Olga Ryabchenko
Hryhorii Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University
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THE MOBILIZATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNIST TRANSFORMATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE DURING COLLECTIVIZATION AND THE HOLODOMOR

Since the late 1980s when the Holodomor became the subject of intense study, scholars have analyzed how Stalin and his "revolution from above" in 1932–1933 deliberately created conditions in the Ukrainian countryside whereby physical survival became impossible. As Stanislav Kulchytsky has noted, publications devoted to the Holodomor now number more than twenty thousand.[1] Among the issues that continue to be examined are the number of victims and the ethnicity of Holodomor victims. The question of the perpetrators of the Holodomor has yet to be adequately addressed, especially those who carried out the Soviet government's criminal orders at the local level and on a daily basis. As the writer and critic Lev Kopelev wrote in summarizing his experience working in Myrhorod raion (Poltava oblast, then part of Kharkiv oblast) in those years, "such a crime cannot be absolved through prayer or repentance."[2]

The overwhelming majority of rank-and-file perpetrators of the Holodomor remain nameless, and not a single study has been devoted to this issue, a point emphasized by such scholars as Olga Andriewsky.[3] This situation is due in part to the relatively short period during which systematic research on this question has been conducted and to the difficulties of uncovering documents that are not concentrated in a single place. Consolidated lists of perpetrators do not exist, but it is possible to recreate them partially.

The aim of this study is to analyze the participation of students and lecturers at Ukrainian higher educational institutions in the Soviet transformation of the countryside and to identify their role in organizing the artificial famine. My research was conducted within the methodological framework of the history of everyday life and is based on a broad range of sources. Prominent among them are ego-documents, such as diaries, letters to the authorities, and unpublished memoirs as well as party reports and visual sources.

Sheila Fitzpatrick has noted that the younger generation played a leading role in carrying out collectivization.[4] It bears repeating that in putting their plans into practice, the Soviet leadership constantly made use of young people. All Soviet transformations were carried out with the direct participation of students, the largest organized and mobile social group in the USSR. The records indicate scores of resolutions, orders, and instructions related to mobilization of the young aimed at eradicating so-called "shortcomings" (*proryvy*, according to the terminology of that period), including an "onslaught" (*shturm*) against the Ukrainian countryside.

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[1] Stanislav Kul′chyts′kyi, "Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv u svitli ostannikh doslidzhen′," *Svitohliad*, no. 5 (2013): 70.
[2] Lev Kopelev, *I sotvoril sebe kumira* (Kharkiv, 2010).
[3] Olga Andriewsky, "Towards a Decentred History: The Study of the Holodomor and Ukrainian Historiography," in *Contextualizing the Holodomor: The Impact of Thirty Years of Ukrainian Famine Studies*, ed. Andrij Makuch and Frank E. Sysyn (Edmonton; Toronto, 2015), 34.
[4] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge, 1979).

Between the late 1920s and early 1930s, students dispatched by party and Komsomol bodies were expected to be directly involved in collectivization as well as in sowing, harvesting, and procurement campaigns. In 1929 it was officially recommended that only second- and third-year students attending agricultural schools of higher education be mobilized.[5] Other institutes were supposed to demonstrate initiative "with regard to agricultural assistance in carrying out preparatory work ahead of sowing, and help with organizing collective associations in the countryside."[6]

In practice what "demonstrating initiative" meant was that it was mostly students from the peasant milieu who were sent to implement collectivization. A female student from the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education (KhINO), A. M. Matviienko, recalls that in early spring 1929 studies were interrupted, and students were sent to villages in Kharkiv oblast: "It was vexing to realize that students not from the peasantry remained in the city and continued their studies."[7]

The question of demonstrating initiative was raised in a letter from the People's Commissariat of Education (NKO) entitled "To All Pedagogical Institutes and Pedagogical Colleges," which the higher educational institutions received on 6 January 1931. In keeping with the decisions passed at the December 1930 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine (CC CP[B]U), collectives of pedagogical schools, "without delaying a single day," were to set about this task "with even greater eagerness" and galvanize the entire student population. Moreover, every twenty days schools were to provide the People's Commissariat of Education with information "about the participation of a pedagogical school in the preparation for the spring sowing"; the first notification had to be submitted by 20 January 1931.[8]

Thus began a wave of mass mobilizations of students to rural areas, the scale of which increased with each passing year. Newspapers published by higher educational institutions were emblazoned with such slogans as "On the campaign for the socialist village!" and "Students in the struggle for the second/third Bolshevik spring," and reported on the "initiative" of a particular group of students or individuals, which everyone should take up. On 22 February 1930 a newspaper published by the Kharkiv Institute of National Economy wrote: "The initiative of the fourth-year students at the Faculty of Trade is acquiring particular importance: They have decided to take a break from their studies and leave for a month in the countryside to take part in the preparations for the sowing campaign. The administration of the institute met this initiative halfway. The entire class, both party and non-party members, decided this unanimously. This initiative should be supported by all fourth-year students."[9]

The directors of higher educational institutions reported to the NKO that they had begun preparations for the spring agricultural campaign even before the relevant directives had been issued. For example, the Odesa Institute of Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics announced: "Owing to the fact that during the winter vacation in January 1931 a number of students were supposed to leave for the countryside, they were given training in the preparatory work relating

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[5] Tsentral′nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukraïny (Central State Archive of the Highest Organs of State Government and Administration of Ukraine; hereafter cited as TsDAVO Ukraïny), f. 166, op. 9, spr. 1736, ark. 266.

[6] Ibid.

[7] A. M. Matviienko, "Khar′kov: KhINO–KhPIPO," in *Kharkivs'kyi universytet (1917–1941 rr.) u spohadakh ioho vykladachiv ta vykhovantsiv* (Kharkiv, 2016), 111–21.

[8] Derzhavnyi arkhiv Odes′koï oblasti (State Archive of Odesa Oblast; hereafter cited as DAOO), f.r-1641, op. 1, spr. 12, ark. 1.

[9] "Bazhaiemo uspikhu: 4-i kurs torhfaku vyrushyv pershyi," *Student Zhovtnia: Orhan studentiv, profesoriv, vykladachiv ta sluzhbovtsiv instytutiv: inzhenerno-ekonomichnoho, plianovo-ekonomichnoho, obminu i rozpodilu ta radians'koho budivnytstva i prava* (Kharkiv), 22 February 1930 [article signed by Harkavenko].

to their tasks in the village. Two seminars were held, which were attended by nearly all the students who were leaving for the countryside (68–70 people)."[10]

It is difficult to estimate the number of campaigns. In addition to the better known All-Union campaigns, such as the "Twenty-Five Thousanders," who were dispatched to the countryside to ensure the success of "collective-farm construction," in keeping with the decisions that were passed at the November Plenum of the CC AUCP(B) and which were widely reflected in the literature,[11] there was a vast number of other campaigns. Higher educational institutions and other organizations were in constant communication with party committees of various levels responsible for the mobilization to the countryside of cohorts of "25," "50," "80," 100," "150," "300," "340," "800," "1100," and so on.[12]

Also mandatory were progress reports on efforts in the countryside and the number of students dispatched there. The figures are impressive. For example, the Stalin Mining Institute reported that "during the 'slowdowns' [sing. *volynka*; this informal term embraces regular walkouts, sit-down strikes, and slowdowns—Trans.], 150 comrades worked on collectivization in the countryside. [...] Two hundred and ninety students worked on the harvesting campaign." At the same time, students were engaged in other sectors: "More than a thousand people worked on liquidating shortcomings in the industrial financial plan at the factory; on a shock worker day—twelve hundred. Fifty-five comrades worked permanently at the factory."[13] Similar information exists for other institutes.

Needless to say, much attention was paid to the participation of Communist Party and Komsomol members in these campaigns; it was their direct duty. For example, the Kharkiv Machine-Building Institute reported that at the start of the 1932/33 school year, out of 1,427 students, 645 were party members and candidate members. In February and March 1933 alone, 152 people were dispatched to various campaigns; 81 students were sent for permanent employment in political departments and Machine-Tractor Stations (MTSs). Eventually they were joined by 79 more students who were dispatched for the sowing campaign.[14] Documents clearly indicate that all students, irrespective of party affiliation, took part in these mobilization processes. This work intensified markedly during the 1932/33 school year.

At the All-Ukrainian meeting of the heads of regional departments of public education held on 18 February 1933, public education bodies were criticized for the fact that "in the struggle for grain they did not organize mass political work among members of collective farms and working individual farmers, among collective farm activists, through their work forms and methods; did not ensure full mobilization aimed at completing the annual state grain delivery plan, at smashing kulak sabotage."[15] A decision was passed to devote more "attention and energy, class vigilance" during the next spring sowing campaign "for the completion of the tasks of the Fourth Bolshevik spring, in the struggle to strengthen collective farms, to increase yields."[16] Thus, at the peak of the Holodomor, the winter and spring of 1933, during the entire period of fieldwork, brigades of students were sent to various villages to liquidate

[10] DAOO, f.-r1641, op. 1, spr. 12, ark. 2.
[11] Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization* (New York; Oxford, 1987); Robert Conquest, *Zhnyva skorboty: Radians'ka kolektyvizatsiia ta holodomor* (Kyiv, 1993); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalinskie krest'iane: Sotsial'naia istoriia sovetskogo obshchestva: derevnia* (Moscow, 2001).
[12] DAOO, f. 11, op. 1, spr. 108; Tsentral′nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads′kykh ob'iednan′ Ukraïny (Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine; hereafter cited as TsDAHO Ukraïny), f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6222, ark. 20, 42; Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kharkivs′koï oblasti (State Archive of Kharkiv Oblast; hereafter cited as DAKhO), f. 2, op. 1, spr. 62, ark. 8, 26; DAKhO, f. 2, op. 1, spr. 61, ark. 5, 34; DAKhO, f. 2, op. 1, spr. 69, ark. 72; DAKhO, f. 2, op. 1, spr. 70, ark. 103; DAKhO, f. 2, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 103, 145–46, et al.
[13] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5558, ark. 110.
[14] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 2, op. 1, spr. 5558, ark. 102, 103.
[15] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 39, ark. 9.
[16] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 39, ark.10.

the "seed shortcoming": to harvest seeds and organize the sowing. It was considered crucial to mobilize students attending agricultural institutions of higher education "as supervisors and political instructors of collective farm brigades," a point that is mentioned, for example, in a resolution passed on 28 March 1933 by the Kharkiv oblast committee "concerning the mobilization of '2,000' for the spring sowing period."[17]

In the summer of 1933 upperclassmen and graduate students (Communist Party or Komsomol members) were selected to conduct agrotechnical propaganda; these young people were supposed to teach villagers the proper methods for organizing harvesting and threshing and to prepare for the fall sowing.[18] The authorities were constantly passing decisions concerning the mobilization of students to the countryside for a variety of jobs. For example, on 24 June 1933 the secretariat of the Kharkiv oblast committee of the CP(B)U handed down two decisions regarding mobilization: For a period of two months, during the harvesting campaign, 76 students from higher educational institutions in Kharkiv and Poltava were placed at the disposal of the oblast division of the State Political Directorate (GPU), while others were to be selected and then sent for ten days to raions in order to assist MTSs.[19]

It is impossible to determine the total number of students who were dispatched to the countryside. Although statistics were kept for individual campaigns (by oblast party committees and institutions), it is difficult to track down all of them. Most likely data for all the years of mobilization have not been preserved. However, extant documents reveal some fascinating details. The following categories were required information in reports submitted on individual campaigns: raion; authorized representative; number of Communist Party and Komsomol members; and a separate column for students. In some raions there were no authorized representatives, possibly because there were not enough of them. In the spring of 1932, in thirteen out of fifty raions in Odesa oblast, apart from local activists, it was students who were involved in the sowing campaigns. Out of 818 people who were sent to villages, 373 were students. Their numbers were not constant, but there was an upward trend. When this particular list was updated, the number of students increased by 96. Thus, we can conclude that out of the total number of people who were mobilized to the countryside, most were students.[20]

In 1933 the Poltava Institute of Social Education had an office that regularly dispatched brigades of students and lecturers to villages designated by party committees. These could be smaller groups, faculties, and even entire collectives.[21] Brigades were also dispatched regularly from the Nizhyn Institute of Social Education, one brigade replacing another.[22] Starting on 1 July 1933, all students and teaching staff of pedagogical institutes mobilized themselves for one month for the harvesting campaign.[23]

Young people were mobilized for varying periods of time, from a few weeks to several months. Sometimes, at the request of low-level party structures and with the permission of higher-level ones, students were ordered to stay for another term or even assigned work on a permanent basis. For example, on 4 March 1932 the Novoukrainsk raion party committee reported that out of all the brigades dispatched from Kharkiv and Odesa, eight students remained in the raion; they had been ordered to stay on to help with the sowing campaign—without being consulted.[24] A student named V. Novikov wrote a letter to the dean of the Odesa Industrial Institute to request help in recalling his brother, N. P. Bulat, a fourth-year student,

[17] DAKhO, f.p-2, op. 1, spr. 62, ark. 26.
[18] DAKhO, f.p-2, op. 1, spr. 73, ark. 62.
[19] DAKhO, f.p-2, op. 1, spr. 74, ark. 90, 113.
[20] DAOO, f.r-11, op. 1, spr. 112, ark. 80–81.
[21] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148, ark. 116.
[22] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148, ark. 70.
[23] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148, ark. 117; Derzhavnyi arkhiv Khmelnyts′koï oblasti (State Archive of Khmelnytsky Oblast; hereafter cited as DAKhmO), f. 302, op. 1, spr. 1841, ark. 41, 75, 105.
[24] DAOO, f.r-11, op. 1, spr. 112, ark. 31.

from a village, where a municipal party committee had dispatched him to the harvesting campaign in July 1933. The municipal party committee had a number of students remain indefinitely because the annual grain delivery plan had not been completed. "I think that the directorate of the institute will help him quit and complete his studies," Novikov wrote."[25]

It is important to note that the students were not offered extensions or additional time to study in order to pass their exams. After their mobilization to the countryside, even for a protracted period of time, they returned to their year of study and were expected to catch up with the program and pass the material on their own. There were some rare exceptions. For example, Drenov, a student at the Kyiv Industrial Institute, was aggrieved that two Jewish girls from the senior year ended up in his year of study following their mobilization. He stated that "this is their privilege as Jews."[26] While privileges supposedly accorded to Jews were emphasized, in reality, such exceptions to the rule did not depend on a student's nationality and were simply manifestations of anti-Semitic sentiment common at the time.

Young people were often transferred to other places after completing a mission in a rural area. For example, Ivan Plakhtin, a student at KhINO, wrote that "he was drowning in assignments [...] and then almost became a permanent authorized representative of the Central Committee and the oblast committee of the CP(B)U on sowing, harvesting, grain procurement, shortcomings in the Donbas, etc."[27] Similarly, in his memoirs, P. A. Havriuk, a student in the Faculty of Literature of Kyiv State University, writes that on the instructions of the Kyiv oblast party committee, he held various jobs, including in Shpola raion, where he worked in the political department of the MTS. Later he wrote that he was proud of having taken part in strengthening the collective farming system and that while working in the countryside he had passed his final exams together with his fellow students.[28]

Heads of higher educational institutions, who at first enthusiastically assured the party organs and the People's Commissariat of Education of the readiness of institutions of higher learning to participate in the mobilization campaigns, later frequently appealed to party organs to send back their students, especially freshmen, because "staying out of school will not allow them to catch up with their comrades who are studying."[29] Their letters to the authorities are preserved in various archives. For example, Symonko, the director of the Kherson Agricultural Institute, in response to an order handed down on 16 June 1933 about a new mobilization of third-year students for a one-month placement to carry out crop accounting, requested that the practice of taking students away from their studies be stopped because "the implementation of the curriculum, test session, and dissertations is being disrupted."[30]

As a rule, these types of requests were not answered. However, extant data reveals instances where the higher leadership did issue instructions summoning young people back to their educational institutions. For example, on 4 July 1933 the CC CP(B)U sent a telegram, signed by Stanislav Kosior, to all oblast committees with the following order: "Ensure the return of students who are on the harvesting campaign no later than 20 August. Provide the students with footwear, clothing, and underclothes."[31] Similar orders were issued the following year, thus attesting to the continuation of the practice of sending young people to engage in agricultural work during the school year. On 1 April 1934 a telegram signed by Pavel Postyshev, secretary of the CC CP(B)U, was sent to all secretaries of oblast committees, stating that "the CC categorically orders the return to their studies, within two days, of all students

[25] DAOO, f.r- 126, op. 1, spr. 2, ark. 8.
[26] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 7, op. 1, spr. 1079, ark. 53.
[27] Ivan Plakhtin, *Lita-dorohy: Spohady* (Simferopol, 1982), 117.
[28] P. A. Havriuk, "Robitfak industrial′noho hihanta: Spohady," *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, no. 1 (1971): 106.
[29] DAOO, f. 11, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 114, 115.
[30] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6451, ark. 28.
[31] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6222, ark. 57.

from the Kharkiv Institute of Mechanization who were mobilized by the CC as brigadiers, mechanics, tractor drivers, or combine operators."[32]

Taking young people out of their classes, the authorities had them perform duties that the peasants refused to do: "It is not stuffy classrooms, lectures, and theoretical formulas but the direct front of the class struggle—the struggle for grain, for new collective farms, for Bolshevik sowing, organization of work, shock work, socialist competition—which should become a laboratory of the daily work of student brigades in the countryside."[33]

Newspapers reported that the "finest representatives of proletarian students" were heading to the villages "with songs, full of vivacity and Bolshevik enthusiasm." It is worth noting that the geographic range of departures was broad and not restricted to nearby villages or one's own oblast. For example, "sixty-five of the finest representatives of proletarian students from the Kharkiv Institute of Agricultural Mechanization and Electrification—five shock brigades of enthusiasts of the II collective farming spring"—were dispatched to Melitopol raion [Zaporizhia oblast].[34] One could encounter students from other Kharkiv-based higher educational institutions in Odesa and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts, and they were also dispatched to Vinnytsia oblast, the Moldavian ASSR, and elsewhere.

Getting to remote areas was difficult. Plakhtin, a student at the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education who was dispatched in the spring of 1932 to act as authorized representative to the sowing campaign in the village of Prachiv, Hlobyn raion, recalled the twenty-kilometre walk to that distant village, slogging through a continuous swamp and losing the soles of his shoes in the process.[35] Students from the Kharkiv Institute of Agricultural Mechanization and Electrification walked the eighty kilometres to the Kakhivka MTS because they lacked the money to pay for transportation.[36]

Students were sent to organize collective farms, repair equipment, conduct mass cultural and educational work with the peasantry (conversations, reading of newspapers), and publish wall newspapers, breaking-news papers (*blyskavky*), and the like.[37] Not all people with roots in the countryside had the relevant agricultural experience. Even so, young people were compelled to take up these posts in order to avoid punishment. For example, the secretary of the Hlobyn raion party committee told Plakhtin in no uncertain terms: "Either you do a good job of organizing and carrying out the vegetable sowing, or you'll be booted from the party."[38]

Most students had an enthusiastic attitude to manual labour, which was the same in every village. In documents and even diaries they describe working joyfully, singing and joking. For example, students assigned to Hurynivka repaired forty harrows, inspected thirty seeders, set up a locomobile, (a steam-powered agricultural vehicle), communized all the horses in the village and shoed them, and fulfilled the seed preparation plan.[39] In Raihorodok they cleaned and collected the seed fund in storerooms—overfulfilling the raion plan—repaired collective farm equipment, and familiarized the peasants with the seed plan. Countless such details are recounted.

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[32] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6451, ark. 16.

[33] P. Myroshnyk, "V borot′bi za druhu bil′shovyts′ku," *Za mekhanizatsiiu ta eletryfikatsiiu sil's'koho hospodarstva: Dvotyzhneva hazeta studentiv, medpersonalu ta spivrobitnykiv Kharkivs'koho instytutu mekhanizatsiï ta elektryfikatsiï sil's'koho hospodarstva*, 14 May 1931.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Plakhtin, *Lita-dorohy*, 117.

[36] "Do tret′oï bil′shovyts′koï vesny," *Za mekhanizatsiiu ta elektryfikatsiu sil's'koho hospodarstva*, 15 February 1932.

[37] "Studentstvo KhIRBP v borot′bi za zbir urozhaiu," *Student Zhovtnia*, 5 July 1931 [article signed by Hladshtein].

[38] Plakhtin, *Lita-dorohy*, 116.

[39] "Hurynivka maie buty zrazkovym kolhospom: Shefbryhady—na dopomohu selu," *Student Zhovtnia*, no. 12(31), 22 February 1930 [article signed by Radkevych].

Peasants who refused to work on collective farms were perceived by these party envoys as enemies. For example, in his diary, M. K. Synkov recorded his impressions of his encounter with some village youths: "A bunch of peasant boys appeared in the field, cracking seeds in their mouths and staring at us, talking lazily. We asked them some questions: Why are they not working and why is there not a single peasant in the field; there was no one except for the bosses. One of them replied: 'You're working in our place!' The others burst out laughing. This was the laughter of an implacable enemy, which sparked great indignation and hatred in me."[40] (The entry, dated 15 May 1933, was written under the impression of the sight of ragged adult peasants and their children starving to death on the streets of Kharkiv. According to the author, this entry described events that had taken place one and a half to two years earlier, when he was studying at the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education.)

Many students who took part in these historic events believed in the need to implement collectivization forcibly, and they wholeheartedly hated "kulaks" and other "class enemies." At their institutes it was drilled into them that "kulaks and their henchmen are operating" in villages.[41] Prior to the arrival on 1 February 1931 in the village of Raihorodok, Sloviansk raion, of a brigade from the Kharkiv Planning Institute of Consumer Cooperatives, 106 homesteads (35.3 percent) out of 761 had been organized into a collective farm. According to the newspaper, within one month, as of 1 March, 58 percent of all homesteads were collectivized.[42] Meanwhile, the secretaries of the Communist Party and Komsomol branches in Raihorodok were accused of holding right-opportunist views for having failed to spot a large "kulak slogan" hanging in a village building with the following message: "Collective farmer! Do you really think further development of the collective farm and your well-being are possible?"[43].

The periodical press encouraged young people to continue taking part in "shock militant work," showcasing the results and importance of student labours: "… the party directive mobilizing students to the countryside has fully justified itself"; "It would be good if more like them would be sent."[44]

It should be pointed out that results depended on many factors, including the ability to explain tasks convincingly to the peasants and the establishment of good relations with the local population. These relationships were formed in a variety of ways. During a meeting of collective farmers convened by the above-mentioned student Ivan Plakhtin, who spoke about the need to sow the spring crops on time, the women nearly killed him, pouncing on him while screaming, "Beat the damned chatterbox!"[45] He lost consciousness after getting hit on the head with a rolling pin, which actually may have saved him. The future writer recalled: "In order to make amends somehow, a beautiful, assertive widow mobilized the female members of the collective farm and persuaded [them] to harness their cows to seeders and harrows. [...] The sowing campaign was completed on time, and when the friendly shoots of the spring crops turned green, pleasing the eye, the raion committee sent me home with thanks."[46]

A similar fate befell a student from the Kyiv Institute of Public Education, the future professor Yurii Kobyletsky, in the village of Mudrivka, near Chyhyryn. The village women locked him and other collectivizers "inside the village soviet and kept them under guard for several days, passing only something to drink through the window, but no food—uh-uh! They

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[40] DAKhO, f.r-6452, op. 1, spr. 5276, ark. 159v.; "Vytiahy z shchodennyka asystenta kafedry neorhanichnoï i analitychnoï khimiï Kharkivs′koho khim.-tekhnolohich. in-tu, vyluchenoho pry areshti 11 sichnia 1937 r.," in *Reabilitovani istoriieiu: Kharkivs'ka oblast'*, bk. 2 (Kyiv; Kharkiv, 2014), 69.
[41] Artem Shport, "Bezzakonnia: Notatky represovanoho," *Kyïv*, no. 7 (1991): 8.
[42] A. and N. Kanevs′ki, "Studentstvo u borot′bi za druhu bil′shovyts′ku vesnu," *Student Zhovtnia*, 13 April 1931.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Myroshnyk, "V borot′bi za druhu bil′shovyts′ku."
[45] Plakhtin, *Lita-dorohy*, 117.
[46] Ibid.

berated us to the nth degree, passionately, hysterically, and in an inspired fashion."[47] Some students viewed such incidents as youthful adventures; for others, they ended tragically. For example, during an attempt to organize a collective farm, Antin Pidopryhora, a student from the Kyiv INO, was killed.[48]

Unfortunately, we cannot answer the question of how often such incidents took place, let alone establish a percentage. Brigades of students, proclaiming themselves shock workers, "conducted a merciless struggle against the kulaks, introducing the general party line." The authorities urged students to look up to Yakovlev, Lozhkin, and Kozynets, who attended the Kharkiv Institute of Exchange and Distribution, as the "best comrades and social activists."[49]

The struggle against "kulaks and sub-kulaks" was reported with particular pride, especially during the Holodomor. Reports submitted by institutes give an idea of the scope of this effort.[50] In some villages, students almost completely fulfilled the norm for collecting seed. For example, during a ten-day period in Lubny raion, Poltava oblast, in the spring of 1933, forty students from the Lubny Institute of Social Education collected 90 percent of the required seed material and also "exposed kulaks," who were mounting resistance.[51] Activists were especially proud that in the village of Snityn they had uncovered "an armed gang headed by the Kotliars (sons of a kulak)," and in the villages of Dukhova, Kozaidentsi, and Khyttsi they had exposed "kulaks who were organizing the theft of stacks of grain (*kopa*; 1 = 60 sheaves of grain) from the collective farm field as well as the theft of horses."[52] The administration of the Mykolaiv Shipbuilding Mechanical Engineering College reported proudly that their students based in the affiliated village of Slyvyne "mobilized 96 percent of the seed material, purged and organized guards, repaired agricultural equipment, [and] organized a brigade of sowers"; and in the village of Vodopii collected "thirty-six tsentners [tsentner = a hundredweight] of concealed kulak grain."[53] Meanwhile, the Kharkiv Institute of Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics was criticized for "missing spring preparations"; in one affiliated village, only 3.96 percent of seeds were collected. One representative of the institute lived permanently in the village, and two others came to assist him, which sparked considerable anxiety on the part of the party organs.[54]

What the Ukrainian countryside looked like to students in 1932–1933 and how these young people related to their task are revealed above all by ego-documents. Some students were "oppressed by the ominous silence." Artem Shport wrote in his memoirs that it was impossible even to imagine a Ukrainian village without singing, noise, barking dogs, and crowing roosters.[55] But the most depressing impression was made by individual peasants who found the strength to go out to work: "It is difficult to guess whether it is a young or old woman, a teenager, or a girl. Everyone's faces are the same and resemble each other. The famine had leveled everyone. What could one-and-a-half to two dozen exhausted women accomplish? They barely moved, sitting on the rows of beets richly dotted with weeds."[56] Leonid Vysheslavsky writes in his memoirs that students working on beet plantations were struck by the sight of starving people drinking the molasses used to lure night moths, and digging out ant

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[47] Iurii Kobylets′kyi, *Dal' makhne krylom* (Kyiv, 1985), 134–35.
[48] Ibid., 138.
[49] The institute was created in 1930 by a resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR on the basis of the Trade Faculty at the Institute of National Economy; in 1934 it was restructured as the Ukrainian (Kharkiv from 1940) Institute of Soviet Trade. See K., "Harni naslidky roboty," *Student Zhovtnia*, 1 May 1931.
[50] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148.
[51] "Lubentsi znaishly osnovnu lanku," *Student revoliutsiï*, nos. 7–8 (1933): 3, article signed by Dobrovil′na.
[52] Ibid.
[53] "Raportuiemo naslidkamy boiovoï roboty," *Student revoliutsiï*, nos. 7–8 (1933), 4.
[54] S. Voloshyna, "Vyznaty pomylky—vypravyty khyby," *Student revoliutsiï*, nos. 7–8 (1933), 5–6.
[55] Shport, "Bezzakonnia," 9.
[56] Ibid.

eggs and eating them. One student brought half of his rations to a girl who was swollen from starvation.[57]

At the same time, the students could observe a very different cross-section of village life: the lifestyle of the local party elite. The diary of Anton Komashka, who was a pupil of the artist Ilya Repin, director of the Kharkiv Art Institute, describes in minute detail the everyday life of one such family, that of Fedir Serhiiovych Nechytailo, the head of the finance department of Velyka Bahachka raion. His family lived in the village of Zatin (today Poltava oblast). "Among the typical peasant buildings is Nechytailo's new house covered with gray tiles. The interior of the small house is an amazing scrap of holiday. The earthen floor is strewn with fresh grass. In the aroma of grass, in the snow-white embroidered towels, in the red wooden divan along the entire wall—delightful comfort and folk poetry resounded in everything. But there were new things scattered here and there: a telephone, a radio set, portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and Shevchenko. On a final note, a bouquet of red dahlias blazed on a clean tablecloth on the table."[58] But the artist was most struck by the beauty of the young Maria Ivanivna, Nechytailo's wife. Even though his task was to create a gallery of local female collective farm shock workers, he also painted this woman's portrait. In his diary he notes: "In my mind, I expressed my surprise in this way: Here it is, a work of life itself, so perfectly composed. A young, healthy, beautiful Ukrainian woman, tanned, with lively red smiling lips, dimpled cheeks, intelligent, playful brown eyes."[59] What a contrast to the portraits of the suffering Ukrainian women who were going mad or starving to death in unheated, dirty houses! Or to the portraits of female collective-farm workers, who, marshalling their last reserves of strength, went out to the fields to work. Comparing the images of Ukrainian female collective-farm shock workers that were featured in newspapers or Komashka's own art, the difference in emotions immediately catches one's eye. The artist's images of the faces contain no joy. They are exhausted, sad, and closed in on themselves, arms crossed over their chests.

Komashka captures the difference in the food that was available to the collective farm members and to their bosses. He recorded the following: "5 August. I rode out to the fields on a cart. I made five sketches of the best male and female collective farm members. [...] One of the female collective farm members turns to us: 'When will you stop feeding us those turds? To hell with them! Have you shown them to our rulers?' Another woman, who was driving a cart, recounted how all swollen, she worked on the beets." On another subject he notes: "During breakfast as I was sketching reapers the other day, one of them says, pointing to a poppyseed flat cake: 'A good householder's dog wouldn't eat this. By God, it's true, he would sniff it and head off. Well, you understand, it gets stuck right here (pointing to his chest).'"[60] The food in Nechytailo's house was completely different: "...We happened upon a whole table laid out with appetizers, bottles, and the crowning glory was fried fish (bream, crucian carp, pike). If ever in my life I experienced occasions of time spent wonderfully, I consider this day and evening as one of the most remarkable. What cheerful conversation, full of humorous folk rhymes and paradoxes. How Maria Ivanivna laughed!... On a warm, starry, Ukrainian night we returned to Velyka Bahachka on a chaise-cart. Potapenko's rolling laughter sounded in the meadows, in the darkness, among the dewy, fragrant herbs and the River Psiol"[61]—laughter at a time when most people had forgotten what laughter was.

Komashka likely anticipated his diary would be read, as attested to by the abundance of detail, including the content of Repin's letters, which he recopied into his new notebook,

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[57] Oles′ Honchar, *Shchodennyky*, 3 vols. (Kyiv, 2008), 2: 206.
[58] Tsentral′nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv-muzei literatury i mystetstva Ukraïny (Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine; hereafter cited as TsDAMLM Ukraïny), f. 290, op. 1, spr. 139, ark. 10.
[59] TsDAMLM Ukraïny, f. 290, op. 1, spr. 139, ark. 10–11.
[60] TsDAMLM Ukraïny, f. 290, op. 1, spr. 139, ark. 9.
[61] TsDAMLM Ukraïny, f. 290, op. 1, spr. 139, ark. 11.

along with his high assessment of his work. Komashka was a convinced communist, like many artists of the time, and he frequently carried out assignments of a propagandistic nature. In adding the portraits of the local party nomenklatura and their family members to his gallery of shock workers from Velyka Bahachka raion (a total of 33 portraits), he preserved for posterity the vivid contrast between the daily life of various categories of rural inhabitants. He did the same in his diary, adding vivid strokes to the portrait of the Ukrainian countryside in the summer 1933.

How prepared were students for this work? Were all of them able to carry out their grain delivery tasks, despite the peasants' suffering and despair? How did they manage to live with such a burden?

The institute reports emphasize the shock work that students and lecturers carried out with special emphasis on the voluntary nature of their actions (for example, when collectives from higher educational institutions declared themselves mobilized for the harvesting campaign for one month during the summer of 1933). They were proud that "without a break, in the absence of food and water, unrelenting work took place throughout the day."[62]

Along with these dithyrambs addressed to the authorities, the reports habitually exposed "enemies" of socialist construction; not all of them, of course, just a few, in order to demonstrate the vigilance of various party committees. They recapitulate students' conversations about the peasants' situation, as well as lecturers' remarks and jokes, similar to what could be heard elsewhere. For example, the Nizhyn Institute of Social Education reported that students were discussing the question, "when Stalin dies." The following statements were pervasive: "The party's resolutions are nonsense; nothing will come of them"; "Stalin and the leaders are doing nothing; there are no achievements"; "So many people are dying that there aren't enough boards to bury them"; "What kind of socialist construction is this when people are dying?"; "Can you study when you're starving?" A student named Strykun told the following joke: "When a horse, a donkey, and an ox go to Petrovsky for help, it's only the donkey who receives some, because who is sitting there but his brothers—donkeys all."[63]

Similar conversations were recorded in institutions of higher learning in other oblasts: "Right now the countryside needs material and cash assistance; you won't help by dispatching people." "Collective farms are falling apart because the peasants were forced to join them."[64]

To the category of quiet protests one can also add refusals to write reports on the work that was being done in villages. For example, Dashkul, a student from the Zhytomyr Institute of Social Education, made the following comment when he was told to submit such a report: "What will I write for you? About how the peasants are starving to death in the countryside?"[65]

Several key behavioural strategies employed by mobilized youth can be singled out:

1. According to notes made by D. Hoichenko, who had to spend part of his student years working as a collectivizer and on state grain deliveries, only the biggest scoundrels or utterly blind fanatics could remain indifferent to such crimes. It is highly likely that a significant proportion of young people belonged to the category of fanatics. Thus, as Lev Kopelev writes, ordinary feelings of pity or shame were crushed by "rationalistic fanaticism." The sources of this fanaticism were the hours devoted to political affairs at meetings during which party resolutions and speeches of state leaders were formulated. Students were urged "to show that they are honestly carrying out the tasks placed on them" in various campaigns, and they proved their devotion.[66] They were prepared to wage an "implacable struggle for the implementation of the general party line against right deviationists, against left deviationists." They were

[62] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148, ark. 105.
[63] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148, ark. 60.
[64] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5558, ark. 104.
[65] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148, ark. 105.
[66] "Studenty razom z kolhospnykamy zbyraiut′ vrozhai," *Shliakh sotsialistychnoï rekonstruktsiï*, 30 July 1933.

convinced that "foot-dragging regarding the mowing, the threshing of the harvest [was] a kulak maneuver aimed at disrupting the mowing and threshing."[67]

However, as Kopelev suggests, "more persuasive were those people who embodied, in my eyes, our truth and our fairmindedness; those who confirmed with their own lives that, gritting their teeth and clenching their hearts, it is necessary to carry out everything that the party and Soviet power command."[68]

2. Refusing to go to villages and so-called "desertion" from the sowing front among lecturers and students alike. For example, when a brigade was being organized at the Kharkiv Geodetic Institute for liquidating "shortcomings" in the village of Prykolotne, Velykyi Burluk raion, there were some "Komsomol members who talked a lot about the village, they were considered activists, but they refused to go..."[69] As a rule, students justified their refusal by explaining that they did not want to fall behind academically.

Lecturers who were not party members refused to leave on economic and political campaigns, deeming them a communist matter. For example, an employee of the Uman Institute of Social Education named Burshtein twice refused to deploy to a village, declaring: "The state grain delivery is the communists' affair. Let them go to the countryside."[70] Communists, too, refused to be mobilized and fled from villages. For example, Abram Finkelshtein, a student at the Odesa Milling Institute, who was sent to Holovanivsk raion to organize cultural and propaganda work, refused to work after he was given another assignment. Citing illness and the need to finish his studies, he simply fled the raion.[71]

Those in a position to do so obtained exceptions for themselves.[72] A female student named Shylina requested a telegram from home stating the following: "Ira, leave at once. Troshka is dying." It was noted that this was not an isolated case.[73] Amelin, the commander of a student detachment that was formed at the Dnipropetrovsk Railway and Civil Engineering Institute of Transport Engineers to bring in the harvest, "brought the students to the station but went back home with some commanders, thereby derailing the labour campaign, because others, observing their commander, also deserted the campaign."[74]

Desertion was particularly widespread during the Holodomor, even among students who were members of the Communist Party. Party organizations began sounding the alarm, noting that if all the fugitives were to be expelled from the party, there would be no one left in the party organizations. Markin, the secretary of the Kryve Ozero raion committee in Odesa oblast, requested instructions concerning penalties for deserters, "considering that right now the trend of people fleeing the raion is acquiring a mass character; no educational influence is helping, and we cannot expel such a large number from the party."[75]

3. Some students tried to demonstrate the unrealistic nature of excessively high state grain delivery plans to the state leadership. For example, a fourth-year student at the Kharkiv Engineering and Economic Institute named Soroka, who was mobilized to the village of Tarasivka in Troitske raion (today: Luhansk oblast), where he was assigned to work from 9 September to 28 December 1932, wrote a memorandum to the Central Committee. In it he tried

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[67] "Het′ z komsomolu ta instytutu Shylinykh i podibnykh," *Shliakh sotsialistychnoï rekonstruktsiï*, 30 July 1933 [article signed by K-dent].
[68] Kopelev, *I sotvoril sebe kumira*, 259.
[69] "Dezertyry zaznaly porazky," *Student revoliutsiï*, nos. 7–8 (1933), 3.
[70] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148, ark. 21.
[71] DAOO, f. 11, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 76.
[72] Shport, "Bezzakonnia," 8.
[73] "Het′ z komsomolu."
[74] "Iz materialiv reviziinoï komisiï," *Za tempy ta iakist' : Orhan kolektyviv KP(b)U, LKSMU, profkomu, MK Robos, dyrektsiï ta robitfaku zaliznychno-budivel'noho instytutu inzheneriv transportu* (Dnipropetrovsk), 5 August 1932 [article signed by M. K.].
[75] DAOO, f. 11, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 79.

to establish the unrealistic nature of the state grain deliveries, which had resulted in the crippling of the village's economic foundation. The CC reached the conclusion that this student, who had assessed the "class struggle against the kulaks" as subversion of the economic foundation of Tarasivka, had a "kulak state of mind."[76] The student P. Dniprovsky, a student at the Chervonohrad Agrotechnical College and member of the Komsomol Bureau who was dispatched to the state grain deliveries and was very affected by the peasants' plight, wrote a letter to the raion committee of the Komsomol in which he expressed his opinion about the "incorrectness of the general party line in carrying out the state grain deliveries." As a result, he was expelled from both the Komsomol and his college and stripped of the right to apply to any other institute of higher education for a period of three years.[77]

4. Feigning madness. For example, out of nine party members who were dispatched to no. "300" in Kryve Ozero raion, three of them, as noted in a memorandum, were "engaged in simulation." A student named Vals initially got down to work, but later submitted a declaration stating that he was ill and asking to be discharged from the raion. "He is pretending that he cannot do anything, does not remember anything, cannot understand anything, pretends to be stupid." Another student, Prostota, resorted to other tricks. "One time he came to the dining room, and in the presence of a huge number of people he removed his boots and began clipping his toenails, or he goes into the biggest bog and wanders through it, or he stands on a street and, turning his head in all directions, laughs at strangers. […] For entire days they roamed through the small town and with their actions discredited the party organization."[78] The memorandum also noted that a number of party comrades also carried out these kinds of anti-party actions.

5. Some students, unable to withstand the psychological stress, expressed their protests against the state grain deliveries by committing suicide. A memorandum sent to Kosior, secretary of the CC CP(B)U, reports the suicides of students, including one Oleksandr Hrebeniuk. After a meeting held on 28 December 1932, Hrebeniuk announced that it was going to be difficult for him to cope with the tasks assigned to him, that he had no clue about agriculture, and that the working conditions at the MTS were unfamiliar to him. The next day he was found shot in a room of the MTS building.[79] A student by the name of Mushynsky, who was the authorized representative in the village of Sosivka, Zinovievsk raion, cut his own throat. Shortly before he was heard to say: "We are completing the threshing, but we still have to transport 5,500 tsentners, 2,000 tsentners of which are wheat, but where to get them, I do not know."[80] Clearly, not everyone was able to withstand being hardened by class hatred and cruelty. In their memoirs Petro Hryhorenko and V. Bohdan write about activists who were stripped of their illusions.[81] "I cannot live in these conditions. If they don't recall me, I will kill myself," said Ya. Zlochevsky, a student at the Kharkiv Civil Engineering Institute, in 1933, when he was sent to work again on state grain deliveries.[82] Commissions investigating suicides explained these acts by the fact that rural mobilization had caused confusion, fear, and self-doubt. Sometimes the findings were more brutal. L. M. Savitsky was accused of "having become entangled in the kulaks' nets, breaking with the general party line in practice, and being confused before the class enemy..." in explanation of why he shot himself.[83] Unable to endure the totalitarian system, those who ended their lives in suicide tried to direct the public's

[76] DAKhO, f. 1148, op. 7, spr. 62, ark. 1
[77] V. Teruk, "Mashkaru zirvano," *Student revoliutsii*, no. 4 (1933): 32.
[78] DAOO, f. 11, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 79.
[79] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6395, ark. 20.
[80] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6395, ark. 22.
[81] Bohdan V., "Byt 'real′nogo sotsializma': Kak eto bylo," http://newzz.in.ua/ob/1148856782-byt-realnogo-socializma-kak-yeto-bylo.html.
[82] Petro Hryhorenko [Petr Grigorenko], *Spohady* (Kyiv, 2007), 96.
[83] TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6395, ark. 47.

attention to the actual state of affairs in society. In this particular case, the impact on the system is moot.

The institutes could strip someone of a diploma, rescind a scholarship, and send a case to the prosecutor. During the state grain deliveries in 1931–32 eight students from the O. D. Tsiurupa Kherson Institute of Cotton Production who were accused of espousing "kulak ideology" were expelled from the institute with the help of the school community.[84] The same number of students was expelled from the Lubny Institute of Social Education for "malicious non-fulfilment of state grain deliveries." Another group of eight students was expelled for having contacts with kulaks. Those students who were found to have gone to the countryside to study rather than perform community work was also exposed and condemned.[85]

Occasionally, students were outraged by such decisions and appealed to the authorities for readmission to their institutes. For example, V. Chorny, who refused to spend six months as secretary of a collective farm "because he is not familiar with this matter and is still young (b. 1915 and in the KSM [Komsomol] for one year)," complained in a letter to the high-ranking Ukrainian communist leader Volodymyr Zatonsky: "My punishment by the party is sufficient; why expel me from the technical college?"[86]

Some students who were not expelled were evicted from their dormitories and stripped of their food ration cards, without which it was simply impossible to survive. In addition, the periodical press began to publish appeals to students "to cover the names of the deserters from the sowing front with the black stain of proletarian shame."[87]

Conclusions

Analysis of the participation of students in collectivization and the sowing, grain procurement, and harvesting campaigns reveals their significant role in carrying out these measures. Schools of higher education were transformed into an inexhaustible source of replenishment of local Soviet structures as well as brigades of collectivizers and liquidators working to eradicate the numerous shortcomings in the establishment of the Soviet system. It is no coincidence that students called themselves the "cork that plugs all holes." If we consider the problem from this vantage point, it becomes eminently clear why the number of higher educational institutions in the Ukrainian SSR markedly increased in the early 1930s—from 38 institutes in 1929 to 190 in 1933—and, accordingly, the total number of students. No one intended to keep such a great number of young people in educational institutions for a lengthy period time and offer them a complete education. Thus, it is no surprise that the newly created structures were not provided with premises, equipment, or teaching staff with appropriate qualifications, nor the students—with scholarships, dormitories, and food.[88] Educational processes, accompanied by systematic "political instruction" and party pressure, influenced student awareness and conduct and were designed to involve them in the political struggle and mobilization campaigns. Therefore, these emissaries had "to be vigilant and implacable with regard to hostile agitation." They organized collective farms, searched for and confiscated hidden grain, and threw adults and children out of their homes. In other words, they augmented the party's coercive measures by elements of "natural self-development" in those sectors of the transformation of everyday life where traditional society offered the most conservative resistance.

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[84] DAOO, f. 11, op. 1, spr. 95, ark. 69.
[85] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 148, ark. 134.
[86] TsDAVO Ukraïny, f. 166, op. 11, spr. 331, ark. 28.
[87] R-k K., "Na sotsialistychni lany rushaite!" *Student revoliutsiï*, no. 4 (1933): 2–3.
[88] For detailed analysis of these problems, see Ol'ha Riabchenko [Ryabchenko], *Studenty radians'koï Ukraïny: Praktyky povsiakdennosti ta konflikty identyfikatsiï* (Kharkiv, 2012).