

# **Mobilizing Young People for Work in Rural Areas During the Years of Collectivization and the Holodomor**

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Since the late 1980s, the Holodomor has been subject of debate and public scrutiny. Scientists have made a lot of efforts to prove a deliberate creation of the Ukrainian village of 1932–1933, during Stalin's "revolution from above," when the physical survival of a person became impossible. According to Stanislav Kulchytsky, the literature on the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine currently has more than 20,000 items (Kulchytsky 2013: 70). However, to this day, scientists are arguing about the total number of victims and the discussion on the national identity of the Holodomor victims remains relevant. In addition, new aspects emerged in the study of the Holodomor; in particular, the performers of the Holodomor, namely those who undertook the execution of criminal acts on the ground. One of such performers, Lev Kopelev, later known as a famous writer and literary critic, in describing his own experience as such a performer in the Mirgorod district of the Poltava region (formerly known as the Kharkiv region territory), noted that "it is impossible to atone this sin and avert by praying" (Kopelev 2010).

The average executives of the Holodomor, in the vast majority, remain nameless today and have not become the subject of a separate study. This was emphasized, for example, by Olga Andriewsky (2015). Indeed, this is caused in part by the relatively recent interest in researching the topic, limiting the amount of attention that has been devoted to it, and the dispersed locations of the relevant documents and sources. Nevertheless, while an aggregated list of the performers does not currently exist, it has become possible to start elaborating one.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the participation of students and teachers of Ukrainian higher education institutions in the Soviet transformations in the countryside and outline their role in organizing the artificial famine. The research is conducted in the methodological framework of the history of everyday life and is based on a wide range of sources. Among them, a special place belongs to ego-

documents, such as diaries, letters to the authorities, unpublished memoirs, as well as party documents and visual sources.

Sheila Fitzpatrick noted that the younger generation played a leading role in implementing the collectivization (Fitzpatrick 1979). It should be noted that the country's authorities regularly used the youth to implement their plans. All Soviet transformations were carried out with the direct participation of students as the most organized and mobile social group. This is evidenced by numerous decrees, orders and instructions on mobilization of so-called “breakthroughs,” including “arrear” of the Ukrainian village.

From the end of the 1920s to the early 1930s, students sent by the party and Komsomol authorities had to take a direct part in the collectivization, sowing, collection of grain and crop harvesting campaigns. In 1929, it was recommended to officially mobilize only the students of the second and third year of the agricultural higher educational establishments (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.9, spr.1736, ark.266). The rest of the institutions had to show their own initiative “regarding the agro-cultural assistance in carrying out preparatory work for sowing, help in organization of collective associations in the countryside” (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.9, spr.1736, ark.266).

It was mainly the students from the peasants’ environment who were sent to support the collectivization. A student of HINO, A. M. Matvienko, remembered that in the early spring of 1929, having stopped their studies, they left for the villages of the Kharkiv region. “It was offensive to realize that the students who were not from peasant backgrounds stayed in the city and continued their studies” (Matvienko 2016).

According to the decisions of the December plenum of the Central Committee of the CP(b)U (1930), the teaching staff of the pedagogical schools, “without wasting a single day,” “with even a greater zeal,” had to set up to work and make all the students be more active. In addition, every twenty days, it was necessary to submit to the People's Commissariat of Education (PCE) information “about the participation of the pedagogical school in preparation for spring sowing and the following of seeding,” and the first notification had to be submitted by January 20, 1931 (DAOO,f.R1641,op.1,spr.12,ark.1).

Since then, the registration begins of mass and permanent mobilizations of students to the village, which increased in number with every following. The newspapers using the slogans: “In a march for a socialist village!,” “Student in the struggle for

the second/third Bolshevik spring,” reported the “initiative” of a particular group of students or individuals that everyone should take up. The University paper of the Kharkiv Institute of National Economy of February 22, 1930, wrote:

Particularly important is the initiative of the students of the 4th year of the Trade Faculty: they decided to take a break in the study and go for a month to the village to participate in the preparation for sowing. The authorities of the Institute met this initiative half-way. All the students of this year, both party members and non-party members, decided to go unanimously. This initiative should be supported by all the 4-year students (Garkavenko 1930).

The directors of higher education institutions reported to the People's Commissariat of Education that they had begun the preparation for the next Spring's agricultural campaign even before the relevant directives had been issued. Thus, the Odesa Physico-Chemical-Mathematical Institute reported:

Since during the winter holidays in January 1931 a number of students had to go to the villages, they had been trained as for their tasks in the village. For this purpose, two seminars were held, which were visited by almost all the students who went to the villages (68-70 people) (DAOO,f.R1641,op.1,spr.12,ark.2).

It is hard to estimate the number of campaigns that were conducted. Indeed, there were many campaigns aside from the renowned and widely covered all-Union campaign, also known as the Campaign of the 25-thousanders, during which students were sent to villages for the success of “collective-farm construction,” due to the decision of the November plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Bolsheviks (Viola 1987, Conquest 1993, Fitzpatrick 2001).

Higher educational institutions and other organizations conducted constant correspondence with the party committees of various levels on mobilization to the rural areas of “25,” “50,” “80,” “100,” “150,” “300,” “340,” “800,” “1100” etc. (DAOO,f.11,op.1,spr.108).

The elaboration of reports on the state of work in the villages and the number of students sent there was mandatory. These numbers are impressive. The Stalin Mining Institute reported that “at the time” of delay “with collectivization 150 students worked in the villages, there were 290 students employed in the harvesting campaign.” In parallel, other students were employed in the industrial sector for the “elimination of the breakthrough of the industrial financial plan more than 1000 people worked at a plant, and on the Day of Strike Workers, 1200

students were employed. 55 comrades work at a plant permanently” (TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.5558, ark.110). We have similar information on other universities as well.

Of course, much attention was paid to the participation of the party and the Komsomol members in these campaigns, as this was their direct duty. Thus, the Kharkiv Machine Building Institute reported that 645 of the 1427 students were members and candidates of the party at the beginning of the 1932/33 academic year. In February and March of 1933, 152 people were sent to various campaigns and 81 students were sent to permanent employment in political departments and machine-tractor stations (MTS). Later, 79 students, who had been sent for the sowing campaign, joined them (TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.5558, ark. 102,103).

The documents clearly show that all students, regardless of their party membership, participated in the mobilization processes. This work was particularly intensified in the 1932-1933 academic year.

At the All-Ukrainian meeting of the heads of the regional public education departments on February 18, 1933, the public education bodies were criticized, because, in the period of struggle for bread, they had not “organized a mass political work among collective and individual farmers, among the bodies of active collective farmers and having not appropriate forms and methods of work, did not provide a full mobilization for the implementation of the annual plan for collection of grain for the State’s grain stockpile and the destruction of kulaks’ sabotage” (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.39, ark.9). It was decided to devote more “attention and energy, class vigilance” to the next spring sowing campaign “to fulfil the tasks of the 4th Bolshevik Spring, in the struggle for strengthening the collective farms, for raising yields” (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.39, ark.10). Therefore, at the peak of the Holodomor in the winter and spring of 1933, the brigades of students were sent to work in different villages to eliminate the “seed breakthrough” to harvest seed and do sowing, for the entire duration of the fieldwork. It was considered necessary to mobilize the students of the agricultural universities “as controllers and political leaders of the collective farmers brigades.” This was discussed, for example, in the resolution of the Kharkiv Regional Committee “on mobilization of ‘2000’ for the period of spring sowing” of March 28, 1933 (DAKhO, f.P 2, op.1, spr.62, ark.26).

In the summer of 1933, senior students and postgraduate students (party or Komsomol members) were selected for the agrotechnical propaganda. These youth had to teach the peasants the correct forms of organization for harvesting, threshing

and preparation for autumn sowing (DAKhO, f.P 2, op.1, spr.73, ark.62). The decisions to mobilize students to the villages for a variety of work were taken on a permanent basis. For example, the Secretariat of the Kharkiv Regional Committee of the CP (b)U made two decisions on mobilization on June 24, 1933: for the period of the two-month harvesting campaign, 76 students of Kharkiv and Poltava higher educational establishments were placed at the disposal of the regional department of the Chief Political Administration, while others had to be selected and sent for 10 days to the rural areas to help MTS (DAKhO, f.P 2, op.1, spr.74, ark.113,90).

It is not currently possible to know how many students were sent to work in the villages. Statistics were conducted for individual campaigns (both in the regional party committees, and in the institutes), but they are difficult to find. The consolidated data for all the years of mobilization has probably not survived. However, the available documents provide interesting observations. Amongst these, the graphs provide the following information on individual campaigns: district, responsible person, number of party members, Komsomol members and, separately, students. In some areas there were no responsible people, perhaps there were simply not enough of them. For example, in 13 districts out of 50 districts of Odessa region in the spring of 1932, only students were involved in sowing campaigns! Of course, there were also local activists. Out of 818 people sent to the villages at that time, 373 were students. The number of the students was not constant, but the tendency was on the rise. As a result, the same list was supplemented and the number of the students increased to 96. Thus, we can conclude that out of the total number of the people mobilized to the village, the majority were students (DAOO, f.P-11, op.1, spr.112, ark.80,81).

In the Poltava Institute of Social Education in 1933, there was a headquarters which regularly sent brigades out of students and professors to the assisted and other villages designated by the party committees. Separate groups, faculties, or even the whole staff of the Institute could be sent (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.148, ark.116). The brigades were continuously sent from the Nizhyn Institute of Social Education: one brigade was replaced by another (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.148, ark.70.). And as of July 1, 1933, all the students and the teaching staff of the pedagogical institutes self-mobilized for the harvesting campaign for a month (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.148, ark.117; DAHmO, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 1841, ark.41, 75, 105).

Youth were mobilized for different periods. It could be a couple of weeks or several months. Sometimes, at the request of regional party structures and with the

permission of the higher educational establishments, the students were mobilized during a new term or even for permanent work. Thus, on March 4, 1932, the Novo-Ukrainian Regional party committee reported that out of the students of the brigades sent by Kharkiv and Odessa, only eight people remained in the region, who were asked to mobilize for the sowing campaign. The order was given without the students' approval! (DAOO, f. P-11, op.1, spr.112, ark.31). Thus, a student of the Odessa Industrial Institute, V. Novikov, in his letter to the Dean, asked to help and bring back his brother N.P. Bulat, a student of the 4th year, as he was sent by the local party committee on July 14, 1933, from the village to the crop harvesting. But since the annual grain delivery plan was not implemented, the local party committee allowed for a part of the students to be left to work permanently: "I hope," V. Novikov wrote, "that the authorities of the institute will help him to get back and finish the studies." (DAOO, f.R126, op.1, spr.2, ark.8).

It is important to note that these students were not offered extensions or additional time to pass their examinations. After their mobilization to the village, even if it lasted a long period of time, the students returned to their year of studies and had to master all the disciplines individually. Exceptions to the rules occurred, but they were infrequent. For example, a student of the Kyiv Industrial Institute Drenov was indignant at the fact that two girls of the senior year of study, Jews by nationality, were enlisted in his group after the mobilization. He said that "this is their privilege as Jews" (TsDAHOU, f.7, op.1, spr.1079, ark.53). The emphasis was on the privileges that were said to exist for Jews. In reality, such exceptions to the rules did not depend on the nationality of the students but simply on anti-Semitic sentiments that were common at that time.

In addition, mobilized young people were often transferred to other places after the expiration of their term. Thus, the student of the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education Ivan Plakhtin wrote that he "was drowning in orders [...] and then almost became an authorized representative of the Central Committee and the regional committee of the CP(b)U on sowing, harvesting, collection of grain, breakouts in the Donbass, etc." (Plakhtin 1982:117). We also read in the memoirs of P.A.Gavryuk that he studied at the Literary Department of Kyiv State University, but, due to the order of Kyiv regional party committee, had various employments, in particular in the Shpolyansky district, where he worked in the MTS political department. Later, he wrote that he was proud to have participated in the strengthening of the collective farming system and that he passed his graduation exams at the university, together with his fellow-students while working in the village (Gavrjuk 1971:106).

The heads of higher education institutions, who initially enthusiastically ensured the party bodies and PCEs of the readiness of higher schools to participate in mobilization campaigns, later increasingly appealed to the party bodies and asked to return students, especially freshmen, since “staying out of school will not allow them to catch up with their comrades, who are studying.” This is evidenced by their letters to the authorities that have been preserved in the archives. Thus, the Director of Kherson Agricultural Institute Simonko, in response to the order for a new mobilization of the third-year students for the crop accounting for a month on June 16, 1933, asked the authorities to stop taking the young people out of classes because “implementation of the curriculum, the academic session, diploma works is disrupted” (TsDAHOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6451, ark.28).

Such requests, as a rule, remained unanswered. However, we have some data testifying that the senior management still agreed to return students to their educational institutions. Thus, on July 4, 1933, the Central Committee of the CP(b)U sent to all the regional committees a telegram signed by S.Kosior, which ordered: “Ensure the return of the students who are involved in the harvesting campaign, no later than August 20. Provide students with footwear, clothes and linen” (TsDAGOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6222, ark.57). Similar orders were made in the following year, which testifies to the continuation of the practice of using students’ labor in the agricultural work during the academic year. For example, on April 1, 1934, all secretaries of the regional committees sent a telegram signed by the secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)U.P. Postishev, which stated that “the Central Committee categorically binds, within two days, to return to studies all the students of Kharkov Institute of Mechanization, mobilized by the Central Committee as teachers of the courses, foremen, mechanics, tractor drivers, combine operators” (TsDAGOU, f.1, op.20, spr.6451, ark.16.).

After taking young people out of their classes, the authorities made them fulfil the work that the peasants refused to do.

“Not stuffy classrooms, lectures and theoretical formulas but an immediate facing of the class struggle – the struggle for bread, for new collective farms, for the Bolshevik sowing, organization of labor, shock working, social competition should become the laboratory of daily work of the student brigades in the country” (Miroshnik 1931).

The newspapers reported that “the best representatives of the proletarian students” went to villages “with songs, full of vivacity and Bolshevik enthusiasm.” It should be noted that the geography of the trips was wide and not limited to the closest villages nor to the oblast. For example, “65 best representatives of the proletarian

students of Kharkiv Institute of Mechanization and Electrification of Agriculture – 5 shock brigades of enthusiasts of the II Collective Farming Spring” were sent to the Melitopol district (Miroshnik 1931). It was possible to meet the representatives of other universities of Kharkiv in the Odessa region and Dnipropetrovsk region; the students from Odessa were sent to the Vinnitsa region, the Moldavian autonomous socialist Soviet republic, and so on.

Getting to distant areas was difficult. A student of the Kharkiv Institute of Vocational Education Ivan Plachtin, who was sent as an authorized representative to the sowing campaign in the village Prachi of the Globynsky district in the spring of 1932, recalled that he walked to this distant village over twenty minutes, for about twenty kilometers in mud, and even lost his soles (Plachtin 1982). The students of the Kharkiv Institute of Mechanization and Electrification of Agriculture walked 80 km to Kakhovka Machine-Tractor Station (MTS) because they had no money for transport (“Do tret'oi' bil'shovyc'koi' vesny” 1932).

Students were sent out to organize collective farms, to repair the equipment, to conduct cultural and educational activities among the peasantry (conversations, reading newspapers), to produce wall papers, breaking newspapers, and the like (Gladshtejn 1931). Even the students who came from villages did not have enough experience working in agriculture, but young people were forced to take on the work to avoid punishment. So, the secretary of the Globynsky District Party Committee said directly to Ivan Plakhtin: “I will either organize and conduct the spring sowing well or will be booted from the party” (Plachtin 1982:116).

Most of the students took on the physical work with enthusiasm. It was similar in almost all villages. Documents and even diaries say that the people worked joyfully, with songs and jokes. Thus, in Gurinovka the students repaired 40 drags, examined 30 seeding machines, repaired a locomobile, and collectivized all the horses of the village and shod them. They also completed the plan for collecting of the seed material by 100% (Radkevich 1930). In the Raygorodka village, the students purified and collected the storage seed fund, exceeding the district plan, repaired the collective farm remnant and acquainted the peasants with the plan of sowing. A lot of these facts can be provided.

The peasants who refused to work in collective farms were perceived by such party messengers as enemies. M.K.Sinkov, for example, noted in his diary an impression of his meeting with rural youth<sup>1</sup>:



“Some peasant boys appeared in the field, who lazily talked shaking seeds and looking at us. We asked them why they are not working and why in general, no peasants are present in the field, except the bosses. One of them replied: “You will work for us!” and the rest laughed. It was a laugh of an irreconcilable enemy, which caused a great indignation and hatred in me” (DAKhO, f.R6452, op.1, spr.5276, ark.159r).

Many students who participated in the aforementioned historical events believed in the necessity of collectivization by violent methods and sincerely hated the “kulaks” and other “class enemies,” as they were convinced in their institutes that “kulaks and their followers” operate in the villages (Shport 1991:8). At the time of the arrival of the brigade from Kharkiv Planning Institute of Consumer Cooperatives in Raygorodok of the Slovyansk district (February 1, 1931), 106 households (35.3%) out of 761 were organized into the village’s collective farm. According to the local newspaper, a month later, by March 1, 58% of the households had joined the collective farm (Kanevs'ki A. ta N. 1931). And the secretaries of the party and Komsomol committees of Raygorodok were accused of opportunist views for not noticing the great “kulak slogan”: “Collectivist, do you think that further development of the collective farm and your prosperity is possible? “ (Kanevs'ki A. ta N. 1931).

The results of the work were widely covered in the periodicals and the importance of this work was stressed constantly: “All this specifically indicates that the directive of the party on mobilizing students to the country has been fully justified” and “The more such people are sent the better the situation will be.” The articles pushed the youth to further participation in “shock combat work” (Miroshnik 1931).

It should be noted that the result of the work depended on many factors, including the ability to convincingly explain the task to the peasants and establishment of good relations with the local population. These relationships evolved differently. The aforementioned Ivan Plakhtin, who assembled a meeting of the collective farmers and talked about the need to sow spring cultures in a good time, was almost killed by women, who attacked him with a cry: “Beat the dumb chatterbox” (Plakhtin 1982:117). He lost consciousness as he was hit by a beater on his head. It saved him. The future writer recalled: “A beautiful high-handed widow, in order to somehow reclaim fault, mobilized the collective farmers, persuaded them to harness private cows into seeding machines and harrows. [...] They finished harvesting on time, and when young crops of spring wheat turned green, satisfying the eye the District Committee sent me back home with a gratitude” (Plakhtin 1982:117).

A student of the Kyiv Institute of Public Education and a future professor, Yu. Kobyletsky, had a similar incident in the village of Mudrivka near Chygyrin. He and other collective farming activists “were locked up in the village council by women, were guarded for several days and given only water to drink through the window but no meals. They yelled at [them] like nothing on earth: passionately, hysterically and partially” (Kobylec'kyj 1985:134,135). For some people, such cases were the adventures of their youth, but, for others, they ended tragically. For example, during an attempt to organize a collective farm, Anton Pidopryhora from Kyiv INO was killed (Kobylec'kyj 1985:138).

We cannot, unfortunately, answer the question of how often such cases occurred, nor show them as a percentage. There were the brigades of students who declared themselves shock workers and “ruthlessly fought the kulaks, introducing the party's general direction.” Such students of the Kharkiv Institute of Exchange and Distribution as Yakovlev, Lozhkin and Kozinets worked in Baranovo village in the Kharkiv region from February 3 to April 10, 1931 and called to look to the “best comrades – social activists” (K. 1931).

Fighting with “kulaks and their followers” was reported with special pride, especially during the Holodomor years. Reports from the Institutes give an idea of the scale of this work (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.148.). It is known that in some villages, students performed almost the entire task of seed material collection. For example, 40 students of Lubensky Institute of Social Education collected 90% of the seed material necessary for the decade of work 1933 in the Lubny district of the Poltava region during the spring of and “exposed the kulaks who maintained resistance” (Dobrovil'na 1933). These activists were particularly proud of the fact that in the village of Snityn they exposed “an armed gang headed by the Kotlyars (sons of a kulak),” and in the villages of Dukhovy, Kozaydentsy and Hyttsy found “the kulaks who organized the theft of a haycock from the collective farm field and the theft of horses” (Dobrovil'na 1933). The authorities of Mykolaiv Shipbuilding Mechanical Engineering College reported with pride that their students in the village of Slivino had “mobilized 96% of the seed material, organized the guard, repaired the agricultural remnant, organized the brigade of seeders,” and in the village of Vodopiy, “36 centers of concealed kulak's bread” were collected (“Raportuemo naslidkami bojovoï roboti” 1933). But Kharkiv Physical-Chemical-Mathematical Institute was disgraced by the fact that the “preparation for the spring was missed” – only 3.96% of seeds were collected in the village. One representative of the institute lived permanently in the village and two more came to help him, which caused a considerable concern of the party bodies (Voloshyna 1933).

Ego-documents help us to imagine what the Ukrainian village of 1932–1933 looked like, how the young people perceived it, and how they treated their work. Some people were “restrained by an oppressive silence.” A. Shport wrote in his memoirs that it was impossible to imagine a Ukrainian village without singing, noise, dog barking, cock screaming (Shport 1991:9). The most shocking display of oppressions is illustrated by the peasants who found the strength to go to work:

“It's hard to figure out if it is a young or an old woman, a teenager or a girl. All people had the same look and similar faces. The hunger made everybody equal ... What could one and a half or two dozen exhausted women do? They moved slowly and were frequently sitting on the rows of beets, abundantly covered with weeds” (Shport 1991:9).

According to the memoirs of L. Vysheslavsky, on the beet plantations the students were impressed by the fact that hungry people drank treacle, which was needed to catch an owl moth, picked up and ate ant eggs. And one of the students gave half of his ration to a girl swollen from starvation (Gonchar 2008:206).

At the same time, one could notice another lifestyle, namely, the way the local party elite lived. In the diary of Anton Komashka (former student I. Repin, a talented artist, director of the Kharkiv Art Institute), the everyday life of one of families such as the family of the Chairman of the Velyko Bogagachansky district financial department Nechytailo Fedor Sergeevich, is described in the smallest details. His family lived in the village of Zatin (now – Poltava region).

“Among typical peasant buildings there was a new house of Nechitaylo covered with gray tiles. Inside the house – an amazing piece of the holiday. The ground floor is covered with fresh grass. The aroma of grass, in snow-white embroidered towels, in a red wooden sofa along the entire wall – all these made a sweet coziness, which reminded a folk poetry. But new things were also embedded: a telephone, a radio, portraits of Lenin, Stalin and Shevchenko. As a final chord, there was a bouquet of red dahlias on a table, on a clean tablecloth” (TsDAMLM U, f.290, op.1, spr.139, ark.10).

But most of all the artist was struck by the beauty of the young lady, Maria Ivanovna, the wife of Nechitaylo! And though his task was to create a gallery of local collective farmers, he wrote a portrait of this woman too. In the diary he noted: “In my mind, I expressed my surprise in such a way: here it is, the work of the life itself, so perfectly composed. Young, healthy, beautiful Ukrainian woman, tanned, with brown, lively, red lips with a smile, dimples on her cheeks ... smart, playing eyes” (TsDAMLM U, f.290, op.1, spr.139, ark.11). What a contrast it was with the portraits of Ukrainian peasants who lost their minds or died of hunger in

polluted, dirty huts! Or to the portraits of women of the collective farms, who used the rest of their energy to go and work in the field.

The eye of the artist captures and describes the differences in the nutrition of the collective farmers and their leaders. Here are some descriptions:

“August 5. I traveled on a horse cart to the fields. I made 5 sketches of the best collective farmers, men and women. ... One of the collective farmers asked us: “When will you stop feeding us with this dung, hell with them. Have you shown them to our managers? “ And the woman who was driving the horse cart told me that she was swollen, when she worked collecting beets.”

Another story: “When I was making sketches of mowers, during the break for breakfast one of them said showing a cookie: “A good household owner will never feed a dog with such a thing. But the dog will never eat it, it will just smell it and go away. Well, you know, it is stuck in the throat here (he showed on the chest) “ (TsDAMLM U, f.290, op.1, spr.139, ark.9). There was quite a lot food in the house of the already mentioned F. Nechitaylo: .. we found a full table of snacks, bottles, and all was crowned by fried fishes (breams, crucians, pikes). If in my life I had occasions of a wonderful pastime, that day and evening I believe to be the most outstanding. What a cheerful talk, full of folk says and paradoxes. And how Maria Ivanivna was laughing! ... In a warm, starry Ukrainian night, we returned in a horse cart to Velyka Bagachka. Potapenko's booming laughter expanded in the meadows, in the dark, among the dewy, fragrant herbs and the river Psyol” (TsDAMLM U, f.290, op.1, spr.139, ark.11). It was laughing at the time when most of the people had forgotten what a laugh was.

The artist assumed that his diary would be read sooner or later. This is evidenced by many details, in particular, the way he carefully copied the letters of I. Repin with a high appreciation of his work to the new notebook. A. Komashka was a convinced Communist as well as many other artists of that time, he often fulfilling the tasks on propaganda. Adding to the gallery of shock workers of the Velikobogachansky district the representatives of the local party nomenclature and the members of their families (as many as 33 portraits were made), the artist tried to convey the contrast of the everyday life of different categories of villagers and inform future generations. He did the same thing in his diary. These are brilliant strokes to the portrait of a Ukrainian village in the summer of 1933.

**How many students appeared to be prepared for such work? Could all be able to fulfil the tasks of collection of grain for the State grain stockpile, despite**

## **suffering and desperation of the peasants? How did they live with this burden later?**

It should be noted, firstly, that the reports of the institutes emphasize the shock work of students and teachers in the villages. Particular emphasis was given to the voluntariness of this work, for example, in the summer of 1933, when colleges of universities declared themselves mobilized for the harvesting campaign for a month. They were proud of the fact that “there was a hard work without a break in the conditions [and of the] absence of food and water during the day” (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.148, ark.105).

Along with the praises to the authorities, in the reports “the enemies” of the socialist construction have traditionally been exposed. Not all of them, of course, but a few, to show the vigilance of the party committees. The documents talk about the state of the peasants in the students' environment, teachers' statements, and jokes. They are similar to those that could be heard everywhere. For example, the Nizhyn Institute of Social Education reported that among students the question was discussed: “When will Stalin die?” Common statements were: “The party's decisions are nonsense, nothing good will happen as the result,” “Stalin and the leaders do nothing, there are no achievements,” “People are dying so that there are not enough planks for coffins to bury,” “What can be said about the construction of socialism, when people die,” “How can you study if you are hungry?” And the student Strikun shared an anecdote: “When a horse, a donkey and an ox came to Petrovsky to get help, only the donkey got it, because only its relatives are sitting in the government – only donkeys” (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.148, ark.60).

Similar conversations were recorded at higher educational establishments in other regions: “The village now needs material, financial help, sending people to the villages will not help,” “Collective farms mess up because the peasants were forced to go there.” (TsDAGO U, f.1, op.20, spr. 5558, ark.104).

The category of silent protests included the refusals to write reports on work in the villages. For example, a student of Zhytomyr Institute of Social Education Dashkul, on demand, to submit such a report, said: “What can I write about? –The way in which peasants die from hunger in the countryside?” (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.148, ark.105).

Several key strategies for mobilizing young people can be determined:

1. D.Goichenko, who in his student years had to be a collectivizer and a worker on grain collection, wrote that only the greatest rascals or completely blinded fanatics could remain indifferent to such crimes.

Apparently, a significant part of the youth belonged to the category of fanatics. Therefore, the usual feelings of pity or shame, were suppressed, according to Lev Kopelev, by precisely “rationalist fanaticism.” The sources of this fanaticism were political, stemming from all sorts of meetings, in which the party resolutions and the speeches of the leaders of the state were worked out. The students were called to “show that they fulfilled the tasks assigned to them with honor” in a variety of campaigns, and they proved their loyalty (“Studenti razom z kolgospnikami zbirajut' vrozhaj” 1933). They were ready for “an irreconcilable struggle for implementing the party's general line against the right mavericks and against the left wingers.” They were convinced that “a delay with the haymaking and thrashing is a kulak’s maneuver aimed at breaking up the haymaking and thrashing” (K-dent 1933).

Yet, according to Kopelev, “the more persuasive were those people who embodied in my eyes, our truth and our justice, those who confirmed by their lives that it is necessary, setting their teeth and locking the heart, to do all that the Party and Soviet power commanded to do” (Kopelev 2010:259).

2. Refusals of trips to villages and the so-called “desertion” from the sowing front were demonstrated by both teachers and students.

For example, when the brigade was organized to eliminate the “breakthrough” in the village of Prykolotne of the Velykoburlutsky district in Kharkiv Geodetic Institute “there were the Komsomol members, who spoke a lot about the village, were considered activists, but refused to go ...” (“Dezertyry zaznaly porazky” 1933:3). As a rule, students motivated their refusal by the fact that they did not want to lag behind in their academic studies.

The teachers who were not members of the party refused to go for economic and political campaigns, as they believed these events to be an affair for the Communists. For example, a staff member of Uman Institute for Social Education, Burstein, did not go to the village twice, noticing: “Collection of grain is an affair for the Communists, let them go to the village” (TsDAVOU, f.166, op.11, spr.148, ark.21). However, Communists also refused to be mobilized and escaped from the villages. For example, a student of Odessa Milling Institute Abram Finkelshtein, who was sent to Golovanivsky district for organization of cultural and propaganda

work, having received another assignment, refused to work. Referring to the illness and the need to complete studies, he simply escaped from the village. (DAOO, f.11, op.1, spr.108, ark.76).

Those who could get a variety of references (Shport 1991:8). The student Shilina asked to give her a telegram from her hometown having the following content: “Ira, immediately come home, Troshka is passing away” (K-dent 1933). It was noted that this case was not an isolated one. The head of a student brigade, created at Dnipropetrovsk Railway-building Institute of Transport Engineers for harvesting Amelin, “brought students to the station, but then returned home with some leaders and, as the result, broke up the labor campaign, because they were some other people, who also deserted from the labor camp, looking at the leaders” (M.K. 1932).

Desertion was particularly wide spread during the Holodomor, even among the students who were party members. The party organizations began to ring the alarm, noting that if all the deserters were expelled from the party, no party members would be left in the party organizations. Markin, the secretary of the district party organization of the village of Krivoe Ozero, Odesa region, asked to give him instructions on the punishment of deserters, “since now the tendency to escape from the area is gaining in mass character, no educational effect can help and we cannot exclude such a great number of people from the party” (DAOO, f.11, op.1, spr.108, ark.79).

3. While staying in the villages, the students often did not want to put up with the plans of excessive collection of grain for the state grain stockpile. Therefore, for example, they tried to prove to the supreme state leadership the unreality of such plans.

So, a fourth year student of Kharkiv Engineering and Economics Institute Soroka who was mobilized to the village of Tarasivka of the Troitsky district (now Luhansk region), where he stayed from 9 September to 28 December 1932, wrote a report to the Central Committee of the party. In this report, he tried to prove the unrealistic expectations of the grain collection plan, which resulted in the economic base of the village being undermined. The Central Committee, in turn, concluded that the student had a “kulak’s mood” and regarded the “class struggle with kulaks” as undermining the economic base of Tarasivka. (DAKhO, f.1148, op.7, spr.62, ark.1). A student of Chervonohrad agrotechnical institute, a member of the LKSMU Bureau P. Dneprovsky, who was sent for the collection of grain, was impressed by the situation of the peasants, and wrote a letter to the LKSMU,

where he expressed his opinion concerning “the badness of the general line of the party in the execution of the grain collection policy.” For this letter he was expelled from the Komsomol and the high educational establishment with a deprivation of the right to enter higher schools for three years (Teruk 1933:32).

4. They made themselves insane.

For example, as it was outlined in the memorandum, the nine party members out of the “300” students mobilized in the Krivoozersky district, “imitated insanity.” So, student Waltz's initially came into work, to later petition that he was ill and should be absolved from working in the region, pretending that he can do nothing, remembers nothing, can understand nothing, simulates to be stupid.” And the student Prostota resorted to other tricks:

“Once he came to the dining room and in the presence of a huge number of people, he took off his boots and began to trim the nails on his legs, or gets into a big mire and is wandering in it, or standing in the street turning to all sides, laughing at people unfamiliar to him. [...] They were wandering around the city for days and discredited the party organization by their actions.” (DAOO, f.11, op.1, spr.108, ark.79).

It was also noted that such anti-party actions were made also by a number of party members.

5. Some students, unable to withstand the psychological load, expressed their protest against grain collection by committing suicide.

In a memorandum addressed to the secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)U, Stasnislav Kosior, a series of students’ suicides was reported, among them that of Oleksandr Grebenyuk. On December 28, 1932, after the meeting, he said that it would be difficult for him to cope with the tasks set before him, that in general he did not know agriculture, and the conditions of work at MTS are unfamiliar for him. The next day he was found shot in an apartment house of the MTS (TsDAGO U, f.1, op.20, spr. 6395, ark.22). The student Mushynsky, who was an authorized person in the village of Sosovka, Zinovievsky District cut his throat with a knife. Shortly before, he was saying: “We are finishing to harvest, and we still have to transport 5500 centers, of which 2000 are centers of wheat, and where I can get this wheat, I do not know” (TsDAGO U, f.1, op.20, spr. 6395, ark.20).

As we can see, not all the students could stand hardening by hatred and cruelty. P. Grigorenko and V. Bogdan reported about such activists who lost their illusions.



“In these conditions, I cannot live any more. If they will not take me back, I'll kill myself ...” – said a student of Kharkiv Engineering and Construction Institute Y. Zlochevsky, when in 1933 he was once again sent to grain collection (Grygorenko 2007:96). The commissions investigating suicide cases explained these actions by the fact that mobilization into the village caused confusion, fear, frustration. Sometimes the conclusions were tougher. Savitsky L.M., for example, was accused of being “meshed in the kulak nettings, dropped the general line of the party, lost courage in front of the class enemy ...,” so he shot himself (TsDAGO U, f.1, op.20, spr. 6395, ark.47). Not being able to withstand the totalitarian system, people voluntarily died and attempted at least to attract the attention of the general public to the true state of things in the society by their suicides. There is no need to speak about the impact of these cases on the system itself.

As a rule, such cases were considered by the directorate and public organizations of the institutes. They could deprive students of their diploma and scholarships and they could refer the case to the public prosecution office. In Kherson Cotton Production Institute, named after O.D. Tsyuryupa during the grain collection period of 1931-32, eight students with a “kulak ideology” were found and excluded from the institute (DAOO, f.11, op.1, spr.95, ark.69). The same number of students was excluded from Lubensky Institute of Social Education for “malicious non-fulfillment of grain collection” and one more student – for a connection with the kulaks. The thoughts that students came to study, and not to do a public work, were exposed and condemned (TsDAVO U, f.166, op.11, spr.148, ark.134).

Sometimes the students were outraged by such a decision and appealed to the authorities with requests to bring them back to the institutes. For example, V. Chorny, who refused to go for six months as a secretary of the collective farm “because he is not familiar with this activities and is still young (born in 1915, the term of service in KSM is 1 year),” complained in a letter to V.P. Zatonky: “It is enough for me to get a party punishment. Why have you expelled me from the technical school?” (TsDAVO U, f.166, op.11, spr.331, ark.28).

Those who were not excluded were evicted from the hostel and deprived of ration cards, without which it was simply impossible to survive. In addition, in the periodicals, appeals to the students appeared, which called “to cover the names of the deserters of the sowing front with a black spot of the proletarian shame” (R-k 1933:3).

Thus, the analysis of the students’ participation in collectivization, sowing, collection of grain and crop harvesting campaigns shows their significant role in

carrying out these activities. The high school was transformed into an inexhaustible source of a constant supply for local Soviet structures and for replenishing the brigades of collectivists and liquidators of numerous gaps (in the terminology of that time – “breakthroughs”) of Soviet construction. It is no coincidence that the students called themselves “a cork, which is used to stop all the holes.” If we consider the problem from this point of view, the purpose of a significant increase in the number of higher educational establishments in the Ukrainian SSR in the early 1930s becomes clear. For example, in 1929 there were only 38 institutes, but in 1933, the republic had 190 institutions of higher education and an increased number of the students therein. No one was going to keep such a great amount of young people in institutes for a long time, providing them with a thorough education. It is not surprising that not all newly created institutions were provided with premises, equipment, and teaching staff with appropriate qualifications, nor that the students were not always provided with scholarships, hostels and meals. A detailed analysis of these issues was carried out in my monograph (Rjabchenko 2012). Educational processes with a systematic “political training” and a party pressing influence on the students' consciousness and behavior were designed to include them in the political struggle and mobilization campaigns. Therefore, it is not surprising that such missionaries had to “be vigilant and irreconcilable to enemy propaganda”; they undoubtedly organized collective farms, sought and took away the hidden grains, and expropriated adults and children. Generally, they supplemented the party constraint with the elements of “natural self-development” in those segments of the everyday life transformation, where the traditional society maintained the most conservative resistance.

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