

France, Germany and Austria Facing the famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine

by

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It is not a question here to tell what was the famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine but to wonder about the reactions to this dramatic event in three countries of Western or central Europe, France, Germany and Austria. Who knew what? What was the attitude of the authorities and the feeling of the opinion? The reactions were different in these three countries. How to explain it? The political and cultural background, even religious, of these three countries helps to better understand it and this is why we will treat successively reactions in these three countries.

I - Badly Informed French

The French public opinion is very badly informed of what was happening then in Ukraine. The French government had some indirect information at their disposal, nevertheless it was not incomplete nor distorted. It is known that the Soviet authorities put all their attention into concealing the famine. The borders of Ukraine are closely guarded by the army and the customs authorities are reinforced. When foreigners end up obtaining authorization to travel through Ukraine by train, they are supervised and the windows of the coaches are made opaque so that they do not see the corpses, starving peasants and the abandoned fields along the route. Alternatively these trains travelled by night. Any rumour of famine is vigorously contradicted by the Soviets who only agree to recognize some local difficulties of supply. The Soviet newspapers do not mention any famine. Moreover, massive Soviet corn exports are contradictory and make the rumours of a famine seem absurd. It should be noted that the Soviet Union needs foreign currencies to get from Germany and the United States in particular, the powerful machines essential to its industrialization and to the achievement of the objectives of the five-year plan.

Unlike Germany or Italy, France does not have any diplomatic representation, or even any consulate in Ukraine. It is the embassy of Moscow which informs the government about what occurs in all the Soviet Union. Thus

Dejean very early on communicates the rumours of famine to the Quay of Orsay which are circulating within the informed sources of Moscow but they remained naturally vague because they were only from brief and indirect information. Andre François-Poncet, the Berlin ambassador, also communicates what was heard from Berlin authorized sources on the famine in Soviet Union. (1) There is much wonderment at the Quay of Orsay, if these rumours are not exaggerated because the rapid industrialisation of the country undoubtedly gives a contrary impression. In addition the news services and the French newspapers do not have any permanent correspondent in Ukraine and no French reporter thinks of venturing in Ukraine during the months of the famine. Whereas the British Malcolm Muggeridge (2) and Gareth Jones, them, did not hesitate to do this and write scathing articles. As for the resident French journalists or those reporting from Moscow, they hesitate to give a report on the alarming noises which they hear: they could not check on the spot, they do not want to be expelled from the Soviet Union like their English colleague from The Daily Express, Mrs Rhea Clyman, who had to leave the country, specifically for having in an article published on November 15, 1932, spoken about the famine and criticized the Soviet regime. Moreover the Parisian compilers/editors do not want to publish heavily severe articles on the Soviet Union for fear of any reprisals. The self-censorship constitutes an effective barrier to the propagation of information.

The rumours of famine however became increasingly insistent. In January 1933 the monthly review *Le Monde Slave* [Slavic World] (3), published in Paris by the Alcan bookshop, studies "the famine in the USSR and its consequences." The famine is especially attributed to the economic errors of the regime but the extent of its consequences is pointed out. But it is a review with a confidential circulation, so that is only read by specialists. In the same way, February 11, 1933, in the review *Le Travailleur* [The Worker], Boris Souvarine, a refuge in France, publishes an article entitled "Stalin famine" where he announces "a true famine in the south of the USSR" amongst a long criticism of a speech by Stalin. Here too the circulation remains confidential.

It is the daily newspaper *Le Matin*, which is the first in France to publish on August 29 & 30, 1933, a great report on the distress of the Ukrainian population. This work is the work of a woman, Suzanne Bertillon, who travelled often to the USSR and become aware of the problem of suppressed nationalities under Soviet power. She reproduces the testimony of an American country-woman originally from Ukraine, Martha Stebalo, on return from a trip to

her native land. Suzanne Bertillon also analyzes the reasons of this tragedy: "the Ukraine is under exclusive sovereignty of Moscow and against her will under the communist regime. Moreover, to reduce to nothing all the partisan elements which the Soviet government systematically organized the appalling famine which currently prevails in the hope definitively destroying a whole people whose only fault was to aspire for freedom. The famine is confined to Ukraine and in the North Caucasus; in the other parts of the USSR, the population is rationed but can be fed."

Le Petit Marseillais of August 30 publishes an article by Robert de Beauplan who suggests that "the appalling famine which devastates the Ukraine" and adds: "This famine is due mainly to the will of the Soviets, who seek by this means to punish the Ukraine for their long national resistance. The history of Ukraine and the red terror which prevails there is one of most lamentable of the post-war period..." Emile Buré a little later covered in the columns of *L'Ordre* (9) in two scathing articles from Charles de Peyret-Chappuis who paints a frightening picture of the situation in Ukraine. He gives the example of villages, which lost 80% their inhabitants. He mentions some desperate revolutionary movements of peasants concluding: "time has unfortunately passed, when an insurrection of brave bands and armed with false hopes who at one time could have swayed power over organized troops."

We are no longer at the heroic days of the Polish insurrection of 1830: a century had passed, bringing to mankind – a clearer civilization for which it is proud – but some new and more insurmountable means of destruction. What can the hopeless courage of the Ukrainian peasants do against the aviation of the [a patriotic Soviet youth (aviation and ballooning) organisation?] "Ossoaviachim," their suffocating gases, with regular regiments coming from Moscow? The sacrifice of these plucky people makes no other sense than that of a last protest, raised against the most intolerable of tyrannies; it is not only that the indifference of the world renders their actions entirely worthless, that their material hardships added to their own poverty through their personal convictions and that they remain alone and unaware that public opinion ignores their fate."

Other newspapers devote articles and notes on the Ukraine disaster with much caution but mention the issue, like *Le Temps* and *Le Figaro* in France. But many others, and not of least, keep silent or provide information by adding Soviet denials to it. The newspapers publishing the principal documents on the

matter being generally politically positioned on the right, most political leaders and intellectuals do not want to take this information seriously. In spite of the rather significant circulation of some of these publications, one does not feel it amounted to a deep indignation in public opinion, an opinion was very worried then by the problems involved in the Western economic crisis and arrival of the Nazis to power in Germany.

A 54-page document, admirable of precision and clearness is published, in Brussels, by the European Federation of Ukrainians abroad, in October 1933. Written in French, it is also intended to French readers. This small volume is entitled *Famine in Ukraine (its horrors, its causes and its effects)*. It is sold "to the benefit of the famished in Ukraine." The title shows that its authors understood well that the famine is not due to a general disorganization of the Soviet Union. The cover shows a map of the west of the Soviet Union which distinguishes the areas from intense famine (Ukraine and areas of high Ukrainian settlement) and the areas of food shortage (in the south of Russia in particular). A synthesis of twenty-eight pages, remarkable in precision, documented well and is rich in references, presents the various aspects of the Ukrainian tragedy, the sequence of official measures which led to the tragedy, as well as the immediate and foreseeable consequences of the famine. The political causes of the famine are clearly indicated, in particular in part of the development entitled "*the famine is like a form of terror.*" One reads in particular: "As the opponents (to Communism) in Ukraine are counted in millions, a general famine was necessary to subdue them". The famine, for the authors of the document, "is thus directed initially against the most rebellious population, those most opposed to Communism, against the Ukrainian population." Then, on six pages, of the letters from famished and some eye witnessed accounts are published. The testimonies published in Ukrainian newspapers of Western Ukraine are also quoted: *Tchass* (newspaper published with *Czeniwcı*), *Dilo and Novy Tchass* (two newspapers of Lvov). Then the text of nine appeals coming from religious personalities, Ukrainian associations or groups like the Congress of Nationalities and the international female Organizations are reproduced; all call for a mobilization in favour of hungry Ukrainians. This small volume did not cause a ripple [of interest] and the most recent historical research confirms all the significant points pointed out in this publication. Since 1933, complete and precise information on the famine and its significances is thus available. But it is read in France only by one small number of people who, for the majority, were interested already in the Ukraine before the famine erupted.

These reactions are however sufficiently numerous to worry the Communist Internationale. Obligated by its statutes, it must all implement to defend the "fatherland of socialism" and thus, the Stalinist regime. In France like elsewhere, the Communists hasten to defend the USSR. Closely related to the USSR, installed with the head of the PCF by the will of Stalin and his close relations, the French communist leaders show fidelity without fault with the Soviet regime, even if some of them endeavour to think of a communist route more adapted to French realities (4).

The use of the articles of Paul Valliant-Courtourier illustrates this route, Communist deputy and mayor of Villejuif, protégé of Maurice Thorez, chief writer of *l'Humanité*, Paul Valliant-Courtourier stayed for nine months in the USSR in 1932. He had already gone there in 1921, 1925 and 1927. From this fourth trip he brings back a vast report about all glorious Soviet achievements, full of enthusiasm for the Plan and the Soviet "new man". Let us quote an extract from the account of his trip in the Ukrainian countryside:

"Kozlov, the old kolkhoz man, speaks: "it only went well since we able to remove the kulaks. Here, there was of them one who had been able to take the control of the kolkhoz... By agreement with the former kulaks, he threatened people who did not enter the kolkhoz with enthusiasm. Comrade Stalin's letter arrived and we expelled the kulak. Then the kulaks set fire to the harvest, they killed a Komsomol. We made them stop, one night. Today, almost everyone is kolkhozian and works happily..."

"Look, comrade", said the woman while turning around. She opens a large draw and I see before me a veritable bread mountain.

One does not see that in the capitalist countries!

- The bourgeoisie press and social-fascists say that the government has starved you to organize the dumping of corn.

- You tell your own [French] peasants that they are being lied to! Also say to the workmen of France that if they are hungry, we will send our bread to them."

One could quote several reports and texts of this nature published then in the communist press. Behind the apparent objectivity of the traveller who is allowed to speak with his hosts, 'Manichaeism' is the rule, all the charges carried against the USSR are systematically refuted and of course the victims are not met. In another, one notes the total indifference to the fate of the

"kulak", who beforehand had been demonised. Repression is minimized and presented like a simple response to a threat of plot. What became of this kulak? What does one know of his family? What does one know of him? Nothing. At a certain time he ceases to exist in the village. The universal defence of human rights is quietly forgotten. And many of the intellectuals of left are then satisfied this type of explanation.

Accounts and articles written by Paul Valliant-Courturier during nine months of his trip in the USSR during first five-year plan are published in the month that follows his return by the 'Bureau d'éditions' of Paris, which is related to the communist movement, in the form of three volumes gathered under a general title: *Builders of the new life*. The first volume relates to the "*fields of corn and the oil fields*", the second is a discovery of the "*country of Tamerlan*", the third and the last is devoted to the industrial areas. It is of course the first volume, which mentions the situation of the Ukrainian peasants. These volumes are not alone in their kind. The same Bureau d'éditions' publishes in 1934 (5) a work of Leon Moussignac entitled *I return from Ukraine*. Leon Moussignac is associated with books about the glory of Communism and the Stalinist Soviet Union. Everyday in 1934, the same editor prints a personal text by Stanislas Kossior: *The Soviet national policy in Ukraine*. Named by Stalin secretary-general of the Communist Party in Ukraine, Kossior supervises the commandeering and police searches from the outset of the famine. It is really difficult to be more closely associated by these Soviet arguments. But the Communists are not alone to plead the cause of the Soviet Union.

That same year on the return from his trip to Ukraine, Edouard Herriot publishes through another editor, a book entitled *The East where it savagely denies the reality of a famine in 1932-1933 in Ukraine*. However, at same time, no book is published in France to tell and explain the famine in Ukraine. Was the lack of Information due to the travel restrictions imposed on the most critical foreign journalists? The famine in Ukraine does not appear to inspire the most savage French anti-communists. They do not take support nor mention this tragedy so as to renew their arguments. Admittedly the famine in the USSR is mentioned in certain anti-communists posters at the beginning of the Thirties or in some articles, but never it is not a dominating topic. The French anti-communists books of this period preferred to mention the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks and the crimes of the Leninist period, anti-religious persecutions, the deportations of kulaks, and later measures of terror and the great purges. The famine is seen more as a sign of failure of the Collectivisation that a crime

deliberately organized by the powers that be to bring to an end its toughest adversaries. However in 1933, published in Paris, France, by the editor of *Maisonneuve*, was a true history of Ukraine in 300 pages, under the title '*The Life of People in the Ukraine.*' If it was published during the year of the famine, the work was thought out and conceived before this tragedy does erupted. The author, Roger Tisserand, is a specialist at Dijon University in Flaubert and Théophile Gautier. However interestingly, in the history of intercultural relations, the work of Roger Tisserand is not used as a means of bringing awareness to the reality of the Ukrainian famine of 1932-1933.

The Soviet authorities also take care to carefully chaperone the distinguished visitors who travel through the country, even if they are not communist. The official travel agency, Intourist, reports directly to the GPU. Intourist adapts to each foreigner, regulating the administrative problems and materials throughout the stay, placing interpreters and guides at the disposal of the Westerners and especially determines the itinerary to its own liking. Visits to factories, dams, model kolkhozes, crèches or giant cities are arranged everyday, with some sightseeing being arranged in the evening for those that wish it. The meals are generous, the comfortable hotel rooms, the kindness shown all the time. As Fred Kupferman wrote in his book, which he devoted to the French visitors to the USSR during the inter-war period, "the visit turns into a demonstration. Those who came singing the laurels with certainty came back from there satisfied." (6) But there is also that which USSR does not show... A favourite of Tsarina Catherine II, Potemkin had installed in the Crimean countryside some theatrical stage sets which readily passed for authentic houses and villages during the visit in 1787 by Catherine II, the emperor of Austria Joseph II and the king of Poland, Stanislas Poniatowski. Peasants in festive costume came to meet their famous visitors who were thus deceived. The trick of Potemkin passed into posterity and the expression of a "Potemkin village" with it. The Bolsheviks took up this method again for themselves at the beginning of the Thirties.

The height of manipulation is reached during a visit carried out between August 26 and September 9, 1933, by Edouard Herriot in Ukraine. Famous for being a radical party leader and mayor of Lyon, he had until a few months before been head of the government of France. Deeply hostile to Marxism, he wished that France established relations with the Soviet state. He had already completed a trip to the USSR at the beginning of the Twenties and the start of NEP but he well knew that the country since changed and that rumours of

famine were circulating. This is why he wanted to go to the area in order to make a more "objective" judgement. He largely tells of his trip in Ukraine in the book *the East*, published little after his return. Disembarking at Tchitchérine in Odessa, Herriot settles in the comfortable and ultramodern Hotel London, built primarily for the foreigners, vis-à-vis the sea. He then crosses the country but it is always carefully orchestrated by official representatives charged officially to answer his questions but in fact attentive to guide his visit.

In Kiev, he discovers a bustling and busy city, which seems to abound in foodstuffs of all kinds. Witnesses like the American trade unionist Harry Lang and his wife, reported much later what had really occurred (7). The day before, the population must clean the streets, wash them and decorate the houses. The corpses all are removed, beggars, famished and homeless children are stopped and mysteriously disappear. Queues are prohibited in front of the stores and at distribution points. The windows are on the other hand filled with food of all kinds whose purchase by the population is rigorously forbidden. Shipped in from a roundabouts, some people get ready to play the role of a "festival crowd." Militiamen on horseback even parade at the crossroads, with white ribbons in bunches on their horses. The hotel where Herriot stays is refurnished and the personnel fitted out in new uniforms. Herriot is enchanted by his visit and the following day everything is repeated in Kiev: queues, corpses... The same scenario reproduces in Kharkov where Herriot visits a model children's' camp, the Shevchenko museum, a factory of tractors, and takes hearty meal with the communist authorities.

But the rumours of famine but especially in the countryside persist. Herriot wants thus to go in collective farms and to visit some villages(8). There too actors were sent to play the role of smiling peasants. The ambassador from France in Moscow who accompanies Herriot during his trip, shares his enthusiasm. Herriot is satisfied with his trip. He then declares to the press that there is not a famine in Ukraine, that he did not see any trace of it, and it shows adversaries of the Soviet Union are spreading the rumour. "When one believes that the Ukraine is devastated by famine, allow me to shrug my shoulders," he declares. September 13 *Pravda* is able to write that Herriot "*categorically contradicted the lies of the bourgeoisie press in connection with a famine in the USSR.*" The Soviets are satisfied, that they fully achieved their goal. Admittedly protests are heard in France, and a newspaper like *L'Ordre* vigorously takes Herriot to task, by stating that "unconsciousness is confined to the odious". Nevertheless the French public opinion is disturbed for Herriot is

not at all Marxist (9). When a communist journalist denies the famine, it is hardly believed. When the matter comes from an adversary of the Communism who went there, it carries more weight.

Does Herriot believe what he says? How could he have noticed nothing during his journey through the countryside? His zeal to deny the famine in Ukraine and to speak in praise of the Soviet Union led some to wonder whether he did not lie, if he did not behave deliberately influenced by Soviet politics. Moreover the question was insistently put to Pierre Cot, a young radical Aviation Minister of the Daladier Cabinet and who also shared the trip in the Soviet Union in September 1933, with the aim of Franco-Soviet detente. No document or file for the moment makes it possible to say. Perhaps Herriot estimates it that with the rise of the Nazism in Germany a détente with Stalin's USSR is for France absolutely vital, even at the price of the denial of the famine in Ukraine.

Because paradoxically, it is at the time of the great famine that the USSR starts to be largely perceived like a possible friend of peace, or like an useful output for the maintenance of peace. With the rise of the Nazism then the arrival of Hitler to the power, the search for an ally in the East of Europe is seen as more pressing for the French diplomacy and a detente with the USSR is outlined. Herriot, then Barthou and even Laval work in this direction. The Western democracies do not dare to mention the fate of the populations persecuted by fear to cut all the bridges with the Kremlin and to see Germany benefiting from it. Far from standing accused, the Stalinist USSR is on the contrary allowed to join the League of the Nations as of September 18, 1934. In addition, the propaganda campaigns of the Comintern and its skilful satellite organizations to attract naive "fellow travellers" show their effects. In France, the devotion of the militant communist alongside the working-class families in the suburbs forces greater respect. And, vis-a-vis in the Nazi Germany, the Stalinist USSR sets itself as an adversary of Fascism, a possible ally of the democracies, in short as a friend of peace (10). The French writers Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland organize an international congress in Amsterdam on August 27 and 28 1932 "against the imperial war" and for peace. A world Committee to fight against the war sets itself up and a second congress is organized on the format of the precedent from the 4 to June 6, 1933 at Pleyel Hall in Paris. With the arrival of Hitler to the power in Germany, the congress wants this time to be "against the war and Fascism." International

networks of intellectuals are set up, in the mobility of what one soon becomes known as the "Amsterdam-Pleyel Committee". In fact, since the beginning, a Comintern propagandist, Willi Münzenberg co-ordinates the operation so as to gather together, a covert struggle against Fascism and the war, of the many and influential intellectuals, including and especially outside of the communist movement so that they take up again the topic of international politics of the USSR who was also seeking to abandon its diplomatic isolation and become a friend of peace to these intellectuals of which good number become then of faithful fellow travellers of the Communists (11).

If the USSR works for peace between the European countries and fights the warmongering Nazis and fascists, how could it tolerate a famine in its own territory and even more to organize it? What can weigh testimonies of the Ukrainian victims of the famine vis-a-vis such quiet certainty? What democrat can refuse to get along with those who state to make antifascism their engagement priority of the moment? Münzenberg is an expert of propaganda... And especially, let us repeat once again, the famine in Ukraine coincides with the arrival of Hitler to power and the installation of his regime. Western Europeans, and in particular the French, worry rightly. The events in Germany have almost immediate effects over the situation of France in Europe and, in the long term, on the life of the French. It is not really the case of the famine in Ukraine and the events, which had happened in Soviet Union. Under these conditions, the French as their European neighbours somewhat forsake the Soviet news for a better following of what is taking place in Germany in the years 1932 and 1933.

II- Germany: an interested silence and a selective indignation

The examination of the files confirms that the English, Italian and German governments were remarkably informed about the famine, of its extent and its evolution. The Italian diplomats, in station in Kharkov (12) (the consul Sergio Gradenigo), Odessa and Novorossijk in 1932 and 1933 address reports of a remarkable quality. Germany of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi regime also know precisely what occurs in Ukraine (13). But the German governments remain silent. Andor Hencke is then a consul from Germany in Kiev (14). He and his family witness the horrors of the famine. During this time the Soviet newspapers affirm that there is a famine in Germany. Deeply shocked, Mrs Hencke one day leaves the embassy, in spite of prohibitions, and leaves the city to take photographs of the corpses of the dead people from hunger. One

finds some everywhere, on the step of the doors, on the corner of the streets. Carts collect them each morning. And everywhere the people beg.

Conscious of the danger, the Soviet authorities take care thereafter to categorically prohibit more photographs and to destroy the negatives already taken, which does not prevent the Hencke family from keeping the ones they had taken. Johann von Herwath is young attaché with the embassy from Germany in Moscow in 1932 and he protests ahead of the silence of the democratic Weimar government vis-a-vis the tragedy. Other young members of the embassy consider that Germany should suspend all its ties with Stalin's Soviet Union who commits such crimes. The reports/ratios sent to Berlin are thus, throughout the period, precise and overpowering. The government answers that Germany must already face a terrible unemployment, which touches six million people, and which if the delivery of German manufactured goods in the USSR is suspended, this number of unemployed is still likely to increase. Democratic Germany thus chooses to keep silent. A few weeks later, Hitler is in power. He also keeps silent. He does not incorporate the famine in Ukraine in his anticommunist propaganda. He does not give explicit reason to this silence but this attitude can be understood. Hitler clearly indicated, in his book, "Mein Kampf", which he wished for an expansion of Germany towards the East of Europe and the Ukraine is part of this "Living space" (Lebensraum).

The death of millions reduced the Ukrainians of much of the power to defend themselves vis-a-vis a German attack. Hitler must moreover even consolidate his power in Germany, and he must still wait a few months before taking great initiatives of foreign policy. He is on the point of provoking the French and the British and he does not want immediately to stand up to Stalin directly. On the other hand he observes the master of the Kremlin and undoubtedly meditates on the power to silently exterminate, almost secretly and by general indifference of the democracies, of the million human beings.

At the beginning of the year 1933, German evangelic churches receive thousands of letters sent by co-religionists living in the German republic of the Volga who also suffer from the famine. These descendants of peasants arrived in the XVIII^e century indeed kept ties with their country of origin. It would be necessary to study how these letters were able to leave the USSR. German newspapers publish some of these letters. The German evangelic churches, then sent speedy aid to these communities, which let it be known that there the death toll of the famine was less devastating than elsewhere (15). Moreover

the control of the Soviet authorities is then less Draconian near these populations. The villagers can, for example, more easily leave their village than Ukrainians.

Many aspects of this file need to be cleared up. Worried by the fate of the Germans in the Volga and by the consequences of the arrival of Hitler to power in Germany, the German Christians hardly have time to think of The Ukrainian crisis. At the end of a few months at the indignation of its population and charitable initiatives by certain groups Hitlerian pragmatism prevailed. "the famine in Russia" (one speaks about "Russia" rather than of "Ukraine") and the "distress of the Volga Germans" become recurring topics in the German press during the summer 1933. Upsetting photographs of victims of the hunger often accompany the articles. The Nazi benefited from these articles of denouncing the failures of Stalin and the communist regime which enabled Hitler to further overpower the German Communists. But the Nazis took care not to abuse the Soviet authorities. A demonstration planned for July 7, 1933 in Berlin is finally cancelled because the Soviet embassy threatens Germany to organize counter-demonstrations in Moscow.

It is later that Nazi publications more specifically mention the famine in Ukraine. In a collective book published in 1937 in 'Nibelungen' editions under the direction of A. Laubenheimer, "*And You See the Soviets in a True Light*", German witnesses precisely describe in several chapters, what they saw in a starving Ukraine of 1932-1933. The observations are exact and the horror of the situation is not exaggerated. But from the beginning it is a piece of propaganda and its testimonies are in line with the comments and thoughts, which follow all the doctrines of national-Socialist ideology. The responsibility for the famine is allotted to the Jews as much as in the Communists, Hitler and his doctrines are presented like the only possible fortifications against the Soviet threats. The matter of the famine is only one pretext, the true goal of the editor and of the authors is elsewhere: they prepare their readers with a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union and want to sow their hatred of the Jews of Eastern Europe. One wonders how many readers of this type of work were among those who exterminated so many Ukrainian Jews during the Second World War?

III - Austria: the initiative of Archbishop Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna

In Austria, the government, like so many others, remains officially discrete. But the most significant religious authority of the country, Cardinal Innitzer mobilizes a certain part of public opinion in favour of the starving Ukrainians. The bishops of the Greek-catholic Ukrainian Church have just launched on July 24, 1933, an emotional appeal. A few days later, Cardinal Innitzer, archbishop of Vienna, in turn appeals to the public and sets up a solid campaign.

Then 57 years old, a Doctor of Divinity, this former professor of commentary from a modest family in the north of Bohemia was appointed archbishop of Vienna September 1932 and was created cardinal in March 1933, during the leadership period of the Austrian government by the Christian-socialist chancellor Dollfuss. Innitzer follows with much attention the political affairs and the news, and for a few months in 1929, he was the Minister for the social affairs in the Schober government, in particular voting for a significant law in favour of the elderly victims of inflation. Like Monseigneur Seipel during the Twenties, he estimates that the catholic clergy must intervene actively in the life of the Austrian society, by directing the public opinion, warning it against certain dangers, while working with the governing Christian socialists who were inspired by the principles of Christianity. By speaking in the public debates, by challenging public opinion, he thus continues a well-established clerical tradition in Austria; but attentive to the changes in the modern world he goes further. He thus starts by addressing a message in these terms (16):

"At the time when the civilized world finds itself faced with a serious responsibility, there is more than ever a pressing need to appeal to the public for charity. No denial can hide the fact that hundreds of thousands even millions of people have perished by hunger in the USSR during these last months. The hundreds of moving letters coming from the famished areas in the USSR, mainly in the Ukraine and the North Caucasus, just as the accounts of reliable eyewitnesses, describe the terrifying details of the tragedy which is currently occurring in the USSR. I draw here the special attention to the call of Métropolitaine André Szeptycky and the Episcopate of Galicia who have recounted in a moving way the terrifying torments undergone by the Ukrainian population. In the same way, the eyewitness, the English Gareth Jones affirms that in certain areas of the USSR, a quarter of the population perished by the hunger. The Secretary-general of the Congress of Nationalities of Europe, Doctor Ewald Ammende, published a memorandum which establishes, while being based on authentic information coming from various mediums, of multiple nationalities composing the USSR, that the terrible famine decimates the Russians,

Ukrainians and other people of the USSR. The author formulates the proposal to come to assistance of the waning population of the USSR...

To remain silent itself on this subject, worsens the already large responsibility of widespread deaths taking place in the USSR, on the civilized world, guilt-ridden as in certain parts of the world, the surplus of cereals and other foodstuffs are destroyed at the time when the population of the USSR perishes by the famine, leading to the murder of children and cannibalism.

In the name of the eternal law and future love, I raise my voice in front of the whole world and especially in front of the world organizations, which serve the cause of humanity and justice. Before it is not too late, it is necessary to undertake to help thousands of human beings threatened of the famine in the USSR while placing this work above the national and denominational divergences. This call is addressed first of all to the International Red Cross and its sections in various countries. It is also addressed to all the authorities which currently consider the development of the economic relations with the USSR; that they bases their negotiations on the needs of various parts of the USSR and impose on the government of the USSR a humane stipulation which would guarantee the satisfaction of the vital needs for the population.

With an aim of starting a campaign of aid in Vienna, I will soon invite the representatives of various denominational groups to constitute the assistance Committee. Before it is not too late, raise yourself to a common and fraternal action. God wants it! "

The cardinal intends to start a tangible action and he sets up an inter-denominational committee of assistance intended to bring aid to the victims. It is a question in theory of helping the famished populations of the whole of the USSR, but it is clear that the Ukraine, Kuban and the North Caucasus f are the most affected areas. The office contains thirteen members of the principal religious communities, represented by ecclesiastics or eminent and symbolic personalities, classified alphabetically, which avoided the quarrels of precedence (17).

That the step is resolutely modern. The cardinal chairs the committee, assisted of R. Mitloehner. Chief rabbi Feuchtwang represents the Israelite community. The congregation of the Armenian church (rev. Habozian), the orthodox Rumanian church (rev. Jancovski), the Eastern Serb church (rev.

Stojakovic), the evangelic church (rev. Eric Stoeckl), the Eastern Greek church (prof Xiruchakis), also Doctor Kiss, was representative of Hungarian communities. The committee translates also the diversity of the catholic world of Eastern Europe: the rév. Père Skwierawski represents the Polish catholics Prof Karlicky the Czech catholics and the rév. Hornykewytsch the Ukrainians catholics, the Uniates, defenders of their orthodox brethren with whom, however, the relations had been difficult over a long time. Such a denominational diversity is very rare at the beginning of the Thirties in Central Europe. Tragic and exceptional events putting in danger the lives of million innocent explain this coming together. In addition, the secretary-General, the key man on the committee, Doctor Ewald Ammende, is of Lutheran religion.

Ewald Ammende (18) is 40 years old in 1933. a Baltic German, he grew up and studied in Riga where his father was a shopkeeper. A political thesis on the economics of the corn trade led him to cross the Tsarist Empire on the eve of the First World War. With the Russian revolution and especially after the civil war [of 1921], he endeavoured to plead the cause of the civil populations threatened by the famine and to bring aid to them through the columns of the newspaper *Rigasche Rundschau*. He set up an international and inter-denominational committee, alerted Nansen and the SDN (league of Nations), and went to Moscow. One knows that Lenin finally accepted the European and North-American aid, however directing his distribution by ensuring for example that the Ukraine is not initially helped. Ammende was then the tireless lawyer of the European minorities. In 1931, he had published, as a matter of fact in Vienna, a 568-page book entitled '*Nationalities in the European States*', a studied work starting from the established reports by the delegates of the minorities present at the European congress of nationalities organized each year in Geneva, close to the head office of the SDN (League of Nations). Ammende was indeed the principal organizer of these congresses. Undoubtedly, he is one of the best-informed men about life in the USSR and Eastern Europe at the beginning of the Thirties and also one of the men able to urgently conclude a mammoth operation of humanitarian aid. Innitzer knows it and he noticed the letter of Ammende published on June 26, 1933 in the large Viennese newspaper *Reichspost*. The Comintern also notes that Reichspost publishes his very precise information on the famine. Then the Soviets deny everything and seeks to discredit the newspaper. *Pravda* of July 20, 1933 shows the Austrian newspaper, "to have declared that million of Soviet citizens in the area of the Volga, Ukraine and the North Caucasus had died of hunger. This vulgar accusation, this nauseating invention was concocted by the writers

of *Reichspost* to divert the attention from their worker's difficult times and hopeless lives they lead." The tone is set. But Innitzer and Ammende are not intimidated.

The two men meet. They are admirably suited. Innitzer launches his appeal; the interdenominational committee is in place by October 1933. It is already too late, the famine already killed millions of people, but on December 16, and 17, 1933 a European conference convenes under the presidency of the cardinal of all the organizations concerned by the charity for Soviet people. The Soviets continue to make denials and, in *Pravda* of December 19, 1933, Kalinin declares: "Some dishonest politicians propose to help the starving in Ukraine... Only the most decadent classes can come up with such cynical bare bones." The Comintern is wary, it is a question of him of diverting European public opinion and of discrediting the charitable initiatives for the starving people.

The Red Cross, made requests, but answered that it is impossible for them to intervene without the assent of the government concerned. However the Soviet government denies the existence of the famine and quotes peasants who loftily turn down the aid. Help is nevertheless sent, but the convoys are not authorized to cross the border... Indeed, the authorities and Soviet Red Cross find this aid ineffective. Aid is actually sent but it is not possible to cross the Soviet border. Doctor Ammende helps, but is impotent in the tragedy: "the Germans of Bessarabia (the houses and people on Russian river bank could easily be seen on the other side of Dniestr) saw their friends and brothers who died of hunger in the Soviet territory. The Germans had a surplus of grain, fruits and other food. In the summer 1933, they prepared 20 carriages filled with grain to place at the disposal of a charitable organization for their fellow-citizens on other side of the border. In vain, their assistance was declined."
(19)

Some parcels of food are nevertheless secretly delivered, thanks especially to the committee of Ukrainian assistance in Lviv, but the aid which arrived on the spot is dramatically insufficient in comparison with the needs.

In addition, in the autumn 1933, by suspending the commandeering of food, Stalin puts to an end the famine policy in Ukraine and in the neighbouring regions. He achieved his goal; he had broken the people, whom he considered were not submissive enough. Months passed before the peasants can adequately feed themselves. The committees of assistance continue to

function, but they are completely isolated. In 1934, Ammende publishes in Vienna, thanks to the support of the cardinal, a book on the famine in the USSR. In 1936, an English version is published in London under the title *Human life in Russia*. (20) The book goes unnoticed, it remains completely unknown by the French-speaking public and it was never translated into French. Furthermore, Ammende dies soon after, on April 15, 1936.

The USSR, was allowed to join the SDN (League of Nations) in September 1934. Perhaps this situation explains why the Innitzer cardinal had a moment of madness in March 1938, when he gives his support to Hitler, a few hours after Anschluss, however it was a very temporary support, which he quickly withdraws and thus merits him hatred by the Nazis.

In spite of the rumours of food shortage and difficulties of supply in Soviet Union, a majority of Europeans is not aware of the extent of the tragedy which the Ukraine saw in 1932-1933. It is very marked in France. Contradictory information on the Soviet Union is a distraction, whereas the arrival of Hitler to the capacity in Germany attracts greater attention, superseding for some time news of the second [5-year] plan of the USSR. Being well informed, the German governments keep silent, both under Weimar republic as it does under Hitler. The Protestant churches are concerned with fate of the Germans in the Volga but the most tangible initiatives and the most daring are in favour of the starving Ukrainians come from the Cardinal Innitzer, Archbishop of Vienna, who manages to mobilize efforts outside catholic circles, at the same setting a precedent for 'oecumenism' (Inter-denominational cooperation) and which would later become known as "the duty of interference."

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Notes

- 1 - Consultable correspondences in Paris, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- 2 - To find the text of Malcolm Muggeridge and to discover more about his reports:

MUGGERIDGE Malcolm, articles in *Manchester Guardian* 25, 27 and 29 March 1933; reprinted in *The Ukrainian Review*, vol XXVII, n°2, 1979

MUGGERIDGE Malcolm, *Winter in Moscow*, Boston, Little Brown, 1934

MUGGERIDGE Malcolm, *Chronicles of Wasted Time*, New York, William Morrow, 1973

3 - The review *Le monde slave* [Slavic World] regularly publishes articles on "the famine in the USSR" in 1933 and at the beginning of 1934:

B.X., "Famine in the USSR and its consequences", *Le monde slave*, 1, January 1933

VOSTOKOV P., "L'URSS en 1932", *Le monde slave*, January 1933

TIMASAEV, "La famine en URSS", *Le monde slave*, September 1933

B.X., "La récolte en URSS en 1933", *Le monde slave*, September 1933

VOSTOKOV P., "L'URSS en 1933", *Le monde slave*, January 1934

4 - WOLIKOW Serge, *Le Parti communiste français et l'Internationale communiste (1925-1933)*, thesis of contemporary history at the university of Paris VIII, 1990

5 – In her thesis, Sophie Coeuré draw up the list of all the books on the USSR published in France during the Thirties

COEURE Sophie, *Images de la Russie soviétique dans la culture politique française (1919-1936)*, thesis of contemporary history at the university of Paris X, 1995

6 - KUPFERMAN Fred, *Au pays des soviets. Le voyage français en Union soviétique (1917-1930)*, Gallimard-Archives, collection Archives, 1979

7 - LANG L.R., *Tomorrow is beautiful*, New York, 1948

8 – In the chapter entitled "*In Ukraine*"

9 - On Herriot, consulted:

BERSTEIN Serge, *Edouard Herriot ou la République en personne*, Presses de la FNSP, 1985

10 - SANTAMARIA Yves, *Le Parti communiste français dans la lutte pour la paix (1932-1936)*, historical thesis, 1991

11 - CAUTE David, *Les compagnons de route, 1917-1968*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1973

Also consulted:

Dossier W. Münzenberg", *Communisme*, 1994, n° 38-39

12 – Testimony from Italian Consul in Kharkov, Sergio Gradenigo, cited in:

GRAZIOSI Andrea, "Lettres de Kharkov: la famine en Ukraine et dans le Caucase du Nord à travers les rapports des diplomates italiens, 1932-1934", *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XXX (1-2), janvier-juin 1989

13 - ZLEPKO D., *Der ukrainische Hunger-Holocaust*, Verlag Helmut Wild, Sonnenbühl, 1988; they are documents extracted the files from the German ministry from the Foreign Affairs

14 - Testimony in two forms:

HENCKE Andor, *Errinerungen als deutscher Konsul in Kiew in den Jahren 1933-1936*, München, Ukrainische Freie Universität, 1979, Varia n°12

NOWYTSKI S.-LUHOVY Y., *Harvest of despair*, a 55 minute Canadian film-documentary from in Montreal in 1984 (in English) This film tells the famine and calls on many witnesses. A version (or rather a translation) French was carried out under the title *Sanglantes moissons*

15 - On the other hand, it is during the second world war that these German populations of the Volga will suffer badly and will massively be off-set.

16 - Complete text in:

Fédération Européenne des Ukrainiens à l'étranger, *La famine en Ukraine*, Bruxelles, 1933: [European federation of Ukrainians abroad, the famine in Ukraine, Brussels, 1933]

17- We could consult copies of booklets, lists and extremely interesting new documents on this operation in the files which accompany the specimen in the Final report deposited at the University by Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium).

18- Idem

19 - Idem

20 - The testimony of Ewald Ammende was not published in French but in German and English:

AMMENDE Dr Ewald, *Muss Russland hungern? Menschen und Völkerschicksale in der Sowietunion*, Vienne, W. Braumüller, 1935

AMMENDE Dr Ewald, *Human life in Russia*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1936

(republished in 1984 with text of James Mace by the foundation for the commemoration of the famine of Montreal and the University of Harvard.)

“Famine Losses in Ukraine in 1932 to 1933 within the Context of the Soviet Union.” In *Famines in European Economic History: The Last Great European Famines Reconsidered*, edited by Curran, Declan, Luciuk, Lubomyr and Newby, Andrew G., 192–223. New York: Routledge. Simchenko, Yuriy B. 1990. *Perepis 1939 goda: Dokumentalnye istochniki* [1939 Census: Documentary Sources]. Parts 1–15. Moscow: Institute of Ethnology and Ethnic Anthropology, USSR Academy of Sciences. The famine of 1932–1933 was officially denied, so any discourse on this issue was classified as criminal "anti-Soviet propaganda" until Perestroika. The results of the 1937 census were kept secret as they revealed the demographic losses attributable to the Great Famine. The Soviet Union in 1933 and thus revoked the United States' official recognition of an independent Ukraine.^[35] A similar position was taken by the French Prime Minister Edouard Herriot, who toured the territory of Ukraine during his stay in the Soviet Union. Other Western journalists, however, did report on the famine at the time, including Malcolm Muggeridge and Gareth Jones, who both severely criticised Duranty's account and were later banned from returning to the Soviet Union.^[36]