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## Методологія, історіографія та джерелознавство аграрної історії

### Methodology, historiography and source studies of agrarian history

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### COVERAGE OF THE HOLODOMOR OF 1932-1933 IN UKRAINE IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING MEDIA AS AN ANTIDOTE TO THE SOVIET DISINFORMATION POLICY

**Abstract. The purpose of the article.** The author of the article aims to investigate the methods used by the Soviet government, particularly through contemporary media, to suppress information about the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine. Additionally, the article seeks to illuminate how English-language mass media countered the spread of Soviet disinformation regarding the Holodomor in Ukraine.

**The scientific novelty.** The previous issue of reflecting objective facts about the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine in English-language media, as well as the mechanisms of Soviet propaganda to suppress information about the Holodomor, has been explored in the works of A. Kozyskyi, V. Gudz, A. Mikheiev, and other researchers. Most studies by these scholars focus either on describing the events or on Soviet disinformation policies in general. Our study focuses on specific methods through which English-language media countered Soviet disinformation, analyzing specific articles, reports, and testimonies of journalists, while also considering specific examples of disinformation spread in Soviet media.

**Conclusions.** Seeking to control information about the famine in Ukraine, the Soviet government prevented foreign journalists from freely accessing the affected areas to conceal the scale of the famine and prevent international outcry. Soviet media reacted to reports in foreign mass media by attempting to refute information about the famine in the USSR and portray it as an anti-Soviet smear campaign to discredit Western sources. Despite active disinformation efforts by the Soviet government, truthful accounts of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine began appearing in the foreign press due to witnesses, journalists, diplomats, politicians, and public figures from Western countries. Newspapers such as «The Guardian», «The New York Times», «New York Herald Tribune», «Daily Telegraph», and others regularly reported on the unprecedented famine in Ukraine. Publications by G. Jones and M. Muggeridge sustained international interest in the Ukrainian situation and kept the issue of famine in the forefront of global public opinion, making it more difficult for the Soviet authorities to conceal the truth.

**Key words:** Holodomor, mass media, genocide, English-language mass media, USSR, «Guardian», «Chicago Daily News».

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# ВИСВІТЛЕННЯ ГОЛОДОМОРУ 1932-1933 РР. В АНГЛОМОВНИХ ЗМІ ЯК ПРОТИДІЯ РАДЯНСЬКІЙ ПОЛІТИЦІ ДЕЗІНФОРМАЦІЇ

**Анотація. Мета статті.** Автор статті ставить за мету з'ясувати методи замовчування інформацію щодо Голодомору 1932—1933 рр. в Україні радянською владою, зокрема тогочасними ЗМІ, та висвітлити механізми того, як англомовні мас-медіа протидіяли розповсюдженню радянської дезінформації про Голодомор 1932—1933 рр. в Україні.

**Наукова новизна.** Попередньо питання відображення об'єктивних фактів про Голодомор 1932—1933 рр. в Україні в англомовних ЗМІ, а також механізми радянської пропаганди щодо замовчування Голодомору було розкрито у працях А. Козицького, В. Гудзя, А. Міхеєва та інших дослідників. Більшість досліджень фокусуються згаданих науковців на описі подій або на радянській дезінформаційній політиці в цілому. Наше дослідження фокусується на конкретних способах, якими англомовні ЗМІ протидіяли радянській дезінформації, аналізуючи конкретні статті, репортажі та свідчення журналістів, а також бере до уваги конкретні приклади розповсюдження дезінформації у радянських ЗМІ.

**Висновки.** Прагнучи контролювати інформацію про голод в Україні, радянська влада запобігала вільному доступу іноземних журналістів до місць подій, щоб приховати масштаби голоду і запобігти розголошу. Радянські ЗМІ намагалися спростувати інформацію про голод в СРСР і представляти її як антирадянську наклепницьку кампанію, щоб дискредитувати західні джерела. Незважаючи на активне проведення політики дезінформації радянською владою, правдиві свідчення про Голодомор 1932—1933 рр. в Україні почали з'являтися в іноземній пресі завдяки свідкам, журналістам, дипломатам, політичним і громадським діячам із західних країн. Газети «The Guardian», «The New York Times», «New York Herald Tribune», «Daily Telegraph» та інші регулярно повідомляли про небувалий голод в Україні. Публікації Г. Джонса та М. Маггеріджа підтримували міжнародний інтерес до ситуації в Україні і допомагали утримувати питання голоду в полі зору світової громадськості, що робило важче для радянської влади приховувати правду.

**Ключові слова:** Голодомор, мас-медіа, геноцид, англомовні ЗМІ, СРСР, «Guardian», «Chicago Daily News».

## Problem statement.

It is generally recognized that the Holodomor of 1932–1933 was caused by various factors, but primarily by the deliberate policy of the Soviet authorities of forced collectivization and grain requisition. Millions of Ukrainians became victims of the Holodomor of 1932–1933, and its consequences are still felt in the history of the people to this day. Outside of Ukraine, English-language publications played a key role in shaping the international understanding of this tragedy, highlighting the relevancy of our topic.

The analysis of recent studies and publications shows that the issue of reflecting objective facts about the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine in English-language media, as well as the mechanisms of Soviet propaganda regarding the silencing of the Holodomor, has been addressed in the works of A. Kozitskyi, V. Gudza, A. Mikheiev, and other researchers. At the same time, a more detailed analysis is needed of how journalists of English-language media countered Soviet propaganda in European countries and exposed the truth about the Holodomor, thereby counteracting Soviet efforts to hide the scale of the genocide and influence international public opinion. Most studies by the mentioned scholars focus on describing events or on Soviet disinformation policy in general. Our study focuses on specific ways in which English-language media countered Soviet disinformation by analyzing specific articles, reports, and testimonies of journalists, as well as taking into account specific examples of the spread of disinformation in Soviet media.

## The purpose of the article.

The author of the article aims to determine how English–language media countered Soviet disinformation regarding the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine.

## The statement of the basic material.

English-language publications in mass media played a significant role in revealing objective information about the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine to the international community, creating a platform for Ukrainian voices that were silenced by Soviet censorship. Through detailed investigations and the publication of personal testimonies, these publications highlighted the human suffering and loss of life caused by the policies of forced collectivization and grain requisition implemented under I. Stalin's directive. By amplifying the voices of witnesses, they effectively



countered Soviet attempts to minimize or deny the existence of the famine and expose the suffering of the Ukrainian people to the world; these publications mobilized support for aid and diplomatic pressure on the USSR. They questioned the legitimacy of Soviet authority and exposed the brutality of its regime. Journalists from English-language media, such as Malcolm Muggeridge and Gareth Jones, did everything possible to uncover the truth about the Holodomor so that the victims of the genocide would not be forgotten.

The portrayal of the Holodomor in English-language media was challenging. For example, in his research, A. Kozyskyi revealed details of how Soviet propaganda attempted to undermine the credibility of reports on the famine, labeling them as anti-Soviet propaganda or exaggerations. Additionally, geopolitical circumstances sometimes influenced coverage, as Western countries considered their response to the famine in the context of their diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

For a long time, it was believed that the Soviet government began taking measures to strengthen control over the dissemination of information about the famine in the affected regions only after Western countries published the first reports on this issue in the USSR, particularly in Ukraine. However, the first measures to maintain secrecy about the Holodomor were taken by the Bolsheviks in the summer and fall of 1932, before the Western press started writing about it<sup>1</sup>. For example, in July 1932, Politburo members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, V. Molotov and L. Kaganovich, sent a telegram to I. Stalin, expressing the necessity of keeping information about the famine strictly secret: «At the Ukrainian conference, there should be criticism of the work of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, whose shortcomings have led to a difficult situation in some areas. The question arises as to how to cover this in the press. In order not to provide fodder for the foreign press, we consider it necessary to present this criticism in our press in restrained tones without publishing facts about the situation in the problematic areas»<sup>2</sup>.

The Soviet authorities used local media as a propaganda mechanism to deny or conceal the fact of the famine in Ukraine during 1932–1933. For example, in the newspaper «Izvestia» (issue 261, 1932), in an article by L. Moskvин titled «About the Liars and Provocateurs from the Bourgeois Camp» it was reported that the Canadian correspondent Rhea Clyman, who was in Moscow, was «expelled from Russia» and criticized as a «bourgeois troublemaker». The article primarily cited a resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU: «The correspondent of the «Daily Express» Clyman should be expelled from the USSR within two days for clearly slanderous and provocative, completely fabricated information about the USSR (an article about the «nationalization of women» in a Canadian magazine, an article about «uprisings and hunger riots» in the USSR in the «Daily Express»), which aimed at maliciously discrediting the USSR in the eyes of public opinion»<sup>3</sup>.

The article criticized Rhea Clyman for several alleged journalistic violations, particularly citing articles published in the London newspaper «Daily Express» in late August and early September. These articles included several of her stories describing a trip to the Soviet Far North, which she undertook that summer. The editorial criticized Clyman, accusing Western reports of politically motivated lies and falsifications, falsely claiming that she had only been in Moscow for a few months, even though officials knew she had been living there since late 1928. It was suggested that the journalist aimed to discredit Soviet achievements. Thus, by using local media as a propaganda tool, Soviet authorities tried to deny or conceal the fact of the famine in Ukraine in 1932–1933 to maintain the USSR's positive image on the international stage. By criticizing Western correspondents, the Soviet authorities aimed to show that any negative reports about the USSR were false and politically motivated, thereby undermining trust in Western media.

In addition to responding to journalists' reports, Soviet media were also used as a platform to react to foreign media reports, distorting the information presented in them to their advantage. For example, a TASS material published in the newspaper «Tikhookeanskaya Zvezda» under the headline «The Austrian Press Spreads Vile Anti-Soviet Slander» directly mentions the famine in certain

1 Козицький А. Велика брехня. Методи, нарративи та динаміка заперечення Голодомору. Харків. 2023. С. 82.

2 Так само. С. 82.

3 Москвин. Л. О лжецах и провокаторах из лагеря буржуазии. Известия. 1931. 261.



regions of the USSR: «The Austrian official «Reichspost» contains an article under the headline «Mass Death Marches Through Russia». The article, signed by the Secretary General of the Congress of National Minorities, Amendi, states that millions of Soviet citizens in the Volga, Ukraine, and North Caucasus regions have died from hunger»<sup>4</sup>. However, this information is immediately disputed, and instead of refuting the information about the famine in the USSR, Soviet correspondents focus on the fact that it is not Soviet people but Austrian citizens who are actually suffering from hunger: «It is not surprising that the leader of the Austrian Social Democrats, Otto Bauer, had to declare at a trade union congress: «All working youth and all workers» children are in the most dangerous condition due to severe malnutrition. An entire nation is threatened with physical and moral extinction. Dog and cat meat is what Austrian fascists feed the starving, unemployed masses. To top it off, the fascist kitchen adds malicious and brazen anti-Soviet slander»<sup>5</sup>. As a result, Soviet propaganda aimed to strengthen internal support among USSR citizens by emphasizing the troubles and suffering in other countries, convincing them of the advantages of the Soviet system, and distracting them from internal problems.

Another example of the Soviet government's policy of spreading disinformation was inviting foreign politicians to the country to show them a pre-prepared positive picture of what was happening in the country. For instance, the visit of French Prime Minister Édouard Herriot was specially prepared to demonstrate the successful development of trade, industry, and agriculture in the cities of Ukraine (Kyiv, Odesa, Dnipro, etc.) that he visited. His visit was thoroughly described in the newspaper «Izvestia» in the article «Report of the Special Correspondent of «Izvestia» «Herriot in Kharkiv» from August 29, 1933, which noted: «Regarding the first acquaintance with collective farm construction in the USSR, the guests noted the enormous impression made on them by the richest harvest. For example, the «Krasnii Luch» collective farm already gave them the impression of a quite prosperous peasant collective, which particularly impressed the guests, as the rich harvest this year had not yet been realized by the collective farmers. Recalling all that was said and written in France about the decline of Soviet cities and the poverty of Soviet peasants; the guests noted that their first impression of visiting Right-bank Ukraine showed that French public opinion is often misled about the true state of affairs in the Soviet Union and, in particular, in Ukraine»<sup>6</sup>.

The authors of this article used Édouard Herriot's comments to demonstrate to Soviet readers or potential readers from abroad that the situation in Ukraine did not match reports about famine. In this way, they spread false information about the true situation in the regions of Ukraine that were suffering from famine.

Another method of spreading disinformation by the Soviet authorities was the use of foreign journalists to write articles that would refute information about the famine in Ukraine. One of the journalists and writers who actively denied the reports of the famine in Ukraine was Louis Fischer, a correspondent for the American newspaper «The Nation», who was also known as a supporter of communism. During October–November 1932, Louis Fischer traveled through Ukraine and wrote several articles for his newspaper in which he denied the existence of the famine. At the beginning of 1933, he delivered a series of lectures in Oklahoma and California as part of a campaign aimed at preparing U.S. public opinion for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Moscow<sup>7</sup>. In his speeches, Louis Fischer claimed that there was no famine tragedy in the USSR and that the food problems were merely the result of the industrialization processes that had begun in the USSR. He asserted that the main culprits of these problems were «counter-revolutionary saboteurs»<sup>8</sup>.

In 1934, at the invitation of the Soviet government, Louis Fischer visited Ukraine again and stated that he had not noticed any famine or its consequences there<sup>9</sup>. In the second half of 1930s,

4 Австрийская печать распространяет гнусную антисоветскую клевету. Тихоокеанская звезда. 1933. 160 (2440). С. 4.

5 Так само. С. 4.

6 Гарри А. Сообщение специального корреспондента «Известий» «Французские гости поражены успехами строительства в Советской Украине». Голод в СССР 1929-1934. Том 3. Лето 1933 - 1934 гг. 2011. С. 546-547.

7 Козицкий А. Велика брехня. Методи, наративи та динаміка заперечення Голодомору. Харків. 2023. С. 87.

8 Так само. С. 87.

9 Так само. С. 87.





he wrote several articles in which he denied the famine of 1932–1933, claiming that there were only minor food problems in Ukraine. By inviting foreign journalists to write articles denying the existence of the famine in Ukraine, Soviet authorities created an alternative reality and convinced the international community that there was no tragedy.

On the other hand, during the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine, despite the USSR's attempts to silence the scale of the tragedy, objective information about the Holodomor reached Western audiences. Overall, the world began to learn about the 1932–1933 Holodomor thanks to eyewitnesses, journalists, diplomats, and political and public figures from Western countries. Information about this began to appear in the press even before 1933. Newspapers such as «The Guardian», «The New York Times», «New York Herald Tribune», «Daily Telegraph» and others regularly reported through their correspondents in Moscow, government officials, and appeals from the Ukrainian political diaspora about the unprecedented famine in Ukraine and the Kuban<sup>10</sup>. For example, Ewald Ammende, the General Secretary of the European Congress of Nationalities of the League of Nations and the honorary secretary of the Interconfessional and International Committee for Aid to Starving Regions of Russia informed the public about the dire situation of the starving in Ukraine in the conservative London newspaper «The Times»<sup>11</sup>. In 1935, his book about the famine in Ukraine was published and was reissued in English in 1936. It had a positive impact on the further study of the catastrophic situation that had developed in the Ukrainian countryside in 1933<sup>12</sup>.

In February 1933, correspondents Walter Stoneman from the «Chicago Daily News» and Ralph Barnes from the «New York Herald Tribune» traveled from Moscow to the North Caucasus, attempting to objectively assess the truthfulness of reports about famine in that region. There, the journalists were arrested and forcibly sent back to the Soviet capital<sup>13</sup>. As a result, on February 23, 1933, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) adopted a resolution «On the travel of foreign correspondents across the USSR». According to the document, foreign journalists could only travel within the USSR and stay in designated places with permission from the Main Directorate of the Police. Foreign reporters were strictly prohibited from visiting famine-affected areas<sup>14</sup>.

According to A. Mikheyev's research, «Reaction of the English-speaking world on the Holodomor 1932–1933 in Soviet Ukraine», foreign journalists attempted to accurately depict the horrific conditions in which the starving population was living in<sup>15</sup>. Their reports caused outrage and concern among the global public, depicting the true picture of the tragedy that Stalin's regime attempted to conceal. For instance, Malcolm Muggeridge's journey to Ukraine in the 1930s played a crucial role in exposing the massive famine in the region. Unlike the carefully orchestrated visits of foreign politicians by the Soviet government, independent journalists sought to visit more remote regions away from regional centers and described the real situation on the ground. Muggeridge's reports, published in a series of articles in «The Guardian» in March 1933, significantly expanded the understanding of the scale of the famine and its victims in Ukraine during 1932–1933 in the English-speaking world.

In his article «Exposing Stalin's famine in Ukraine», Muggeridge presented clear facts demonstrating that the population of the Ukrainian SSR indeed suffered from famine, thereby refuting the reports of Soviet media and authorities regarding the absence of famine. «Some of the people in the crowd were holding fragments of food, inconsiderable fragments that in the ordinary way a housewife would throw away or give to the cat. Others were examining these fragments of food. Every now and then an exchange took place. «Hunger» was the word I heard most. Peasants begged a lift on the train from one station to another, sometimes their bodies swollen up – a

10 Гудзь В. Початковий етап дослідження історії Голодомору в Україні. *Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія». Серія «Історичні науки».*

11 Так само. С. 238/

12 Так само. С. 238

13 Козицький А. Велика брехня. Методи, нарративи та динаміка заперечення Голодомору. Харків. 2023. С. 84.

14 Так само. С. 84.

15 Mikheyev A. Reaction of the English-speaking world on the Holodomor 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine. *European philosophical and historical discourse.* 2022. 8, P. 26-32.



disagreeable sight – from lack of food»<sup>16</sup>. Muggeridge also noted clear signs of the artificiality of the famine suffered by the peasants: «Otherwise, it was the same story – cattle and horses dead; fields neglected: meagre harvest despite moderately good climatic conditions; all the grain that was produced taken by the government; now no bread at all, no bread anywhere, nothing much else either; despair and bewilderment. Ukraine was before the Revolution one of the world's great wheat-producing areas, and even Communists admit that its population, including the poor peasants, enjoyed a tolerably comfortable standard of life»<sup>17</sup>.

Malcolm Muggeridge's presence in the Ukrainian SSR during his journey allowed him to personally witness the horrific conditions and suffering of the population during the Holodomor in 1932–1933 in Ukraine. As an eyewitness, he provided additional credibility to his reports, making it difficult for readers to dismiss his accounts as mere speculation or propaganda. His materials, such as the article «Deliberate famine in Russia» for «The Guardian», exposed Soviet denial of the famine and emphasized the incompetence of local Soviet leadership: «The Communist directors were sometimes incompetent or corrupt; the agronomes were in many cases a failure».<sup>18</sup> At that time, the Soviet government actively concealed information about the scale of the crisis. In England, Malcolm Muggeridge's articles raised significant doubts, as many found it difficult to accept the reality of such horrific events. However, Muggeridge's articles provided undeniable evidence of the severity of the famine, challenging the official Soviet narrative.

Another English-speaking witness to the tragic events of the 1932–1933 Holodomor in Ukraine was Gareth Jones, a journalist from Wales. Motivated by a determination to obtain firsthand information about the food crisis in Ukraine, Jones embarked on a trip to the Soviet Union. In March 1933, he traveled to the USSR to gather testimony from foreign correspondents, touring surrounding villages and meticulously documenting horrific events in his diary. Jones later returned to Berlin and held a press conference on March 29, 1933, the materials from which were widely disseminated in numerous British and American publications. For instance, in his article «Famine grips Russia, millions dying» for the «New York Evening Post», the author asserted: «In the train a Communist denied 'to me that there was a famine. I flung a crust of bread which I had been eating from my own supply into a spittoon. A peasant fellow-passenger fished it out and ravenously ate it»<sup>19</sup>. In addition, in the article «Russian Famine Now as Great as Starvation of 1921, Says Secretary of Lloyd George» for «The Chicago Daily News», his thoughts on the famine situation in Ukraine during 1932–1933 were given: «The present Russian Famine is as bad as the great starvation of 1921, when millions died...»<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, G. Jones noted the potential causes of famine in Ukraine: «Jones attributes the famine chiefly to the collectivization policy and the peasants' hatred of it. Other causes are bad transportation, the lack of skilled labor, the bad state finances and government terror. Unemployment is steadily growing in the land that but a few years ago boasted of its freedom from ills current in capitalistic society»<sup>21</sup>. Highlighting the main causes of the famine, such as the policy of collectivization, peasant resistance to this policy, poor transportation, shortage of skilled labor, and so on, Gareth Jones provided an objective analysis of the situation. This countered the Soviet narrative, which sought to justify the crisis with other factors.

### **The conclusions.**

The Soviet authorities actively controlled information about the Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932–1933, preventing free access for foreign journalists to the affected areas to conceal the scale of the famine and avoid international outcry. Using local Soviet media as a propaganda tool, the Bolsheviks sought to refute or suppress reports of the Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932–1933,

16 Muggeridge, M. Exposing Stalin's famine in Ukraine – archive, 1933. The Guardian. 1933. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/exposing-stalin-famine-in-ukraine-muggeridge-1933>

17 Ibid.

18 Muggeridge M. Deliberate famine in Russia. The Guardian. 1933. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/1933/mar/25/mainsection.fromthearchive>

19 Jones G. Famine grips Russia, millions dying. Idle on Rise, says Briton. New York Evening Post. 1933. URL: [https://www.garethjones.org/margaret\\_siriol\\_colley/Famine\\_gripsrussiahtm.htm](https://www.garethjones.org/margaret_siriol_colley/Famine_gripsrussiahtm.htm).

20 Mowrer, E. A. Russian Famine Now as Great as Starvation of 1921, Says Secretary of Lloyd George. Chicago Daily News. 1933. URL: [https://www.garethjones.org/soviet\\_articles/edgar\\_mowrer.htm](https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/edgar_mowrer.htm)

21 Ibid.



aiming to maintain a positive image of the USSR on the international stage. Soviet media reacted to foreign media reports by attempting to discredit them as anti-Soviet slander campaigns, aiming to discredit Western sources. By inviting journalists to write positive stories and organizing their trips to Ukraine, the authorities spread propaganda about the successes of industrialization and justified food shortages.

Despite these efforts at disinformation, truthful accounts of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine began to emerge in the foreign press thanks to witnesses, journalists, diplomats, and political figures from Western countries. Newspapers like «The Guardian», «The New York Times», «New York Herald Tribune», «Daily Telegraph», and others regularly reported on the unprecedented famine in Ukraine. Publications by journalists like Gareth Jones and Malcolm Muggeridge supported international interest in the situation in Ukraine and helped keep the issue of famine in the spotlight of global public opinion, making it harder for the Soviet authorities to hide the truth. By writing articles for Western publications such as «The Chicago Daily News», G. Jones informed the international audience about the true scale of the famine in Ukraine, comparing it to the devastating famine of 1921, which led to millions of deaths. This helped expose the lies of the Soviet government about the absence of famine in Ukraine during 1932–1933. M. Muggeridge's articles for «The Guardian» provided undeniable evidence of the severity of the famine, directly challenging the official Soviet narrative.

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