



Archpriest Andrei Novikov: crocodile tears of Phanar hierarch



On the 28th of November 2020, at his Phanar residence in Istanbul, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople delivered a sermon marking the Holodomor Remembrance Day commemorated by the Ukrainian state. In his speech, Bartholomew voiced an extremely tendentious interpretation of the dreadful 1932–33 famine as “genocide” of the Ukrainian people, which is in line with the position of the biased Ukrainian nationalistic historians: “The goal of the Great Famine in Ukraine was to kill from seven to ten millions of the pious Ukrainians during the most horrible years of the Soviet regime, from 1932 to 1933... The Ukrainian term *Holodomor* refers to the man-made famine which was a part of the diabolic plan of the Stalinist system aimed at carrying out genocide of a particularly devout people in order to eradicate Christian faith and the Orthodox Church, while... the Ukrainian people had been blessed by an abundant harvest of grain and other crops. As human beings were starving, the Soviet regime was exporting their grain crops, creating an illusion that Ukraine was a prosperous country.”

Of course, one would find it hard to disagree with the assertion that the 1932–33 famine was a part of

the Stalinist system's plan (yet, why just Stalinist – Bolshevik in general), that the blow fell on one of the most pious social stratum, peasantry, that the Soviet regime continued, in spite of the mass mortality from starvation among the population of its own country, to export grain crops, and that the regime liked creating abroad an illusion about itself.

However, having told a part of the truth, Patriarch Bartholomew blends it with a fabrication. As is clearly evidenced by widely available facts, the famine of the early 1930s, man-made and instigated by the Soviet authorities, was aimed not against the ethnic group of Ukrainians or Ukraine as a national and territorial unit within the Soviet Union, but against the country's peasantry as a whole, which the regime considered to be the backbone of the old Orthodox Russia and the major factor of opposition to the Marxist reforms. By continuing to export grain crops the theomachist rulers did not, certainly, mean to destroy the Ukrainian nationality; what they had in mind was profit in foreign currency, so precious to them. And, needless to say, the Soviet propaganda tried to create an illusion about the whole USSR thriving, not just Ukraine. It is easy to verify by examining articles published in the Soviet press or propaganda posters of the time.

The numbers, which actual historians working with archives, and not propagandists, refer to, indicate that the 1932–33 famine caused by the Bolsheviks was not the genocide directed against Ukraine in particular. Prof. N.A. Ivnitsky, Doctor of History, an outstanding expert in the history of collectivization and dekulakization of the Soviet village, who is widely acknowledged in Russia and abroad, presents the following data: “The famine of 1932–33 struck a vast territory of the Soviet Union with the population of over 50 million people, including Ukraine, the North Caucasus, Kazakhstan, the Volga Region, southern districts of the Central Black Earth Region and the Ural, Western Siberia and partly other USSR regions... At an approximate estimate, in 1932–33 some 7 million people died from starvation and related diseases, including from 3 to 3,5 million people in Ukraine, at least 1 million people in the North Caucasus, 1,3 million people in Kazakhstan, and over 1 million people in the Volga Region, the Central Black Earth Region in the Ural and Western Siberia; some 7 million people in total”[1]. As for the percentage of the victims among the peasantry population, the tragedy was even more terrible for Kazakhstan and the Volga Region. “The comparative analysis of the materials of the censuses conducted in 1926 and 1937 demonstrates the following rural population decrease in the USSR regions which the famine struck in 1932–33: by 30,9% in Kazakhstan, by 23% in the Volga Region, by 20,5% in Ukraine, and by 20,4% in the North Caucasus,” Prof. V.V. Kondrashin writes[2].

In his article “The Famine of 1932–33 in Villages of the Volga Region”[3], Prof. Kondrashin points to the horrifying scope of the famine in the Volga Region, in particular. He mentions names of the villages and entire collective farms in the Volga Region where almost all residents perished and presents a shocking list of numerous settlements, in which cases of cannibalism were officially reported (and in how many villages such cases went unreported?!). In the memory of peasants in the Saratov and Penza regions

for a long time there lived the following *chastushka* (ditty): “In the year thirty-three all the goosefoot plants were eaten. Swollen arms and swollen legs, people died, with hunger beaten.”

The aforementioned Prof. Ivnitsky, who was born in the Belgorod Region in Russia, experienced first-hand the famine of the 1930s. His father, a poor Russian peasant, was arrested and, sentenced by the OGPU *troika* (three officials of the Unified State Political Directorate), was sent to the White Sea–Baltic Corrective Labour Camp. His mother was left destitute, with two small children. “I was an eyewitness of how the forced collectivization and savage dekulakization were carried out in 1930–31, and I myself suffered in full measure from the 1932–33 famine. Our whole family swelled because of starvation, and my mother was taken to hospital and only by chance did not die. But we saw our fellow villagers (south of the Central Black Earth Region) and refugees from Ukraine and the North Caucasus perishing,” Prof. Ivnitsky recalls[4].

Unlike Patriarch Bartholomew, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia knows by his own experience about the sufferings of the Russian people in 1932–33. When his grandfather, a confessor of Orthodoxy, was sentenced to many years’ imprisonment in labour camps, the family, which lived in the Volga Region, suffered to the full extent from the horrors of starvation. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill recalled: “So, when not a gram of flour was left in the house, in the evening my grandmother baked bread for seven children, gave it to them and said, ‘Children, we have nothing left to eat for tomorrow. Tomorrow we will start dying.’ And at night something happened which I as a believer call miracle. There was a tap on the window, and my grandmother heard a voice saying, ‘Missus, come out and take the goods.’ She went out and saw no one, but next to the door there was a sack of flour. That sack of flour saved my family and gave me an opportunity to be born” [5].

The Russian Orthodox Church prayerfully commemorates victims of the 1932–33 famine instigated by the theomachist authorities. It swept down on the Russian Church’s, not Phanar’s, canonical territory. Among those who died in torment during that famine were great many clergymen and church workers of the Russian Church, as well as millions of its laypeople. However, while commemorating these victims, our Church does not permit itself to play politics on their blood – does not permit, precisely because preserves their memory.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, whose words stand in striking contrast to Bartholomew’s bilious politicized attacks, said as far back as 2008: “The famine – terrible starvation caused by absolutely concrete political reasons and exacerbated by natural cataclysms – resulted in the death of great many people in Ukraine, in the Volga Region, in the North Caucasus, in the Southern Ural, in Western Siberia, in Kazakhstan. It was a calamity that affected all our peoples who at the time lived in one country. Therefore, it is by no means surprising that we pray for innocent victims, commemorating those who died. And while commemorating them, we at the same time pray that no such thing may ever happen

again, that no such events from our history may ever be seen as a barrier to fraternal communion, that no historiosophy which incites hatred between brothers may ever spring from these tragic circumstances of our history. Together we should pray and work so that our world become a better place, our peoples live a better life, and innocent victims do not ever pass away unto God in peacetime” [6].

The Russian Orthodox Church’s position, conforming to the historical reality, instead of the nationalistic doctrines created in order to cause division between the Orthodox nations, was also voiced by the chairman of the Synodal Information Department of the Russian Orthodox Church, Vladimir Legoyda, who said in 2009: “The forced mass famine of 1932–33 in the Soviet Union struck not only Ukraine, but also the Volga Region, the North Caucasus, the Southern Ural, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan. Starvation did not choose among people who spoke different languages – the Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian... It ruined the lives of millions of people who lived in the Soviet Union, bringing many of them to the grave. The Church calls upon the faithful to actively preserve in their hearts the memory of all these victims. In their homilies bishops and priests of our Church often say that the best we can do for our deceased loved ones is to pray for them. Not speeches, not rallies, not despondency, not desperation, but prayer is the best tribute to someone’s memory. Speaking of what happened at that time, the Church often reminds people: millions of deaths by starvation is the price paid for an attempt to create a paradise on earth without God. We see a lesson in this – a terrible lesson that became important in the scope of the entire Slavic civilization. Largely for this reason, our Church believes that any attempt to politicize the situation with the mass starvation (to accuse Russia as the USSR’s successor state of the genocide of the Ukrainian people) is inadmissible and in some sense blasphemous. One must not be allowed to use the human tragedy as a political instrument for achieving tactical goals. It profanes everything that people associate with those events: sorrow, pain, memory, prayer... Politics are a transient thing. And what occurred in the Soviet Union back in 1932–33 is more than politics” [7].

The very terms *Holodomor* and “genocide” in relation to the great famine of 1932–33 were first used by radical nationalistic Western Ukraine’s immigrants in the USA and Canada who were sympathetic to Nazism and often collaborated with it. These terms were and still are used in the narrow political, propaganda way. It has to be stated with regret that among those involved in this political propaganda campaign, based on falsehood and manipulations, is Patriarch Bartholomew who is personally responsible for the attempt to legitimize the schism which creates disastrous division between the fraternal Orthodox nations and Churches and pits consanguineous fellow-believers in Christ against each other. For many years Bartholomew was not at all concerned about the topic of the 1930s famine. Yet, as soon as it became politically expedient, the head of the Phanar seized the opportunity to profiteer on someone else’s sorrow, on the greatest tragedy and pain of the peoples of the former USSR, emphasizing the sufferings of some and ignoring the adversities of others. The words about “genocide” sound especially cynical as coming from the man who himself got actively involved in the

efforts directed against the canonical Ukrainian Church and, therefore, the majority of the Orthodox population of Ukraine, who associated himself with the regime which unleashed repressions and war against its own citizens refusing to submit to the lawlessness.

Frequently and untimely, Patriarch Bartholomew likes to speak about the “history” which, according to him, is to become a “judge” for everyone who disagrees with him. However, being deeply immersed in the dubious game of politics, he might have forgotten about the One Whom an Orthodox clergyman must remember above all – the true and unprejudiced Judge. It is to Him that everyone will inevitably have to give an account.

Archpriest Andrei Novikov

- [1] <http://www.hist.msu.ru/Labs/UkrBel/obrukr-golod.htm>**
- [2] <http://www.hist.msu.ru/Labs/UkrBel/obrukr-golod.htm>**
- [3] https://scepsis.net/library/id_459.html**
- [4] <http://www.hist.msu.ru/Labs/UkrBel/obrukr-golod.htm>**
- [5] <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/705092.html>**
- [6] <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/705092.html>**
- [7] <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/702932.html>**

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