

Donbas Leader Calls for Confiscating Food Crops, Echoing Stalin's Holodomor

Opinion

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“Previously OSCE observers [had] reported seeing trucks full of cereals and grains on Russian-controlled territories in Ukraine moving towards the Russian-Ukrainian border and into the Russian Federation,” just as happened under Stalin. Photo: Grain seized during 1932-33 famine

By Paul Goble for “Window on Eurasia”: November 14 – Aleksandr Zakharchenko, the self-proclaimed leader of the Russian client statelet, the Donetsk Peoples Republic, has called for the confiscation of all agricultural food products and their being handed over to his regime, an ugly order in and of itself and especially ugly given Ukraine’s experience with the Holodomor in 1932-1933. The order, dated November 3 and posted on his regime’s website at old.dnr-online.ru/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ukaz_N291_03112017.pdf, specifies that “cereals and grains, as well as fruits growing on bushes, trees and vines that have been harvested without permission on state and municipal plots are the property of the Donetsk Peoples Republic.” As the Euromaidan Press points out, similar measures were “in effect during the 1932-1933 Holodomor in Ukraine when … Stalin imposed a repressive new law on the protection of state property” and used it to confiscate food from those who were already starving (

euromaidanpress.com/2017/11/13/dnr-leader-zakharchenko-orders-confiscation-of-local-crops).

And the analogy is made even more compelling because, as the news service points out, “previously OSCE observers [had] reported seeing trucks full of cereals and grains on Russian-controlled territories in Ukraine moving towards the Russian-Ukrainian border and into the Russian Federation,” just as happened under Stalin. This report raises three questions: Who in fact ordered it? Why did that person do so? And what should be the reaction of Ukrainians and people of good will around the world? The answers to each are obvious. First, it is clear that this order originated not in the mind of Zakharchenko but from Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. As Kurt Volker pointed out last week, Moscow controls “100 percent” of what happens in the Donbas (

thinktanks.by/publication/2017/11/05/kurt-volker-rossiya-na-100-kontroliruet-proishodyaschee-na-Donbase.html). Putin thus has to be held responsible for this horrific action and not allowed to escape public censure and, one hopes, eventual punishment for this crime against humanity as well as so many others. Second, Putin ordered it both to shore up morale among his fighters and to provoke Ukrainians into actions that will isolate it from the West. By issuing an order like this, Putin has sent a clear message to his fighters that they can expect no quarter if they are defeated and thus must be prepared to fight to the very end. And he clearly hopes as he has so often to provoke his opponents, in this case, the Ukrainians, into taking actions or making statements in response for which they will be condemned and thus allow him to escape responsibility for what he has initiated. Putin knows how central the Holodomor is to Ukrainians and how many of them will respond. Finally, third, Ukrainians and their many friends and supporters around the world must recognize that this order and its Kremlin origins can best be countered not by violence or dramatic

actions but rather by a calm insistence that everyone recognize just what the world is up against as long as Putin remains in power. ###

The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and appears here with the author's permission. Contact Goble at: paul.goble@gmail.com