

## Context Note: Death and burial of famine victims in the city

During the spring and summer of 1933, tens of thousands died of starvation each day in Ukraine. In June alone, an average of 28,000 people died each day, in their village homes, in the fields, along roadsides, and in the cities of Ukraine (Wolowyna, graph)

Starving peasant farmers fled their villages and collective farms, making their way to Kharkiv and other cities in search of food. However, by 1933, the authorities introduced residency permits that made it illegal for those from villages to relocate to the city. Moreover, most farm workers could not find work in the cities, and they were not entitled to the food ration cards that urban dwellers received. To return home to one's village was a near certain death sentence. Without food or shelter, people from the countryside began to die in ever increasing numbers throughout the city.

Each day city workers were sent out to collect the dead that were found in the streets and take them by wagon for mass burial at one of many hastily designated plots on the city outskirts. In his memoir *Hart auf hart*, Wienerberger states that each mound marked a grave for 15 bodies, and that there were 7 such sites at the time, each holding 250 mass graves. (Wienerberger, p.182)

Often the collection of the dead and burial occurred at night, in order to conceal the scale of death in the city. Thus in addition to those buried in known cemetery mounds, "between February and June 1933...the OGPU [secret police] in Kharkiv recorded that it had surreptitiously buried 2,785 corpses." (Applebaum, p.254).

Sources:

Applebaum, Anne. *Red Famine : Stalin's War on Ukraine*. New York: Doubleday, 2017.

Wienerberger, Alexander. *Hart auf hart. 15 Jahre Ingenieur in Sowjetrussland. Ein Tatsachenbericht; mit 52 original-Leicaaufnahmen des Verfassers*. Salzburg: Verlag Anton Pustet, 1939.

Wolowyna, Oleh. "Holodomor Losses by Nationality and the Surge in Mortality in 1933: Two Little-Known Aspects of the Holodomor," Graph: Average Number of Daily Direct Losses by Month Ukraine 1933. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2018.