

## Foreword

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1. The film, *Two Regimes—A Mother’s Memoir of the Holodomor and the Holocaust*, is an exceptionally welcome voice in the literature on and documentation of the Holocaust and Holodomor. Winding Road Films Director Doug Darlington’s presentation of over 100 historical photographs and vintage military film footage resonates hauntingly with a soundtrack consisting of the music created by actual prisoners in labor and concentration camps between 1933 and 1953—and brilliantly recreated by Italian Maestro Francesco Lotoro.
2. Darlington’s film is based on Teodora Verbitskaya’s remarkable written memoir. The unvarnished directness of Verbitskaya’s observations enable readers to acquire a glimpse into her reality and, thus, to empathize with her and her family. But Verbitskaya’s having experienced and survived the Holodomor, the Holocaust, and World War II also make the memoir a microcosm of Ukraine’s horrific twentieth-century encounter with mass violence and a useful reminder that the regimes responsible for the Holodomor and the Holocaust bear some striking similarities.

### Ukraine as Bloodland

3. We often forget that less than 200 years ago Ukraine’s population consisted primarily of illiterate peasant serfs, whose lives were little different from those of American slaves. The twentieth century was especially unkind to them. First came seven years of world war, revolution, and civil war. Then came famine, terror, and genocide. But the real troubles began in 1939-1941, when Adolf Hitler unleashed a genocidal war and transformed Ukraine into a colony whose subject populations—both Jews and Ukrainians—were slated for extermination. After peace returned in 1945, another eight years of famine, terror, and repression followed.
4. Ukraine experienced some 40 consecutive years of relentless death and destruction, starting in 1914 and ending with Stalin’s death in 1953. According to a study of the Moscow-based Institute of Demography, Ukraine suffered close to 15 million “excess deaths” between 1914 and 1948. Consider the horrifying numbers:
  - 1.3 million during World War I (1914-1918),
  - 2.3 million during the Civil War (1917-1921), the Polish-Soviet War (1918-1921), and the famine of the early 1920s (1921- 1922),
  - 4.0 million during the Holodomor (1932-1933),
  - 300,000 during the Great Terror and the repressions in Western Ukraine (late 1930’s),
  - 6.5 million during World War II, when Nazi Germany treated Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs as brutes and subhumans (1941-1945), and
  - 400,000 during the post-war famine and the destruction of the Ukrainian nationalist movement (1945-1948).

### Revolution and empire in Nazi Germany

5. The Holocaust was the consequence of the coming to power in Germany of a revolutionary party, the Nazis, with unabashedly imperialist goals. The Nazis aimed to transform Germany from top to bottom, desiring nothing less than a completely new Germany populated by new Germans. They also sought to extend German control over Europe in general and Eastern Europe in particular—the mostly Slavic territories that

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were to serve as *Lebensraum* (living space) for German colonists. Like many revolutionaries, the Nazis killed their opponents or locked them up in concentration camps, imposed a totalitarian regime on Germany, and proceeded to remove undesirable elements from Nazi society—homosexuals, cripples, Slavic *Untermenschen* (subhumans), Roma (Gypsies), and above all Jews.

6. Once the Nazis initiated war—against Poland in 1939, Western Europe in 1940, and the Soviet Union, which had willingly helped them destroy Poland, in 1941—they embarked on empire building and could expand their revolutionary goals to the occupied territories. Nazi opponents in these territories were all those who either actively resisted Nazi ideological goals or were incompatible with them. Democrats, nationalists, and communists resisted and had to be killed. Impure nations such as Jews and Roma were targeted for immediate destruction, while Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian *Untermenschen* were slated for exploitation to be followed by extermination. Nazi Germany was thus a genocidal regime that perpetrated multiple genocides—above all against Jews, but also against the Roma and the Slavs.

## Revolution and empire in Stalin's USSR

7. Like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union was a revolutionary regime with imperialist goals. Like the Nazis, the Bolsheviks aspired radically to transform the lands they had seized in a series of military campaigns in 1918-1921. They got their chance in the late 1920s, when Joseph Stalin became undisputed leader and embarked on a “revolution from above” that would change every dimension of life. Industry would be created from scratch, the countryside would be collectivized, and empire would be consolidated.
8. Like the Nazis, the Bolsheviks were violent and brooked no opposition. They killed their opponents and packed off millions to die in concentration camps. As with the Nazis, Stalin's opponents were all those who either actively resisted Soviet ideological goals or were incompatible with them. Obstreperous classes, such as the more prosperous peasants, had to be eliminated; obstreperous nations that stood in the way of Moscow's totalitarian ambitions and imperial rule—such as Ukrainians—had to be crushed. Like Hitler's, Stalin's regime practiced genocide as part and parcel of its policies toward its subject populations. Unsurprisingly, well over 20 million non-Russians and Russians were shot, starved, or worked to death.
9. It is easy to become jaded by such fantastic numbers. Fortunately, Teodora Verbitskaya reminds us that these people were just like us. It is to her everlasting credit that she gives life to the millions of Jews, Ukrainians, and others who fell victim to Stalin and Hitler and their two murderous regimes.
10. Two Regimes materials are intended to broaden our knowledge of these horrific, world-changing events. They provide a platform for discussing how and why genocides have occurred and why they may still occur anywhere in the world. Understanding others and their history is the first step toward changing the world.