

## Letter to the Editor

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In his article “Multiculturalism, Memory, and Ritualization: Ukrainian Nationalist Monuments in Edmonton, Alberta” (*Nationalities Papers* 39.5: 733–68), Per A. Rudling attributes to me statements that cannot be found in any publications. Therefore he fabricated them by misquoting and manipulating other sources. Rudling’s erroneous presentation of my academic work pertains to three issues: the number of victims of the Great Famine (Holodomor) of 1932–33, the 1983 academic conference about that famine, and the Ukrainian veterans of the Second World War.

### The number of Ukrainian victims of the Holodomor

Rudling alleges that I have claimed there were 7 million to 10 million famine victims in Ukraine. But the *Globe and Mail* article he cites as evidence says something quite different: “Grođ [president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress] referred Postmedia News to University of Quebec historian Roman Serbyn, who in the introduction to a 2008 essay referred to estimates ranging from three [million] to 10 million.” My mention of other people’s estimates is not the same as making my own claim of 7 to 10 million. Estimates ranging from 3 million to 10 million can be found in both Soviet and Western sources from the time of the famine itself. I have always favored the estimate of 6 million victims that Harry Lang of the Jewish daily *Forward* brought back to the United States; this was based on a discussion he had in September 1933 with a high Soviet official in Kharkiv.

There is a curious sentence in Rudling’s endnote 32: “On Serbyn’s claims of seven to ten million deaths see for instance Serbyn.” It is doubtful that Rudling is inviting his readers to contact me personally, nor could he be referring to either of the two publications by me listed in his article’s bibliography, because in them I deal exclusively with the famine of 1921–23. I can only conclude that Rudling intended to cite a publication in which I claim there were 7 million to 10 million victims, but was unable to; the point is that such a publication does not exist, and Rudling left the reference unfinished.

### Sponsorship of the 1983 famine conference

Rudling writes: “Sponsored by the UCC, the CIUS, and the Shevchenko Foundation, Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko organized a pioneering conference on the Ukrainian famine of 1932–1933” (p. 751). What did this international academic conference, held at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), have to do with the erection of what Rudling curiously refers to in his article as a “nationalist” memorial to the Ukrainian famine in Edmonton? Absolutely nothing! Why, then, did Rudling insert it in his

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polemical discourse? Let us examine the UQAM event and Rudling's particular presentation of it.

The first international conference on the Ukrainian Famine of 1933 was held at UQAM on 25 and 26 March 1983. The idea to hold such a conference originated in the fall of 1982 during a discussion I had with the director of the Interuniversity Centre for European Studies (ICES) of Montreal regarding the center's program for the academic year. The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) at the University of Alberta was approached to cosponsor the conference; its director, Bohdan Krawchenko, readily accepted the invitation. The conference's printed program indicated that the ICES and the CIUS sponsored the event, while the preface to the published conference papers, *Famine in Ukraine, 1932–1933* (CIUS, 1986) states that support for the event came from UQAM, the CIUS, Concordia University, the Shevchenko Foundation, and the Montreal Branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee (UCC, now Congress). Contrary to Rudling's suggestion, the UCC did not sponsor the conference, and the involvement of its Montreal branch was limited to local promotion of the event, which was open to the general public.

The two-day conference was an academic affair. Held on the UQAM campus, it was inaugurated by the vice-rectors of UQAM and Concordia University. During the conference some 20 speakers analyzed the famine and the destruction that the Soviet regime wrought on Ukrainian society during the tragic 1930s. Among them were scholars in various disciplines from American and Canadian universities, including George Y. Shevelov (Columbia University), Bohdan Bociurkiw (Carleton University), Wsevolod Isajiw (University of Toronto), André Liebich and Jacques Mascotto (UQAM), and Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn (Concordia University, directors of the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies). Particularly noted and appreciated was the participation of three pioneers in Ukrainian famine studies: James Mace, then a research fellow at Harvard University; Marco Carynnyk, an independent researcher from Toronto; and M. Maksudov (pseudonym of Aleksandr Babyonyshev), then a recent emigrant from the USSR.

Rudling strives to show that the famine conference in Montreal and the Holodomor memorial in Edmonton were two aspects of the same nationalist agenda. He begins his discussion of the famine memorial in Edmonton with a truncated quotation from Victor Satzewich seemingly stating that the famine provided "the third-wave émigrés ... with a sense of legitimacy." Legitimacy for what? Satzewich argued that the famine was meant to reinforce the notion that the Ukrainians left their homeland "because of political and cultural persecution and not for mere economic reasons." Rudling substitutes a more sinister explanation. He borrows Johan Dietsch's claim that the famine campaign was a way "to directly counter charges and allegations that Ukrainians were inherently anti-Semitic and that they were overrepresented in the ranks of Hitler's executioners." To give further credibility to the notion that the Montreal conference was a Ukrainian-Canadian political undertaking rather than an international scholarly convention, Rudling uses subliminal suggestions. He mentions only the UCC, the CIUS, and the Shevchenko Foundation—institutions that have some connection to the Ukrainian-Canadian community. In order to create the impression that the initiative came from the UCC, which he claims is dominated by Ukrainian nationalist activists, he places it at the top of the list. At the same time, he ignores the non-Ukrainian-Canadian co-sponsor of the event – the ICES – and fails to mention that two Montreal universities contributed financially to it and that UQAM hosted it.

**Ukrainian war veterans**

Rudling writes: “A prominent UCC, activist professor emeritus Serbyn has combined his activism to get the famine recognized as a genocide with lobbying to have the OUN and UPA, and the *Waffen-SS Galizien* recognized as heroes” (pp. 760–61, n. 29). He identifies his former professor, David Marples, as the source of this knowledge. But in the article by Marples that Rudling cites, Marples says something quite different, namely that Serbyn “has been active in a campaign to have UPA fighters considered as veterans of the Second World War,” referring to my posting on Infoukes (7 June 2004). There I argued that those who have vehemently opposed the reconciliation of Ukrainians who fought on opposite sides in Ukraine, as soldiers in the Red Army, the UPA, or the Galizien Division during the war, are guided by the pervasive Soviet myth of the so-called Great Fatherland War, and I castigated the Ukrainian government for not recognizing the veterans of all three of the above formations as pension recipients. I am of the opinion that the title of “hero of Ukraine” is a remnant of the Soviet system and should be discarded. Rudling’s claim that I have been lobbying for the attribution of the title of “hero of Ukraine” to the OUN, the UPA and the veterans the Halychyna Division is not supported by Professor Marples’s article, nor does it reflect my thinking on the subject.

While Rudling himself seems to favor the Soviet-era linkage of two unrelated issues – in this case the Holodomor and the Second World War – in an alleged causal relationship, he misleadingly implies that I have done so as well. That is not the case: I have always maintained that these two tragic events are distinct and should be studied independently of each other. Again Rudling is wrong when he claims that I have invoked the suffering of the Holodomor to secure official Ukrainian recognition of anti-Soviet Ukrainian war veterans as heroes.