

Makuch, Andrij, and Frank E. Sysyn, eds. *Contextualizing the Holodomor: The Impact of Thirty Years of Ukrainian Famine Studies*. Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2015. viii + 126 pp. \$22.95 (paper). ISBN 978-1-894865-43-2.

Since the publication of Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (1986), historians have grappled with the origins, implementation, and short-, medium-, and long-term consequences of the politically induced famine of 1932–33 in Ukraine. Most importantly, many scholars sought to redefine this tragedy by designating it the *Holodomor* (mass killing by means of starvation), instead of *holod* (famine).

Sandwiched between the conflagrations of the First and Second World Wars, the Holodomor has played a critical role not only in the history of Ukraine but also in the Soviet past. As Andrea Graziosi reminds us, the Holodomor (which killed between 4 and 5 million men, women, and children) represents a critical chapter in the Great Soviet Peasant War of 1918–34. Although the Holodomor served as a brutal means to integrate the recalcitrant peasantry into the Stalinist order, its post-traumatic consequences still influence events in the post-Soviet world today. As Olga Andriewsky points out, the Holodomor symbolizes a “considerable rupture in the history of Ukraine,” a “cultural catastrophe” which accelerated the “deformation” of Ukrainian culture and weakened its relationship with Russian culture within the multinational Soviet Union (p. 36). According to the authors of this book, the cultural, demographic, and political cataclysms Ukraine encountered in the first two decades of Soviet rule are intimately interrelated.

What are the factors that caused the Holodomor? How and to what extent did it differ from the other famines in other parts of the USSR in 1932–33? What aspects distinguish the Holodomor from the famines of 1921–22, 1929, 1931, 1932, and 1946–47? What does it hold in common with the other famines?

This small book of six essays (all of which first appeared in the on-line journal *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies*) seeks to answer these important questions. Frank E. Sysyn provides an excellent introduction to the origins of Conquest's monograph and its critical reception. Andriewsky thoroughly analyzes the research completed on the Holodomor in Ukraine and outside Ukraine, concluding that historians, for the most part, have overemphasized the role of the Soviet leadership and marginalized the people who experienced the Holodomor, “rendering them into ghosts who silently haunt our work” (p. 34). Graziosi, who spent his career investigating the strong links between the peasant and the national questions in the history of the USSR, reviews the impact of the study of the Holodomor on our understanding of the nature and social dynamics of the USSR. Françoise Thom reflects on Stalin's use of dissimulation during the de-kulakization, collectivization, and Holodomor campaigns. Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi deals comprehensively with the mechanisms by which Soviet authorities carried out Holodomors in the Ukrainian SSR, the North Caucasus krai, and the Lower Volga krai, and how they differed from the All-Union Famine of 1932–33 and from each other. He also examines the similarities between the Holodomor and the Holocaust without equating them. Finally, Norman M. Naimark discusses how the Holodomor can be integrated into our understanding of genocide.

Collectively, these essays judiciously discuss the connection between the problems in grain procurement and the policy of Ukrainization; methods in actualizing the Holodomor; Ukraine's demographic losses; Stalin's “fixations” on Ukraine, his intentions and subsequent actions; and categorizations of the Holodomor and its impact on discussions of Soviet modernization. They investigate this phenomenon within the context of the ideological, political, and social struggles within the USSR as well as the first socialist state's contentious relationship with the capitalist West.

Although this small volume provides us with the most all-encompassing assessment of the Holodomor to date, the two co-editors might have included a final chapter summarizing the conclusions each individual author raised and highlighting areas of future research. Although I concur with most of the conclusions presented in this volume, I wish that this collection had also

included a detailed essay analyzing how and in what ways Russian historians who deal with the period of mass collectivization contest the uniqueness of the Ukrainian famine of 1932–33. (Kul'chyts'kyi touches on this subject, but readers would have benefitted from a separate chapter on this issue). Despite these caveats, readers of this journal who concentrate on the social and national transformations within the USSR as well as post-Soviet period should read this book. Although they may not agree with all of the points raised in this solid collection of essays, it remains the most thorough literature and thematic review of one of the most seismic political and social convulsions in Europe's twentieth century.

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