THE FAMINE OF 1932–1933 IN UKRAINE: AN ANATOMY OF THE HOLODOMOR. By Stanislav Kulchytsky. Trans. Ali Kinsella. Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2018. xxvi, 175 pp., b/w photographs, color map, tables, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN (paper) 978-1-894865-53-1.

Stanislav Kul´chyts´kyi is one of Ukraine's preeminent scholars of the Soviet period and an astonishingly prolific historian with over two thousand (!) publications, including interviews and shorter pieces, scores of books, and hundreds of major articles. The book under review is an updated and revised translation of his 2014 *Ukraïns´kyi Holodomor v konteksti polityky Kremlia pochatku 1930-kh rr.* (The Ukrainian Holodomor in the Context of Kremlin Policy in the Early 1930s) published by the Institute of Ukrainian History of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences. This new English-language book includes two interesting biographical introductions, Bohdan Klid's "Stanislav Kulchytsky: A Historian and His Writings in Changing Times," and Kul´chyts´kyi's own note entitled "To the Reader." Taken together, these shorter pieces pose intriguing questions of how a highly regarded Soviet Ukrainian economic historian has been able to make a successful transition to contributing to independent Ukraine's distinct national (and nationalist) historiography. Kul´chyts´kyi has accomplished this difficult transition by adhering to his empirical inclinations, focusing his attention on economic data, and engaging in close analyses of crucial documents, which characterize this book and his earlier work.

Kul´chyts´kyi properly sees the Holodomor, the Ukrainian "Death Famine" of 1932–1933, as a product of the Soviet political system. First, Lenin tried to control the agricultural production of Soviet peasants by introducing "War Communism" in 1918–1920, which Kul´chyts´kyi calls the "first onslaught"—a Bolshevik frontal attack—on villages. When this failed to accomplish its ends, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), which revived the marketplace in agriculture and stimulated peasant production. The "second onslaught" came with the "Stalin revolution" and the *vozhd*'s seizure of political power in

the Soviet Union at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s. When confronted with peasant opposition to the brutal and murderous measures of forced collectivization in the winter of 1929–1930, which was particularly widespread and intense in Ukraine, Stalin backed off briefly in 1930–1931, as had Lenin earlier. But the dictator did not restrain his instinct for vengeance for long, launching what he called a "crushing blow" at the countryside, initiated by a Central Committee resolution of 18 November 1932 and trumpeted at the 27 November 1932 joint meeting of the Politburo and the Presidium of the Central Control Commission. Up to this point, according to Kul´chyts´kyi, the collectivization campaign had wrought so much damage on the Soviet rural landscape through social upheaval and forced requisitioning that famine engulfed the entire country. (The issue was not poor weather or crop shortages.) Allegedly recalcitrant villages accused of withholding grain were blacklisted and blockaded, making it impossible for the inhabitants to seek food in other locations.

It is at this point, in late December 1932 and early January 1933, that Kul´chyts´kyi sees the launching of the "terror famine" (Robert Conquest's 1986 term) in Ukraine, when the all-Union famine was "transformed" into the Holodomor, "with its fifteenfold greater total of victims" (p. xxiv). In his telegram of 1 January 1933 to the Soviet Ukrainian government which "initiated the Holodomor," Stalin talked both about seizing "hidden grain" from the farmers and mercilessly punishing the offenders (p. 115). Kul´chyts´kyi focuses as well on the 22 January 1933 Central Committee and Sovnarkom resolution, written by Stalin himself, which blockaded the countryside and stopped the "exodus of peasants from Ukraine and the Kuban to other regions" (p. 116). In short, all of Ukraine, as well as the Kuban and parts of the Northern Caucasus, were now secretly blacklisted. Kul´chyts´kyi identifies three characteristics of this January and February 1933 campaign against the Ukrainian peasants: (1) the banning of information about the famine, which obviated the possibilities of any resistance; (2) the blockade of all villages, preventing the peasants from seeking sustenance in neighboring villages, towns, and cities or in other republics; and, most devastatingly, (3) the authorization of groups of police requisitioners, poor peasants, and urban recruits to seize *all the food* that might have been stored away by the villagers—not just grain. These measures created a famine within a famine that was intended to break the back of any kind of resistance in the villages to working the collective fields; that is, if the peasants were even physically capable of doing so given the extent of the famine.

Thus, Kul´chyts´kyi underlines the concept of a "*terror* famine" in

that the bulk of rural inhabitants in Ukraine were threatened with total extinction if they did not fall into line with the new Soviet-imposed discipline in the countryside. That so many suffered and expired in this genocidal action was, more than anything, due to the Kremlin's insistence on its "socialist" program for peasant agriculture. Kul´chyts´kyi points out that the state relief offered villagers during the worst ravages of the famine in February 1933 was part of a "carrot-and-stick" policy to change the nature of economic relations on the land. The problem was that the stick was a campaign of death. The job of scholars, Kul´chyts´kyi insists, is "to find the line that divides death by hunger from murder by starvation" (p. 50). The latter, he writes, was genocide.

Not everyone will be satisfied with Kul´chyts´kyi's approach to the Holodomor. There are historians of the Soviet Union in Russia, the West, and in Ukraine, as well, who refuse to acknowledge that the all-Soviet famine of the years 1932–1933 had a distinctly Ukrainian genocidal component. Even if Ukraine suffered disproportionately, some historians of the Soviet Union have argued, it was because of the sizable agricultural population of the republic, not because Ukrainians as Ukrainians were under attack. On the other side of the issue, many Ukrainian historians, both in independent Ukraine and in the diaspora, do not recognize at all that there was a serious all-Soviet famine in the years 1932–1933 that brought widespread death and destruction to Soviet agriculture across the board. Moreover, they see the Holodomor as a broad-ranging and deep-seated attack on Ukrainians by Russians, a culmination, in some fashion, of a centuries-long attempt by Moscow to subordinate Ukraine to its tyranny. Vladimir Putin's repeated denials of the Holodomor and of a distinct Ukrainian national identity are seen as part of the same metahistorical program. At the same time, the Holodomor has become an essential part of the ongoing project of defining Ukrainian nationhood, which makes dispassionate and balanced historical examinations, like Kul´chyts´kyi's study, all the more difficult in the contemporary context.

Kul´chyts´kyi's excellent book will not settle these arguments. Moreover, his study leaves room for many questions. He makes no attempt here, for example, to deal with the fraught but important issue of how many Ukrainians died in the Holodomor. He cites the rough number of 3.5 million; some historians use the figure of four million, which includes Ukrainians in the Kuban and Northern Caucasus. But other reputable historians insist on much larger numbers, in excess of ten million, a serious difference. Kul´chyts´kyi mentions the attack on the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the church and the need to integrate "the Kremlin's socioeconomic policy with its nationality policy" (p. 131) but

goes no further in exploring the question of whether Stalin and the Kremlin leadership harbored a particular animus toward Ukrainians. Was the Holodomor just the result of Soviet agricultural policy—the core of his study—or were national issues also at stake and how? In this connection, Kul´chyts´kyi could have done much more with the reversals of Ukrainization that occurred concurrently with the Holodomor and with the extension of attacks on Ukrainian villages in the Lower Volga, which he does mention but draws no conclusions from in terms of issues of national struggle.

Scholars of Ukraine and the Soviet Union will welcome the translation of Kul´chyts´kyi's book as an important contribution to the literature on the Holodomor. The book is smartly and succinctly written, and nicely translated, so that it can be used with great benefit in the classroom. It includes both portraits of the main dramatis personae involved in the events discussed and a section of poignant photographs of the "hunger tragedy in South Russia, 1933" from the album of the Austrian engineer Alexander Weinerberger. The photographs, like Kul´chyts´kyi's narrative, remind us again that the Ukrainian people suffered the unspeakable tragedy of genocide, one that continues to influence the development of their national consciousness to this day.

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