

Contextualizing the Holodomor. The Impact of Thirty Years of Ukrainian Famine Studies. Ed. by Andrij Makuch / Frank E. Sysyn. Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2015. VIII, 126 S. ISBN: 978-1-894865-43-2.

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The Holodomor, like other significant historical events, is a complex phenomenon. Millions of people died of famine in 1932–33. Moscow made every effort to conceal the mass deaths and adamantly and vehemently denied the very existence of famine in the country. It was only towards the end of the Soviet regime that Moscow acknowledged the fact of mass deaths through famine in 1932–33. Even though Moscow concealed it at the time, the famine was not unknown to the West. Yet it has not attracted the attention of historians of the Soviet Union until relatively recently. This has deeply disappointed and even angered the Ukrainian diaspora. True, Washington, keen to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow, knowingly ignored the famine, relying on the infamous reporter for *The New York Times* Walter Duranty who denied the existence of famine. It was only after the publication of Robert Conquest's classic study *The Harvest of Sorrow* in 1986 that the famine began to attract the attention of some scholars. When Moscow finally began to acknowledge the famine of 1932–33 in the late 1980s, Western scholars began to pay serious attention to the subject. The field as a whole would do well to examine this long neglect. As FRANK SYSYN implies in his introductory essay, *Thirty Years of research on the Holodomor: A Balance Sheet*, the thirty years since Conquest's ground-breaking publication have produced a truly impressive numbers of publications of primary sources and scholarly works. As a result, we know tremendously more now than thirty years ago about the famine.

Nevertheless, to determine the balance sheet of research is far from simple or straightforward. As NORMAN NAIMARK states in his *How The Holodomor Can be Integrated into our Understanding of Genocide*, "a consensus has evolved among a substantial group of scholars" that the Holodomor was genocide (p. 120), a term not used by Conquest. The originator of the term Raphael Lemkin himself was familiar with the famine in Ukraine and would have categorized it as genocide had it not been for the interference of

Moscow and many Western countries. That Stalin meant to kill people by intention or neglect is not at all surprising. Can it be shown that "Stalin indeed intended for Ukrainian peasants in the countryside to die" (p. 124)? On this crucial question, not every scholar agrees. As FRANÇOISE THOM correctly notes, "As with the Jewish genocide by Himmler, the starvation of Ukraine was surrounded by the deepest mystery" (p. 84). However, the lack of direct evidence does not mean lack of intention. Therefore, if the vast amount of still classified documents in the archives in Moscow ever becomes available to historians, irrefutable evidence may well surface.

One question that many historians of the Holodomor have ignored is that if Moscow intended to kill Ukrainian peasants, why did the Politburo cut down grain procurement plans on nine occasions from August 1932 to January 1933 (on three occasions for Ukraine), and secretly release grain for food and sowing to grain-producing areas from February to July 1933, including Ukraine which received the largest allocation? As OLGA ANDRIEWSKY notes in her *Towards a Decentred History: The Study of the Holodomor and Ukrainian Historiography*, this relief "became yet another way to determine who lived and who died" (p. 28). As Thom emphasizes, it was politics that determined who lived and who died. If everything were equal, an ethnic Ukrainian was by default more politically dangerous than, say, an ethnic Russian, because, in Moscow's view, the former was a potential separatist whereas the latter was not. The puzzling moves of Moscow have yet to be explained fully.

Another neglected question is the international environment in which the Holodomor took place. Although Thom touches on it, much remains to be done to 'contextualize' the Holodomor. Why did neither Warsaw nor Washington make a case for the famished people, for example? Was Stalin's internal policy connected to his external policy and, if so, how?

The present volume includes two more essays: ANDREAS GRAZIOSI, *The Impact of Holodomor Studies on the Understanding of the USSR* and STANISLAV KUL'CHYTS'KYI's *The Holodomor of 1932–33: How and Why?* The book as a whole, while not fully addressing some of the critical issues of scholarly disagreement on the Holodomor, is a serious work. These six essays taken together present a cogent, if incomplete, view of Holodomor research in the past thirty years.

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