

Makuch, Andrij and Sysyn, Frank E. (eds). *Contextualizing the Holodomor: The Impact of Thirty Years of Ukrainian Famine Studies*. CIUS Press, Edmonton, AL and Toronto, ON, 2015. viii + 126 pp. Notes. Works cited. \$22.95 (paperback).

THIS short volume is a high-quality primer on the state of Holodomor studies circa roughly 2013, when the conference of the same name was held at the University of Toronto. Olga Andriewsky reviews the scholarship on all the key issues: the number of deaths and the longer-term demographic losses; methods of implementation, including the blacklisting of villages and the effect of such an apparent 'death sentence' (p. 26, quoting Kul'chyts'kyi); the evidence of Stalin's own involvement and intentions; and linkage to 'colonialism and the practices of settlement and occupation' (p. 31) and the case for seeing the Holodomor as a 'cultural war' that 'marks the violent end of a particular social order: the end of a set of social structures, social institutions and social practices associated with Cossack history and culture in Ukraine' (p. 39). Andriewsky also notes the areas that have so far been under-researched: strategies of survival, the fate of exiles, 'the actual fate and history of blacklisted villages', the role of gender and the urban experience, and the role of perpetrators (p. 38).

Andrea Graziosi has written elsewhere on the strength of Ukrainian peasant resistance (at least in the early stages of collectivization) and the case for

viewing the entire period from the Bolsheviks' initial consolidation of power as the 'Great Soviet Peasant War of 1918–1934'. Here he makes many challenging points about 'The Impact of Holodomor Studies on the Understanding of the USSR'. The Holodomor was far from being a brutal prelude to modernization, as argued by Valerii Soldatenko, the Director of Ukraine's Institute of National Memory in 2010–14, and others. Soviet agriculture never worked: the compromises of 1935 allowing tiny private plots besides the collective farm behemoths simply meant that 'the divergent interests regulating these two spheres of endeavour doomed them both to atrophy' (p. 56). Only Stalin might have forced through collectivization through its failures and the Holodomor through its tragedies, but the whole Soviet leadership was blinded by ideology to the possibility for reform 'in the crucial 1953 to 1964 decade, when a peasantry that could have profited from the disbanding of collective farms still existed' (p. 63). By the Gorbachev era, there was no chance of the aged and drunken residual rural population pulling off what Deng Xiaoping achieved after 1976. But a state that could not feed itself would always be dysfunctional.

Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi makes the case for regarding the Holodomor as genocide, and for distinguishing it from both the 'All-Union Famine of 1932–33' and the holodomors (lower case 'h') in the North Caucasus and Lower Volga. As he argues, not everyone in the target group has to be killed for the label of genocide properly to apply. There may not have been the planning apparatus of the Holocaust, but this was in the nature of a punitive political terror. Stalin created the conditions and sat back. And in Ukraine, moreover, 'those who were dying were supposed to convince the living that it was crucial to work conscientiously on collective farms' (p. 93).

Norman M. Naimark looks at the case for reassessing the Ukrainian background in Raphael Lemkin's work on genocide, and at the case for a sceptical reading of the famous UN definition, influenced as it was by Soviet lobbying.

The political impact of the Holodomor was undoubted. Not everyone would agree with Kul'chyts'kyi's overall judgement, but it is noticeably stark: 'The Great Famine eliminated a threat of collapse of the USSR that could have originated with Ukraine. Two generations later, the leading role in this collapse was played not by the Shcherbyts'kyi-led government of Ukraine but by Yeltsin's Russia' (p. 110).

The world has come a long way since Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow* appeared in 1986. Conquest died in 2015; but there are now over 20,000 works on the Holodomor. This is a perfect guide for students who want to dig deeper, and an excellent summary of current debates for those taking general courses.