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The new volume *Contextualizing the Holodomor: The Impact of Thirty Years of Ukrainian Famine Studies*, edited by Andrij Makuch and Frank E. Sysyn, is an important collection of short essays, which addresses the state of Holodomor studies. The Holodomor (meaning “extermination by hunger”) was a man-made famine orchestrated by Joseph Stalin; it ravaged Ukraine in 1932-33. Scholars still disagree about the final death toll, although current demographic estimates place the number at around 3-5 million people. The book under review is not a comprehensive tome—it is only 136 pages in length, which includes abstracts, footnotes, and works cited. Nonetheless, the contributions therein, by major scholars in the field of Ukrainian studies, are impressive. The majority of the book is comprised of five essays, authored, respectively, by Olga Andriewsky, Andrea Graziosi, Françoise Thom, Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, and Norman M. Naimark. These essays were originally presented in Toronto, Ontario, in 2013, at a conference held on the eightieth anniversary of the Holodomor.

The book opens with a preface, followed by an introduction by Sysyn, professor of history at the University of Alberta and director of the Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Historical Research at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (University of Alberta). The introduction is meant to serve as a brief overview of Holodomor studies, one that enables the essays that follow to function in various methodological and temporal ways. Sysyn does a fine job of reminding us how serious study of the Holodomor did not begin until the 1980s. A major catalyst for Holodomor understanding came in 1986—this was the publication of Robert Conquest’s groundbreaking book *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. Institutional support for the recognition of the Famine came from the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, which included James Mace. Mace would go on to lead the US Commission on the Ukraine Famine, whose goal was to expand the world’s knowledge of the 1932-33 Famine in Ukraine.

Following Sysyn’s short introduction, the reader is taken on an intellectual journey to the heart of the arguments that have occupied the last thirty years of Holodomor studies. This part of the book is divided into five essays, each of which focuses on the Holodomor in a unique way. The first essay, by Andriewsky, deals with the Holodomor in Ukrainian historiography. It is no coincidence that Andriewsky’s work is the lead essay,

as it is a pivotal look at “the dominant trends in historiography, the major findings, and the current state of the field” (14). Andriewsky is careful to remind readers that the world in which Holodomor studies exist today is very different from the world in which scholars first began analyzing the Famine. Her essay is the longest in the book, which allows her to touch on multiple themes, including demographic issues, historical methods, the role of Stalin in the Holodomor, and the question of genocide. The author is at her best when she discusses the role of decentring history. Andriewsky is correct to remind us: “Curiously, what has largely been missing from the academic literature until recently are Ukrainians themselves—the millions of ordinary men and women who experienced de-kulakization, collectivization, and the Holodomor” (34). The essay concludes with a final thought on the impact of Ukrainian history, and Andriewsky rightly claims that the Holodomor was an important turning point in a long-standing history of events in Ukraine.

Graziosi’s essay is the next one in the book, and it examines the role of the Holodomor in the USSR. Specifically, Graziosi is interested in the developing relationship between Stalin and the peasants. Stalin knew that the peasants were the backbone of the economy and that if he could control them, he could control Ukraine. Further expanding on this idea, Graziosi insists on assigning the Holodomor a role, one that very neatly explains Stalin’s intentions for the peasants: “The Holodomor will be discussed as a tool that dealt with, in one stroke, both the peasant and the national ‘irritants’ to the Soviet system and Stalin’s personal power, given Ukraine’s relative autonomy” (50). Here, the author is correct to point out Stalin’s intentions to wipe out nationalists, and he later goes on to detail Soviet *korenizatsiia* practices (indigenization policies). But Graziosi does not elaborate either on the debate as to whether Stalin targeted the peasant population solely or on the debate as to whether Stalin specifically targeted Ukrainians. This sweeping view leaves little room for alternative analyses of the Holodomor, including those dealing with resistance, social structures, gender, and culture. There is still much debate on the issue among scholars of the Holodomor. Graziosi’s essay, in large part, looks at the intricate political and economic factors that motivated Stalin to lay waste to the Ukrainian countryside. There is no one more authoritative than Graziosi on issues pertaining to Stalin and the peasant question. Owing to his erudite research on the topic and the firm groundwork of his arguments, he is among the best experts in the field. Perhaps one of the most overlooked factors in the history of the peasants in the Soviet state is the role of alcohol. Graziosi touches on the question of alcohol, briefly informing us about “the increased role alcohol played as a consequence of both the peasants’ and the state’s behaviour” (53). The author’s sagacious grasp on the complexities of rural life and the political structures that underpin it is exemplary. His essay concludes with a

discussion of the awareness of the Holodomor during the 1930s in the USSR, and he aptly notes that, perhaps, both schools of thought—totalitarian and revisionist—gave too much credit to Soviet modernity.

Following Graziosi's examination of Stalin and the peasants, Thom provides a more extensive examination of Stalin and his intentions with regard to the Holodomor. Thom aims to probe the topics of Stalin's collectivization efforts and internal and external pressures as well as to provide a quasi-comparative analysis in relation to Nazi Germany and Mao Zedong's China. From the beginning, Thom makes a case for Stalin's asperous political assertions. She argues: "As a matter of fact, Stalin was pursuing rational aims through this policy: He was reinforcing his power" (80). With this, Thom is, by no means, defending Stalin's practices; rather, she is attempting to unravel Stalin's intentions in order to understand how he thought about Ukraine. In an effort to show a balanced approach, Thom includes a brief paragraph highlighting non-Russian resistance to collectivization. However, the attempt by Thom to examine internal and external pressures, as well as her comparisons with other totalitarian regimes, somewhat refutes her final claim that "I have tried to show in this paper how Stalin singlehandedly imposed his calamitous and criminal line on unenthusiastic followers and on resisting masses" (85). Thom's comparison of different totalitarian regimes drives home the notion that men like Stalin, Hitler, and Mao learned from one another but each had a unique iniquitous way in which he made his victims suffer. Here, the case in point is the Holodomor.

The fourth essay in the book, by Kul'chyts'kyi, examines the sources on which Holodomor scholarship relies, the major works that have developed as a result, and the ways in which the Holodomor differs from the Holocaust. Kul'chyts'kyi opens his essay with a requisite overview of the etymology of the word *Holodomor*. The author writes: "*Holodomor* refers to the punitive operation carried out by state security organs aimed at containing social disorder" (90). The purpose for this etymological breakdown is twofold. First, Kul'chyts'kyi is separating the Holodomor from the All-Union famine that occurred before 1932-33, thus making the situation in Ukraine *sui generis*. The second purpose is to further distinguish the Holodomor from the Holocaust. The author continues this argument for several pages then turns to an examination of the literature that has shaped Holodomor studies. Although Kul'chyts'kyi does theoretically engage with some of the foremost authorities on the Holodomor, including Conquest, Robert Davies, Stephen Wheatcroft, and Lynne Viola, the reader will be left wanting more interaction with these sources in relation to Holodomor development. The author spends the rest of the essay describing the Chekist operations in the countryside and addressing Stalin's motives. Kul'chyts'kyi does an excellent

job of detailing the “shattering blow” that was the confiscation not just of grain, but of all foodstuffs, and he uses this argument to fervently support a claim of genocide.

The final essay in the book is by Naimark, who focuses specifically on the question of genocide in relation to the Holodomor. The author is interested in situating the Holodomor within a broader understanding of genocide, in accordance with the terms laid out by Raphael Lemkin, defined in his 1944 book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Although the genocide designation question is still debated by many scholars, Naimark carefully extracts the Holodomor discussion from the context of the Soviet Union and places the event in a more global and comparative context. By doing so, Naimark is able to detail the history of genocide on a larger scale, focusing specifically on Lemkin’s efforts to promote the Genocide Convention. The author notes: “The United States Senate would not even ratify the convention until 1986, and the Congress did not accept it into law until 1988” (116). Not mentioned in the text, however, is the fact that the US Commission on the Ukraine Famine was recording testimony from Holodomor survivors during these same years. Further discussion of glasnost and perestroika policies, certainly, would have strengthened Naimark’s claims about why the late 1980s and 1990s seemed to see the culmination of genocide investigations with regard to Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, and Cambodia. Along with the examination of the question of genocide also comes a discussion of numbers. Naimark provides a much-needed objective overview of how numbers are used in genocide claims. He aptly states: “Partisans of the victims also tend to inflate numbers, as do those who use genocide as a means to foster national identity” (123). Naimark’s arguments and assertions deserve praise for objectivity and originality, but those who are not convinced by the genocide claim may take issue with his statements.

Overall, this short book contains an impressive amount of Holodomor scholarship from top researchers in the field. The chapters are well organized, and they allow topics to overlap and authors to examine a multitude of themes. However, one theme that that is not explored in the book is the experience of everyday people who lived through the Famine. Several of the authors hint that a history of everyday people’s experiences is most necessary, but none actually engage the matter in their essays. One of the largest collections of testimonies, from the US Commission on the Ukraine Famine led by Mace, is largely ignored by these scholars, leaving in resounding silence the memories of those who actually lived through, and survived, the man-made Famine. It is understandable that these essays are still attempting to understand the political and economic variables relating to the Holodomor, as new information becomes available with access to new archives and documents, but the social element is key if we are to construct

a composite picture of the Holodomor. New scholars can help with this, especially graduate students who are willing to research the Holodomor across various disciplines. The need for additional scholars is clear from the book itself, as each author cites himself or herself at least once in his or her own essay. The greatest strength of this book is, perhaps, its accessibility. The essays are relatively short and provide in-depth analysis of a number of factors relating to the Holodomor. Works cited are listed at the end of each essay, allowing for convenient referencing; and readers looking for new sources will not be disappointed. The specific use of English and Ukrainian primary and secondary sources is a particular strength, and readers will also find a host of sources in French, Italian, and Russian. This book is an essential tool for those who are studying and researching the Holodomor or related topics. Scholars working on the Holodomor, Ukraine, the Soviet Union, Stalin, and genocide should have this book in their collection.

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