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BOOK REVIEWS

After the Holodomor: the enduring impact of the great famine on Ukraine, edited by Andrea Graziosi, Lubomyr A. Hajda and Halyna Hryn, Harvard Papers in Ukrainian Studies, Cambridge, MA, Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, January 2014, xxxviii + 283 pp., $29.95 (paperback) ISBN 978-1932650105

The book purports to examine the various ways the Soviet famine of 1931–1933 affected Ukraine. A few of the chapters are valuable contributions, but most of them rehash old and often discredited claims, and its inconsistencies, errors, exaggerations, and omissions would require a long article to document fully. This review will focus on some of the most important ones.

The central argument of the book, and of the research trend it represents, is that the Soviet famine of 1931–1933 was a genocide imposed by Stalin on Ukraine and a few other regions by means of "grain deliveries" in 1932 to suppress "peasant resistance" and Ukrainian nationalism (xxxvi). The book has eight chapters on the "short-term" effects of the famine in rural and urban areas and in the North Caucasus region of Kuban', as well as reports from Poland on the famine, and the famine's relationship to nationality policies and to the great purges of the later 1930s. Seven chapters on the "long-term" effects of the famine examine the famine and the Nazi occupation, the postwar famine, the demographic effects of the famine, the destruction of certain archives, and responses to the famine by Ukrainian leaders and writers and foreign observers.

The authors disagree over whether the famine was part of an "all-[Soviet]Union famine" (10), several regional famines (xvi), or just a Ukrainian famine (most of the authors). Most of the authors consider the "Ukrainian" famine a genocide. One author even claims that people who died in Kazakhstan, the Volga, and elsewhere "were not victims of a genocide" (xxxvii). Yet another asserts that there are "no grounds" for considering the "mass repression of citizens of Ukraine" ethnic purges (9). None of the authors discuss these disagreements; they mostly write as if they had not read one another's work.

The 1933 famine affected Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Northern Caucasus, the Volga basin, the Central Blackearth Oblast', the Urals, and Western Siberia, and partly other areas, and affected towns as well as villages (Ivnitskii 2009; Liebich 1986). The fact that all of these events occurred in the same period, linked by environmental disasters and by a food rationing system that encompassed more than 40 million people by 1932–1933 (Davies 1996), means that the famine was a Soviet famine.

The chapter by Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi on famine and the Ukrainian countryside presents a disorganized narrative of the famine with many errors and inconsistencies. For example, he writes that scholars still do not know why the regime imposed the famine (3), but also that the regime resorted to the "weapon of famine" specifically against Ukraine to suppress "mass sabotage" by peasants (3), even while he acknowledges that the famine struck other regions. He also writes that famine served the policy goal of "binding the peasants" to the overall economy (4), and that the threat of famine existed from the moment the collective farms were created (6). Yet Kul'chyts'kyi's own sources, while indicating some problems in peasants' work in the farms, do not support

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his description of "mass sabotage," but show that many peasants worked conscientiously in the kolkhozy in 1932 (e.g. Kiev 1990, 441–444, 447–449, 455–456).

Kul'chyts'kyi describes the grain procurements from the 1932 harvest as "unrestricted" requisitions (6); a later article also refers to "unlimited state grain procurements" (76), and the authors generally see the procurements as having caused the famine (xvi). Yet, no author specifies the amount of grain procured in 1932 or compares it to 1931 or 1933. The regime reduced procurement plans repeatedly during 1932, and in the end procured 4.7 million tons, much less than the 7 million tons procured in 1931 and less than the 5 million tons procured in 1933 (Davies and Wheatcroft 2004, 478; Tauger 1990, 72). Such reduced procurements could have resulted in a famine only if the harvest was much smaller than that in the other years. No author addresses this conclusion except Kul'chyts'kyi, who implicitly rejects it by declaring the harvest of 1932 unknowable and dismissing my work on this topic: "the real harvest of 1932 cannot be estimated at all, despite Mark Tauger's long-term efforts" (7). Yet those efforts, based on archival data from kolkhoz annual reports, final harvest data, and agronomic evidence (that Kul'chyts'kyi does not discuss), showed that the 1932 harvest was much smaller than the official pre-harvest estimate because of environmental causes (see Tauger, "1932 harvest," and other items at http://history.wvu.edu/faculty/current-faculty/mark-b-tauger).

Kul'chyts'kyi writes that on 8 February 1933, early in the famine crisis, "Stalin set about feeding the starving populace" (10). This is the only passage in the whole book where any author admits that the regime provided food relief in 1933. Where is the "weapon of famine" if the regime was feeding the victims? He claims that the regime fed only those who worked, and the rest "perished" (10). Yet, the later chapter on demography by France Meslé et al. indicates that many older people and children survived the famine (226ff), and his own sources document regime aid to nonworkers, children, students, old people, and people extremely ill (e.g. Kiev 1990, 401–406, 414–415, 474–477).

Most of the authors repeat Kul'chyts'kyi's arguments and omissions. Several articles, for example, claim that peasants put up "mass resistance" and refused to work, and that the regime imposed the famine to "break" resistance (xvii, xxxiii, 5, 9, 72, 131–132). During the process of collectivization in early 1930 there were many protests, mostly non-violent, encompassing about three million peasants of the total population of 120 million (*Tragediia Sovetskoi Derevni* 2000, v. 2, 787–808). No evidence has shown that anything comparable took place in 1932. The "resistance" of that year was the peasants' inability to fulfill grain procurement quotas because of the 1932 crop failures, never acknowledged in this book, even though they are well documented. The authors omit evidence in their own sources showing that many peasants worked in the kolkhozy in 1932, but earned very little in grain and other payments for their work, because harvests were low (e.g. Kiev 1990, 441–444, 447–449, 455–456).

Some chapters are extremely problematic. Oleksandra Veselova in her chapter on the 1946–1947 famine claims that in 1932–1933 the Soviet government exported 6.9 million tons of grain. In fact Soviet grain exports were 1.73 million tons in 1932 and 1.68 million in 1933 (*Vneshniaia torgovlia SSSR za 1918–1940: Statisticheskii obzor* 1961, 144). She asserts that grain procurement plans "frequently exceeded the projected harvest yields," yet the plans were always a fraction of the harvest projections (even Kul'chyts'kyi noted this, 2). She states that the 1946–1947 famine resulted from drought and crop failures (185), but later that it was deliberate genocide (190). She writes that "three million starved" in the 1946–1947 famine (187), but also that it caused 369,000 deaths (186), or 628,000 deaths (187), or 1.2 million deaths (193). She describes how the USSR imported food from the United Nations Refugee and Relief Administration to

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alleviate the famine (188–189), but then denies there was relief from abroad (193). If the 1946–1947 famine resulted from drought-caused crop failure and the government imported food for relief, can this famine be called genocide?

Oleg Khlevniuk's "Comments on the Short-Term Consequences" repeats arguments from earlier chapters, but asserts (155) that the famine destroyed the "finest" and only the "morally defective" survived. This seems to imply that the peasants who worked hard to produce a larger harvest in 1933 that ended the famine, and the officials who helped organize the farms, obtained food, and distributed it to children and sick people, and risked their careers by appealing to higher authorities for more food (all documented in *Holod* and other sources) were "morally defective." His assertion implies that the "finest" response to the Soviet regime was to die in protest, but many died working to produce the 1933 harvest.

Sergei Maksudov's chapter on "dehumanization" argues that collectivization and famine made the peasants passive, obedient, and willing to work for "the lowest wages." Yet, kolkhozniki did not earn wages until the Khrushchev period, but received their income from the harvest at the end of the agricultural year. This dehumanization allegedly made peasants lose their self-respect and become lawbreakers and thieves (123). But if peasants broke laws, how effective was that intimidation? Maksudov asserts that despite World War I and the Russian Civil War, the peasants retained their "love for the land" and respect for private property (126). Yet during the Civil War the peasant majority forced the minority of "Stolypin separators," who had consolidated their former allotments as private property under the Stolypin reform, back into the old village repartition system. Most peasants clearly did not respect the separators' private property. Nonetheless, Maksudov asserts that collectivization deprived peasants of their lands and turned them into workers devoid of initiative and only capable of carrying out the directives of the authorities (130). Yet peasants retained their private plots, government plans required peasants to grow more of the crops they always grew, and officials struggled to find organizational methods to encourage initiative. Maksudov does not mention Kul'chyts'kyi's point that after the famine peasants worked diligently and expanded into bee-keeping, market gardening, orchards, raising poultry, and fish ponds (8).

Hennadii Yefimenko's chapter on nationality policy in Ukraine during and after the famine presents evidence that Ukrainian leader Mykola Skrypnyk committed suicide in 1933 not directly in response to the famine, but after he was hounded by Pavel Postyshev and other officials for nationalist views (77–79). Yet, Yefimenko asserts that the "Bolshevik" regime imposed *korenizatsiia* (indigenization), the extensive program of promoting national groups, languages, and culture that lasted to the end of the Soviet regime, in order "to **liquidate** [my emphasis] the historical traditions of the Ukrainian people" (78). He criticizes townspeople sent to organize collective farms in 1933 for ignorance of "Ukrainian culture" (85). He claims that the "Bolsheviks" wanted to "destroy Ukrainian traditions, the distinct features of their daily existence, and their historical memory" (86), yet he also admits that Ukrainization, the application of *korenizatsiia* in Ukraine, was never suspended (88). How could the Soviet regime both "destroy" and promote Ukrainian culture at the same time in the same place?

Yuri Shapoval's chapter on the famine's influence on the great purges in Ukraine provides more details on the OGPU's actions during and after the famine to enforce grain procurements, expose counter-revolutionary nationalist groups, purge Ukrainian educational institutions and transform the Ukrainian writing system to make it more like Russian, and purge the Ukrainian Communist leadership. But he asserts that Soviet leaders imposed famine and these purges to "rein in" Ukrainization by "liquidating" the

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country's "nation-building potential," which he claims was never revived (107), in spite of the establishment of Ukraine in 1991.

Robert Kuśnierz's chapter on the famine in Ukrainian cities describes tragic cases of starvation, but ignores Kul'chyts'kyi's evidence about famine relief (15–17). He describes the internal passport system introduced in 1933 as serfdom (18), and seems to accept the view of a Ukrainian engineer (25ff) that the famine was an effort by the "proletarian" city to "subjugate" the conservative countryside. Yet, his own evidence shows that many peasants left villages for towns and industrial sites and returned to their villages when conditions improved (22–23). Kuśnierz does not explain why peasants in towns would return to villages if conditions there were so bad.

Karel Berkhoff's chapter on the famine and the German occupation discusses Nazi repressive measures to starve Ukrainian towns and presents some evidence that people viewed these actions through the memory of their experiences in 1933. Nazi propaganda created the impression that Kyiv was starving because the peasants were retaliating for the requisitions of 1933. The chapter also refers (176) to a Nazi poster showing a burned-out starving city reaching for expensive flour guarded by rich peasants, which reminded townspeople of their fears in 1933. These fears had also motivated the harsh grain procurements of 1932–1933.

Brian Boeck's chapter on the famine in Kuban', a partly Ukrainian region in the Russian republic across the Sea of Azov from Ukraine, challenges the Ukrainian nationalist interpretation of the famine. He shows that Ukrainization in this region was unpopular and faced resistance, and that the infamous 14 December 1932 decree connecting the famine in the North Caucasus with Ukrainization was based on one report by a local official and the rebelliousness of a single Cossack *stanitsa* [village], rather than on widespread Ukrainian nationalist opposition to the regime in the region.

The chapter by Meslé et al. on the demography of the famine shows that previous estimates of famine deaths ignored the decline in the birth rate it caused. On this basis Meslé et al. estimate excess deaths in Ukraine from the famine at 2.6 million, fewer than any previous estimate (247). They also argue that World War II and Nazi and Soviet repressions in 1939–1949 brought much greater population losses and long-term effects than the famine (230). These losses make isolating the demographic effects of the 1933 famine difficult because groups that had high mortality during the famine also lost many people during the 1940s. Yet, Valeriy Vasylyev's chapter (below) puts famine mortality at 6–7 million (262), ignoring the findings of Meslé et al.

Hennadii Boriak discusses how Soviet authorities destroyed certain archives that had sources on the famine, including the archive of the Ukrainian Radnarkom (the top central Ukrainian government administration). Boriak asserts that this destruction "excludes any possibility for adequate representation and evaluation of the past" (212). Yet many valuable historical studies have been written about poorly documented topics. Sources on the 1931–1933 famine are abundant, even without those archives. The archive of the politburo of the Ukrainian Communist Party, held in the RGASPI archive in Moscow, duplicates much of the Radnarkom archive. Yet omission of contrary evidence, such as comparison of the actual amounts of grain procurements in 1931–1933 or the kolkhoz annual reports that prove that the 1932 harvest was very small, also interferes with "adequate representation and evaluation of the past."

Valeriy Vasylyev's chapter about post-Stalin Ukrainian leaders and the famine is valuable for its discussion of efforts by Ukrainians living in the US to commemorate the famine, and their success in persuading certain US senators and congressmen to define the famine as genocide in American political discourse. Finally, Volodymyr Dibroba's chapter on

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Ukrainian literature and the famine evaluates how writers have struggled with the emotional difficulty of presenting the famine and people's memory of it with references to relevant literature outside Ukraine.

This book is very uneven; it has a few genuinely scholarly chapters or sections, but most of the chapters make misleading, inconsistent, and often bizarre claims based on a narrow source base that excludes important contrary evidence. The book is an illustration of the inadequacies of research intended to support the "Ukrainian genocide" interpretation of the famine rather than a contribution to research on the famine itself and its effects.

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Mark B. Tauger
West Virginia University
mtauger@wvu.edu
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Genocide on the Drina River, by Edina Bećirević, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2014, 237 pp., $58.50 (HC), ISBN 978-0300192582

Since its inception in 1943 the concept of genocide has generated more debate than most other terms associated with organized violence. This particularly intensified after 1948 when genocide was institutionalized in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as the ultimate form of crime. Hence Article 2 of the Convention defines this crime as an act "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." What is interesting in this very broad definition is that the term "in part" is rather ambiguous, allowing for a great variation in the scale of destruction. While it is very clear that the mass extermination of groups such as what occurred in Nazi Germany, in 1994 Rwanda, or in 1904–1907 South West Africa easily fit this definition, many other instances of mass murder are generally contested. What exactly would count as "destruction in part?" Does this refer to the clear intention to annihilate an entire group which was not achieved because of the group's resistance or external intervention? Or perhaps this implies that the aim always was partial destruction in order to frighten the group or to force them to leave a particular territory? More importantly, this definition does not tell us how substantive the "part" has to be. Is it enough to kill a few hundred individuals or must it be thousands or hundreds of thousands? Furthermore, Article 2 of the UN Convention does not include mass murder for ideological, political, or class reasons. This legal formulation leaves no room either for Stalin's 1938/1939

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