

# Preface

When, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Ukrainian diaspora communities in the West initiated plans to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33, they encountered not only a lack of awareness among the general public, but also a dearth of scholarship on the Famine. Although Sovietology was a privileged field of research in North America and Western Europe and the study of the Soviet Union of the 1920s and 1930s was at that time being transferred from the discipline of Soviet politics to that of Soviet history, very little scholarly work had been devoted to the Famine. Indeed one of the most prominent scholars on Soviet agriculture and the peasantry, R.W. Davies, commented that most Western accounts of Soviet development had treated the famine of 1932-33 as a secondary event, though he believed it should occupy a central place in the history of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Such neglect of the Famine to a considerable degree explains the tremendous resonance in 1986-87 in scholarly publications and the mass media of Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, which had come out of the Famine research project at the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University.<sup>2</sup>

One of the reasons so little attention had been devoted to the Famine was that up until the late 1980s the Soviet Union denied any major famine had occurred in 1932-33 and denounced all those who saw the Soviet authorities as culpable for the Famine. Only under the influence of glasnost in the late 1980s did discussions of the Famine appear in the press, and only in August 1990 was an international symposium devoted to this issue held in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of a Ukrainian state have radically changed the environment in which the Holodomor (Extermination by Hunger), as the Ukrainian Famine has been increasingly referred to both in Ukraine and abroad, is commemorated and studied.

In the twenty-five years that have passed since the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the Ukrainian Famine, the level of international public awareness of the tragedy has increased dramatically. While the Ukrainian

diaspora has played a significant role in this process, the Ukrainian government has played an ever greater role by sponsoring official commemorations of the Holodomor and raising the issue of its recognition as a genocide by foreign governments and international organizations. Although the number of Holodomor scholars in North America and Europe is still not great, a substantial body of literature has emerged, expressing varying viewpoints on the classification, origins, dimensions, and consequences of that great tragedy. Here too, however, the major change to the study of the Famine has come with the opening up of archives, the gathering of eyewitness testimonies, and the publication of research in Ukraine and other areas of the former Soviet Union.

In planning a scholarly conference for Toronto, an organizing committee consisting of members of the Toronto office of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta, the Petro Jacyk Program for the Study of Ukraine at the University of Toronto's Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, and the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre in Toronto decided to concentrate on highlighting the contribution of Ukrainian scholars in amassing source materials and conducting research on the Famine as well as on the role of the Holodomor as a public issue in Ukraine. The co-operation of the Toronto Branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the Buduchnist Credit Union Foundation made organizing the conference possible.

The committee was pleased that a number of eminent scholars from Ukraine were able to speak at "The Holodomor of 1932-33: A 75th-Anniversary Conference on the Ukrainian Famine-Genocide" on Thursday, November 1, 2007. The session also benefited greatly from the contributions of the North American academics who served as discussants. Mykola Riabchuk (Ukrainian Centre for Cultural Studies, Kyiv) spoke on "The Famine in Contemporary Ukrainian Politics and Society," followed by a commentary by Dominique Arel (Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa). Liudmyla Grynevych (Institute of the History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) presented a paper on "The Present State of Ukrainian Historiography on the Holodomor and Prospects for Its Development," with Terry Martin (Harvard University) commenting. Hennadii Boriak (then at the State Committee on Archives of Ukraine, now at the Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) spoke on "Holodomor Archives and Sources: The State of the Art."

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1. See his review of *Harvest of Sorrow* in *Detente*, nos. 9-10 (1987): 44-5.

2. See Frank Sysyn, "The Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33: The Role of the Ukrainian Diaspora in Research and Public Discussion," in *Studies in Comparative Genocide*, ed. Levon Chorbajian and George Shirinian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 190-93, 208-13.

Iryna Matiash (Ukrainian Research Institute of Archival Affairs and Document Studies) delivered a paper on "Archives in Russia on the Famine in Ukraine." Lynne Viola (University of Toronto) commented on the latter two presentations. A webcast of the entire conference and the lively interchange there between Ukrainian and North American scholars and the academics and members of the public present can be viewed at <[http://hosting.epresence.tv/munk/archives/2007\\_nov1\\_633295348322877500/?archiveID=32](http://hosting.epresence.tv/munk/archives/2007_nov1_633295348322877500/?archiveID=32)>.

The Ukrainian presenters have kindly revised their papers for publication in the *Harriman Review*. This special issue constitutes one component of the commemoration of the Holodomor by the Ukrainian Studies Program at the Harriman Institute. The Ukrainian Studies Program is also sponsoring the conference

"Visualizing the Holodomor: The Ukrainian Famine-Genocide of 1932-1933 on Film" on December 2, 2008. The Program is grateful to Andrij Makuch of the Toronto office of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies for serving as guest editor of this special issue, and to Ronald Meyer, editor of the *Harriman Review*, for his expeditious editing of the issue.

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