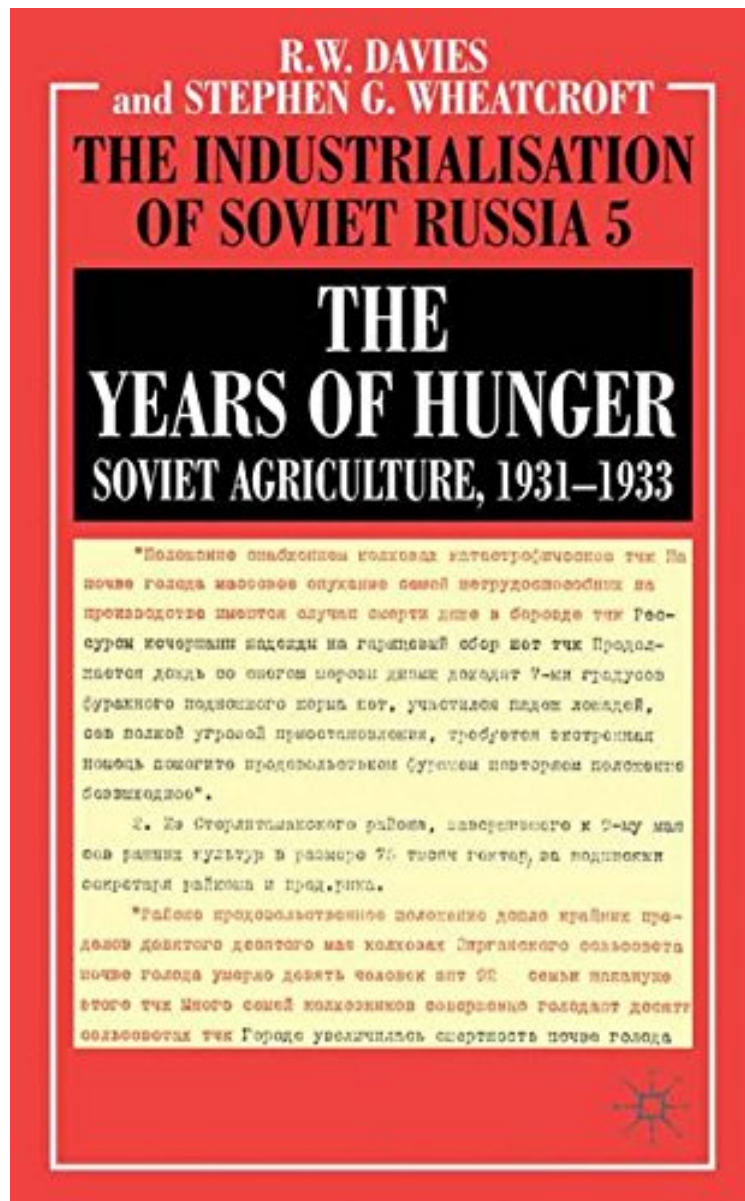


[Download] The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933 (The Industrialization of Soviet Russia) (Vol 5)

## The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933 (The Industrialization of Soviet Russia) (Vol 5)

R. Davies, S. Wheatcroft

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R. Davies, S. Wheatcroft : The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933 (The Industrialization of Soviet Russia) (Vol 5) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The

22 of 27 people found the following review helpful. By far the best book on the subject By Walt Byars "The Years of Hunger" by Stephen Wheatcroft and R.W. Davies, two of the top historians of the USSR, is far and away the best book on the famine of 1931-33. Simply put, no one has done the archival research these two have, no one has put the pieces in place like these two have. The book is a gripping account, almost like a narrative, of the famine and the Soviet political culture, as well as the mentality of the populace. The early chapters describe the major state programs of collectivisation, dekulakisation, and crop collection. The later chapters examine the nature of the Sovkhoz and Kolkhoz, the death of livestock, as well as a concluding chapter rebutting various arguments made by political ideologues about the famine and putting it in historical perspective. The many and varied factors causing the famine are demonstrated to a high degree. Overall, and quite generally, the famine resulted from bad policy rushed into quickly. However, this isn't the whole story. The famine was as bad as it was because of a whole slew of phenomena that corresponded with the bad policy. Policy limiting the extent of fallow land and mandated overcultivation, for example, severely reduced flexibility of planting times which became disastrous when combined with odd weather conditions. The bungling of grain collections by the state is explored in excruciating, but gripping, detail. Wheatcroft and Davies frequently recount series of communication between officials, or proposed policy documents as they circulate through the hierarchy, describing the conditions and proposing solutions, and the response of the higher ups. The top leadership comes off looking somewhat bad on net, although there are a number of examples of people like Stalin making the right decision in the face of incompetent subordinates. The caricature of Stalin as tyrant who would allow no criticism is thoroughly demolished. From what I gathered from the book, the authoritarian nature of the political system and restrictions on/intimidation of people who would potentially speak up did not seem to be as big of a problem as it was in some other authoritarian nations with major famines. One problem is their criticism of Mark Tauger's arguments about the role of plant disease that was spreading throughout the area (somewhat independent of state policy). Tauger (correctly) presents this as a small but significant cause, whereas Wheatcroft and Davies would have it be insignificant. However, their argument against Tauger is completely incoherent. This should be obvious when one reads it, but you can also find Tauger's review of this book on the Economic History website. Although there are only a few pages dedicated to refuting alternative explanations of the famine, this book serves to utterly destroy right wing (the famine was deliberate) and left wing (it was caused by reactionary saboteurs) myths about the famine. There is no evidence of an intentional famine at all, and the book recounts the serious attempts of the state to help mitigate and eliminate the famine. The authors even quote a personal correspondence with Robert Conquest in which he concedes (contrary to what he got famous for saying for decades) that the famine wasn't intentional. While only a few Ukrainian nationalist cranks hold this view, the book clearly destroys the idea of a famine concentrated only or overwhelmingly in the Ukraine. They show that 5.5-6.5M died in the famine, rather than some higher estimates. While they don't explicitly mention them, this book refutes the favorite claims of certain Stalinists about the famine. To give one example, Douglas Tottle has tried to show the extent of sabotage by giving a few examples of saboteurs killing livestock and attributing the entire decline to sabotage. The chapter in this book on livestock, however, shows that the livestock starved in the famine itself! They also show how the condition they were kept in in state and collective farms contributed to the deaths of livestock.

6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Fine study of the famine years By William Podmore In this remarkable book, Davies and Wheatcroft describe and analyse the dreadful famine in the Soviet Union in 1931-33. They show that 1931 saw an unusually cold spring, delaying the sowing, and unusually hot weather in May, June and July, bringing a drought and cutting grain yields. 1932's March was even colder than 1931's, May and June even hotter. They note that in February 1933 "the Politburo authorised the issue of over 800,000 tons of grain as seed to North Caucasus, Ukraine, the Lower-Volga Region, Urals and Kazakhstan; and a further 400,000 tons was issued before the end of the spring sowing. ... Between February and July no fewer than thirty-five Politburo decisions and Sovnarkom decrees - all secret or top-secret - authorised in total the issue of 320,000 tons of grain for food." This included 194,000 tons of food aid for Ukraine. A total of 'nearly 2 million tons' was issued for seed, food and fodder. Davies and Wheatcroft provide detailed data on the state's seed, food and fodder loans and aid between February and July 1933 in their Tables 22, 23 and 24. They also show that "Considerable efforts were made to supply grain to hungry children." They conclude that Robert Conquest was wrong to assert that Stalin 'wanted a famine', that 'the Soviets did not want the famine to be coped with successfully' and that the Ukrainian famine was 'deliberately inflicted for its own sake'. Their book refutes the big lie that the famine was a holocaust of the people of Ukraine.

This book examines the Soviet agricultural crisis of 1931-1933 which culminated in the major famine of 1933. It is the first volume in English to make extensive use of Russian and Ukrainian central and local archives to assess the extent and causes of the famine. It reaches new conclusions on how far the famine was 'organized' or 'artificial', and compares it with other Russian and Soviet famines and with major twentieth century famines elsewhere. Against this background, it discusses the emergence of collective farming as an economic and social system.

'A truly remarkable contribution to research into this important field.' - Robert Conquest, Hoover Institution s of The Soviet Economy in Turmoil, 1929-1930 (volume 3 of the Industrialisation of Soviet Russia) 'Like the first two volumes in this series, this volume is a model of vigorous scholarship. Davies' research is impeccable, and simply unsurpassed in Western Sovietology. The writing is clear and often gripping.' - Lynne Viola, Russian History 'If the purpose of understanding the past is to better understand the present, then this book will be important reading for all interested in the Soviet industrialisation process and both its short-term and long-term outcomes. This book is a worthy fourth volume to the Industrialisation of Soviet Russia series. It is surely destined to become the standard work on its subject.' - Robert C. Stuart, American Historical 'This volume enormously enhances our understanding of Stalin's great breakthrough. Surely this is required reading for all concerned with the Stalin years.' - Hirokai Kuromiya, Russian s of Crisis and Progress in the Soviet Economy, 1931-1933 (volume 4 of the Industrialisation of Soviet Russia) 'Davies thus manages to convey not only the substance but also the passion of policymaking, not only the (generally) failing living standards of most soviet citizens but also their strategies for coping when they could cope; and not only the amplitudes of production but also the texture of the time. The complimentary volume on agriculture is eagerly awaited.' - Lewis Siegelbaum, The Russian 'With his usual calm approach, free of politicising, the author, firmly grounded in his subject, describes in detail all the main aspects of the economic history of the three years in which Soviet society survived another crisis and the foundations were laid for future economic growth.' - Svobodnaya mysl (Moscow) 'Robert Davies is unquestionably among the most prolific and distinguished scholars in the field of history and the leading authority on Soviet industrialisation. His multi-volume history of the Soviet economy during the 1930s is not only a mammoth undertaking, but one of great importance to our understanding of Stalinism and Soviet history more generally.' - David L. Hoffmann '...Davies has made another enormous contribution to our understanding of Soviet industrialisation. We eagerly look forward to future volumes in this series.' - David L. Hoffmann, Slavic '... anyone who wants to follow in detail the economic and demographic history of the rural transformation of Soviet Russia can do no better than consult this magisterial volume.' - Peter Gatrell, Business History About the Author R. W. DAVIES is Emeritus Professor of Soviet Economic Studies in the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, UK, of which he was the foundation director. He has published many books and articles on Soviet history, including Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution, Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era, Soviet Economic Development from Lenin to Khrushchev, and four previous volumes in the series The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia. He collaborated with E. H. Carr on vols. 9 and 10 of The History of Soviet Russia. He is an honorary life member of the British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies. STEPHEN G. WHEATCROFT is Professor in Russian and Soviet History at the University of Melbourne, Australia, where he was the First Director of the Centre for Russian and Euroasian Studies. He has written many articles on agriculture and population in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.