

Red Harvest: The Terror Famine in Soviet Ukraine

Michael Cherkas

NBM

Hardcover \$19.99 (144pp)

978-1-68112-320-2

Red Harvest is a gripping historical graphic novel covering the oppression and starvation of Ukrainian farmers under Soviet rule.

Framed by the memories of Mykola, a Ukrainian immigrant to Canada, the book recounts Josef Stalin's forced collectivization results, which resulted in the loss of farms, food, and family members. As Soviet influence permeated Ukrainian villages, neighbors and families turned on each other; some, like the husband of Mykola's sister Nadya, were made responsible for reporting farmers who didn't cooperate. Those who survived these circumstances were inspired to inform the world of their horrific experiences.

The book represents varied points of view: the farmers united against Soviet theft; communist true believers, who saw short-term hardships and sacrifices by peasants as necessary to bring about utopia; and those with no real loyalties except whatever advanced them personally. Poignant moments occur throughout, with several caused by Nadya's shifting loyalties between her husband and her family.

Elements of Ukrainian culture that were subsumed by Soviet rule—including Kupala Night, in which people jump over fire and flowered wreaths are worn by unmarried women—wend in. And the scratchy pen-and-ink art style, which represents a full range of dynamic action and subtle facial expressions, befits the rough-hewn Ukrainian peasant setting.

Exposing some of the roots of Russo-Ukrainian hostilities, *Red Harvest* is a moving and enlightening historical graphic novel.

PETER DABBENE (November / December 2023)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.