

Famine in Modern History

Instructor: Olga Andriewsky (oandriewsky@trentu.ca)

Course Code: HIST-3625H:

When Taken: Winter 2023

Jan 31 - Irish Famine

1. One of the best documented famines, significant % of population lost
2. Long Standing debate about responsibility and culpability
3. Questions - subsistence/man made, malthus/sen, inevitability/bad luck

RTE Documentary

1. 1/3 of the pop relies on potatoes as almost sole food
2. Decades proceeding were the enlightenment
3. Native catholic poor Irish case as inferior and subservient
 - a. Subsumed in the act of the union
4. 95% of land belongs to major protestant landlords
5. Significant food exports to britain
6. Decade or 2 before famine was a population surge due to potato nutrition meaning they started to move into new areas
7. Noted vitality of culture, still had languages in remote and poor areas
8. Aspects of culture disappear during the famine
9. Idea that the system of potato dependence, poverty, poor housing, doomed them (inevitable argument)
10. Belgians and the french take action to prevent starvation - prevent exports, non food uses, open soup kitchens
11. Peel wants to put in relief programs, UK oriented towards Laissez faire economics
 - a. Temp relief committees, provide corn, must work to get this corn
 - b. A success, avoids famine deaths, but criticized
12. Russel then takes over in June 1846, blight returns killing most of the crop - 1846 is the year of sustained famine
13. Government concerned at the amount of money going to Irish relief, see it as an opportunity to modernize Ireland and reduce its population
 - a. 46-47 winter they stop distributing corn, food prices surge, public works wages are cut
14. In early stages they were rioting, island is highly militarized so it was contained
15. Famine seen as an intervention of god
16. Evictions push people into town and cities bringing disease, crime and new tensions
17. Donations, catholic solidarity
18. Public works close, soup kitchens opened based on a loan, increased taxes on debt ridden landlord class
 - a. Soup kitchens take 3 months to set up
19. 1847 the blight doesn't return, but limited potatoes were planted, britain declares famines over and closes soup kitchens

Discussion

1. Government really only reacted due to the media coverage public image
 - a. How does the famine get portrayed, images are mediated
2. Perception as the Irish as lazy and overpopulated
3. Structural violence - the institutional arrangement means the decks are stacked
4. Don't want to sink the price of wheat by importing it, but importing corn will not affect wheat prices
5. The most vulnerable parts of the population don't get into workhouse
6. Keep an eye on gender in famines
7. More emigrate than die
8. Rebellion is always the beginning stage, later they don't have the energy to

Feb. 7 Famines & the Origins of the Third World

1. Argument of a system of murder
2. Laissez faire economics
3. Rise in prices, not a rise in income
4. Britain gets rid of its corn laws - no longer protecting British agriculture so cheap imports can happen
 - a. The world starts feeding Britain
5. In the 3 years before famine they have good harvests but they no longer keep food in stores
6. Coming of the British destroyed the traditional system of grain reserves
7. Chinese government is broke and puts money towards defense rather than putting money in irrigation systems and grain transport systems
8. Spike in the # of famines during British occupation
9. Structure of domination "inevitability" of famine gives them the justification to not intervene
10. In most cases of famine it is other people being starved - not starving yourself, minorities or colonial populations
11. Intent of colonialism was to benefit themselves
12. During famines there is an increase in voluntary enslavement, suicide, property crime, prostitution
13. Destruction of social structures and familial bonds
14. Selling into slavery and prostitution - increasing power imbalance

Feb 14: Clearing the Plains

1. Last one of the conquest famines
2. Building on research from Indigenous historians, only he gets noticed
3. Movement towards stating positionality
4. There are not good records of excess deaths because the colonial administration wasn't interested in recording them
5. People often move during famines
6. Bovid TB also contributed to the deaths of the bison
7. The prime minister's take on the ministry of Indigenous peoples - demonstrates how important it is
8. Social Darwinism - agriculture is the future, adapt or die

9. Obsession with people having to work for their food - fear of welfare cheats is characteristic of the english
 - a. This happened in the west and ireland
10. Rationhouse is a system of control and domination that reinforces hierarchies
11. Famine as a system of control. Loose political leverage is you are starving to death
12. Potentially genocide not as an event but rather as a relationship

Feb 28: The Holodomor

1. Exam
 - a. Discuss 5 things you learned about famine in modern history
 - b. Other choices which are more typical
 - c. Talk about 6 of the famines
 - d. Important to give examples
2. This is part of act 2
3. More than just the criminal negligence we see in other famines
4. Areas most resistant to the bolsheviks suffered the worst during the famine
5. Grain targets are set so high in Ukraine specifically so that it almost guarantees a famine
6. Demonization of the kulaks
7. They seal the borders
8. Stalin's coverup campaign
9. People honestly believed in revolution
10. System of stores where people could bring in their valuables for food

March 7: The Nazi Hunger Plan

1. Focus on the heroic war deaths rather than starvation death
2. In the soviet union they talked about the siege of leningrad rather than the hunger plan
3. Plan was very flawed and ineffective - food goes on the black market rather than back to germany
4. Whole underground food network the nazis were not able to control
5. Plan to avoid starvation in germany of humiliation like the turnip winter
6. Naval blockades preventing food imports
7. Lebensraum - connection to the american west
8. Question of if food is a driving factor of the nazi plans
9. Racialize issue of food and link it to power and prestige
10. Part of a transformative political project
11. Concern of the categorization of famine crimes as hierarchical
12. Also a focus on perpetrators - suffer just as much regardless of the intention
13. More now to prevent families rather than to prosecute them

March 14: Bengal

1. Exam
 - a. 1 essay, choice of 3 questions
 - b. 6-8 pages
 - c. One option is 5 things learned in the course
2. Controversy about churchill's role in it
3. Finish with De Wall act 2

4. Even the produces were affected by the famine
5. FAD famines - food availability decline
 - a. Famines typically start by environmental shock and then are mismanaged
6. Japan had invaded up to burma - right on the border
7. Entitlement famines - unequal suffering there is food but no access
8. Starts the panic - the fear of war
9. Moderate shortfall in production lead to a lack of market release and panic
10. Britain is dependent on imports
11. Japan-occupied areas often have famine - including Henan province in china
12. Famine develops over a long period of time

March 21: The Great Leap Forward

1. Can reference films and presentation for the exam
2. It is a hard topic to research
3. State induced famine, during peacetime
4. Other difference from the Holodomor is the canteens - complete control over food and the destruction of family structures
5. Taking away pots and materials needed to collect and cook food
6. Would democracy and free press stop famines? Opinions mixed
7. People cant work so they don't get food
8. Surprisingly little disease
9. Not a minority population

Video

1. Wanted to speed up industrialization and collectivization - this speed was pushed by mao
2. Food was allocated to communes, peasants were unable to leave their villages
3. Unmeetable quotas
4. Crop experimentation to produce more food - these practices had been deemed ineffective, but they were not able to resist
5. Told to smelt all scrap metal
6. Urban populations did better, but were still negatively affected

March 28: Ethiopia

1. Get take home exam questions next week and talk about details
2. Straddles act 3 and 4
3. Last of the big famines
4. Tigray is a separatist region, eritrea separated
5. Environmental shock, war, government mismanagement
6. Carter wants to provide relief, regan really doesn't
7. Carter administration only wanted to provide immediate famine relief not the development aid that ethiopia really wants
8. Famine worse in Tigray - a place where there is a rebel moment
9. Taking aid and using it for their own political purpose
10. Need a willingness to provide relief

11. Hardtots get aid to people when food is a weapon of war

History of Modern Famine Relief

1. Each of these phases sees an increase in funding for the programs
2. Local relief often form of victorian soup kitchen
 - a. Focus on proving need, avoiding dependence
3. India famine codes
4. Red cross - armenian relief, relief to russia
 - a. Started as relief to soldiers
 - b. First international relief
5. OXFAM (1942) - sent relief to greece with is being starved by the Nazis
6. Marshal plan - avoid famine through development aid
7. UN recognize food as a human right in 1948
8. UN world food program in the 1960s
 - a. Pushed by eisenhower
9. Live aid (1985)
 - a. Tipping point where aid becomes refined
10. Famine early warning network (1985)
 - a. Monitoring to determine where there is a likely crisis
11. Creation of the ICC (1988-2000)
 - a. Nobody charged for famine except as part of war crimes
 - b. Raises possibility of charging for it however
12. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (2014)
 - a. Levels are
 - i. None
 - ii. Stressed
 - iii. Crisis
 - iv. Emergency
 - v. Catastrophe
 - b. Two units of classification - area based and household group based
 - c. Look at when parts of the population are affected
 - d. Famine
 - i. 1 in 5 lack adequate food AND malnutrition is greater than 30%
 1. When starvation and death are evident
13. New system of monetary deposits right into people's bank accounts
14. More people are paying attention

April 4: The End of Famines

1. De Waal's periodization - discussing act 4
2. Decline in catastrophic famines, not no people hungry
3. Number of people dying has significantly dropped
4. Food production has gone up
5. Increased humanitarianism
6. Counter-humanitarianism
 - a. Goes against the idea that all people should be helped

7. Famine destroys lives and culture

Exam

1. Give examples from 5 of the famines
2. Choose one of the three essay options
3. Don't need footnotes, refer to them by title
4. Do not use direct quotes
5. Have page numbers
6. Can refer to student presentations and videos shown in class