



# Famine: A Short History

*Cormac Ó Gráda*

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## **Famine: A Short History** Cormac Ó Gráda

Famine remains one of the worst calamities that can befall a society. Mass starvation--whether it is inflicted by drought or engineered by misguided or genocidal economic policies--devastates families, weakens the social fabric, and undermines political stability. Cormac Ó Gráda, the acclaimed author who chronicled the tragic Irish famine in books like *Black '47 and Beyond*, here traces the complete history of famine from the earliest records to today.

Combining powerful storytelling with the latest evidence from economics and history, Ó Gráda explores the causes and profound consequences of famine over the past five millennia, from ancient Egypt to the killing fields of 1970s Cambodia, from the Great Famine of fourteenth-century Europe to the famine in Niger in 2005. He enriches our understanding of the most crucial and far-reaching aspects of famine, including the roles that population pressure, public policy, and human agency play in causing famine; how food markets can mitigate famine or make it worse; famine's long-term demographic consequences; and the successes and failures of globalized disaster relief. Ó Gráda demonstrates the central role famine has played in the economic and political histories of places as different as Ukraine under Stalin, 1940s Bengal, and Mao's China. And he examines the prospects of a world free of famine.

This is the most comprehensive history of famine available, and is required reading for anyone concerned with issues of economic development and world poverty.

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