



## News Release

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### **Famine Lecture Presents Findings of Holodomor Demography Research Team**

October 9, 2010 —The 2010 Annual Ukrainian Famine Lecture was delivered by Ukrainian-American demographer Oleh Wolowyna at the University of Toronto on 9 November. The presentation, titled “Demographic Assessment of the Holodomor Within the Context of the 1932–1933 Famine in the USSR,” was notable for the solid treatment of its two main points. Firstly, it established a thoroughly credible figure for Holodomor mortality, and secondly, it demonstrated clearly that the famine conditions in Ukraine during the year 1933 were exceptional compared to other parts of the USSR.

The former addresses a long-standing need to determine a fact-based ‘consensus’ figure for the number of Holodomor victims, while the latter roundly refutes the claims of Russian (and some Ukrainian) politicians and historians that the situation in Ukraine in 1933 was not substantially different than that of other Soviet republics.

The Lecture was sponsored by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, the Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, the Petro Jacyk Program for the Study of Ukraine, the Canadian Foundation for Ukrainian Studies, and the Toronto Branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. This event has been held every year since 1998, when James Mace delivered the inaugural lecture.

The speaker began with some background information about his work on a Holodomor research project that started in 2008 with a small group of demographers (including Omelian Rudnytsky, Nataliia Levchuk, and Pavlo Shevchuk) at the Institute of Demography, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. His lecture presentation was, in fact, co-authored with Rudnytsky and Levchuk.

In dealing with Holodomor mortality, Dr. Wolowyna first underlined the need for a solid figure for Famine victims and stated that the poorly-formed 10 million figure recently in vogue has actually had a negative impact on the credibility of the Holodomor case. As an example he cited the difficulties encountered by the Ukrainian World Congress at the UN, where it has NGO representative status, when challenged to substantiate the 10 million figure for Holodomor deaths that it had been citing.

The speaker took great care to clarify the definition used by the research team for Holodomor losses and the methodology it employed to arrive at its figures. The former was summed up as “‘additional’ deaths due to hunger versus all deaths” in the period 1932–1934 within the Ukrainian SSR. These represent direct losses. Indirect losses, specifically lost births, are a separate issue that should be treated distinctly. The methodology used took the Soviet censuses of 1926 and 1939 as start and end points. After “adjustments” to the figures for these two “pillars,” the team then did a year-by-year population reconstruction based on the number of births and deaths (and factoring in migration figures).

The final figure reached for direct Holodomor losses in Ukraine came to 3,902,700—100,700 in 1932, 3,597,500 in 1933, and 204,500 in 1934. This was well within the range of other scholarly estimates of

direct Holodomor mortality, which had been noted earlier by the speaker (with the gamut running from 2.6 to 5.2 million). Dr. Wolowyna cited the indirect losses (i.e., lost births) for that period as 988,000, resulting in a figure of 4,890,700 for total losses.

The presentation also examined how this fared with famine mortality in other parts of the USSR. A comparison of figures for direct losses per 1,000 population was particularly revealing, as it showed that in 1933—the main famine year—Ukraine’s famine mortality rate was 118/1,000 compared to 22/1,000 for Russia overall and 45/1,000 for Southern Russia, the agricultural region of the Russian SFSR (which included the heavily-Ukrainian populated Kuban) that experienced that republic’s most significant famine losses. The speaker also displayed a graph for mortality in Ukraine, Southern Russia and Belarus that showed the figures for Ukraine to be exceptional and much higher than in other parts of the Soviet Union (with the exception of Kazakhstan, where the famine had its own particular dynamic).

The speaker presented additional tables and graphs (e.g., “Life Expectancy at Birth”) that rounded out the demographical profile of Ukraine and the USSR during the famine years. He also went on to raise the question of whether the Famine in Ukraine was genocide, citing degrees, statements, and actions that present the case for such a designation. He noted, however, that this was not his area of specialization and that his overarching concern was to “build bridges between the demographic data and the historical record.”

Dr. Wolowyna and his colleagues plan to continue their research and will be publishing some of their results in the near future. They plan to investigate famine losses in the Soviet Union by nationality, as well as estimate more precisely Holodomor losses in the Kuban region. The research plan also includes a detailed analysis of Holodomor losses in Ukraine down to the oblast level. In time, their research materials, like data and unique scanned documents, will be posted on the Internet and deposited at the Harvard University Library, where they will be available for consultation and further research.

**Total losses (direct and indirect) by republic, 1932–1934 (in thousands)**

	Direct losses	Lost births	Total losses
USSR	7,668	4,217	11,885
Ukraine	3,903	988	4,891
Russia	2,524	1,706	4,230
S. Russia	1,918	1,336	3,254
Kazakhstan	1,014	162	1,176
Uzbekistan	46	6	52
Belarus	39	5	44
Tadjikistan	34	4	37
Kyrgyzstan	28	3	31
Turkmenistan	26	3	29
Azerbaijan	15	2	16
Georgia	7	2	9
Armenia	5	3	8

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**Photo**(by Oksana Zakydalsky):Dr. Oleh Wolowyna.

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