

Transcript of Speech by;
Mr. Taras Zalusky
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Ukrainian Canadian Congress

At an event commemorating the 1932-33 Ukrainian Famine (the Holodomor)

Parliament Hill
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Holodomor survivors, Your Eminence Bishop Andriy, Bishop Stephan, Reverend fathers, Hon. Members of Parliament and Senators, Charge D'affaires Khomenko, distinguished guests

Bonsoir, Good evening, Dobryj vechir:

Slava Isusu Khrystu:

Dr. Raphael Lemkin was instrumental in having the United Nations adopt a Convention on Genocide over 60 years ago.

He described the “destruction of the Ukrainian nation” as the “classic example of Soviet genocide.” He added that:

“the Ukrainian is not and never has been a Russian. His culture, his temperament, his language, his religion, are all different...to eliminate (Ukrainian) nationalism...the Ukrainian peasantry was sacrificed...a famine was necessary for the Soviet...if the Soviet program succeeds completely, if the intelligentsia, the priest, and the peasant can be eliminated [then] Ukraine will be as dead as if every Ukrainian were killed, for it will have lost that part of it which has kept and developed its culture, its beliefs, its common ideas, which have guided it and given it a soul, which, in short, made it a nation...This is not simply a case of mass murder. It is a case of genocide, of the destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation.”

And this was no ordinary famine.

“At night, one would wake up, and all around was silence. Not a conversation anywhere. Not an accordion either. Like a grave. Only famine was on the move. Only famine did not sleep. The children would cry from morning on, asking for bread. And what could their mothers give them - snow?”

“The starving people were left to themselves...In the village people went from house to house, begging from each other. The poor begged from the poor, the starving begged from the starving. Whoever had fewer children or none might have something left by the spring.” V. Grossman - Forever Flowing.

This is the account of Holodomor survivor Petro Chonusky, "In the spring of 1933, watchtowers were being erected all over the grainfields of Kharkiv region. Peasants questioned why they were being erected. Later on the peasants understood only too well for what purpose and against who these watchtowers were erected as armed men were detached to maintain a round-the-clock watch over the fields and the crops in 1933...Only peasants ... were left in the villages, and of course they were dying of starvation. In order to save their lives, they would be tempted to clip the heads off unripened grain...Anyone attempting to clip grain inevitably received a bullet."

In his recent book Stalin's Genocides Princeton professor Norman Naimark states, "On November 27, 1932, Stalin ordered a knockout blow be delivered. The borders between Russia and Ukraine were sealed, and peasants forbidden to travel by rail. In the month of February 1933 alone, 220,000 Ukrainian peasants were arrested attempting to flee their villages in search of

food. Of these, 190,000 were sent back home, which meant they were essentially condemned to death. The rest were sent to the Gulag, where the death rate was also exceptionally high."

Today there are campaigns around the world which seek to remember and bring truth to the victims of the Holodomor. One of those important annual initiatives, is Holodomor Awareness Week. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress together with all our constituent member organizations are coordinating a series of national and local events such as this one here in Ottawa to raise awareness.

On behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian community, I congratulate Prime Minister Stephen Harper for his resolve in bringing the issue of Holodomor recognition to the forefront. I thank Canada's Members of Parliament, Senators together with their political parties, and the Members of the Legislative Assemblies of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec for their assistance in the struggle against Holodomor denial.

Malgré nos meilleurs efforts pour sensibiliser le monde de l'un des plus grands génocides de l'histoire de l'humanité, il est important que nous restions vigilants. Le Canada compte aujourd'hui une opportunité comme leader mondial en matière de droits humains pour aider l'Ukraine et le monde entier d'adresser ce passé difficile ukrainien et en faire un endroit meilleur pour tous ses citoyens.

May God inspire us to do good and may the memory of the victims of the Holodomor be eternal
– Вічна Ім Пам'ять.

Thank you.