

## Introduction

### Ukrainian Famine-Genocide: Holodomor 1932-33

If you are familiar with the history of Ukraine, you will know that the artificial famine, or Holodomor, was one of the largest national catastrophes of the Ukrainian nation in modern history, resulting in the needless death of between 7 and 10 million people. The word **Holodomor** is derived from two Ukrainian words – *holod*, meaning *hunger* and *moryty*, meaning *to starve to death or to exterminate*.

Most historians agree that the famine of 1932-33 was caused by the inhumane government policies of Joseph Stalin's regime. The creation of collective farms was seen as a means of achieving state ownership of all land under Soviet rule, leading to greater power and wealth for the USSR. The Ukrainians defied this plan; they refused to give up their land, language and national identity to comply with Stalin's policy of collectivization. As cruel punishment, Stalin set impossible grain quotas on the Ukrainians as a means of forcing them to comply with Soviet policies.

Ironically, the Ukrainians harvested record crops in 1932-33, **but were not allowed to keep any of the grain**. If they were caught hiding grain to feed their families, they were shot by Soviet authorities. All of the grain which was harvested was shipped to other parts of the Soviet Union or sold to Western countries. This was a very convenient way for the Soviet government to gain wealth and power, while also removing the problem of Ukrainian nationalism by starving the peasant farmers to death.

To date, a number of countries (including Ukraine, USA, Israel) have declared that the **Holodomor** should be recognized as a world **genocide** – a deliberate attempt to eliminate an ethnic group. There is no question that the famine was engineered by a government which specifically planned to destroy the Ukrainian nation and its people as a political and social force.

Canadian parliamentarians recognized the **75<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the Holodomor on November 28, 2007 in a Commemoration Ceremony on Parliament Hill. Etobicoke MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj addressed the House of Commons, as follows:

*Mr. Speaker, today marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of humanity's descent into the abyss of the Holodomor, the famine genocide of Ukraine's rural population. Six to ten million were starved to death in the bread basket of Europe. As the famine raged, Ukraine's lush countryside was denuded of its leaves and grasses as people ate anything that grew. One by one, hundred by hundred, thousand after thousand, million after million, lay down their starved skin and bone bodies and became one with its fertile black soils, life extinguished.*

*As millions starved, Stalin exported grains from Ukraine's fertile lands to the West; a West which, apart from a handful of brave politicians and journalists, turned its gaze away while eating the bounty, the bread, from these starving lands.*

*Seventy-five years later, we are once again witnessing a genocide by attrition in Darfur, Sudan. On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Holodomor, let us pledge to ourselves and those who have placed their trust in our leadership, a pledge of two simple words: NEVER AGAIN!*

An article by the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, appeared in the Wall Street Journal (26/11/2007), outlining the historical events and horrors of the famine for Ukrainian people. It ends the article by stating that, " *The Holodomor was an act of genocide designed to suppress the Ukrainian nation. The fact that it failed and Ukraine today exists as a proud and independent nation does nothing to lessen the gravity of this crime. Nor does it acquit us of the moral responsibility to acknowledge what was done. On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we owe it to the victims of the Holodomor and other genocides to be truthful in facing up to the past.*"

## Recommended Resources

### A) Web Resources

Several websites which will provide you with more information are given below. All sites are in English, unless otherwise indicated.

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodomor](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodomor)

(To access material in Ukrainian, choose this language from the list on the left)

[www.faminegenocide.com](http://www.faminegenocide.com)

[www.holodomor.org.uk/Portals/0/Holodomor\\_Presentation.pdf](http://www.holodomor.org.uk/Portals/0/Holodomor_Presentation.pdf)

[www.artukraine.com/famineart/mackinnon.htm](http://www.artukraine.com/famineart/mackinnon.htm)

[www.lucorg.com/luc/holodomor.php](http://www.lucorg.com/luc/holodomor.php)

[www.infoukes.com/history/famine](http://www.infoukes.com/history/famine)

[www.artukraine.com/famineart/](http://www.artukraine.com/famineart/)

[http://www.ucc.ca/media\\_releases/2007-06-05/index.htm](http://www.ucc.ca/media_releases/2007-06-05/index.htm)

<http://www.holodomor.org> (bilingual)

[www.ukrajinci.hu/holod/32-33.htm](http://www.ukrajinci.hu/holod/32-33.htm) (Ukrainian)

## B) Books - Elementary (Grades 3-6)

- *Enough\**. Skrypuch, Marsha. 2000. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Toronto  
<http://www.calla.com/enough.html>  
<http://www.calla.com/enoughguide.html>
- *\*Dosyt'*. Skrypuch, Marsha. 2000. Ukrainian translation of 'Enough'. Ukrainian Language Education Centre. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. Edmonton.  
[http://www.ualberta.ca/~ulec/pub\\_enough.html](http://www.ualberta.ca/~ulec/pub_enough.html)

## C) Research or Reference

- *Famine in Ukraine 1932-33*. Serbyn, Roman and Krawchenko, Bohdan, eds.  
<http://www.utoronto.ca/cius/publications/books/famineinukraine.htm>
- *The Harvest of Sorrow*. Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine. University of Alberta Press. Edmonton.

## D) Videos - High School (Grades 11, 12)

- *Eternal Memory – Voices from the Great Terror*. Narrated by Meryl Streep. National Film Network. 81 min. [www.nationalfilmnetwork.com](http://www.nationalfilmnetwork.com). 1-800-431-4586

## Discussion Guide:

<http://www.nationalfilmnetwork.com/store/DiscussionGuides/978-0-8026-0321-0.pdf>

## Teaching Unit by Valentina Kuryliw (Ontario)

<http://www.faminegenocide.com/resources/teachingkuryliw.html>

- *Harvest of Despair*. Novytski, Slavko and Luhovy, Yuriy, producers. National Film Board of Canada. 55 min. <http://www.historicvideo.com/377.html>

## Film Review:

[http://www.infoukes.com/history/famine/harvest\\_of\\_despair/](http://www.infoukes.com/history/famine/harvest_of_despair/)

View the PPT presentation [\*\*Ukrainian Famine-Genocide: Holodomor 1932-33\*\*](#) for more details about this tragic period of history.