

**Speech of Fedir Kurlak, Chief Executive, Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain
Delivered at Westminster Central Hall, 22 November 2008, during the
Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Holodomor**

Your Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

If I may I should like to begin by citing the prophetic words of Ukraine's most famous poet, Taras Shevchenko, written almost 100 years before the horrors of the 1932-33 Holodomor:

*No one knows them,
No one will mourn there sincerely,
No one will recall them.
Only the wind – quietly, softly
Will still blow above them,
Only dews of early morning,
With small tears will lave them...*

And the grandchildren – they're indifferent...

In the introductory remarks to the memorial book "Famine-33", Lidia Kovalenko, elaborated on who those unknown victims were: *"We must not forget the bitter truth (she said)... Into the grave, where seven and a half million Ukrainian villagers lie, fell the best. Industrious independent landowners, labelled as "kulak saboteurs", perished without trace. Village tradesmen and artists, including the thousands upon thousands of naturally gifted individuals – all were lost forever. Rebellious descendants of the kozaks, who could not accept the (oppressive dictates of the) authoritarian regime were descended into the raw earth. A specific target of the GPU-NKVD, the village intelligentsia - carrier of culture and the Ukrainian national idea - was brought to extinction. All who were fit and able, talented, healthy in body and spirit, that were capable of thinking, that opposed force, that protested, that sought the truth – all were ruthlessly rooted out and destroyed. Orphaned children, sentenced to death by starvation, could not carry forth the teachings of their parents... Truly the world of the Ukrainian village was turned upside down."*

And in the midst of all of this, whilst the world remained silent and Soviet-Ukraine's borders closed, two exemplary British journalists risked their own lives and did everything within their powers to shine the light of truth through the darkness of lies propagated by Joseph Stalin's and successive Soviet regimes. I am, of course, referring to Malcolm Muggeridge and Gareth Jones who, in spite of organised campaigns to discredit them, to their eternal honour, maintained their integrity publically, wrote the truth about the systematic annihilation that they saw and categorically refused to deny what they had witnessed personally.

How truly fitting it is that 75 years on and in this hall we have the relatives of those two great men with us today. And how appropriate it is that the testimonies of Jones and Muggeridge of 75 years ago are today being sustained by governments worldwide.

Just one month ago the European Parliament passed a resolution which expressed sympathy and respects to those who died and described the horrors of 1932-33 as an appalling crime against the Ukrainian people, and against humanity.

And in this great country too, the land of Malcolm Muggeridge and Gareth Jones, a very tangible demonstration of the United Kingdom's co-operation in promoting the historical facts about the Holodomor and raising awareness of this atrocity has come this year when Prime Minister Gordon Brown agreed with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko that the UK would cooperate to promote remembrance and increase awareness of the Famine. The Prime Minister has made it clear that the UK will continue to support Ukraine's efforts to raise the Holodomor in other international fora. The historic letters of support of the last few days from both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, and the very presence here today of Mr Tim Hitchens as representative of HM Government reaffirms that very sincere commitment. We ask you, sir, to personally convey our gratitude for this both to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

It is imperative that we work together in this common cause to prevent a similar atrocity from ever recurring again anywhere in the world. The truth must prevail and in this regard we fully support the European Parliament's resolution calling "on the countries which emerged following the break-up of the Soviet Union to open up their archives on the Holodomor in Ukraine of 1932-1933 to comprehensive scrutiny so that all the causes and consequences can be revealed and fully investigated".

To conclude, I would like to revert back to and slightly paraphrase the words of Shevchenko that I read out at the beginning, so that we may all walk away from this gathering with a very clear message in mind about the Holodomor and its victims:

*Let us ensure that everyone knows them,
Let us ensure that everyone may mourn them sincerely,
Let us ensure that everyone recalls them.*

*And the grandchildren - of that and all generations and of all nationalities –
let us all ensure that they are not indifferent...*