

**Speech of Tim Hitchens, Representative of HM Government.
Delivered at Westminster Central Hall, 22 November 2008 during the
Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Holodomor**

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen

I am honoured to be with you today, representing Her Majesty's Government.

The Holodomor was one of the largest catastrophes of the Ukrainian nation in modern times. We are here today to remember the millions of people who died during this tragic episode in Ukrainian history.

During President Yushchenko's two visits to the UK this year, the Prime Minister agreed that the United Kingdom would work closely with Ukraine to promote remembrance and increase British public awareness of the Great Famine.

I would like to read to you Gordon Brown's message to the people of Ukraine:

"I offer my deepest sympathies on this day of remembrance to mark the 75th anniversary of the Great Famine (Holodomor) of 1932-33. I sincerely hope that the commemorations taking place around the world will pay fitting tribute to those who suffered in the horrors of 1932-33, and help to ensure that such events can never be repeated. The United Kingdom will continue to support efforts to promote remembrance and increase public awareness of this appalling human tragedy".

We extend our deepest sympathies to the descendants of the victims and give our assurances that they will not be forgotten.

Representatives of the British government and the Royal Family have commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor during their visits to Kyiv this year. The Foreign Secretary David Miliband paid his respects to the victims by laying a wreath at the Holodomor memorial in Kyiv. And HRH the Duke of York and HRH Princess Eugenie of York placed commemorative candles at the memorial to mark their respect. John Grogan MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Ukraine is representing the Government at the remembrance events taking place today in Kyiv.

The United Kingdom has also supported Ukraine's efforts to raise awareness of the Holodomor at the UN and the OSCE. And in London, the exhibition "Holodomor: Through the Eyes of Ukrainian Artists" is currently being displayed in Parliament and was officially opened by the Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague earlier this week. It is important that we remember not only the disaster itself, but the causes. We are used to hearing about large numbers of people suffering at the hands of nature, for example in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, and the sympathetic response these events provoke. However, the Holodomor was not a natural disaster, but a man made one. This makes the suffering endured by so many people so much more difficult to comprehend. We must learn that democracy and respect for human rights is the best guarantee of the security of ordinary people. The Holodomor is a stark reminder of this.

It is important that what happened in Ukraine must never be repeated. In remembering the famine, we are not only honouring those who died, but ensuring that similar atrocities are avoided in future.

It is a tragedy not just for Ukraine, but for the whole of Europe. Europe and the world has a collective responsibility to remember.

(May I conclude with a short prayer - Eternal Memory, based on the Eastern ritual: "Eternal memory. Eternal memory. Grant to your servants, O Lord, blessed repose and eternal memory.")