

Ukraine Remembers the World Acknowledges Australia's Contribution - National Rally in Canberra

Australia's Ukrainian community is making a significant contribution to raising awareness about the Holodomor and doing it quite effectively, says AFUO Chairman and Chair of the Ukraine World Congress (UWC) International Holodomor Coordinating Committee Stefan Romaniw OAM.

The successful Holodomor Rally in Canberra last Saturday (8th March), in which close to 1000 people participated, is another chapter in the escalating activities by Ukrainians in raising awareness about this tragic episode in history.

The Rally saw a march through city in Canberra, an Ecumenical Requiem Service, public addresses by members of the Australian Parliament and of the press as well as by representatives of the Ukrainian community and a Remembrance Requiem Concert.

The Rally was attended by the leadership and clergy of our Churches, headed by Bishop Peter Stasiuk Eparch UGCC, Most Rev Fr .M Serdiuk head of the UOAC Consistoria, The Ambassador of Ukraine Mr Valentyn Adomaytis, the Hon. Matthew Guy MP, Victoria, Mr Bill Stefanik, MP ACT and Senator Gary Humphries, Federal Liberal member for Canberra.

The Ukrainian community was represented by a wide spectrum of community organisations, which is a strong indicator of a shared view of the paramount importance of this commemoration. The organisations and individuals represented included:

AFUO chairman Stefan Romaniw and members of the AFUO board, chairpersons branch heads and members from throughout Australia of the Ukrainians Women's Association in Australia, Christina Bailey, the Ukrainian Education School Council in Australia, Orysia Stefyn, the Ukrainian Youth Association CYM, Wasyl Senko, the Ukrainian Youth Association Plast, Symon Kohut, the Eparchial Pastoral Council UGCC Maru Jarocky, Association of Ukrainians in SA , Ivan Dnistrjanski, the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria Vice President and also the president of the League for a Free Ukraine, Michael Moravski, the Ukraine Scientific Association, Assoc Prof Marko Pavlyshyn, the Ukrainian Cossacks in Australia, Mr Yuriy Mencinsky, chairperson of the Ukrainian Council of Cooperatives and chairman of Dnister, Mr Michael Korniczuk, who, together with Wol Woytowych, chairman of Karpaty, were both strong financial supporters of the national Holodomor commemorations, representatives of the Ukrainian Council of NSW including Slavko Spysyvy, the Association of Ukrainians Queanbeyan, the Association of Ukrainians in Cabramatta Mr. Hluchan, Sydney, Andrij Bilinskyj, Wollongong , Newcastle AUV Branch Noble Park Even Stefyn, contingents from, Geelong, Ardeer, Parish Councils and Ukrainian Catholic Women Association community leaders from other organisations and community members from throughout Australia .

The march lasted started at the Ukrainian Embassy in Canberra and wound its way through the streets of Canberra to the memorial to the victims of the Holodomor at the Orthodox Church of St Nicholas. The participants bore signs and wore clothes emblazoned with the searing facts of the Holodomor: “7-10 MILLION DEAD,” “GENOCIDE,” “WE MUST NOT FORGET 32-33.” They carried flags, icons and coffins in honour of the victims.

At the Holodomor Memorial, more than a thousand people gathered under the burning sun for the Ecumenical service, the laying of wreaths and addresses, each finally filing past and laying a flower in remembrance. It was especially moving to have two Survivors present Mr Krywishyja and Mrs Janacek tell their story. The Rally saw a great variety of people, young and old, march, pray and remember. The community was uplifted and united. Close to 700 participants’ signatures were gathered in the petition: confirmation of the fact that the Holodomor issue is a part of the Ukrainian soul and that the victims’ spirits will not rest until this part of history is correctly recorded.

The afternoon saw the performance of a Requiem Concert with a rich and strong program of music commemorating the event. Six choirs and several soloists performed in the concert. From Victoria, under the direction of Volodymyr Holovko, the concert was opened with the traditional opening hymn of the Eastern Rite liturgy: “O, Heavenly King!” by the combined forces of the Choir of the Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul, Melbourne, “Hosannah,” the choir of the Parish of St Mary the Protectress, Geelong, and “Cheremosh,” the choir of the Ukrainian Youth Association, Melbourne.

The majority of the program remained an exploration of the Ukrainian sacred choral repertoire by the Orthodox Choir of St. Nicholas’ Parish, Canberra with Peter Deriashnyj, conducting, and the Ensemble of Sacred Music of St Andrew’s Church, Sydney, under the direction of Vasyl Opryshko. The Women’s Choir of Sydney, “Sutsvittia”, under the direction of Oksana Rohatyn-Wasylyk, complemented the sacred music with two sets of Ukrainian folk songs, beautifully representing the tone of tragedy as it sounded amongst ordinary people.

Jewels in the program were the soloists: Markiyan Melnychenko on violin, with an exquisitely poignant rendition of Glucke’s “Melody”, and Marta Mencinsky, mezzo soprano, with Mozart’s Ave Verum. The two soloists were both accompanied by Oksana Mencinska-Melnychenko on piano, and joined forces for a beautifully nuanced arrangement of the melancholy folk song “Hadanochka”. Close to the opening of the concert, a Sydney woman, Anna Dovirak, read a poem she had written about the Holodomor. The poem itself was based on an interview she had taken with an elderly woman, living in Sydney, who had witnessed the events of the Holodomor. Its tone was true and its emotion inconsolable.

At the conclusion of the concert, after a program of searching reflection, with the singing of Lysenko’s “Prayer for Ukraine”, the audience stood as one, reflecting the heightened emotion of the day and the unity felt by all. After this, the Canberra Orthodox choir

came out once more and with everyone once again standing led the congregation in a final farewell: the singing of the funereal hymn “Eternal Memory”.

There have been motions in the Federal and Victorian Parliaments on the Holodomor theme, acknowledging it as an act of Genocide and call for support for Ukraine’s motion to the UN acknowledging it a crime against humanity in the near future.

Michael Danby (ALP) moved a Private Members Motion in the Federal Parliament on February 22 it as supported by Petro Georgiou (Liberal) with speakers from the Nationals in a show bipartisan support. Last week Shadowing Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, moved a similar motion in the Victorian Parliament condemning the Famine as an act of genocide.

A strong article in Saturday’s Age newspaper *Ukraine’s Harvest of Sorrow* by Steve Waldon the Age 8.3.2008 and the Age Online information (produced by Martin Day) have proved to be good resources.

The call is now to exercise our influence in the NGO area seeking letters of support the for Ukraine’s motion in the UN. The concept Ukraine Remembers the World acknowledges was out forward by president Yushenko. Its two parts provide the needed sentiment and direction and our Australian community is working toward making this a reality .

On 25- 28 March in the Exhibition Hall in the ACT Parliament, there will be an exhibition: “Execution by Hunger - The Unknown Genocide,” put together by Foundation Ukraine 3000, this will be followed by the International Torch early the Eternal Flame , ongoing motions in the NSW Parliament and possibility in other parliaments around Australia

There is still much to be done ! The call goes out to all to continue to work and provide support for all our efforts to make the call a reality: “Ukraine Remembers - The World Acknowledges”!

Further resources: