



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

Ukrainian Famine

SPEECH

Thursday, 21 November 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Thursday, 21 November 2013 Page 92 Questioner Speaker Ruddock, Philip, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (16:35): Madam Speaker, this is the first occasion in which I have had the opportunity to formally congratulate you on your appointment. I do take that opportunity and I am delighted to see you in the chair. Today I rise to acknowledge on behalf of the government the 80th anniversary of the Ukrainian Holodomor, which will be commemorated by the Ukrainian communities this Saturday. The Prime Minister has sent a message to mark this tragic anniversary and has asked that I convey his sentiments when I speak today on this matter.

Between 1932 and 1933 there was an appalling famine which gripped Ukraine. It resulted in the deaths of 3.5 million people and probably many more. The aggressive implementation of forced collectivisation and five-year plans across the USSR immediately prior to this period had a profoundly significant impact on the productivity of Ukrainian farms and the availability of food. The Prime Minister described this man-made famine as one of the 'cruellest acts in history'. By 1932 annual harvest yields had halved. The significant drop in the availability of the particular grains had a swift consequence in rural areas and by mid 1932 mass starvation was occurring.

USSR authorities initially promoted a propaganda campaign that targeted the way in which their policies were operating. These campaigns presented that rural workers, against to their urban counterparts, were inefficient counterrevolutionaries responsible for disruptions to food supplies.

By late 1932, however, the famine had spread to urban areas of the Ukraine and by the 1932-33 winter and the spring of 1933 at least several million more people had starved. According to some estimates, by 1933 25,000 were dying every day from hunger. Many resorted to desperate acts in attempts to survive and to preserve the lives of their children. Contemporaneous photographs document the scale of these losses and the significance across the Ukraine. Fully clothed bodies can be clearly identified, lying across footpaths and roads where they fell. Whilst hunger killed most, disease as a result of decaying remains and the general disintegration of the public system of health took many more. It is important to note that the loss of life during the Holodomor was not simply confined to those who perished but also extends to those who were never born. Indeed,

the relative population increase in the Ukraine in the decades after Holodomor was significantly below that in neighbouring states.

Throughout this terrible period international reporting of what occurred was extremely limited. Broader public awareness of the Holodomor outside Ukraine did not emerge until the 20th century. Unfortunately, in the former Soviet Union itself, active official denial of famine and disinformation campaigns supported these assertions, and it dominated the official memory of this dark period of Ukrainian history. Official acknowledgement of the Holodomor did not occur until the 1980s and then it did so in a very limited way. Only in the recent, modern post-USSR that we have seen, thanks to a significant degree campaigning by the Ukrainian diaspora, that a more complete discussion has occurred and been acknowledged.

Today, on behalf of the Australian government, I want to honour the memories of those who perished during the Ukrainian Holodomor and in similar events across the former Soviet Union that were the result of what we know to be inhumane Stalinist policies.

This tragedy is still deeply felt by the Ukrainian community, many of whom I know very closely. Continued commemoration of Holodomor and the reflection upon the significant loss of life that occurred is occurring, and it will occur this Saturday. I join with the Prime Minister in extending to all of those participating our empathy with the suffering that they suffered.