FOREWORD/AVANT-PROPOS

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1933. GENOCIDE. TEN MILLION. HOLODOMOR

2003 marks the seventieth anniversary of the Holodomor, the deliberate killing of ten million Ukrainians in the genocide of 1932-1933. Yes, the number is ten million. It is Roman Krutzyk’s current number, based on research by Memorial in Ukraine. It is the number quoted by famed Politburo defector Victor Kravchenko at his trial in Paris in 1949. It is also the figure used privately in 1933, by Stalin’s apologist, The New York Times’ infamous Walter Duranty (who later lied in print about the genocide). If these three, each for different reasons in a position to know, each working at a different time and from a different perspective, all present the same number – if the best and the worst concur on that number – then, it works for me.

Ukrainians in Ukraine, as well as in the diaspora, are taking the initiative to tell the story of this nightmare to a worldwide public which is almost totally ignorant of the events. In many ways, our tragedy is one of the best-kept secrets of modern history.

This part of our history is largely unknown for many reasons. The Soviets were ruthless in destroying anyone who spoke about it. Survivors were (and many still are) afraid of retribution. The USSR had an elaborate program of disinformation to deny its deeds. Many of us who spoke out in the West were either not believed or ignored. Today, Russia, as the successor state to the

USSR, vigorously continues to deny the genocide, although they do admit, ever so speciously, that there was a “famine”.

Our tragedy has failed to catch the imagination of the general public. There are no best selling books about it. There are no Western movies about it. True, our resources to tell the story have been, and still remain, limited. Nevertheless, I believe we can do a better job telling our story to the world.

One of the difficulties we have faced, especially with the U.S. public, is how to focus public attention in a time of sound bites. In the English-speaking world, sound bites create the impression that stays with the public. Whether it is a presidential campaign or a new pair of sneakers, anything that requires more than a quick look will be ignored by most people. If we are to get our message across, especially to the American public, we must use instantly identifiable sound bites for our tragedy — sound bites that will be understood by virtually everyone. Another axiom in modern communication is “repetition works”. The more often you repeat that sound bite, the more people will remember it. We need to tell our story with the right words, repeat them and then repeat them some more.

Only two words fit the bill: Genocide and Holodomor. The events of 1932-33 were Genocide. Period. There is no further discussion on the events that occurred. Rabid Russophiles, die-hard communists, paid propagandists and some of the just plain congenitally stupid will continue to debate the issue forever. No serious person or scholar still debates the facts of the Ukrainian genocide. The more we learn of the events, the more they fit perfectly the definition of genocide as stated in the United Nations Convention on Genocide (1948).

Today, everyone knows what “genocide” means. That does not, however, preclude an energetic debate about the precise definition of “genocide” and who is properly entitled to use the term. The crux of the debate is not about what happened to any one group. It is all about tailoring the definition so precisely that it will include one group and exclude another (or others) in the battle for the hearts and minds of the world public and especially of the American public.

Let us not kid ourselves – this is not a debate over entries in a dictionary or footnotes in history books. The battle for the hearts and minds of the American public is a battle for massive public dollars and huge political power. This is all about controlling tools to build the future – money and power. Our history puts us in the middle of this debate whether we like it or not. Either our voice will be heard and our story judged on its merits or it will be diluted into a curious footnote. It is up to us. Yes, it is “just” a battle of