

# **2008 Annual Report**

**of the**

**Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, Inc.**

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## **Ukrainian Congress Committee of America** **UCCA: representing and serving the community since 1940**

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), is a not-for-profit community-based organization that for 69 years has been representing the interests of the Ukrainian American community. Since its founding, the UCCA has been instrumental in disseminating information about the history and plight of the Ukrainian nation, by actively implementing both local and international projects and educating U.S. legislators on issues important to Ukraine and the Ukrainian American community. Moreover, working through its various committees, the UCCA coordinates the Ukrainian School System, publishes the only English-language scholarly journal, *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, and produces feature films on topics once banned by Soviet authorities.

The UCCA has also taken an active role in the events unfolding in Ukraine, particularly since its independence in 1991. It has successfully carried out numerous civic education programs and sent multiple delegations of International Election Observers to monitor both the presidential and parliamentary elections in order to help secure a democratic foundation for the future of the Ukrainian nation.

Presently, the UCCA has a National Office in New York City, a public relations bureau in Washington DC and over 70 branches throughout the United States. Together with its staff and hundreds of volunteers nationwide, the UCCA successfully accomplishes many projects.

### **Words from the President**



2008 was a year of political change both for the United States and for our organization. In October 2008, the UCCA held its XX Congress of Ukrainians in America, in Cleveland, Ohio. For the first time in its 68-year history, the UCCA elected a woman as its president.

As your newly-elected president, I would like to thank all the delegates who voted for my nomination, and take this opportunity to assure you and the entire UCCA membership that I accept this position with a great sense of responsibility and humility. I am honored that you have bestowed your faith upon me to take up the reins of this organization, and proceed in the footsteps of so many inspiring UCCA leaders.

Over the past several years, membership in all Ukrainian American organizations has declined - either because of assimilation or apathy since Ukraine's Independence. Even though this is a disheartening fact, I believe our organization is very relevant, and the need for the UCCA is greater now more than ever. Therefore, my first task as UCCA President will be to rededicate our efforts to revitalizing our community and branches. Secondly, we must retool our organization to meet the current needs of our community - without sacrificing the groundwork the UCCA has laid over the past 69 years.

In this enormous task, I turn to you for your input, suggestions and, most importantly, your cooperation. I look forward to working with all of you over the next four years for the greater good of the UCCA, our community and Ukraine!

Together, I believe we can change the tide!

### **Highlights from 2008...A Year of Reflection and Change**

Much of 2008 was dedicated to appropriately marking the 75th anniversary of Ukraine's Genocide of

1932-1933. However, in addition to the many events commemorating the *Holodomor*, the UCCA was instrumental in helping to pass House Resolution 997 expressing the strong support of the House of Representatives for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to enter into a Membership Action Plan with Georgia and Ukraine; releasing its third feature film about Metropolitan Sheptytsky; holding its XX Congress of Ukrainians in America, to name a few.

This year's achievements were very rewarding and have resulted in many accomplishments for the Ukrainian community. Although there is still much work to be done, we'd like to share with you some highlights from 2008.

### **75th Anniversary of Ukraine's Genocide of 1932-1933**

*2008 marked the 75th anniversary of one of the darkest pages of Ukraine's history - Ukraine's Genocide of 1932-1933. This genocide is known in Ukrainian as "Holodomor" -- murder by starvation. At the height of the man-made famine, Ukrainian villagers were dying at the rate of 25,000 per day, or 17 per minute, resulting in one of the worst cases of man's inhumanity towards man, and perhaps the most extreme example of the use of food as a weapon.*

*Throughout the year, the Ukrainian community marked this anniversary by hosting and participating in a variety of events. Below are some highlights of the UCCA's commemoration of this tragic page in Ukraine's history.*

#### **International Torch of Relay**

In early 2008, the International Coordinating Committee of the Ukrainian World Congress initiated a worldwide relay of the International *Holodomor* Remembrance Flame (Ukrainian Genocide Torch), with the support of Ukraine's Foreign Ministry. The torch relay was organized to help raise awareness about the forced famine in Ukraine in 1932-33, during which up to 10 million innocent victims were starved to death in a deliberate Soviet policy to crush the nationally conscious and independent-minded Ukrainian peasantry, at a time when the USSR was aiming to rapidly collectivize its agriculture.

Under the slogan "Ukraine remembers! The world acknowledges!" the torch's journey began in Australia and traveled through 33 countries, including 23 cities in the United States, before reaching Ukraine in November 2008 to be part of the official state commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Ukraine's Genocide of 1932-1933.

Escorted by Ukraine's Ambassadors and Consular Representatives, the International *Holodomor* Remembrance Flame arrived from Canada to the United States on May 4, 2008, and traveled to 23 US cities before heading to South America on May 31st. During its journey through the United States, the Torch visited various cities where sizable Ukrainian American communities reside, including: Seattle, WA; San Francisco, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Salt Lake City, UT; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Cleveland, OH; Pittsburgh, PA; Buffalo, NY; Rochester/Syracuse, NY; Hartford, CT; Boston, MA; Yonkers, NY; Binghamton, NY; Albany, NY; Middlefield, OH; Ellenville/Kerhonkson, NY; South Bound Brook, NJ; New York City, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Baltimore, MD; and, Washington, DC.

Activities surrounding the International *Holodomor* Torch varied from city to city. Communities held ecumenical services, demonstrations, rallies, candlelight vigils; while others combined their commemorations with symbolic events or organized a true relay.

The UCCA National Office, which coordinated the torch's travel, would like to thank all of their Branches and the greater Ukrainian American community for their tireless efforts in keeping the flame alive. Your hard work proved that we are able to unite as a community and make our voices heard. It is our duty to recognize, acknowledge and promote the truth about the *Holodomor*, so that such atrocities against humanity are never repeated.

**[www.ukrainegenocide.org](http://www.ukrainegenocide.org)**

On behalf of the *National Committee to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of Ukraine's Genocide of 1932-1933*, the UCCA National Office diligently worked to launch a website. In April, after many months of gathering information, formatting texts, collecting archives, the National Committee's website was officially launched. The website features the latest information about upcoming news and events, detailed information about the *Holodomor* including archives, resources, and eyewitness accounts, as well as information about the *National Committee's* plans. Additionally, and most importantly, you will be able to donate to the *National Committee's* projects and activities through the new website.

The website will be constantly updated to reflect new information and resources. We encourage you to send us information and urge you to visit our website at [www.ukrainegenocide.org](http://www.ukrainegenocide.org)

### **St. Patrick's Cathedral/Photos Exhibit/Food Drive**

The annual requiem service to commemorate the victims of Ukraine's Genocide was held on November 15th at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Thousands of Americans of Ukrainian descent gathered at the now annual service to remember their brethren who were deliberately starved to death in 1932-1933. Following the requiem service concelebrated by the Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic religious hierarchies with the participation of the *Dumka* Choir of New York, participants had an opportunity to hear the keynote speaker, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY).

Prior to the requiem service, marking the 75th anniversary of the *Holodomor*, the UCCA NYC Branch prepared an extensive photo exhibit depicting the true nature of the *Holodomor*. As part of the 75th anniversary of Ukraine's Genocide, the educational photo exhibit highlighted the tragic events of 1932-1933 with an exhibit of recently released photos from KGB archives showing the forced starvation of up to 10 million Ukrainians by Stalin's regime. Many photographs used in the display had never been seen before. The exhibit was displayed in Dag Hammerskjold Plaza, across from the United Nations.



*UCCA NYC Branch before the Photo Exhibit and at the Food Drive*

Additionally, the UCCA NYC Branch, conducted a food drive from 9AM-1PM at Dag Hammerskjold Plaza before embarking at 1PM on a solemn march to St. Patrick's Cathedral. We are pleased to announce that over 175 pounds of dried, canned and baby foods were collected in memory of the millions of Ukrainians starved in the Famine Genocide. The food was donated to City Harvest, an organization that for 25 years has been dedicated to feeding New York City's hungry men, women and children. "We decided that there is no better way to memorialize our brethren who were starved to death 75 years ago, than by collecting food for today's hungry in New York City," stated Andriy Dobriansky, a UCCA NYC Branch member and one of the initiators of the food drive project.

### **Groundbreaking Ceremony of the Future Site of the Genocide Memorial**

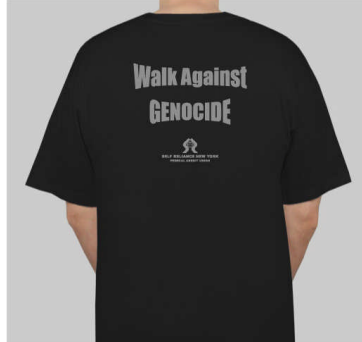
On December 2nd a groundbreaking ceremony for the national memorial dedicated to the 10 million victims of the *Holodomor* took place in Washington, DC. The ceremony was held on the plot of land allotted for the memorial, just five blocks north of the U.S. Capitol. The plot of land is located at the intersection of North Capitol Street, Massachusetts Avenue and F Street, in the northwest quadrant of the District of Columbia.



*UCCA Delegation with Ukraine's First Lady, Kateryna Yushchenko and Ambassador Shamshur*

### **Fundraising Efforts for the Memorial**

As part of a national fundraising effort, the UCCA NYC Branch printed T-shirts and black silicone bracelets to raise funds to support the building of the *Holodomor* Memorial in Washington, DC. The black bracelets, with white lettering, state: "Voices for Victims: Ukraine's Genocide 32-33".



Both the t-shirts and bracelets are still available. Should you like to place an order, please contact the UCCA National Office. The T-shirts cost \$20/each plus \$2 shipping and handling; and the bracelets cost \$4/each (cost includes shipping and handling). All proceeds from both the t-shirts and bracelets are donated to the National Committee's plans and the building of the Ukrainian Genocide Memorial in Washington, DC.

### **Feature Film**

The UCCA is proud to announce that our third feature film with renowned film director, Oles Yanchuk, was completed in 2008. The feature length film "Vladyka Andrey" recalls the life and work of an historical figure and church leader, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Andrey Sheptytsky (1865-1944).

As the public relations brochure states, "Descended from an old noble family, which included well known religious and military leaders, diplomats and politicians, he chose to serve God and his people. Throughout his life, replete with years of blood and turmoil, through severe persecution and the repression of political regimes from Czarist rule to Stalin and Hitler, he bore a painful burden "for the people, of whom I am a part, who need my help." At times of greatest trials, Metropolitan Andrei was a priest and shepherd, a diplomat, philosopher, a moving publicist, defender of a national concept and culture."





"Vladyka Andrey" premiered in Ukraine on August 23rd at the Kyiv Movie Theater. Then, beginning on September 4, the film screened in various theaters throughout Ukraine. The film also screened at various film festivals, and then traveled to the United States in November for screenings throughout various Ukrainian communities.

### **XX Congress of Ukrainians in America**

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) held its quadrennial convention from October 17-19 at the Sheraton Cleveland Airport hotel in Cleveland, Ohio. At the XX Congress, delegates amended the organization's bylaws, heard reports from the UCCA Executive Board and Commission Chairs, and elected a new Executive Board. This Congress marked an historic moment in the history of the organization, as the delegates elected the first female UCCA President – Tamara Gallo Olexy. Additionally, the convention hosted two workshops for the delegates addressing the following topics: "The Future of Our Community" and "The Importance of Advocacy of Our Community's Interests on the Local and Federal Levels".



*UCCA's newly-elected Executive Board and Delegates to the XX Congress of Ukrainians in America*

On Saturday evening the United Ukrainian Organizations of Greater Cleveland (UZO), the UCCA Cleveland Branch, organized a formal congressional banquet for the delegates of the Convention and the local Cleveland community. The evening's keynote address was delivered by U.S. Senator George Voinovich, a long-time friend of the Ukrainian community. Greetings were also read from the then two U.S. presidential candidates, Senators John McCain and Barack Obama. The Honorable Oleh Shamshur, Ukraine's Ambassador to the United States, also addressed the guests and presented the UCCA's out-going president, Mychajlo Sawkiw, Jr., with a special award from Ukraine's Foreign Ministry. The evening's entertainment was provided by Kashtan, the local Cleveland Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, the all-male Ukrainian Bandurist Choir under the direction of its newly elected conductor, Adrian Bryttan, and the

UCCA's Philadelphia Branch Choir "Akkolada".

Six Shevchenko Freedom Awards, the UCCA's highest accolade, were distributed to the following recipients: Paula Dobriansky, Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs; Askold Lozynskyj, former President of the Ukrainian World Congress and the UCCA; Dmytro Shtohryn, professor at the University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana; Maria Lozynskyj, former long-time President of the Women's Association for the defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine (WADFFU); Julian Kulas, President of the Ukrainian Heritage Foundation; and Daria Stepaniak, long-time activist of the WADFFU.

### **UNIS and the Washington Connection...**

2008 proved to be an ostentatious year based upon world events that helped shape UNIS' function in Washington, D.C. One of the greatest challenges for UNIS was advocating issues that affected U.S.-Ukraine relations during an intensive political campaign season. As the Washington representation of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, UNIS was fortunate to meet with several key officials of various campaigns throughout the year. The meetings, under the auspices of the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC), with officials such as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright – senior foreign policy advisor to former Sen. Clinton's campaign; Anthony Lake – former National Security Advisor to President Clinton and chief policy advisor for former Sen. Obama's campaign; and Randy Schunemann – senior policy advisor for Sen. McCain's campaign, provided a distinct opportunity to address collective security issues in Central and East Europe, in particular as it pertained to the further enlargement of NATO, energy security, and foreign assistance programs.



*CEEC meeting with Obama campaign advisor Anthony Lake - February 29, 2008.  
(in center - Anthony Lake; to his right, Michael Sawkiw, Jr. - former UCCA President  
and UNIS Director)*

UNIS was instrumental in advocating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ukraine's Genocide, including a resolution in the House of Representatives. Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI), a co-chair of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus, sponsored the resolution, H Res. 1314, which passed by unanimous consent on September 23, 2008. The main emphasis of the resolution was placed on the term "famine-genocide" and "confirmed the deliberate and pre-meditated deadly nature of the famine" as imposed by the Soviet regime in Ukraine in 1932-33. The resolution quoted the 2006 Ukraine Famine-Genocide Memorial bill which was approved by Congress and signed by President Bush, stating: Whereas on October 13, 2006, the President of the United States signed into law Public Law 109-340 that authorized the Government of Ukraine 'to establish a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia to honor the victims of the Ukrainian famine-genocide of 1932-33,' in recognition of the upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragedy in 2008." The Ukrainian community was fortunate to partake in a groundbreaking ceremony in early December 2008 at the site of the future Ukrainian Genocide Memorial in Washington, D.C. Kateryna Yushchenko, the First Lady of Ukraine, Rep. Sander Levin, and several former U.S. ambassadors to Ukraine participated in the ceremony in commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ukrainian *Holodomor*.

Spring 2008 saw President Bush travel to Kyiv, Ukraine, days prior to the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania. UNIS promoted the idea of having President Bush visit the *Holodomor* Memorial in Kyiv to pay respect to the victims of Stalin's genocide against the Ukrainian nation. Meanwhile, in an autumnal statement issue to the Ukrainian community in commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ukrainian *Holodomor*, President Bush condemned the man-made famine as a "crime against humanity", the first such acknowledgement by an American president.

The year 2008 was unfortunately marred by the Russian military invasion of the sovereign country of Georgia on August 8<sup>th</sup>. The UCCA responded to the unprovoked invasion with a stern statement, which was distributed to Members of Congress and government officials within the National Security Council (NSC) and the Department of State. Our activities included support of a congressional resolution that condemned the invasion, as well as a resolution that called upon the International Olympic Committee to withdraw its plans to hold the 2012 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

UNIS' congressional activities also included advocacy for Senate and House of Representatives resolutions supporting Ukraine's and Georgia's inclusion in the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). The Senate resolution, voted upon by unanimous consent, acknowledged "the Government of Georgia and the Government of Ukraine have each expressed a desire to join the Euro-Atlantic community, and Georgia and Ukraine are working closely with NATO and its members to meet criteria for eventual NATO membership." A similar resolution was also adopted in the House of Representatives.

Cooperation with the Central and East European Coalition resulted in several key events in 2008, including a White House meeting with President Bush. During the White House event, the President emphasized that the work of the CEEC must continue during the next presidential administration and that NATO must take in those countries that aspire to and are ready to share the burdens of membership, including Ukraine and Georgia. The President also discussed the Victims of Communism Memorial in Washington, DC; the Visa Waiver Program; democracy and security issues facing Ukraine and Georgia; support for democracy building in Belarus; the upcoming 60<sup>th</sup> NATO Summit; and U.S.-Russian relations.

Other UNIS events with the CEEC included a Policy Discussion and Reception that focused attention on U.S. security interests in Central and East Europe, and the impact of Russia, energy issues, and NATO enlargement. The reception also presented awards to several members of Congress in recognition of their constant support in strengthening U.S. relations with Central and East Europe.

To conclude, UNIS' multi-faceted activities in 2008 were met with many challenges, and information sharing is a crucial element in that resolve. Throughout the year, UNIS continued its successful distribution of "*Ukraine in Brief*" to congressional offices and media outlets in Washington, DC. The relations that UNIS has established in the past years, in particular with the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus, contributed to a successful outcome of various issues. Such partners and their determination must be acknowledged and we are grateful for their strong support.

## **Russian Aggression in Georgia**

On August 8, in response to Russia's recent aggression towards Georgia, the UCCA released a statement condemning Russian military aggression in the South Ossetia region of Georgia and urged the world community to intervene on behalf of the Georgians. The statement read:

"The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), the largest representative organization of the Ukrainian American community, condemns the recent infringement of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty by armed Russian troops in the South Ossetia region of Georgia. This assault across the internationally recognized Georgian border is a clear violation of worldwide norms and an affront to the peaceful Georgian nation. Past tensions between the two sides, which until recently have been handled in a diplomatic manner, have now risen to a Russian-imposed armed military conflict with untold devastation and loss of Georgian lives. As the Russian troop movement across the Georgian border escalates, the



UCCA calls upon the world community to condemn the violence and encourages both sides to return to the negotiating table. Unfortunately, such recent acts of Russian aggression have been paramount to increased tensions not just in South Ossetia, but also within Ukraine - in Crimea and specifically the port city of Sevastopol - where Russian claims to Ukrainian territory are also of vital concern. Since the latest NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008, whereby Ukraine and Georgia received a positive endorsement for future NATO membership, Russian acts of aggression - whether economic, political, or militaristic - have increasingly grown against the two aspirant NATO countries. The Russian government must heed to internationally recognized borders and preclude its aggressive actions against its neighboring countries. A democratic Russia that respects the territorial integrity of its neighbors, as well as domestically upholds the principles of equal human rights and freedoms of press and conscience for its citizens, will contribute to peace, stability and security in the world. The world must condemn the recent attacks against Georgia and prevent such hostility in the future."

Additionally, the UCCA participated in many protests initiated by the Georgian community throughout the United States. Demonstrations were held before the United Nations in New York City, in Washington, DC, in Chicago and several other locations, where members of our UCCA branches showed their support.

### **Meetings**

*Throughout the year the UCCA participates in various meetings and hosts guests. Below are just a few highlights of 2008.*

On **January 31**, the UCCA participated in a special luncheon and discussion with Congressman Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI) in New York City. Rep. McCotter, the fourth ranking Republican Leader in the House, discussed the state of freedom in the world, and Russia's re-Stalinization.

On **February 19th**, UCCA had an opportunity to meet with Ukraine's First Lady, Kateryna Yushchenko. During the hour-long meeting they discussed the communities plans and exchanged ideas on how best to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Ukraine's Genocide of 1932-1933.

On **September 23**, Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko, on an official working visit to address the UN General Assembly, took time out of his busy schedule to meet with the Ukrainian American community. Speaking at the Ukrainian Institute of America, President Yushchenko thanked the Ukrainian community for rendering constant support to Ukraine, and in particular all the work that has been done to spread the truth about the *Holodomor* in 1932-1933.

### **Council of Aid to Ukrainians**

Throughout 2008, the UCCA's Council on Aid to Ukrainians (CAU) worked on raising funds for the completion of a fourth church in Astana, Kazakhstan, which will serve as a religious and political center for the local Ukrainian community. Additionally, the CAU is working to obtain document copies of two million Ukrainian prisoners who served in the Gulag system. These invaluable KGB archival documents with information on political prisoners that served their sentences in Kazakhstan, including those from Ukraine, are now stored, without supervision, in a building in Karaganda and, if lost, would be irreplaceable.

## **THANK YOU**

A sincere thanks to all the members of the UCCA Executive Board, National Council and UCCA Branches. Without your guidance and cooperation, our various projects would not have been successful.

A special thank you to all the branches that worked so hard towards spreading the truth about the *Holodomor* during this 75th anniversary year. Although much work still needs to be done, your tireless efforts within your local communities shed light on this horrific page in Ukraine's history; and you are to be commended.

**The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, Inc. (UCCA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization as defined under Section 501 C (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All donations to the UCCA are tax deductible.**

*The 2008 annual report was prepared by Tamara Gallo Olexy, President  
and Liza Szonyi, Assistant Director, UCCA National Office*