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Dear editors of *Silski Visti* [Village News]

I am a longtime reader and admirer of your newspaper and I too decided (although I have never written to you before) to write to your newspaper. The newspaper is raising very painful topics these days and I cannot remain silent, because they cut to the quick! Like salt on a wound! So also this pain of the human soul, “Memorial Book: Famine of 1933.”

The appeal to unveil a monument-memorial to the victims of the famine is very timely! There are still living relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances of those who died of starvation in 1933, when there was a famine not from crop failure or drought, but artificially created by the “leader of all nations” Stalin! What a great number of people died in that hungry year of 1932–1933?! Nor did this disaster bypass our prosperous, agricultural Poltava region! I know families in which sometimes only one or two people survived out of the whole family, or else whole families died of starvation!

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In one family that we knew, of the five children, one survived, and the mother, swollen from hunger, barely saved the last child. So many people died in that hungry year! I started school then but could not go because I was swollen. I remember how they came to the apartment where we lived (this was in Zinkiv, which is a town, not a village) to look for grain with a probe, they dug through everything in the house, turned everything upside down. My mother had bundles on the stove with seeds to sow in the spring: beans, sunflowers, pumpkins. These too were ruthlessly seized to the very last tuber, to

the very last seed! They left starving people amid bare walls! My mother and I swelled up. Later, my stepmother's sister came and took me to my father in Kryvyi Rih, where my brother also was. That is how we survived in the Donbas where my father was an agronomist at a state farm. My mother was barely saved. But how many relatives and neighbors died in that hungry year! That is why the people need a true, albeit

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painful, Memory! So that there be a place to pay our respects to those who met an untimely death because of the artificial famine!

But was this the only famine that our people endured?! My mother said that there was a great famine in 1921: her father, a doctor, died of starvation and her older sister was in very poor state. At the time, people were being mowed down by a plague of typhus, dysentery, and famine. Then came the worst famine, that of 1933, which killed millions of starving people. Whom we who are alive have still not forgotten! Memory is our conscience! The people remember the hardships they endured, everything they went through. I also remember these famines: the year 1933, when we picked through the garbage of officials who lived well and knew no hunger while we collected potato and beet peels and other scraps in front of their windows...

My mother was a teacher, but at that time she had no job due to illness and no one supported us ordinary people. We had nothing to sell,

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we had no valuables, even though there was Torgsin,¹ which collected gold from people. That is how those who had gold survived: they handed in rings, earrings, gold ducats, and gold crosses to Torgsin. There were not many such people, not everybody had gold to give Torgsin.

¹ Torgsin (Russ.), an acronym of "[association for] trade with foreigners," were state-run hard-currency stores that existed in the 1920s and 1930s in which goods were sold for gold, jewels, or foreign currency.

I also still remember the famine of 1946–47. Those years also claimed many victims; then people died of hunger in our district as well. We ate bark, nettles, and orach, we swelled from hunger, not all managed to survive. At that time, there was a drought, a poor harvest, and postwar devastation. How we managed to survive — it is a miracle that we did not die! Apparently we saved ourselves with nettles, pigweed, and orach?! What a large number of people were brought to an untimely death by Stalin! Like the ruthless King Herod! Worse! Therefore the people will build a monument, donate money for this [project], but this work must be started! It's high time! We already read that somewhere in Canada there is a monument to the "Victims of the Famine of 1933" (*Zhurnalist Ukrainy* [Journalist of Ukraine], no. 11). It's time! It's time that we also remember them!

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