

M. Chvora
Svitanok Village
Korets Raion
Rivne Oblast
265 254

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The *Silski Visti* [Village News] newspaper is asking people who witnessed the terrible evils of the famine of 1933 to write about them.

I was in the 5th grade then, so I remember the events of the famine well. Few students attended school. There were 7-8 people in the class. They were all thin, weak, they did not play, did not run, and never laughed.

The following happened in the village of Shkurupii, Reshetylivka Raion, Poltava Oblast. Near the village, in the midst of beautiful nature, lay the outlying farmstead of Myny. [It was] surrounded by meadows, orchards, vines. In the spring, meltwater flowed past the farmstead and flooded the plain. There were many frogs in the warm water. People waded through the water, used a wire to pin the frogs, and used them as food. People ate everything: orache, horse sorrel, salsify, various plants—*bulava* [Datura?]. They ate the leaves of birches, lindens, and cherry trees. They baked cakes from Myrhorod husks (from millet). The people were completely emaciated, gusts of wind knocked them down. Many began to die. First the legs began to swell. They shone like glass. Hydrocysts began to appear on them, like the blisters that form over burnt skin. But these blisters were large. They burst and watery liquid leaked over the body. The person rotted.

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The blood was not red, but a pink liquid. Then the face swelled in the same way. And so death came closer and closer to the person. People began to die en masse.

At the farmstead of Myny, there lived Hrytsko Pavlovych Blokha. He had a large family: seven children. When very little food remained, they fed only the oldest boy Mykola, and they ate themselves. The rest of the children swelled and died. When their nine-year-old son died, my mother and I went to the funeral. He lay on a bench, and two smaller boys stood swollen near the stove. Their father swore at them, saying, die already so that I can throw you all into one pit. The next day the two boys also died. Hrytsko himself was already swollen and covered with hydrocysts.

Hrytsko's mother, her daughter Marfa, and grandson Andrushka, who was three years old, also died. They lived across the entrance hall from Hrytsko. One day I visited them. Andrushka was lying with his bare stomach exposed and in a squeaky, barely audible voice was begging for food: I'm hu-u-u-n-g-ry. But no one gave him anything. His intestines began to burst: *pop, pop, pop!* I could see something very black (poison) flowing under the atrophied skin.

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Andrushka died.

Hrytsko's mother was the last to die. Hrytsko was already climbing on all fours. So he threw a rope over his shoulder, tied the other end to his mother's leg, and pulled her to the pit. He buried her but her knees were visible. Hrytsko and his wife and son Mykola survived.

Here is the story of another such family: that of Antin Shkurupii. He was a *seredniak* [middle peasant].¹ The authorities took everything from him. Even the contents of his house. His wife died of grief. Then the famine began. Some kind of teams were organized. They went from house to house and took away all food. [If there was] a bowl of beans

¹ Until the collectivization of agriculture, the peasants were divided into three categories: kulaks, middle peasants (*seredniaky*), and poor peasants (*bidniaky*). The middle peasants owned or controlled their means of production but did not usually employ other workers.

standing, they took it—they called it surplus. They picked people clean. And so this Antin's two children, Halia and Panko, were driven into poverty. They ended up in a children's home and are alive today. Antin was left alone. Swollen from hunger. It had not dawned yet, we were all still asleep, when he came to our house asking for something to eat: please, let me have at least something. There, maybe there's something in that pot. Or maybe there's something in that one. But what could we give him when we had nothing! So he shambled off out of the house. Behind the barn, he fell and died. I heard that a woman selling meat jelly

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with human fingernails in it was caught at the Reshetylivka railway station. So there was cannibalism. She was taken away by the police.

Especially many people died before the harvest. People began to steal. They stole everything edible that came to hand. There appeared half a grain in a spikelet of rye. People set off to steal on the collective farm fields. Men on horseback—guards—rode in. They caught people, beat them with whips. People stole day and night. Here is what happened to one woman named Hania, who was in her fifties. They caught her with a small sack of spikelets. They took her to the police station. She was tried, and the district newspaper reported that she was sentenced to be shot.

Here is what happened to my family. My father, Yakym P. Blokha, was swollen [from hunger], and so was my mother. There were four of us girls. We survived only thanks to our mother, who locked sunflower seeds, squash, and a bag of wheat in a chest. A glass of wheat was ground on a millstone for the day and poured into 10 liters of water. To it, she added some herbs and cooked a gruel [*burda*]. Also for the day, she divided up one glass of sunflower seeds. And just before the harvest, we roasted a ram and ate everything, including the intestines. If we pricked a finger, a pink watery liquid came out. The blood was starved and had turned into water.

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And the following also happened. Our nearby neighbor went and stole some ears of rye from the collective farm. He crushed the rye with his hands and boiled it in a pot. He sat down and ate it all. At night, the rye swelled in his stomach, ruptured his intestines, and he died.

And here is an addition to what I've written.

The Famine of 1933

And it was a difficult hour,
Mother and baby were bloated.
The famine caused so much misery to all,
Laying people in the ground.
 It killed millions,
 All innocent citizens.
 Those who have loved the soil for ages
 And how they carried the collective farm plow!
But there was a second category for everyone
Go, work, take the assignment!
Groom, team leader, or reaper
Began to steal in the end.
 All the hungry people with hoes
 Sowed the beet fields.
 Two dumplings [*halushky*] in a scoop of water,
 Everyone runs for them there.
Also they sometimes gave bread
Made of beet seeds,
Those who weeded all day
Got a 100-gram piece of it.

Believe it or not

It was like that in those days.

I hope you'll find something useful for your document from what I've written.

My name is Melaniia Yakymivna Chvora

I live at:

Svitanok village

Korets Raion

Rivne Oblast

Please do not give my name.