

Vinnytsia oblast  
Pishchanka raion  
Horodyshche village  
Hruby, D. M.

I read the article in the newspaper "Silski visti" from 9 December 1988 about "The 1933 Famine," and I decided to write down my recollections of this period: 1933.

I, Denys Myronovych Hrubyi, member of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union], possessing a higher education, live in the village of Horodyshche, Pishchanka raion, Vinnytsia oblast. My parents were poor peasants; they had in total only two *desiatynas* of land. They lived poorly; they built a house, half of which was not finished. In the other half of the house, there was no ceiling. They kept various things there, straw, etc. In order to have a food reserve, two centiliters of grain were hidden there covered with straw. At that time there was a serious famine in the village. People were simply dropping dead and rarely buried (and then only those who had relatives). Bodies were left all over the place. So, a brigade was formed, and it gathered the dead and would bury 10-15 bodies in one pit. Almost half of the village's population died. Another brigade was created to carry out the task of grain procurement. They ransacked the houses, threw the children out into the snow. They deported the well-off peasants (*kurkuli*) from the village. They never returned. It came turn for our home. Using iron rods, the brigade found our grain. They took everything -- potatoes, beans, oats, flour; this was around the end of February, beginning of March 1933. After some time, they took our cow. They took mamma's new sheepskin coat and other clothing. We were left without food. Father went to the oil press and brought back the husks left after the processing of millet. There were also some acorns. We cooked this and ate it.

There were still five chickens. We did not eat them because they provided two eggs per day. There were four of us, so each got one half an egg. One night, a barn caught fire in the household of a field leader who was collecting ashes. Eighteen households burnt down that night. Our whole farmstead burned down.

Mother's parents left home and died of hunger. To have something, I made ink and sold it to students. I exchanged the ink for food from my classmates because there was nothing left to eat at home.

My grandfather's brother had a brick cellar. My father made two windows, an oven and a stove, and here our family lived. One day, mother sent us for wild onion, goosefoot, nettles (we ate all this). I could not walk. Brother Andrii was a stronger person. He went for the onion and for this they gave him an egg. I did not go, they did not give me anything. I saw that I would die.

In school, I sat at a desk with Pavlo Spyrydonovych Povorosniuk. He said to me: "Let's run away from the village. Otherwise we'll croak."

He heard that there was bread in the city of Odesa and one could actually live there.

The next day, before we'd finished first grade, we went to Rudnytsia station (12 km).

Uncle Pavlo, who worked as a hauler, put us on a train. We crawled under the bench

and went to Odesa. Pavlo had an address where we met up with some girls we knew (Pavlo was their nephew). The girls worked at a state farm at the Leninsky settlement.

They met us, fed us several times, but later we rarely saw them. They were not able to feed us regularly; they did not have enough to eat themselves.

It was very warm; we slept under a canopy where firewood and other things were stored.

Nobody would give us anything to eat. We travelled the city on tram number 21. I would stand near one bread store. Pavlo would stand by another. We had bags. Bread was sold by weight, so there were scraps. We agreed we would say, "Auntie, or Uncle, give me a piece of bread." One day we got two bags of bread by begging, which was enough for us to eat for a week. There was plenty of water from a tap. When we ran out of that bread, we made another trip to the city. At a cafeteria nearby when someone left some food on a plate, we would take turns finishing it off – either me or Pavlo. (They kicked us out of there.) A little later an old man who chopped the wood for the kitchen welcomed us. He could not walk very well so we carried the wood for him – he chopped it and the two of us carried it to the kitchen.

For this work, they gave us something to eat from the kitchen's leftovers, and they completely forbid us to go into the cafeteria, where the workers were fed.

So we were already living from our own labour. I was nine years old; Pavlo was ten. Sometimes we went asking for bread because they did not give us any from the kitchen. Sometimes, the girls got bread from us, because they did not have enough. We would change stores each time because the militia would chase us and said they would take us to an orphanage, and Pavlo's mama had told him not to end up in an orphanage because he was her only son. We lived like this in Odesa for 2-2.5 months. While meeting up with the girls, they told us that they had already begun the harvest in the village and that it was better there than it had been. We needed to go home. In the city they had started to round up the homeless and send them to orphanages.

We began to get ready to travel home. We went to Persha Zastava station. We didn't manage to get on a train to leave. The girls gave us two rubles to give to their parents, and I bought a loaf of bread with it. We lay down to sleep in the garden at Persha Zastava station, and someone cut into my bag to get to the bread.

In the morning when we awoke I cried; I didn't know how I would explain what happened with the two rubles. Pavlo still had five rubles sown into his shirt that he had been told not to undo, so that his mama could undo it and receive the money.

The next day we went to the central railway station where we managed to get into a train wagon. However, at Rozdil'na station, an inspector found us in the car and grabbed us. They took us to the militia. Fortunately for us, the militia station was closed. I sat down at the station and cried. The train stood for a long time.

A young conductor approached me and asked [in Russian], "Boy, why are you crying?" I said that I had no father, no mother, and that I was on my way from my sister's to my grandmother in the village, and that some guy had dumped me from the train car.

This conductor led me onto the train; the passengers gave me something to eat. For the first time, I travelled openly on the train; I looked out the window. That is how I arrived to Rudnytsia station.

From Rudnytsia, we went on foot to Horodyshe. And truly in the village people were no longer dying off. In the gardens, the rye was being sown, they had grain to eat, and the homes were covered with straw. All the buildings were thatched with straw. Those with tin roofs had been stripped so as to cover the collective farm building, since the

collective farm was only just being born. One day they brought plows in and other tools, the next day they took them away ([because of an] uprising).

Drunkards were in charge in the village. They stole and sold things at cheap prices and then drank away the proceedings. In the village they ransacked the church; they sold the stone to a neighboring village. There they built a two-story school. (It exists to this day). A nobleman had once lived in the village; there were many buildings, a palace. They ransacked everything. They took the materials to the village. Later, two collective farms were created in the village. My parents worked on the collective farm and they put me in the second grade. I completed seven grades in the village, in each grade receiving the mark "with distinction." In 1940 I was accepted at the Vinnytsia pharmaceutical school without having to take the entrance exam. That's where the Great Patriotic War found me.

I was a participant in the Great Patriotic War. I worked on the collective farm at various jobs: as storekeeper; accountant; brigadier of a field brigade; chief agronomist of the collective farm -- eleven years; the chairman of the village council --thirteen years; and the agronomist for plant protection -- nine years. Now I am a pensioner, I work at various jobs.

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