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Kyiv-73

131 Frunze Street, apt. 89

Mazepa, H. O.

To the writer Maniak, Volodymyr Antonovych

From Mazepa, Hanna Opanasivna, pensioner, citizen of the city of Kyiv, 131 Frunze street, apt. 89.

If it is useful, include my remembrances about the 1933 famine.

In my village Dziubany [Dziubanivka], Kozelshchyna raion, Poltava oblast, many, many peasants died from hunger in 1933, and they walked around with swollen stomachs, and there was no one to bury them.

My uncle Dmytro Telychko also died; he was swollen and could not go to work. No one gave any bread, even 100 grams; Aunt Kylyna went to work, pulling up weeds on 3 sotky [0,03 ha] of beets, and they gave her 300 grams of bread, though she had four children [to feed]. They lived in the poor though "lordly" hut of my grandmother. At one time, there had been an estate on the hill, and the poor people who worked on the estate lived there, so it was a cabin of the landowner's. Grandma lived there with two kids: my mother and uncle Dmytro. [In 1933] there was nothing there but the floors, benches along the walls, and a chest, which my aunt had brought. Auntie locked the 300 grams of bread in this chest so there would be a little for the children. Uncle begged, give me just a crumb of bread; she said leave it for the children. Then one time when auntie had gone to the field, uncle climbed down from the oven, cracked the chest open with an axe, ate the bread, and died that same day.

Uncle could not eat vegetables and greens, but the children had already picked green berries, cherries, plums, and acacia. Auntie would bake pumpkins for them, which had begun to appear already, and leave them in the oven in a cast iron pot kept warm from straw, because we did not have firewood, and the youngest who was two and a

half years old would climb onto the oven and sit and eat pumpkin. That Vasylo would sing a song all the time: [in Ukrainian original] “*е, е Петро кашки наведе, мама млинчик спече.*” He could not pronounce the letters “l” and “r” in “*е, е Петро кашки наведе, мама млинчик спече.*” [Petro gathered [weeds for] kasha, mama baked pancakes].

Petro was the middle child. There was a windmill on the hill. He crawled under the windmill, gathered the flour dust, and hugged it to his chest because to take this was considered stealing. Then his mother beat this dust together with some acacia to make a kind of pancake. Uncle once built some grain storage containers in the entrance hallway [*siniak*]. But the grain stored there for eating was taken to the collective farm, so Uncle pulled off the containers and burned them, because there was nothing else for heating.

A woman from our village hooked up a horse to a cart and collected 10 dead people, because her mother had died then; she took them to the cemetery, and someone dug a hole about chest deep, and they threw the 10 bodies in the one hole.

The woman next door had seven children -- Katia, Fedir, Petro, Mykola, Mykhailo, Tonia, and Sima, along with her husband, the household head and father of these children. Someone took all of them to the cemetery; she [the woman] was swollen from hunger and did not know where or who buried them in the cemetery. She went there constantly after the war to my mother’s grave to remember the children.

When my uncle Dmytro died, and the children kept asking to eat, auntie packed a bunch of straw into the stove, covered the chimney stack with cloth (using a knotted bunch of rags, which blocked it), and at 2 or 3 in the morning, she lit the trash. The children were sleeping on the stove, and she had covered the windows so that they would be smothered by the smoke. She walked around the hut so that the hut did not burn down. The older 13-year-old brother Ivan woke up, coughed, and clawed his way out the window to escape the smoke. And the little ones woke up and began to scream. The aunt then opened the door and the chimney stack, so they stayed alive. Two had already died, and two were alive.

There was a man in the village then called Aval, a nasty person; he worked as an inspector on the collective farm. People made up a song about him:

Aval goes about the fields counting [people's] work days,
The work day, the work day, give at least bread for a day,
Do not count the work day, count how many units,
Father goes without pants, mama without a skirt.

Or:

No cow, no pig,
Only Stalin on the wall.

I did not live in the village at that time. Father had taken us to the Donbas. There they gave 400 grams of bread to those who worked, and to dependents, 200 grams each. It was father and the four of us children. My brother (he perished in the Great Patriotic War) served in the Army; my two sisters were already working, I was then ten years old.

I recall that Ivan, the older son of our uncle, sent a letter to us in the Donbas from the village of Dziubanivka: Auntie [the mother of the author], send a package because papa [her brother] is dying of hunger. By the time we had dried some bread toasts and had sent a package, a letter arrived thanking auntie for the package but saying that they had already taken their father to the cemetery. In the village of Vakulivets in the same district, people ate other people; they salted the meat of the dead, an old woman who had arrived from that village to live in ours told me.

In the village of Stavy, Kaharlyk raion, Kyiv oblast, where my husband came from, there was a distillery, and people from the surrounding villages would come to eat what was left after the alcohol processing so that they would not die from hunger. They ate small ravens.

Now our children do not know this, and it is better that they not know the nightmare that we endured.

Mazepa, H. O. [Signature]

20 January 1989