

№ 195

290017, Lviv
17 Kutuzova Street, Apt. 5
Yurii Petrovych Kozlov

Volodymyr Antonovych!

I am writing you these brief memories of 1933! If you find them suitable, you can use them.

I was born and raised in Poltava region, in the village of Tarasivka, Pyriatyn (now Hrebinka) raion.

In 1930–1933, I was studying at the Pyriatyn Industrial College [*tekhnikum*]. I want to describe all that was happening at that time. Before collectivization people lived very well. They gave people land and they worked on it, some worse, others better, and they managed a living. Those who had enough adults in the family could produce all they needed. Before collectivization, which began some time in 1928, collectivization went slowly until 1931; collective farms were not organized.

In Pyriatyn, there was so much grain in the market that they bought and poured it into piles. In Pyriatyn itself, there were three mills, which were also stuffed with grain. One of the mills (rebuilt) is still in operation. In the village of Tarasivets, the following existed before collectivization:

- 1) A Beetroot Society, which was concerned with the cultivation of sugar beets. It procured seeds, fertilizers and other things.
- 2) A Machine Society, which purchased machines: a steam engine (a threshing and locomotive steam engine, as it was called); it also bought horse-drawn seed drills for beet sowing and bought metal cultivators, harrows, and other equipment.

Members of the cooperative and other peasants would pay to use these. Obviously all the peasants managed their own property and their land personally. In villages, you could hear sounds of joy and cheerfulness, though no one was very well dressed (clothing was mostly homespun and dyed with elderberries, oak bark, etc.).

Then came the final period of complete collectivization, the de-kulakization of those who did not want to go to the collective farms. They were called *kulaks*, and then the sub-kulaks appeared, and they were all deported (they said then to Solovky [Solovetsky Islands]). It was a terrible picture of life in the countryside; at any time these things could happen to anyone!

People lost all hope for some kind of life and were waiting for something and did not know what. The cattle starved, there was nothing to feed them with, they died. In 1932, the sowing was done very badly.

A tractor appeared (a *fordzon* - a trailblazer with a plow). Nobody knew how to manage the plowing work using a tractor plow. They plowed according to the shape of the field and made mistakes. They were not supplied with fertilizers (before, peasants had fertilized the field with manure and mineral fertilizers). There was no winter sowing. The spring crops were sown poorly. The harvest was very bad. The peasants did not receive anything. In addition, they [the authorities] began a "general search" amongst the peasants for "old" grain and took away whatever they found.

By the start of 1933, some time in the winter, many no longer had anything to eat; by the spring, even more peasants were consumed by hunger, and before the harvest, almost all the peasants were starving. They were eating grasses – nettle, goosefoot weed, and other plants.

Some time in February-March, there were already deaths, especially children and old people. Every month there were more dead bodies, already lying in the streets. The village soviet [council] assigned carts and people to travel around the village and collect the dead, who were lying in the streets and in houses! It was a horrible sight. Often one could see that a person was still alive but had been thrown onto the cart but was unable to get up from the cart; once someone said that he was still alive; the answer was – "Death is on its way"!

There was cannibalism: a mother (last name Postolenko) ate her own young children, and she fed a third child with this meat, but she was caught when she was cutting up the body of the third. They took her somewhere, and people beat her. Almost all people were swollen from hunger. Many, many people died! In addition to hunger, people were finished off by the cold winter because normally people used straw and

dried dung for fuel that they had prepared in the summer. But they did not have this. They cut down all the groves as well as the crosses from the graveyards and burned them as fuel.

In Pyriatyn district, a great many died in the village of Maksymivets, almost 70 percent. It was re-settled by migrants from Briansk region [in Russia] (but I don't know the farms of these peasants or whether they remained there); to describe all this would be very difficult.

In 1933, H. I. Petrovsky [co-chairman of the USSR Central Executive Committee] came to Pyriatyn; he helped only a little bit, but he gave the order to sweep up all the flour dust in the mills and cook it with some nettles to make a soup. At the same time, the mills worked and processed the available grain that was there and that was brought from somewhere. Sometime in June-July, [Pavlo] Postyshev [Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine] arrived. What issues he resolved, I do not know.

I wouldn't want to recall these horrors, but we need our grandchildren to know how difficult it was for us to build their future life.

Many people traveled to Moscow and the other cities of the RSFSR, but everything that they got there was taken from them, and rarely did someone come back with a piece of bread! Excuse me, perhaps I have only wasted your time!

Signature

17/01.89

Lviv, 17 Kutuzov Street, apt. 6

Yurii Petrovych Kozlov

Year of birth 1914, invalid from the Second World War, group II

tel. 75-50-26