

№ 215

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Hello, Volodymyr Antonovych!

It is very difficult to discuss the famine of 1933. There was a notice in the newspaper *Silski Visti* [Rural news] that in Kyiv a memorial book "The 1933 Famine" is being prepared.

It is difficult to take up the pen to write, so many years have passed and after so many years of dying "For Stalin, For the Motherland" -- he had implanted his ideas so that we were giving up our lives for him as if for our motherland. But I will try to write what I remember, because I was 10 years old in 1933. I will die, and that famine will remain in my mind. I've been a pensioner for six years but am still working as a mechanic in the agricultural sector. I was awarded with a gold medal by the National Economics Achievement Permanent Exhibit.

My father had a family of ten persons, [and] five *desiatyn* of land, but only three were good, arable land, and all the rest was pasture and meadow. And even that was in various places, in patches. In 1930, father became a collective farm worker, the grain barns were disassembled, and they took away the horses, harrows, and plow, and left 50 hundredths of land for the family. And the orchard that was near the house was cut down for fuel by whoever wanted some, and no one had the right to say anything to the contrary. Though it was very difficult to witness, this was how the peasant lived. In autumn of 1932, the so-called "Broom" [*metla*] came through and swept away everything from the peasants, from cereals and potatoes, and left nothing, even seeds. There was nothing left to take away, and before the fall special people came looking everywhere for grain, wherever it was hidden; they even took the seeds of cucumbers, beets and others; they also took my mother's woolen shawl from a chest that as a girl

she had earned from her landlord, and two pillows. And mama asked them not to take so much and not to leave the children to die from starvation. But they wouldn't listen and just laughed. I could not take it, and knocked out of the hands of one of them a pot with peas. Then they grabbed me, and Prokip Doroshenko put my fingers in the door and slammed it. What terrible pain! Mother shoved him, and I broke away, ripping the skin off my fingers, and with all my strength I ran into the bushes and did not come back to the house for three days.

I saw how these four men beat our neighbor Ivan Melnychenko, beaten for the fact that he had cut up a little calf that had perished and fed this meat to the children. Ivan was fighting back a bit, and they hit him with something so that he fell and died three days later. No one even looked into what had happened. We little ones went to a temporary potato storage pit in the field where there were potatoes that had rotted from poor farm management. There we gathered those shriveled and dried remains of the potatoes that we dug up from the ground. Mama washed these all with water, then she mashed them up and cooked pancakes. Oh! They were so good! And she boiled nettles in water – and you eat this food, so you're so full you could burst and you are hungry just the same. When in the summer, that is, in the spring, the sun got hot, then those who could would get out of the house to the yard and lay swollen in the sun. Most of them remained there. But they were picked up on a cart and taken to a graveyard by one of the peasants, who was given a pound of bread for a day's work. There were cases when he even picked up people who were still alive... One peasant who was placed on this cart, which was dubbed "the carrier of the dead," was begging [for life]. And the carter replied: "What? Should I have to come back here a second time?" And Yakov Onyshchuk's wife heard this and would not let him be carted off. And so, Yakov did not die until 1987, after enduring the war with fascism, honorably working in the field of the collective farm, and raising his children.

There was a case when a starving man passing by went into a garden where there was some green onion and he began to tear a green onion apart to eat it, and then the woman whose garden it was came up behind him and hit him on the head with an axe. And no one was held responsible.

But those who could walk, who had a little bit of strength, went to the collective farm to work where they were given a bowl of watery cereal and a piece of bread once a day. Then in our village they “swept” away everything under the leadership of these people: Bakaov, Ivankov, Prokopchuk who is still alive, Safronov. They foolishly executed the instructions of the great leader [Stalin], destroying the rural workers, to whom Lenin gave the land to make our Motherland rich. And so what happened? We still haven't managed to recover. Sorry, I wrote how I could. Goodbye.

Prokopchuk, Mikhail Artemovich

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