

Maria Lysenko

ML - During this terrible famine, the communists who had organized it created a store; when winter came and it became very [bad], my father would go to this store, which was called a TORSYN¹ and take gold-covered spoons, he took plates and bowls to a restaurant, and there he would get three loaves of bread, and something else. And because of this we survived. They took a very valuable gold ring to the TORGSYN, and brought back 5 kg of corn and two loaves of bread. Obviously we were very happy. We barely survived, and it was mostly because of that TORGSYN. You see, they organized this store in such a way that if anybody has something, they will come to trade it for bread. "So we will take even that from them." [After the Famine], not a cross, not a ring, nothing was left anywhere. We traded anything that they would accept.

When we were taking my grandmother back [to the village] with my mother, in the village a lot of people were lying in the fields. Right in the fields. I saw this with my own eyes.

Interviewer - *You were six years old then?*

ML - Six years old, yes. In March I turned seven. In March 1933 I turned eight, and I was about to go to school. By then I saw everything, understood everything, but at home, nobody could say a word about the Holodomor. It was so strictly controlled; if you say something at home. You know, there were some people, who if they heard, would [inform]. We were afraid of this. We tried to stay silent. When Stalin died in March 1953, then, in the house, between ourselves, we could speak, remember, my mother would tell us, father would tell us what they saw and what they knew.

¹ An acronym for *Torgovlia s inostrantsiamy* – or "Store for Foreigners," where only gold, precious metals or foreign currency could be used. During the Famine, TORGSYNs were a means for the Soviet government to augment their gold reserves – desperate, starving people could trade gold or other family heirlooms for usually very small amounts of grain or other foodstuffs