

## Walentina Workiewich

**WW** - I remember the TORGSYN<sup>1</sup> very well. These were stores, similar to *Loblaws*, only much smaller. But they had absolutely everything in them - ham, chocolate, rice, anything. The term was "appropriation" of gold. "Appropriation," because people went "voluntarily." To this day I remember that my mother gave my father these little earrings, they were silver, with gold trim, and maybe some rings. I remember them now. I was very sad to lose them. And I went with my father to the TORGSYN. I remember it now. First, you went and the line was [incredibly long]. Then they would weigh [what you brought], and based on the weight they would give you a ticket, for, let's say 5 rubles, and you would take that 5 rubles and go to the store, where there were prices [on the items] that you could buy, for those 5 rubles or whatever amount of gold and silver you had. When we came in my eyes widened. Everything was there, as I said, like *Loblaws*, only smaller.

My mother would go to the bazaar, trade a little something. My job was to [stand in line] for bread every day. Sometimes I got it, sometimes I didn't. But how much would I get? Not more than [a small piece], which we shared. But those swollen people, who would lie or fall near the fences and walls, masses. I saw this. They would throw them in a truck and take them to communal graves.

**Interviewer** - These were villagers, who came to the city?

**WW** - Villagers, yes. They would throw the dead in the trucks. I see it as if it were now, how they picked them up and threw them in. Some were still alive, young, older.

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<sup>1</sup> An acronym for *Torgovlia s inostrantsiamy* – or "Trade for Foreigners," where only gold, precious metals or foreign currency could be used to purchase things. 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