№ 192

Kyiv oblast
Pereiaslav-Khmelnytsky raion
Demiantsi village

Neporozhnii, A. A.

 Good day, Comrade Kulchytskyi, S. V.

Several times I’ve managed to listen to your lectures and to read publications about the famine of 1933. Therefore, as a history teacher, as a colleague, I want to help you. I myself have spoken to more than ten elderly women; at school I have told the children that they should ask their grandfathers and grandmothers about the famine of ’33, only not to confuse it with the famine of ’47.

I have recorded the most interesting stories of two of these grandmothers.

 1. Olha Kyrylivna Petrenko was born in 1905. She told me that the produce situation was very difficult in our village in 1933. She worked on the collective farm (kolhosp), and when she went to work, they gave her a work ration, a cup of some sort of flour. They poured this flour into a cauldron, cooked a soup, and they lived on this watery soup. She was lucky that lodging in her house was a teacher from the city, who was authorized to remove the grain. She says he was a smart man, he removed [grain] according to the plan and did not try to take more because he didn’t want to hurt people.

Six hundred people died in our village. I asked her where she got this data. She said the head of the village soviet [council] had said this in secret. But, in general, at that time people were not opening their mouths. Those who did chatter were immediately sent to Solovki [labour camp]. She did not know the exact causes of the famine. It seems that there was a decent crop was but that it was harvested and taken away. At night, she would go and gather the spikelets. In order to survive, at that time, everyone went to work; there were no lazy or sick people like now.

The majority who were on the collective farm survived because there they were provided at least something, and those who did not want to join the *kolhosp* died. Her father-in-law died together with his family because they took all the grain from him, swept him clean.

Those who had some things would take them to Russia for foodstuffs. She [Petrenko] had a beautiful scarf, shoes, and a necklace, and she exchanged these in Russia for two poods of rye and two large loaves. She arrived home to find the children crying, their stomachs swollen from hunger. They say one neighbour did not return; someone threw his sack from the train, and he fell off the train going after it.

At that time, they couldn’t be very particular about what they ate. They mixed the bark of trees in with flour, peeled and ground corncobs. This was a kind of bread. In the autumn they caught all the cats, dogs and rats – and ate all of them. People went fishing on the riverbank for tadpoles (larvae, frogs)and boiled and ate them. Many people died in our neighborhood. Grandmother Demyanykha lost five children. The deceased were not dressed for burial but simply placed on a sheet and dragged to the cemetery. They dug shallow pits and often buried two or three bodies in each of them.

2. Shcherbak, Dominikia (Domakha) Yevdokymivna, born in 1903.

They survived because her grandfather worked on the collective farm and received a higher work-day ration. She very much remembered how the neighboring children came and picked up potato skins and ate all the red currants. At a hamlet in our village there was a family that ate their own child. They were later sent to Siberia; they never appeared in the village again. When people learned about this, they nearly tore them to death. It turned out that the neighbor had begun to hunt for a boy. He was six years old. People became suspicious; the police arrived and found the child salted in a barrel.

After that, on the collective farm in the village they began to provide a little more of a ration for a day of labour [*trudoden*].

The traces of 1933 are visible in the cemetery even now by the little graves without crosses, of which there are very many. One grandfather said that we did not get it as bad as in southern Ukraine (where he had travelled); there, whole villages perished.

Sincerely, A. A. Neporozhny