

No. 26

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Dear Vladimir Antonovich!

I read the article about 1933 in the paper, and I want to share with you my recollections. We lived at that time in the city of Cherkassy, on Mytnitsa Street, and I was only 5 years old. My eldest brother was 7 years old.

I remember the spring of 1933 very well. Bearded men walked the streets and beat frogs with sticks. And one morning, Mama said that the neighbors who lived one house over had all died, and there were 5 of them.

Why didn't we die?

My father was a fisherman, and we had a pond in our yard where there were roach, carp and burbot.

So then in the spring of '33, when it was especially hard, and the spring was cold and rainy, I remember how my brother, who was 7 years old, would catch a lot of small fry with his fishing pole, and put a cooking pot out in the yard on bricks and throw fish into it, and then boil borscht with beats and feed us. And I also remembered my whole life when Mama procured somewhere a glass of planting peas and hid it on the hanging shelf. I climbed up on the chair to reach the peas, popped one in my mouth, and it melted like candy. And so I ate about five of them, or perhaps more, and then suddenly realized that if I ate all of them, Mama wouldn't plant them and we would all die of hunger, and I didn't take a single other pea, although we had already not eaten anything for more than a day, and my younger sister was only 2 years old.

We waited for Mama, who was supposed to bring rations (my father worked at the railroad, and two times a month we received small rations), but she came in tears with empty hands, knowing we were hungry. Father worked during the day, and at night went to catch fish, but they weren't biting since it was cold, and they all went down to the bottom. But still, sometimes, Papa would bring some home, although he himself began to swell up from hunger.

Then when summer was already in full swing, all of the kids on our street of different ages went in the morning to the Dniepr. There, the little crabs crawled out on the spit to

warm themselves in the sun, and we would collect them, make a fire and boil them, and when they opened up, we would pluck them out, clean the sand out of the little sack that was like their stomach, and eat them. Everybody ate as much as they liked, and after drinking our fill of the Dniepr water, we could stroll and swim until evening.

So the Dniepr saved all the children of our quarter, and no one died any more.

Everything was sold by our parents at the "Torgsin"¹ as they called it then but even today I don't understand that word.

I am a medic by profession. I have been on a pension for six years now, and I have a medal "For Valiant Labor." I have raised two grandsons, I think they will be decent people, my husband I.O.V. is very sick, I do everything to extend his life. If it is interesting, read my notes.

With respect for you,

N.Z.

I wrote everything very briefly.

¹The Torgsin were state-run hard-currency stores that operated in the USSR between 1931 and 1936. Their name was an acronym of the Russian words *torgovlia s inostrantsami*, "trade with foreigners."