

No. 28

Chernihivska obl.  
Bobrovytsky raion  
Branytsia  
Oleinyk Semen Art.

I am a native of the village of Nova Glyba in the Oster District of Chernihiv Region, living now in the village of Branitsia in the Bobrovitska District of Chernihiv Region. I get the village newspaper where I read on the pages an article about the hunger in 1933. It is terrible to remember those Stalin times; I even wondered in fright, did the Stalin times return. Therefore, it is better today to die than to live under such a government. What I want to write about the 30s, especially '33: in those days, brigades of activists were formed and went out and were given the right to abuse the rural population as they wished, especially the peasants from the collective farm, and they went day and night and drove all the poor peasants by the dozens, even due to the style of their clothing. They said there was no grain, you will sell your clothing, but the coins go to strengthening the Soviet government, although people were left naked and shoeless and hungry in those days. It is terrible to remember the Stalin times.

I will write a little about myself and the shortages and you can describe how it was. My father had five children, [I had] three brothers and two sisters. Everything was taken from us, where we had bean sprouts or if we asked for peas, everything was stolen but we didn't dare to run away somewhere, we feared leaving our own home and land, we believe that without land, it would be impossible to live, and due to this, in the summer of 1933, sometimes in order to make *ukha* [fish soup] we had to boil sorrel as there was nothing but sorrel and millet from the fields, or buckwheat. These were very good feed at that time and here this Stalinist activists' group would come to our home, and one would take a bucket of water and pour it on the firewood and the others would take the pots. Thus, 7 people were left cold and hungry, such was the Stalinist government, evil

and thuggish, and so you could think that we had it in our hearts, how wise Stalin was, but let not such a villain be born a second time in the wide world.

A second time, the rural population was subject to taxes, 1,500-2,000 tons of meat, 40 kilograms from each family; if you didn't have the means to pay, they would kick you out like mean dogs.

I will describe another offensive incident that I was a witness of, I had a godfather, and he had three children, two girls and one boy with whom I was friends, and one time I went to visit my friend, and at that time, five people from that activists' group came when the master of the house wasn't at home. He was very busy fishing and they asked the wife where the master was, and she said he's NOT HERE, he was out with the fishermen. And they said, alright, we'll wait. And in 5-10 minutes, he appeared on the lake, and they went out to meet him. He was tying his boat up on the shore, but Zlotko hadn't gotten out yet. And they immediately said to pay the money. And he said, "Look for it, where will I find it all at once." And they said, then either take your wife and three children and leave the house tomorrow, your house will be sold, you know the state needs money. And he did NOT answer them at all, and uttered two words, "Goodbye, children," and himself went to the bottom of the lake. That was what Stalin was, that was his rule. I am writing what I experienced and what I saw with my own eyes, and I will write briefly who I am. I am the son of a proletariat family, my father was a hired hand. During the revolution, he was chosen as the chairman of the kombed [Poverty Committees] where he spent three years, for which he was wounded. I asked, "Why did the bandits want to kill you?" And he replied, "Because I was the chairman of the kombeds<sup>1</sup>." So even today I don't know what this kombed organization was. It's my fault that I have written illiterately. I finished fourth grade, at that time there was nowhere to go to school, there were poor people in school, we had to help our parents and mothers. My name: Semyon Artyomovich Oleynik [Oliinyk]. My date of birth: August, 15, 1921. My address: L. Ukrainskaya St., Village of Branytsia, Bobrovytsia District, Chernihiv Region, Ukraine.

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<sup>1</sup> *Komitet bednoty*, Committee for Poverty, known as Committees for Poor Peasants, formed by the Soviet government. during the second half of 1918 to organize impoverished [peasants](#) to advance government policy. Their primary task was grain requisitioning on behalf of the Soviet state; they also distributed manufactured goods in rural areas.