



WITNESS

MEMOIRS OF THE FAMINE
OF 1933 IN UKRAINE

Pavlo Makohon

Pavlo Makohon

WITNESS

**MEMOIRS OF THE FAMINE
OF 1933 IN UKRAINE**

Translated by Vera Moroz

diasporiana.org.ua

ANABASIS MAGAZINE

TORONTO 1983

Ivan Dubylko

PREFACE

Pavlo Makohon, a Canadian citizen, has written an account of how, in 1932-33, whilst still a fourteen-year old boy, he lived through the famine in Ukraine. This book is a journal, a testimony to all he experienced and saw.

The author describes how he watched his three younger brothers and his little sister starve to death and how he then left his father's house to go in search of food to save his own life. The village was approaching total annihilation and the houses and roads were filled with corpses when Pavlo, with a crust of bread in his pocket, returned to his father's house to find his mother on the brink of death. The young boy managed somehow to save his mother's life.

There were very few sons and daughters who were able to rescue their mothers. Millions of mothers and fathers watched their children become swollen and could do nothing to help them... and then they became swollen themselves and also died.

Those who were alive and could still work were forced by the authorities to collect the corpses of the dead and load them onto carts. Then they were driven to a large hole and thrown in and buried like animals.

Thus did the communist party - the instrument of Marxist - Leninist - Stalinist theories - build a "better, socialist life" for the people in Ukraine.

Current communist leaders continue to follow the teachings of their "prophets", using more "modern" methods such as psychiatric institutions and "strict regime" prison camps.

Parlo Makohon would like these memoirs to reach all those who are still unaware of the genocidal dictatorship of communism, which now threatens all the nations in the free world. He also wishes this testimony to come to the attention of all those who study the destruction of nations in the Soviet Union.

The Ukrainian Tragedy of '33

Once more, the rusty trumpet of the Great Famine is blowing — only this time the world will hear. To succeed in the same deception twice is not always possible. Back in the 1930's, it still was.

Then, rumours of famine in Ukraine were seeping through to the West. The *Chicago Herald* printed an article concerning this matter which included horrific photographs. The Ukrainian famine was becoming a "subject for discussion". The Moscow correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News*, William Stoneman, was assigned the task of going to Ukraine and viewing the situation with his own eyes. However, the Kremlin clearly understood the potential danger threatened by this journey. Stoneman never reached Ukraine — Walter Duranty, a correspondent for the *New York Times*, was invited in his place. He was driven around Ukraine. Later, he was to write that he saw nothing unusual there. Of course he saw nothing; prior to his arrival not only corpses were removed from the street, but also deserted children, petty criminals and other figures of undoubted interest for the camera's lens. Thus, the greatest tragedy of the 1930's was concealed from the eyes of the world.

Moscow is particularly gifted in this field; a foreigner is conducted around a given country with the result that he sees only what the authorities desire him to see. In the past, during the reign of Catherine II, French visitors were given a tour of the Empire. "Potemkin's Villages" — this is not merely a figurative phrase. On the banks of the Dnipro, according to Potemkin's instructions, decorations were actually erected displaying brightly-painted villages. The people, however, were real; they were hounded from one place to another so as to remain in view when the barge carrying the foreign visitors floated by. In her letters to Voltaire, Catherine II mentioned that the peasants in her kingdom ate chicken daily, and recently had even demonstrated their growing preference for turkey. The chicken on the peasant's table was indeed a reality; it was secretly carried from yard to yard to the house into which the foreign dignitaries were entering.

We cannot know what Walter Duranty ate in Moscow — whether chicken or turkey; neither do we know the methods used to place Moscow's spectacles successfully on his eyes — these things remain the secret of Moscow's archives. Today, fifty years later, it is clear that Moscow will fail to repeat its old stratagem and mask the tragedy of 1933. It suffices to say that forceful artillery has already been fired in this direction — the renowned American journalist, Joseph Alsop, in his new book, *Review of a Century*, writes that the famine of 1933 in Ukraine was a "terrible truth" deliberately hidden from the West. Discussions of the famine, just as the investigations into NKVD crimes in Vynnytsia, are appearing more and more frequently on the pages of Western press. The English historian, Robert Conquest, has been assigned by the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at Harvard University to write a book about the Great Famine.

However...

Already the clouds have gathered over the subject of the Ukrainian famine. The greatest danger here is to try and interpret the famine as a "social" problem, unconnected with the national problem. Professor Conquest immediately came into conflict with the Ukrainians at Harvard after stating that he wished to write the history of the "soviet famine". Apparently, the famine was caused by the authorities' desire to crush the peasants' resistance and force them into the collective farms. This version is currently upheld by many anti-Ukrainian groups, particularly the Russian emigrés. This is an attempt to conceal the *national* reason for the famine in Ukraine.

Unfortunately, many Ukrainian writers have succumbed to this "social" viewpoint and also consider the famine as having been organised to destroy the peasants' fight against "collectivisation". However, there was similar resistance within Russia, but in Russia there was no famine. Interestingly enough, the Russian provinces bordering on Ukraine suffered nothing even remotely comparable to the Ukrainian famine. An eye-witness (Professor Voskobiynyk from Connecticut, USA) states that when he fled with his father from Poltavshchyna onto Russian ethnographic territory in an attempt to escape starvation, they found the price of flour there to be ten times (!) smaller than in Ukraine. Only the non-Russian territories of the Soviet Union suffered from the famine: Ukraine (including the Kuban), the Don (specifically the area populated largely by Ukrainians), Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Middle Volga (consisting mainly of Ukrainian village settlements). Professor Constantyn Kononenko, in his work *Ukraine and Russia*, states:

Anyone who interprets the creation of the famine in Ukraine from 1932-1933 as a repressive measure employed to destroy the Ukrainian peasants' resistance to collectivisation is grossly in error. To arrive at such a conclusion is to misconstrue absolutely the situation in Ukraine at that time. The swollen, starving peasants were the least able to muster a resistance. The sole thought in everyone's mind was how to obtain food... In fact, how can one even speak of resistance when by 1931 already 65.3% of all peasant households were collectivised. It would be strange to think that all the horror of the famine was created simply to increase this figure by 4% and bring it up to the 69% which it reached in the year of the famine. No, the famine was not a reaction against those who attempted to undermine Moscow's aims — it was the aim itself.

(Constantyn Kononenko,
Ukraine and Russia;

Socio-economic foundations of the Ukrainian national idea, 1917-1960
Munich, 1965, pg. 276)

An excellent argument which demonstrates that the problem of "collectivisation" was not the reason behind the famine. However, the author eventually arrives at an odd conclusion:

By imposing "collectivisation" on Ukrainians, Moscow discovered in the process a solution to the problem of agrarian overpopulation; not the creation of better farming conditions for the peasants (as was attempted during the "NEP" period), but the destruction of that segment of the population considered "superfluous"... Thus, the destruction of all "superfluous" peasantry became a direct method of increasing the production of bread and enlarging colonial profits.

(*Ibid.*, p. 277)

An extremely lucid (and grim) example of the confusion of even our finest thinkers. Long years of "social" upbringing have erased their aptitude to think *nationally*. The destruction of millions of "superfluous" peasants? The very idea is ridiculous and fantastical. Could the soviets claim to have even one "superfluous" human-being at that time. In the 1930's, the Soviet Union required millions of people to populate the endless Siberian wastes, to provide a "labour force" for the mines and construction in

the distant cold lands. Doubtlessly no other state experienced such a crucial hunger for workers as did the Soviet Union in the 1930's. Which is quite understandable: the Soviet Union had a population of eight people per square kilometre — ten times smaller than in Europe. Even later, in the 1940's, an UPA soldier was not executed but deported to the mines of Vorkuta — for someone had to mine the coal. Under such conditions to consciously murder millions of people for economic reasons would have been insanity. Thus, if Moscow planned this genocide nevertheless then its motivation was obviously other than economic: it was *national*, and was set in motion in spite of it interfering with Moscow's economic plans. *National* interests always carry greater importance than economic interests. This has always been true, and always will be.

Towards the end of the 1920's a serious danger faced Moscow's imperialistic construction. This was not the British fleet (then the largest in the world), nor was it the German army, which was gathering new strength. The black cloud that hovered over the Western horizon of the Russian Empire was "Ukrainianisation". The foundation of Ukrainian rebirth, stimulated into activity by the revolution, contrived a means of self-expression even under Soviet conditions. During the 1920's Ukrainian positions were considerably strengthened. Moscow perceived that if this process was allowed to continue for another decade then the cities would be Ukrainianised and nothing would remain of Russian spiritual domination in Ukraine. In the 1920's, the distinct role of the *village* in the process of Ukrainianisation became particularly evident. It was revealed that the village was not only the preserver of national tradition (as hitherto had been the case), but it was also a powerful catalyst (accelerator) for Ukrainianisation in the cities. The most talented authors and active propagators of Ukrainianisation in the 1920's came from the villages which provided a powerful foundation of fifty million people on which to accomplish the building of Ukrainianisation. From the villages flowed rich Ukrainian blood which poured into the veins of new Ukrainian structures under development in the cities. The muscles of these structures visibly grew stronger and the powerful river of Ukrainianisation flowed from the village to the city, and it became obvious that this fresh, turbulent force would crush all Russian influence. The empire had only one alternative: to thin out the millions and decrease their demographic power. To weaken and halve the Ukrainian village would mean the severing of the infusion of blood into the process of Ukrainianisation. In accordance with the ancient imperialistic tactics of "divide and conquer", the Communist authorities divided the single organism of the village into three "classes": the so-called "bidniaks", "seredniaks" and "kurkuls", with the intention of inciting one group against another.

Stalin, the major bolshevik theoretician on national matters clearly understood the role of the village. He wrote that the basis of every national movement is the village — without it the movement becomes impossible. The renaissance of various European nations (the Czechs, Hungarians, Flemish, Lithuanians, Estonians) proved that during the period of national awakening *the village infuses the town* and a process of nationalisation takes place. As long as this remained a distant theory Moscow was not alarmed. In the 1920's, however, the Russian element in Ukrainian cities visibly disappeared. This was no longer a theory, but a fatal threat to the empire; without Ukraine the empire would again be reduced to a mere kingdom (Khanate) of Muscovy, as it was during the 16th century.

Russia's plan involved two phases: a) to stop the process of Ukrainianisation by halving the population in Ukrainian villages, b) to colonise the starved and emptied Ukraine with Russians. If this plan were to prove successful then the Ukrainians would become a minority on their own territory and the "Ukrainian problem" would cease to exist. The Russian empire has had considerable practical experience in this field. Following the invasion of Kazan, the Tatar capital, all the males were executed. After the seizure of Baturyn, the whole population, both male and female, was destroyed. The entire aristocracy of Novgorod was deported to Moscow and the Muscovian aristocracy was sent to Novgorod in its place. Thus, this nation was

annihilated and now it is virtually unknown that Novgorod was once a separate nation which only later became Russified. Likewise, by means of repression and deportation, the Don Cossacks were reduced to a minority in the Don region.

A similar fate was in preparation for Ukraine. But Ukraine proved too hard a nut for Russia's teeth to crack. Granted, the first phase of the plan was successful: Ukrainianisation was brought to a halt. But to reduce the Ukrainians to a minority on their own land has always proved impossible; neither the Tatars, who periodically deported 200,000 people from Ukraine, nor the Russians, who murdered 5 to 10 million Ukrainians (according to various statistics) in 1932-33, could achieve this. The Russian writer Chekov, in describing Ukraine's steppe region, creates an interesting image: he says the earth is so black and fertile that "if you were to stick a shaft in then soon a whole wagon would emerge." Indeed, the biological power of the Ukrainian ethos is very great. It repeatedly replenished our population following Tatar, Hitlerite, and Stalinist devastation.

There is one aspect of 1933 which is afforded little attention: the famine in the cities. For some reason, it is conjectured that no famine existed in the towns in 1933. However, the memoirs of Z. Fesenko-Kovalska (*Anabasis*, no. 10, 1982) pour new light onto this question. The author of these memoirs testifies that in the city of Hadyach, people died in the streets just as they did in the surrounding villages. Thus, the authorities only prevented famine in the cities of Donbas, Kharkiv and Odessa, which were filled with Russified, imperialistic elements. These elements were intended to pervade and Russify the starved and exhausted Ukrainian territory. As for traditional Ukrainian towns such as Hadyach, they were included in the plan insofar as they consisted of a purely Ukrainian population and were to the same extent as the neighbouring villages, the carriers of Ukrainian spirit and Ukrainian tradition.

What we are now most in need of are facts and testimonies with which to demonstrate to the world that the aim of the Famine of 1933 was not "collectivisation" but the *Russification* of Ukraine.

The memoirs of Pavlo Makohon, in their sincerity and unpretentiousness, provide excellent proof of this. Nowhere does the author theorise or "philosophise". He merely presents the facts themselves, but the authority of his writing is only intensified through this straightforwardness. A boy of fifteen was not, and never could be, present at the confidential meetings in the Kremlin where the real motivations for the tragedy of 1933 in Ukraine were discussed. Following these meetings, instructions were sent to Ukraine to conceal the reason for the genocide by the use of a "class approach", more specifically, "collectivisation". And the down-and-out "activist" who invaded the Makohons' home to confiscate all their remaining food likewise knew nothing of the *national* reasons for the famine. He merely repressed the "kurkul" without understanding that if today the Ukrainian "kurkul" is destroyed then tomorrow the same fate awaits him — the Ukrainian communist (the example of Skrypnyk and Khyvylovyj is particularly relevant here). The guard-dog in a Siberian camp knows nothing about the human being whom he is tracking — he is merely stimulated by outside forces into performing his role.

Nonetheless, this fifteen year old Ukrainian peasant sensed *intuitively* that the motive behind the authorities' actions was not economic. The Ukrainian peasants were doomed because they "loved their country and wanted to work in their own land and be independent. Also, they loved their Ukrainian language and tradition. And this was the sum total of the Ukrainian people's crime. Who will ever understand this and finally see the despotism and brutality of Russian chauvinism which yearns and has always yearned to conquer not only Europe, but the entire world? Who will recognize this danger and do something to stop it? At the moment people sit idly by while the danger approaches nearer and nearer" (pg 61)

The remaining ears of corn in the rafters were thrown down onto the floor and taken away. For what purpose? Was this handful of

corn necessary for soviet foreign trade? Freshly-baked bread was confiscated from the oven — were these loaves then used for export? Horses died in the collective farms on a massive scale. Obviously, such plans were *weakening* the “kolhosp” rather than constructing it. In 1933 more kolhosp workers than non-kolhosp workers died, for the majority of the peasants were already “collectivised”. The emphasis was not on how the people perceived the collective farms, but on how they were to hide a little grain. Otherwise, death came swiftly, to the kolhosp worker and the non-kolhosp worker alike — the entire village of Troyetzk was laid waste in 1933, as the author testifies. Such an act could only undermine rather than create any possibilities for implementing a collective farm. Evidently, the authorities were preventing “collectivisation” themselves!

The harvest scene at the end of the memoirs is particularly convincing. The kolhosp workers in the fields are gaunt as skeletons. Emaciated, exhausted people who can hardly move. Which can only mean that they kolhosp workers were also deliberately starved to death. There was no “social” logic working behind these horrors... particularly taking into account the example of Hadyach, where people died in the streets. No one intended to implement “collectivisation” in the cities. Thus, not a “class”, but a *national* enemy was being destroyed.

Moscow wanted to break the spine of Ukraine. But her spine already had a thousand years’ experience in how to endure foreign pressure...

Back in the 1930’s, a bomb should have exploded on the pages of Western newspapers. But there was no explosion: Moscow succeeded in removing the detonator in time. Even so, it was later revealed that another remained undetected — a detonator for a delayed explosion. Now, the mechanism is striking the last few seconds but the power of the explosion will greatly depend on Ukrainian efforts in the free world.

1933...

In that year famine raged over Ukraine destroying in its wake the village of Troyetzk in the Dnipropetrovsk region, where I was born.

During that year I saw my family and the people of my village starve to death. I watched them hurled onto a cart and driven away and thrown into a pit like dogs.

These memoirs are dedicated to them.

They are written so the world may know of this tragedy of the Ukrainian Nation — a tragedy unparalleled in History.

This is how our life began.

My grandfather, Ivan Omelyanovych Makohon, was a descendent of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. After the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich¹, the Cossacks wandered across Ukraine in huge throngs, searching for a new place to live in freedom. My ancestors, with their families and friends, finally settled in the village of Troyetzk, which now belongs to the Dnipropetrovsk region.

From that time, the life of the Makohon clan began to prosper. My grandfather, through his honest, hard-working nature, managed to establish himself well for those times and eventually he became quite an affluent villager. Grandfather had a large family and, as his children grew older, they in turn helped with the farm management. But he had little opportunity to enjoy the fruits of his hard labour before Ukraine was suddenly caught up in the revolution of 1917. Grandfather's farm was ransacked by marauding troops who carried off his best horses and anything else they wanted.

In 1916 my father had married but soon after was taken into the army together with his brothers. By the time my father returned from the war there was hardly anything left of the farm. However, he and his two brothers continued to live in my grandfather's house.

Time passed, and, in 1918, I was born. The revolution ended and the "NEP"² period was introduced, promising a greater opportunity to build a new and better life. At this time, my grandfather's three sons left home because grandfather could no longer provide them with a decent living. Two sons settled on the Lozivsky farm, but my father remained in the village. I remember how hard my uncles worked at Lozivsky, trying to build a productive farm out of nothing.

Grandfather could only give us a very small piece of land, but we had nothing to plant on it anyway, so father rented it out to the neighbours. Later on, my father bought a horse and some basic agricultural implements such as a small wagon and a winnowing machine. He entered into a partnership with his good friend and neighbour, Ivan P. Luhansky, and life continued in a relatively

normal manner.

I particularly remember Christmas and Easter - how happily the people prepared for the festivities, how we children ran to church and playfully "beat" one another's shoulders with birches³. Our people seemed to flower at these times. We had no less than four churches in Troyetzk, as the village was large. I remember all of this well, and it was the happiest time of my life.

Lenin had launched the "New Economic Policy" and things were supposedly moving forward. But the people were ignorant of the insane plans that the Soviet authorities were preparing. They continued to cultivate their farms, little dreaming of how terrible the results of their perseverance would be.

In 1928 the Soviet authorities in the towns and villages of Ukraine began to put their plans into action. At first, they organised the so-called SOZ⁴ in our village on a voluntary basis. At that time there were 3000 households in Troyetzk which constituted a population of about 12,000. A few families agreed to enter the SOZ voluntarily, and subsequently gave up their horses, cattle and farm implements. Not even a year had passed, however, before all these "SOZ-ites" suddenly, and unexpectedly, seized back their property from the SOZ and took it home again.

This occurrence provoked an unprecedented situation in the village. Instead of the local activists and directors of the SOZ, it was the district militia which arrived to unearth the culprits. They couldn't find the retrieved property, or who had sabotaged the SOZ, but they arrested four people and drove them away. Following this incident a gloom fell over our village and certain wealthier and wiser villagers immediately sold some of their property and took the rest with them, fleeing we knew not where.

On hearing about this secret evacuation the authorities began to enforce "kolhosp"⁵ organizations in earnest. They formed local "activist"⁶ groups from those villagers who still, remarkably enough, volunteered into the kolhosp. These villagers were, as a rule, the very poorest in the village, but there were also several affluent families among them who speculated that the sooner they joined, the better it would be for them. But they were soon to wash their folly in bitter tears, for when collectivisation was completed they were the first to be destroyed.

The progress of collectivisation was very slow and laborious as the majority of the population resisted it unwaveringly. Thus, the

authorities decided to break anti-kolhosp unity and the villagers' resistance by dividing everyone into three distinct groups: "bidniaks", "seredniaks", and "kurkuls"⁷, to which they added a fourth group, the "pidkurkuls", or poor people who supported the kurkuls. On this basis total collectivisation was enforced. The authorities hoped this demarcation would create a rift in the village, but only a few people fell to the level of spreading hatred between the poor and the more affluent, and so they automatically became activists.

At first, the authorities and activists concentrated on annihilating the wealthy and the "seredniaks", who refused to join the kolhosp. Many poor villagers also wouldn't enter, but, for the moment, the activists left them alone, having enough on their hands with the kurkuls. The villagers stubbornly refused to give in. So outrageous taxes were placed on bread. When the people still wouldn't comply and failed to hand over their bread, then the authorities invented an iron prong, or a "stabber" as we called it, because the tip of it was sharp and held a small sack into which grain could fall.

The activists "visited" all those who were disobeying the authorities, overturning each house in search of bread and piercing everything with the "stabber" in the hope of uncovering hidden grain. On finding nothing they confiscated the household's property, arrested the men, and threw the remaining members of the family out onto the street.

Following these events, every villager began to look for ways of escaping, and the village gradually began to empty. Most people fled to the Donbas⁸, changing their names and identity so as to find work.

Most of the activists were local people, but their overseers were Russians from the regional headquarters. These latter continually surveyed the activists and imprisoned them if they failed to carry out orders. Day and night the activists summoned people to party headquarters, where they forced them to sign into the kolhosp. When the villagers refused to sign the declaration they were physically and mentally terrorised.

And so the hideous building of the kolhosp continued until 1930.

By the outset of 1930 the activists had almost destroyed our village; a number of villagers had managed to escape in time, others were "de-kurkulized"⁹, tried and brutally punished, many died refusing to the end to give in, and a few people had succumbed to pressure and entered the kolhosp.

When they'd finished with the "kurkuls" and "seredniaks", the authorities moved on to the "pidkurkuls" who, although poor, sided with the "kulaks" and kept away from the kolhosp. Soon, my father, Mykyta Makohon, also received a "visit", for he was listed as a "pidkurkul".

My father had fought in the war where he saw and learned much of the world, and, on returning home, he was already a fervent anti-communist who bitterly hated the Soviet system. So, he had long since decided never to join the kolhosp. However, his identification as a "pidkurkul" meant he was left in peace until the "kurkuls" were destroyed. Then, the activists began pressurising my father into signing their declaration.

At that time the following people belonged to my family: my father, mother, and grandmother, myself- the oldest child, then Vasyl, Ivan and Anatoly, my younger brothers, and Maria, my little sister. All in all, eight people. We also had a horse, a cow, and a very humble house which could hardly accomodate us all. Most importantly, we had enough grain for survival with a little to spare for the spring sowing. There were four churches in our village and, as they visited each "pidkurkul's" house, the activists also gathered signatures for the destruction of these buildings. Our family was also told to sign.

On their first visit to our house these opportunists were accompanied by the head activist himself, Ivan Zayets. He was the same age as my father and they knew one another well. Zayets said to my father, 'Mykyta Ivanovych, what's got into your head? Why do you let these damned kulaks lead you by the nose? You're not like them, you're poor, you're a proletariat! It's time for people like you to rule! You should have joined us from the very beginning and helped to build the kolhosp! I can't believe Mykyta Ivanovych could make such a mistake. It's a pity, a great pity. But now I've come myself, you see, to straighten things out.' And we children sat on the stove gaping like baby sparrows, and listened, wide-eyed. I alone was old enough to understand what was going on. I have written down that conversation word-for-word, just as it happened. Ivan Zayets kept talking. 'Well, Mykyta, let's stop fooling around. Here's a list; sign that you agree the church should be destroyed, seeing as there's no God, as you know. Sign it here.' And he handed my father a pen. But father, after a long pause, said 'I didn't build the church and it's not for me to destroy it. As for God, I never told you he doesn't exist so I'd thank you, Ivan Zayets, not to make my decisions for me.' On hearing this Zayets first turned

red and then pale and tried to convince my father again, only in an altered voice, and I didn't want to listen anymore. And so the conversation continued for two hours and my father remained immoveable throughout.

Finally, Zayets turned away from my father and stalked up to us children on the stove, shouting, 'You, Pavlo, you sign and don't listen to your father'. Father turned on him in a rage - 'My children will sign nothing; they are too young to make such decisions, so I will decide for them'. The conversation ended here and an angry Zayets left the house, spitting out numerous threats. We were left inside dejected and sorrowful as we could guess what would now follow. And so ended our first confrontation with the authorities, and our family's tragedy, which was to culminate soon after, began.

The activists worked day and night in their headquarters, summoning people and forcing them to sign into the kolhosp. Most people still refused to do so, but various forms of blackmail were used to break their will. After Ivan Zayets's visit they also began to summon my father. At first, they spoke peacefully and even told him in a brotherly way that 'Here is the declaration Mykyta, you just sign it and your troubles are over'. But father replied each time, 'I will never sign it - I want to live independently. The constitution states that the kolhosp is a voluntary project'. When they saw that my father wouldn't change his opinion they tried other ways of coaxing him. They screamed that he, Makohon, had been brain-washed by the kulaks with whom he had nothing in common, being one of the proletariat whose rule had now come. But father remained unmoved and did not sign. Then the activists became enraged and threw a sheepskin over my father's head and forced tobacco down his nose to make him cough violently. All this was done just to break my father's stubbornness, but still he did not sign. So they began to prod his body with a sharp awl that made him cry out in pain. Father shouted that they were insane, but they only replied, 'Will you sign now?', but he wouldn't. So then they let him go home advising him to 'talk things over with his wife and then come back and sign'. My father replied that there was little point in him doing so as his mind was made up.

After this, the authorities began to terrorise my father mentally. They called him to headquarters again, and when he wouldn't sign they sent him home. As soon as he reached our house they called

him out again, and this continued every ten minutes, all through the night. As soon as he got home the summoner would be there waiting to order him back again.

And so it continued. They tortured father like this night after night, giving him neither a chance to fall asleep nor to even think. But, regardless of how brutally they treated him my father never signed that declaration. He never became a formal member of the kolhosp.

Day and night the search for grain continued and families, that is, mothers, small children and the elderly, were thrown out of their homes into the street. Almost all the men were arrested or had escaped in anticipation of arrest. Even certain activists had had to flee from imprisonment.

Then came the winter, and sorrow and fear reigned over our village. The kolhosp slowly organised its workforce whilst the activists continued to search out and confiscate everything edible from the villagers. Some time after our confrontation with Ivan Zayets the following people came to our house in search of grain: T. Bretan, Rodyaka, Metrofan and Klochkov, from district headquarters. Klochkov was dressed in a military uniform, but he clearly wasn't in the army.

My father had known for some time that they'd come to take everything away, so he'd tried to hide our provisions. He mixed some wheat with chaff and concealed it in the loft, thus hoping to save us from starvation. But Bretan overturned everything, including the chaff with the wheat, and he even pulled down some sacks from the chimney where more grain was hidden. He found everything.

Like every good farmer, my father had hung the best ears of corn on the rafters for later sowing. But Bretan found them too, and flung them down onto the floor. I was standing by, watching him. My father was nowhere to be seen. When Bretan began throwing down the corn I realised that, after this, there would be nothing left to eat. With seething indignation and despair I began to throw the ears back into the loft. A battle ensued between Bretan and myself with me throwing back the corn he'd confiscated. Close by stood the grain-collection commissioner who, when he saw what I was doing, told me to stop before I made him angry. I was then 14 years old and said, 'Comrade commissioner, I know you want us to starve, so I'm trying to save something because we've done nothing wrong?' Comrade Klochkov ignored me and asked whether that was everything. Bretan replied that

there was nothing left whereupon they loaded our food onto a cart and drove away. They left our family without a single means of subsistence.

As this was happening in our home, the whole village likewise began to descend into an horrific state. People slowly realised they were facing starvation and did as much as possible to save themselves from such a fate. But all we could do was pray, while the days passed by and people needed food, but there was no food left in the houses.

No matter how diligently the authorities confiscated everything from the villagers, a little food managed to escape their notice and so temporarily ward off starvation. My father also managed to hide some bread which sustained us at least into the first few days of the famine. But the overall situation in the village was devastating. People had survived the winter by consuming everything that was left in the village. Then the famine really began and the villagers' bodies became swollen. They ate every dog, cat and bird they could find and then, in the spring, we heard that a woman in the 5th Brigade had eaten her children. The authorities immediately tried to dismiss this rumour by sending in the militia to control it, so we couldn't find out the exact details about the incident. But we knew for a fact that it had happened.

And so the famine raged, and human beings devoured other human beings.

In the spring of 1933 famine struck my family. We'd eaten everything in the house and our bodies began to swell. At the same time, the spring sowing began in the kolhosp.

Our village was in the clutches of death. Every dog and cat had been killed and eaten. When the horses began to die in the kolhosp then the villagers ran there in the hope of finding meat. They ran with knives and sacks, and I ran too, and when a horse died we, who were hungry and swollen, attacked it like lunatics, trying to cut off a piece of meat. At first we accomplished this unhindered. But then the authorities invented a way of keeping even these dead carcasses from the starving. They dug a large hole and when the horse was dying the activists poured carbide all over it and threw it into the hole. By now, however, the people were half-crazed with hunger and despair and, ignoring the poison, they scrambled into the hole and hacked at the horse with their knives, running home with their poisoned bounty. It was our last hope of survival, and even

this was turned into a death-trap.

I wandered around the outskirts of the village looking for hedgehogs in the bushes. When there were none left we knew we wouldn't survive. People began to die at an alarming rate. In almost every house the physically-strong succumbed first, then the others followed soon after. The authorities saw that the situation was becoming uncontrollable, for in many houses the corpses of the dead were decomposing. So they organised a team of stronger men to dig a huge hole in the cemetery. To this hole they drove all the dead in carts and flung them in.

Death entered our house. Within a week my grandmother died.

One after another my brothers, Ivan, Vasyl and Anatoly, and then my little sister Maria, also died. They were hauled away in the kolhosp cart to the pit and thrown in. I saw this happen with my own eyes.

Never before has history witnessed such a crime — the conscious murder of millions of people by means of famine, simply because they loved their country and wanted to work on their own land and be independent. Also, they loved their Ukrainian language and tradition. And this was the sum total of the Ukrainian people's crime. Who will ever understand this and finally see the despotism and brutality of Russian chauvinism, which yearns and has always yearned to conquer not only Europe, but the entire world? Who will recognize this danger and do something to stop it? At the moment people sit idly by while the danger approaches nearer and nearer.

I was left alone in the house with my mother and father, and we, too, were badly swollen and on the brink of death. At 14 years of age I had seen more horror than many people see in a lifetime. I had watched my village become an earthly hell; I had seen my grandmother, brothers and sister buried like dogs. My parents' eyes showed me they could fight no longer and I knew that if I didn't look for a miracle I, too, would die within the week. Knowing this made me afraid, as I wanted to live so much.

I began to collapse into physical and mental decay. Day and night I saw before me the dead members of my family. I rambled the village streets aimlessly and when I looked at the houses a terrible foreboding shook my body. Not long ago these houses had been beautiful and pleasing to the eye, but now they stood empty and half-devastated. The streets were solemn and the atmosphere

was lifeless, unbearably so; no dogs barked and no cats roamed, and those who still hung onto life lay in their houses and the village both day and night was filled with death.

The authorities continued to terrorise those who refused to sign into the SOZ. They summoned these people in the night and tried to make them sign.

At the outset of collectivisation the authorities had selected several influential and "dangerous" families and arrested them so they would cause no trouble in the village. These families were transported to Siberia. The scene of these arrests was always horrific. The whole village would fill with screams and lamenting as the activists hurled children out of their homes and viciously beat those who refused to climb into the deportation carts. Amongst these families was that of Karpo Makohon whose son, Petro, had recently married, so his new wife's family was also deported with them. Petro later managed to escape from Siberia, but the rest of his family died there.

During the chaos of deportation Petro's wife had somehow managed to evade the activists and had fled with her two small children to the Hryshynsky Kolhosp. She was discovered there and imprisoned. When Petro's escape became known his wife was interrogated, but she could reveal nothing. During her imprisonment the two little children starved to death, and their mother was not permitted to go home to bury them.

After much inner debate I decided to venture out into the world on my own in search of salvation. I'd never been further than ten kilometres beyond my village and couldn't even imagine what a train looked like. Without saying a word to my parents I silently prepared whatever clothing I still had. One silent night, when I'd lain open-eyed for fear of oversleeping, I arose before dawn and quietly walked out of the house so as not to alarm my parents. If they'd seen me I knew they would forbid me to go. For a moment I clasped my trembling hands in prayer, and then walked out of the village. I'd devised a clear plan in my mind. Ten kilometres from our village was the Lozivsky farm where my father's brothers lived. I headed towards it on unsteady, nervous legs with hardly enough strength in me to walk in a straight line.

It was daylight before I reached the farm. Famine had ravaged Uncle Roman's house, where I stopped first, but I was welcomed nevertheless. All they could offer me to eat was an indescribable

mess of boiled grasses. The children here were as swollen as I myself was. I stayed there only for a couple of hours, then I thanked them and said that I was going to Uncle Mykola's. I told them nothing more about my plans.

A similar situation awaited me at my second uncle's house. Everyone was hungry and didn't seem to fully realise my presence, but they asked me how things were at home. When I told them, they began to cry.

Again, I was given a similar mixture of water and grass. I stayed there for the night and early the next morning I set out again for my intended destination. I told nobody where I was going as none of them could have helped me anyway.

I planned to reach Mezhova, the district's central town which lay thirty kilometres beyond our village. There was a station at Mezhova where I intended to board a train for Makeyivka, where my mother's brother lived. I hoped he could save me from starvation, and so, with immense difficulty, I walked from the Lozivsky farm to Mezhova.

When I reached the station I sat down to await the train, but I was wholly unprepared for the terrifying monster, which, after a while, drew near shrieking and smoking like a hideous dragon. I almost fainted with fright when I saw that train - the first one I had ever seen.

Cautiously, I asked the local passers-by where Makeyivka was located, and how far it was from Mezhova. When I'd oriented myself I wondered how I'd get there without a single "kopiyyka"¹⁰ in my pocket. The only solution was to ride stowaway, without a ticket.

When the first passenger train approached I climbed into a compartment, crawled under a bench, and lay on the floor, trembling with apprehension. People began to walk on and place their things under the benches close to me. I was sufficiently concealed to look in safety for food in the baskets, but I didn't dare move and even more, I didn't want to be caught thieving. The train gradually began to move at an extremely slow pace and stopped sporadically at small village stations along the way.

And then I met with bad luck. Miscalculating the distance we'd covered I jumped from the train prematurely at one of the stations. Before I realised that Makeyivka was still a fair distance away the train had already departed and I was left in the middle of the steppe. Not far away, as I soon discovered, was a junction called Yalévayska. I headed towards it on foot, and when the next train

passed through I scrambled on. This time, instead of sliding under a bench I hid behind an iron stove which stood in one corner. But when the train moved off and the conductor began to walk round and check people's tickets, then he noticed the top of my head sticking out from behind the stove, and immediately he pounced on me. "What are you doing there?" I was struck dumb and could think of nothing to say. He told me to come out from behind the stove, but I couldn't move. He shouted at me again and I could see his face reddening with anger. I still couldn't move. So he grabbed my old cap from my head and hurled it out of the window. I became desperate as I only had one cap, and so, as the train was moving slowly uphill, I turned my back on the man and jumped out of the train.

I hit a large, sloping bank and rolled downwards violently. On reaching the bottom I was torn and bleeding. What had happened to my cap? It took me some time to find it as it lay quite a distance from where I'd jumped the train. I was terribly hungry, and even more disillusioned about the future I had so carefully planned.

I had to walk three kilometres to the next station, where I hoped another train would arrive soon. I was so close to exhaustion that I exchanged my last shirt for some food from an old woman. Eventually, a freight train approached and I managed to climb on unnoticed. This train was only going as far as Yasynovata, but Makeyivka was not much further. I got off the train and wondered what to do next, as I was hungry and dirty and very tired. I discovered that nearby there was a large market, and decided to go there. Along the way I met a boy, older than myself, walking towards me with a piece of rye bread in his hand. He was almost naked, as the shirt on his back was full of huge holes. I asked him where he'd got the bread. He replied that, if I liked, he could show me where to find food, just the thought of which cheered me up immediately.

He asked me whether I had a shirt in exchange for his bread, but I only had my dead grandmother's tunic, which he tried on. It was a little tight, but he was glad of it for it covered his bare body. He gave me his bread and we became friends. He told me he was from the village of Holodayevka, not far from Yalévayska station, and that he was the sole survivor of his family — the others had all died of starvation. In fact, most of his village had died, and only he had managed to get away, and was now trying to save his life. I said that my story was just like his and that I was travelling to Makeyivka where my uncle lived. My uncle, I said, would find both of us a job. My new companion knew where Makeyivka was and he agreed to go with me. But first we should go to the market where he'd teach me how to get food.

There was a large market at Yasynovata station in spite of the famine. Somehow, the market managed to keep functioning and you could get all kinds of products. On our way there my companion explained how I'd go about finding food. He said, 'At the market you'll see rows of stalls where people lay out their wares for sale. We'll be there in a minute. I'll go in front and you follow behind me. Just watch what I do, so you can do it later'.

We approached a stall where a crowd of people, all pushing and jostling one another, was trying to see the wares laid out on the table. My companion said, 'When I see something I'll snatch it and run away. But you pretend you don't know me and just look around innocently'. And, as I watched, his hand suddenly shot out, grabbed something, and he didn't even give the old woman a glimpse of him before he was gone.

And so we passed through the whole market and my companion accumulated all kinds of products: potatoes, bread, fish, onions. We sat down in a quiet, comfortable place and ate some of the food. The rest we hid away. As soon as I'd swallowed something I felt stronger and wasn't so unsteady on my legs.

We kept returning to the market so I, too, could learn how to get food. My friend would say, 'Now, watch what I do, walk behind me, and try to do the same as me'. We'd walk amongst the stalls, as my companion looked around for something to eat. I'd watch as he grabbed an onion and disappeared in the crowd. A little further on he would appear again and snatch something else. But I could only follow and try to concentrate my efforts on what we were doing. Regardless of how I tried, I just didn't have the courage to seize anything, and so we traversed the entire market with my emerging empty-handed. My colleague again stuffed his pockets and asked how things had gone with me. I told him, but he laughed and said, 'Don't worry, when you get really hungry, things will go better. I was just like you at first'.

After a few days we set off for Makeyivka. We went to the station and unexpectedly found a freight train heading in that direction. We climbed into one of the compartments and hid behind some large doors. The train took us within five kilometres of Makeyivka and we decided to walk the rest of the way. It was late afternoon when we finally reached Makeyivka market, but the market had closed for the day. We discussed what to do next and decided to stay the night in some disused railway cars which were full of metal shavings, rags, and other refuse. Here we dug ourselves in and slept soundly until morning.

After getting up and washing at a nearby water pump we went to the market in search of food. And so our life in Makeyivka began. We walked around the stalls, as we had done in Yasynovata. But misfortune awaited us here.

An old woman was selling bread and potatoes. Without noticing anything unusual my friend sauntered up to her stall and quickly ran off with the bread. Suddenly, three boys sprang out of nowhere and began to pursue him. They soon caught him and began to beat him viciously. I was alarmed and stared in horror. When the boys had satisfied their rage and returned to their mother I slowly approached my friend, who was lying in a huge pool of blood. Blood was pouring out of his mouth and nose. I tried to talk to him but he couldn't answer. I wiped some of the blood from his face and ran to find some water. But when I returned, my friend had disappeared - I tried to find him, but failed, and I never saw him again.

I was alone once more and unable to fend for myself. I hadn't learnt how to snatch food after all, though I'd hope my luck would change in Makeyivka. However, this tragic misfortune had cancelled all such thoughts from my mind. What was I to do? I was confused and frantic. During the "de-kurkulization" of our village people had fled to the Donbas - but that seemed impossibly far away to me. I would try and start a new life here, in Makeyivka.

So, every day I walked around the market and every night I slept in the disused carriages. In the mornings I washed at the water pump and went to the market again. I walked past the stalls and always tried to seize something, but I could neither conquer my conscience nor my fear, and so day after day passed by and I had nothing to eat. I got weaker and weaker and one morning I noticed my legs were begin to swell. I recognized the first signs of starvation and knew that if the swelling continued I would die. I had to make a decision - either to start stealing food or to die very soon.

Fear forced me to find a suitable place. I saw a middle-aged woman walking amongst the people with some bread, about three kilograms in weight. I decided to steal that bread. But how? I began to circle that woman inconspicuously and prepare myself for the confrontation. I kept walking round and round and was about to jump on the bread more than once but could never actually do it. Finally, in desperation, I said to myself, 'If I don't do it now, I'll die', and snatched the bread, fleeing as fast as I could. The woman began to scream and some men darted off in pursuit of me. Being so weak I collapsed and began devouring the bread as I lay on the

ground. Knowing what would happen now I at least wanted to swallow this bread which had cost me my life. By the time the woman herself ran up I had almost consumed her bread and dug the rest into the sand. Whilst I lay in the sand desperately eating, I heard several discussions going on around me. The woman knelt on my spine and beat me with a stick, cursing all the while, but I hardly felt the blows. A group of people stood around watching the spectacle. The I heard a voice: 'What are you beating the poor little kid for?' I raised my head and saw a militiaman shouting at the woman. I really did look like an infant because of my wasted body, although I was fourteen years old. The militiaman continued, 'Can't you see he's still a child and unable to work and earn bread?' The woman cursed me in every way imaginable, but the militiaman ignored her and led her away to the militia's headquarters for selling produce unlawfully.

The crowd remained where it was for a few moments, and then gradually dispersed. The people looked at me with pity, and some were even crying, and one man said, 'Try and save yourself in any way you can...'. And I took this advice to heart.

I was still a little frightened and confused after this incident, and I couldn't get the images of the woman and militiaman out of my mind. I went to the water pump and washed my face. I felt very depressed and unable to face the market again that day. I went back to the old carriage and lay down for the night.

But, in the morning my empty stomach forced me to set off for the market early. My legs were so shaky that I thought I would surely die today if I didn't eat something. I began to steal what I could, snatching anything that was edible. Most of the products on sale were so bad that in normal times no one would have dared to sell them. Because of this, anything as valuable as a potato was understandably treasured, and anyone caught stealing such a prize was beaten half to death.

But luck was on my side. By the end of the week I was a competent food snatcher. Now, I never came back from the market empty-handed. All the market women soon knew me well, and when they saw me coming they quickly spread the word, 'Watch out, here comes that boy again!' But I knew they held no real grudge against me, even though I'd stolen their wares more than once. One day, I was wandering around when I saw a large frying-pan full of hemp seeds. The sight of it reminded me of how my mother used to fry the delicious treat for us when we were small. I wanted so badly to taste them again that I watched the position of

the pan, and of the girl who was tending it. I meant to snatch only a handful of seeds and run away, but as I turned to run I caught the edge of the pan with my sleeve and overturned everything into the sand. The poor little girl began to cry bitterly and I, who was standing at a distance, heard her and felt sorry for what I'd done. I wanted to go and apologise to her and tell her about my own misfortunes, but I was too afraid.

Some hours later, I returned to that spot and saw the girl had left. Many seeds were still lying in the sand where she'd been unable to retrieve them. I felt it was safe to gather up what I could of them, and had just commenced doing so when I heard a voice say, 'Could that be Pavlo, Mykyta Makohon's son?' I turned round and saw our neighbours and good friends from home who'd fled to Makeyivka before the "de-kurkulization". It was Vasyl Zherdiv and his wife Sashka. When we'd greeted one another I told them about our village and we all three wept together with aching hearts. They gave me some money and their address and told me I was welcome whenever I wanted to visit them. They were going somewhere and said they'd be back tomorrow. I was overjoyed by this unexpected good fortune. We parted warmly and they went on their way. I walked around the market for a little longer and couldn't forget the girl whose hemp seeds I'd overturned. I'd profited but little from my stolen handful whereas she'd lost practically all the seeds.

Although I was cheered by the chance meeting with my neighbours, I didn't hasten to their house but remained at the market for another three days, building up my strength. I now had something to eat at least once a day, and even though my diet was still irregular and insufficient I felt much stronger and the swelling in my legs had disappeared. I could walk normally again, and even run.

But, when four days had passed I decided to seek out my friends. I would have to go on foot and ask the local people where the address was. In fact, they lived outside Makeyivka in a new suburb called Sobachovko, where almost the entire population consisted of people who'd fled the kolhosp. I followed the directions people gave me and finally reached the house at about two o'clock in the afternoon. Fortunately, my friends were at home and gave me a warm welcome. Considering the famine, the meal we ate was very good, and after we had eaten they asked me to tell them about home. I described our village and the ravages of the famine, telling them about the deaths in my family and the sad condition of their

own relatives. We cried with grief, not knowing what to do next, or how to help our families and friends.

I soon discovered that there were more of our old neighbours at Sobachovko. Vasył Mykas lived there in poverty with his large family. But when I visited them, they shared everything in the house with me as if I was a long - lost son. There, again, the conversation turned to the famine as that was all anyone could think of now. During our discussion I told them that here, somewhere in Makeyivka, lived my mother's brother who'd left the village before the Soviets came. I said I had to find him as he might help us. 'Yes', replied Mykas, "I know Archyp well. He lives near Makeyivka, close to the mine. He works for the director of the bakery. You'll find him easily enough, I'll tell you how to get there. It's about two or three kilometres beyond Makeyivka, when you arrive ask anyone where his house is - they all know'. I was glad to hear this because Uncle Archyp was also my godfather and I had great hopes of him at least rescuing me from starvation.

It was a warm, sunny day when my friends accompanied me onto the road to my uncle's house to say goodbye and wish me well. I walked swiftly in the assurance that I was going to a "second home". When I reached the mine I began to look around. I soon saw a large wooden building in which some people lived and, walking toward it, I asked a woman if she knew Karpenko Archyp, my uncle. The woman good-naturedly told me to walk around the settlement until I came to a big gate, and there I would find Archyp's house. I was overjoyed at having reached my goal so easily and was now almost certain of my survival.

When I entered the gate, I saw my aunt Nastya, Archyp's wife, carrying two pitchers of water. She recognized me immediately, and said, 'Oh, is that you Pavlik?' I could hardly answer her for my eyes filled with tears. We went into the yard and across to the house. My uncle happened to be working just then and my aunt Nastya, on entering the house, looked me up and down and said nothing. Then she began to clear some dishes away and I sat near her in silence. She ignored my presence completely, not even asking me whether I was hungry. At once I knew that if my uncle reacted in the same way there would be no salvation for me here. Later, this proved to be only too true.

In the evening my uncle came home and greeted me sincerely enough, and even wept when I told him about Troyetzk. My aunt prepared the supper. They lived very well for those times, having three rooms and a kitchen just for the two of them. They had

enough to eat and numerous cupboards full of clothing. I was filthy and in rags, but they didn't notice or think of washing me and giving me fresh clothes. The famine hadn't so much as touched them, whereas I hadn't seen a proper meal in months. I was exhausted from hunger but could only sit and watch my uncle and aunt eat their supper. When they'd finished my uncle went outside and my aunt began clearing the table. I remained where I was, looking at the bread on the table. My bones vibrated from the hunger racking my body and, without intending to offend anyone, I took a tiny piece of bread, unable to resist the temptation. But no sooner had I picked up the bread and taken a bite from it than my aunt began to scream and wail like a lunatic: 'You miserable thief, what do you think you're doing with that bread?' and she shouted to my uncle to come at once. I hadn't expected such a reaction and little thought that eating some bread in my uncle's house would be considered thieving. But when I heard my aunt's screaming I knew there was an end to my hopes. My uncle entered the room and with renewed venom his wife now screamed at both of us: 'Just look how he steals our bread'. My uncle stormed up to me, grasped my throat, and shouted 'So, you take advantage of our hospitality and steal from us!' I fell on my knees crying bitterly and tried to explain that I hadn't meant to steal the bread, only I was so very, very hungry and hadn't thought they'd mind.

After a while my uncle left me alone and I went outside where I crawled into a corner near the house. Here, I wept so hard that my whole body pulsated and shook uncontrollably. From the house came the sounds of a fierce argument. My uncle was trying to defend me, but to no avail, for my aunt was like a poisonous snake. I would have left immediately except that I had nowhere to go. So I decided to stay here at least for a few more weeks. My aunt continued to take no notice of my appalling condition. She refused to spare even a few cast-offs to replace my rags, and never once did she tell me to wash myself.

And so began my new life in Uncle Archyp's house.

My aunt continually incited my uncle to throw me out, and agitated him so much that after two weeks he also began to hate the sight of me. He went to work in the morning where he drove the director of the bakery around in a cart whilst my aunt occupied herself in the house with various chores. They forgot all about me, after my aunt had decided that I'd sleep in the corridor from now on. In the corridor there was no bed, or anything else for that

matter, and it was really only a kind of filthy passage leading to the house where all kinds of rags lay strewn around. I collected some empty sacks and made a bed for myself in the corner. Then I curled up tight and slept in the dirt, remembering the relative comfort of the carriage at Makeyivka, compared to this, my uncle's house, which had three large clean rooms and a kitchen, while I slept amidst the refuse. I recalled how my mother had always welcomed them to our house before the famine - how they'd danced and drank. Now I saw with bitterness how they repaid us. Even when I told them about my brothers and sister and my grandmother, and how my mother was now on the verge of death, uncle just bowed his head and stood mute though he could have done so much to help them.

Soon, they were only giving me food once a day, when my uncle came home from work. They fed me, not at the table, but in the hole where I slept. I had a small bowl of weak soup and a minute piece of bread, and that was all. Within a few days I began to weaken again and became frightened. The director's house was close by and I often saw the director's wife and her two children. One day I felt so hungry that I had to go rummaging in the director's refuse can where I found several good raw potatoes and, with renewed energy, planned how I would bake them. As I was turning over the rubbish the director's wife watched me from the window, but I didn't notice her. Quietly, she came out of the house and said, 'Pavlik', in a gentle voice. I was terrified at having been caught. 'Why are you taking those potatoes?' she asked. 'Because I'm so hungry', I whimpered, my eyes full of tears. 'Hungry?' 'Yes, my legs no longer want to keep me up.' 'But doesn't your aunt give you anything to eat?' I said nothing, only wept. But she understood immediately and went back into the house. Soon, she emerged with a huge piece of bread and dripping and, in fluent Ukrainian, said 'Here, eat this, and I'll talk to your aunt'. I knew this would change nothing, but I was only staying for a few more days anyway.

The next day my aunt attacked me like an animal. 'What filthy lies have you been spreading about us?' I remained silent. 'Tell me, you idiot!' Suddenly, I felt an overwhelming anger rise to my throat and I burst out, 'I said nothing against you. But I almost starved to death in your house, so I had to look for food in a refuse can and the director's wife saw me and gave me some bread and dripping, and now she's put you to shame'. She was livid with rage and screamed like a witch. 'You just wait until your uncle comes

home, he'll teach you to keep your filthy, ungrateful mouth shut!' 'It's all the same to me', I replied, 'because I'm leaving soon.'

I had decided to continue on my hungry wanderings towards my Uncle Tymochy's house at Sofino-Brodsky, about thirty kilometres beyond Makeyivka. I knew Uncle Tymochy very well as he, too, used to visit us. Presently, my uncle Archyp came home and I wondered what would happen next. My aunt began to mumble something to him for what seemed like hours, but her voice was calm - and then they asked me in to supper. We ate the meal in silence, like strangers. Then my uncle said, "So, you've decided to leave us Pavlik.' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I wanted to stay alive, so I'm going to find my Uncle Tymochy.'" On hearing this he bowed his head, deep in thought, but no more was said of the matter.

I worked out a plan for my journey, and one day I told my aunt that I was going but that first I wanted her to inspect the house in my presence to make sure I hadn't stolen anything. I'd give her no cause to begin a scandal in my absence. On hearing this, she became confused and embarrassed, and simpered, 'Pavlik, you shouldn't speak like that.' 'You told Uncle Archyp lies about me all the time, you'll probably do so when I'm gone,' I replied. Then she frowned and coaxed entreatingly, 'Well, if you really want to go to Tymochy's then do so, it's your decision, but you won't say anything bad about us there, will you?' and finished by showing me a letter for Tymochy which she wanted me to take for her. But I replied that no, I couldn't, as I wasn't even sure I'd reached my uncle's house alive, having no food or money. She became sulky and complained, 'Pavlik, you're too harsh to us.' Even so, she didn't buy me a ticket and gave me no food for the journey in return for refusing to take the letter. When I finally left that house, my uncle was, as usual, at work and my aunt ignored my departure.

When I reached the station, I found a freight train going in the direction I required, Sofino-Brodsky, which was leaving in fifteen minutes. By now, I was skilled in getting on trains unnoticed and, without a second thought, I climbed on and concealed myself in the darkness. The train began to move and I was on my way. The journey passed by smoothly and I reached Sofino-Brodsky station before I'd even properly settled down. I didn't have uncle's exact address, but from overhearing his conversations with my father, I remembered he worked as a switchman at the station. Someone

there would know him and be able to tell me where he lived.

I got off the train and wandered round the station until I met a man who knew my uncle and could tell me where to go. 'Can you see that market over there? Walk towards it and you'll find Tymochy selling his wares.' I was surprised, as I'd thought my uncle worked at the station, but I was glad I'd found him so easily. I walked across to the market and, sure enough, my uncle was standing behind the very first stall. My limbs felt curiously weak and shaky, but I kept on walking towards him. As soon as he saw me, he stopped what he was doing in amazement and called me over to him. He realized my situation immediately. Explaining that he still had to stand there for a few more hours, he told me to walk to the end of the street where I'd find his house. There, my aunt Symka, uncle's second wife, whom I also knew, would take care of me.

When I approached the house, my aunt recognised me at once, and warmly embraced me, exclaiming in horror at the state I was in — ragged, weary, and dirty. Without another word, she put me in a bath and found me some decent clothes, throwing away my old rags. Then Uncle Tymochy came home and we sat down to supper. Again, I had to relate what had come to pass at home and they grieved over our family's misfortune and the misfortune that Moscow had brought to all our rich Ukrainian lands.

Then I found out why my uncle no longer worked at the station. Before the revolution, Uncle Tymochy had left our village and settled down quite well in Sofino-Brodsky, where he'd worked as a switchman at the railway. Then he'd been promoted to a guard. He lived comfortably and even owned a few houses which he leased to tenants. But, when the Soviet authorities implemented the kolhosp and enforced it in the villages by creating famine, Uncle Tymochy's heart broke and he began to drink and neglect his work. At first, he was given a warning by his overseers, but things gradually got worse and uncle finally had to sell his houses to get out of debt. Then he lost his job and almost ended up on the roadside, living in a small hovel which he'd put together himself. Then total famine struck Ukraine, and he was half-crazed when I met him - and his family was also eating grass. But, miraculously enough, uncle still kept a cow, which he now entrusted to me to graze. When I told them of Uncle Archyp and his wife's treatment of me, Uncle Tymochy and Aunt Symka shook their heads in distress. I compared Uncle Tymochy's lifestyle to Uncle Archyp's, the latter possessing all the necessities of life, the former himself swollen with hunger but ready to share his last meal with his star-

ving nephew. Now, I never think back to this strange and unnatural paradox without sorrow and bitterness.

One evening, I was bringing the cow home from pasture when I suddenly froze in my tracks and the blood rushed to my head - there in the house sat my father, terribly swollen and hardly alive. Somehow, he'd reached this place in a final desperate attempt to save his own and my mother's lives. When my father saw me, he was stunned and shaken, for he'd thought my disappearance had meant I'd died somewhere of hunger. Even now, as I was grazing the cow, my father had told Uncle Tymochy that 'Pavlik didn't come home, and we don't know what's happened to him.' But my uncle and aunt had kept their silence, thinking it best that I reveal the truth to him myself. So that when I walked into the room, my father was overwhelmed to see me, his now only son, alive before his eyes.

After the joy of our meeting, we all sat down to discuss how best to help my mother, who was dying. Quickly, we improvised a parcel into which we put a small amount of dried biscuits and fish, and anything else we could find. It was a fine parcel, but how would we get it to my mother? The postal service was by now non-existent. After a short deliberation, I said that, since I was experienced in riding stowaway, I would take the parcel. Everyone was uneasy about letting me go, but there was no alternative, so they were forced to agree. They scraped together some money for a ticket, but I had no intention of buying one - I planned to spend it on food instead.

And so, the next day we went down to the station and my father said he would stay with Uncle Tymochy and try to find a job. I got on the train unnoticed, as usual, and set off. The journey was uneventful except that, being hidden, I couldn't see what stations we were passing through. Thus, I missed Mezhova station, where I was to have alighted and rolled on to Prosyana. Once there, I had to wait for a train back to Mezhova, little knowing that both stations were of an equal distance on foot from Troyetzk. Finally, I arrived at my intended destination. But now another problem faced me. How was I to walk thirty kilometres holding the parcel, with my body craving for food? But my conscience forced me to walk and some external strength pressed me on, for I knew my mother was dying. I had to save my mother, if she was still alive. I vaguely recognised the road, knowing only that it meandered through the steppe and passed several farms. I knew the danger of someone seeing me with the parcel in my hands, and I was a little

anxious.

It was a beautiful spring day, but the further I walked, the weaker I became, and it was then that the calamity faced me. The food in the parcel was for my mother, but I also needed to eat - yet, if I ate something there would be less for my mother. Finally, I nibbled the smallest amount of the food possible and still felt dizzy - but I kept on walking. I passed the farms but saw no people. Everything seemed dead in the fields, and no dogs barked. I tried to move faster so as to reach the village before dark.

After what seemed an endless time I began to spy the first house of Troyetzk. Then I noticed the cemetery set aside at the edge of the village, and when I saw it terrible memories of what had happened there came rushing back into my mind. By now, half the village lay dead in that hole in the cemetery. With an aching heart I entered the village. When I passed the cemetery I recalled how mother used to frighten us with tales of dead people if we were disobedient, and I tried to pass by as speedily as possible. Soon, I emerged onto the main road which led right through the village to our house, but first I stopped to look and listen all around me. I wanted to feel what had happened to this place of my happy childhood.

Troyetzk was a large village and in better days it had fairly hummed with vibrant life. Dogs barked, musicians played, young girls sang, and the atmosphere was filled with an aura of normal, contented, peaceful life. But now, as the twilight was falling, I stood as still as a corpse and listened to the black, heavy silence of the village. Lord, what had happened to our lives?

Then I remembered my mother and hurried on down the road. Soon, I reached our street where rows of handsome houses had once stood, with pretty fences and fragrant orchards. Now, everything was overgrown with weeds, and the houses were collapsing. As I approached our house my steps faltered and I felt so alone amidst the desolation. The only sound I could hear was the hag-like croaking of frogs; as frogs crawled everywhere, on the road and in the grass, all around.

I entered our yard and saw that the shutters were closed and the gate was missing and weeds were growing everywhere. There were so many rasping frogs under my feet that I couldn't help but crush them as I walked. The door was wide open even though night had settled in, and the frogs were crawling into the corridor. I swallowed my revulsion and entered the house.

Once inside I saw that all the interior doors were open, and again I could hear no noise. As if in a nightmare I kept walking - something pushed me into room after room until I stopped again, to listen. Nothing. I remember that I half-turned to the right and knocked against an unlighted kerosene lamp which always hung there on a nail. I took a match out of my pocket and, lifting the lamp, I lit it with trembling fingers. Luckily, there was still a minute pool of kerosene in the bottom. Gradually, light pervaded the shadows, but I could only hear the frogs creeping about on the floor. To the left of the room there was a stove and I turned instinctively towards it. My mother lay there in the last stages of starvation, haggard and almost naked. I stood for a moment looking at her and I couldn't believe it was my mother lying there in a torn shirt, on the stove, as thin as firewood. I didn't know what to do - my cap fell onto the floor and then my hands let go of the parcel.

Her eyes were closed and I thought she was already dead. Half afraid, I moved towards her on leaden legs and stood by her side, helpless. Then I thought of taking her hand. I picked it up and felt for the pulse. It was barely there, but she was still alive. She was completely unconscious and couldn't see me. I went outside and collected some dry twigs. I made a small fire and began to heat some water. Then I crushed some dry cherry sprigs and boiled some tea. I also made a watery soup from whatever I could find lying around. I poured some of the tea into a glass, mixed in a little of sugar I'd brought, and carefully began to pour it through my mother's lips. As her lips were hard to open, I had to keep them apart with one hand while I fed her with the other. It was midnight and deathly quiet, and I knew no one would see me. So I sat until morning pouring the tea at intervals between my mother's lips until, at the break of dawn, her organism finally responded and she opened her eyes, though she was still unable to speak. Then I gave her some soup.

Around midday, my mother started to mumble something but I couldn't understand what she wanted to say. I continued to feed her and try to build up her strength. By the evening she recognized me and shakily exclaimed 'Pavlik, is that you?' 'Yes, mama, I've come home', and I thanked God for saving her life.

Throughout the day I kept inside the house, afraid of someone noticing me. I didn't doubt that the activists were still prowling the village. I took care of my mother, and, on the next day, with my help, she managed to sit up, and even stand. Then, by carefully leaning against the walls she could even walk a little and attend to

her needs. After four days had passed, my mother was strong enough to talk normally, and we told one another of all that had happened to each of us.

It was spring time and things were beginning to grow in the gardens and fields, such as onions and small potatoes. But the harvest was still many months away. I became anxious again, for the food I had brought was not enough to sustain both my mother and myself for much longer than a week. And then what would we do? I decided to try and steal some food from the activists' fields during the night, hoping that together with my parcel, this would last my mother until harvest-time. However, I, myself, would have to return to Sofino-Brodsky as there wouldn't be enough food for both of us. Mother was forced to agree to this for there was no other solution, but she was loath to lose me again so soon.

And so we planned my departure. I hid some of my mother's food so no one would confiscate it. Just before I left I found some young onions which I took with me to sell along the way. Whilst in the village I had contacted my god-mother, whom I'd found in a similar plight to my mother. She had a son, Andry, who was starving, and she begged me to take him along as his last chance of survival. I readily agreed to this as travelling in a pair in such dangerous times was preferable to travelling alone.

In a few days time Andry and I said goodbye to our grieving mothers and walked out of the village, making certain that no one followed us. Again, there were thirty kilometres to cover to Mezhova station, where we'd hopefully catch a train. The way was hazardous and uncertain but hunger overcame our fear. We left home early in the morning and reached Mezhova as the evening was turning into night. God watched over us along the road and we had no mishaps. I still remember the horror of that year when men attacked other men in a last, frantic attempt to appease their terrible hunger. It now seems like a horror movie at the cinema, but it was real and I shall never forget it.

We reached Mezhova station under cover of darkness. Only a few people were wandering along the platform and they looked ghastly and emaciated. What were we to do? First, we decided to rest after our long journey. We had nothing to eat except a few onions and raw potatoes that our mothers had given us. As always, there were empty carriages standing in the stocks. We crawled into one which was full of dirt and wood shavings, lay down, and fell into a deep sleep. We slept for quite a while until the shrill whistle of the coupler awoke us.

When we climbed outside we saw that dawn was breaking, so we tidied ourselves up a little and began to walk slowly so as not to attract anyone's attention. But no one could be seen and everything was silent. When we reached the platform we saw a freight train ready to leave at any minute. We hurried towards the front end where the coupler was checking the carriages. We asked him where the train was going. He looked at us strangely and asked where we wanted to go. 'Makeyivka', we answered. 'Well, the train's going to Makeyivka', said the coupler. I told him we had no money for tickets and he bent his head to one side and thought. Then he told us to go to the conductor's compartment where we could ride safely. He said the conductor was a friend of his, and that he'd tell him all about us. The conductor would certainly help us, said the coupler. We thanked him earnestly and ran towards that compartment. Yes, there was a good place to hide and we sat down comfortably. Within five minutes the train moved off, and at first all went well. But after we'd covered about five kilometres the conductor approached us unexpectedly and told us to come and sit with him for a moment, as he had something to tell us. We crawled out calmly enough as the coupler had told us we could trust him. The man was about forty years old, and very imposing. He said, 'So you boys are heading for Makeyivka.' 'Yes.' 'And what are you going there for?' 'We have relatives in Makeyivka whom we're going to visit.' 'Listen boys, this train is going there, but it'll make some short stops along the way. Don't you get out anywhere. When we reach Yasynovata station the train will stop for two hours, as that's an important junction. You can get out there and stretch your legs. But be careful as the station is full of militia on the lookout for kids like you. If they catch you they'll take you away to a horrible place'.

Well, we reached Yasynovata station safely enough. The train stopped and we got out cautiously to "stretch our legs". We wanted to walk over to the market, but no sooner had we stepped onto the road than a militiaman shouted and ran towards us. It was too late to escape and, although our hearts were beating fast as we knew what would happen, we walked towards him resignedly. The militiaman leered at us and asked in Russian, 'Where are you going? What are you hanging around here for? Where are you from?' I made a sign to Andry, and began. 'We're from Makeyivka and we've been visiting our relatives. Now we're going home'. 'What's that you've got in those bags?' 'A few onions and potatoes our relatives gave us for the journey'. 'Well', he said, 'You're going

with me to sort this out'. Our stomachs turned over as we'd heard what an interrogation by the militia was like. He led us like a snake in between the trains. We hadn't gone far when he stopped abruptly near a passenger train and knocked on the door. The door sprang open and out glanced a boy of about twenty. 'See here, I've got two kids who've been wandering around out here. Take a good look at them.' And, after handing us over to the boy he walked away. The compartment we entered was clean and looked like an office. Then another young boy walked in with blond hair. They invited us to sit down and asked whether we were hungry. Yes, very much as we hadn't eaten in two days. But I knew from experience that it was best never to tell such people the truth. So, as I was a little quicker than Andry, I said, 'Not very'. Then they made me answer a lot of confusing questions, which was long and arduous, and I saw by the questions that they were Komsomol¹¹ members simply carrying out orders. This train was their office. I thought about all those people who'd been arrested, like us, for trying to escape this misery and find a better life. They had no doubt gone through the same ordeal that we were going through now.

At first, only one of them asked us questions while the other walked up and down the compartment with his hands folded behind his back. We didn't learn the names of either of them. 'Listen kids, we're only trying to help you, so tell us the truth. Where are you coming from and where are you going?' 'We're from Makeyivka, that's where our families live, and we've been visiting our relatives. Now we're going home again'. 'What's in those bags?' 'Just a few onions and potatoes our relatives gave us for the journey'. 'You lying pigs', -and he struck me hard in the face. I fell from the chair and blood poured from my mouth. His colleague sat me back in the chair and, in a quieter tone, he asked the same questions again. But this time he wrote down everything I said. When this comedy was finally over he said, 'Fine, now we'll take you to the address you've given us.'

They led us outside and towards another train. They knocked, and a girl looked out to whom they handed us over. I couldn't overhear what words passed between them. Inside the train we saw a large number of children from about eight to fifteen years of age. All of them were filthy and emaciated and lying all over the place, wherever they could find an empty spot. They told us we were to stay here too, until we were summoned to be taken home. And thus a new chapter began in our unfortunate lives.

There was an horrific atmosphere inside that train. The weakest children cried and screamed incessantly, 'Mama, mama, mama'.

There was no lavatory, so the Komsomolists took us outside in turn to a designated place, and then brought us back again. Andry also asked to be taken outside. As we had had no chance to talk first, I only found out about his plan later. They took Andry and two smaller children outside but soon discovered they'd failed to bring him back again. Somehow, he fled, with great risk to his life, as they were returning to the train. Whilst the Komsomolists were preoccupied with the smaller children he'd darted between the trains towards the station, but, to his great misfortune, he ran straight into the very same Komsomolists who'd first interrogated us. They were each carrying a canteen of water from the station. When they recognized Andry they shouted, 'Where d'you think you're going, you scum?!' Andry had no time to think, but kept his head and, surprisingly for him, threw himself straight at the Komsomolists hitting at them with all his strength. They were so amazed that, before they got their bearings, Andry was already out of sight. When I heard the Komsomolists discussing this incident later, I was satisfied that Andry had escaped successfully. I also realised that I only had to think about my own fate from now on.

After a few days we were given some soup and dumplings, not enough to fill our stomachs, but enough to keep us alive - so we weren't as afraid of this place as we would otherwise have been. Nonetheless, I began to follow the movements going on around me closely. I kept asking our guards when they'd take us home. Their inevitable reply was always, 'Soon, just wait a little longer'. I'd been in that train for a week when suddenly they removed me and nine other boys to a different one — the so-called "re-allocator". The next day we travelled to Chystyakovo station where our wagon was detached and reattached to yet another train. Then we were stationary again and had little hope of moving on in the near future. During the first few days at Chystyakovo we received no food. The militiaman who was guarding us went to the station every day at noon for two hours. I saw that no one intended to feed us here, and that once more I was growing weak. The old fear of starvation gripped me yet again and I began to think of escaping.

When the militiaman went to the station I examined all the doors and windows. He always locked the door behind him, so escape through there was impossible. But the windows, I found, could be opened and there was just enough room for an undernourished, skinny body like mine to squeeze through. I considered

everything carefully: I chose the best window and began to note exactly when the guard came and went. The militiaman had his own private room in the train and once, when he'd gone out, I thought of exploring it, if the door wasn't locked. Incredibly, the door opened and I remember how surprised I was that he'd forgotten to lock it. The first objects my eyes lighted on were a large piece of bread and a plate of dumplings on the table. My head swam as I looked at them and hunger and weakness overcame my fear - I fairly ran towards the table and began swallowing the dumplings and bread as fast as I could. I decided to eat all the dumplings now, but to save some of the bread for later. But just as I was finishing my unexpected feast I heard the sound of boots in the corridor. The militiaman was returning. I glanced round the room, but there was nowhere to hide — I had fallen straight into his hands. I decided to try and escape, but as I opened the door I saw the militiaman blocking my way. I managed to slip past him, but there was nowhere to run and all I could do was desperately climb onto the bunks in the compartment. But he seized me from behind and threw me onto the floor in a rage. He kicked and beat me with his fists until I was almost sorry I'd eaten his dinner. Eventually, I managed to get away from him and crawl up into the bunks out of his reach, and then I was glad all over again that my stomach was no longer empty. As for the pain, it was just a pain and would go away. My companions watched the whole of this scene but were too weak to react. At first I'd tried to befriend them, but they'd long since become living corpses. They could only sway their heads from side to side when anyone spoke to them. So I concentrated all my efforts on rescuing myself.

Two weeks passed after my encounter with the guard and we were no nearer to being taken home. So I finally made up my mind to escape. I watched for when the militiaman went to the station and then I quickly forced open my window. I struggled through it and fell heavily to the ground on the other side. I was bruised and bleeding - but I was free!

I looked around and saw a large freight train standing nearby and I headed towards it. When I approached I saw a coupler walking around checking something. He told me the train was going to Sofino-Brodsky. I barely had time to ask how far it was, fifteen kilometres, before the train began to move and I jumped on. I couldn't believe my luck as I saw ahead of me an end to my troubles. In about two hours the train reached Sofino-Brodsky. This time I knew exactly where I was going, and very soon I was

standing outside Uncle Tymochy's house. They were eating their dinner. When I walked in they could hardly believe I was still alive. They greeted me so warmly and incredulously, knowing well all the dangers I must have gone through.

I told them about my journey and how I'd reached home and saved my mother's life. We were grateful to be together again knowing now that my mother was safe. But father wasn't there - he'd left them again to go in search for food, and they didn't know what had become of him.

During my absence uncle had been forced in desperation to sell his only cow, so now I had nothing to do except wander around the area and look for food. I did so with added diligence because uncle had become so weak he could hardly walk. I found out where the worker's canteens were located, in particular the one where the party officials themselves came to eat. There were plenty of scraps in these places, as the officials often left pieces of bread and meat lying on their plates — and these were of the highest quality.

Of course, outsiders were strictly prohibited from entering the canteens, but uncle hadn't forbidden me to go there, so I went, secretly. Very soon I befriended two other boys like myself, and the canteens became our new lifeline.

The weather was getting warmer and it wasn't long till the harvest. The days passed by and we still heard nothing from my father, or from my mother, whom I hadn't seen since my journey to save her life. The corn was ripening in the fields and the harvest would be bountiful — it was like a gift from God after the months of famine.

Of course, my visits to the canteens didn't pass without an unpleasant experience. I especially liked to linger around the party officials' canteen, as it emitted the most fragrant aromas, but the women who worked there were particularly merciless and would throw us out onto the streets if they found us lurking in the corners. Only occasionally did we slip past them - and then what a feast we had! Sometimes we could even take something home in our pockets.

Not all the women were heartless, however, and one day as I was gulping down some porridge a man had left behind, a young, pretty waitress approached me and said, 'You know, you're not supposed to be here - the rules are very strict'. I looked at her with one eye and kept on eating the porridge, thinking it would only go into the refuse anyway. 'Well', she continued, 'I don't agree with

the rules and if you like I'll help you. We work here on different shifts, and I always work at this time. If you want, come again at the same time tomorrow and I'll let you in.' I didn't know what to say, so I seized her hand and kissed it, and two red spots appeared on her cheeks. So, from that day on I came to the canteen only when this particular girl was working, and as long as I only came then everything was fine. My warm-hearted friend was so kind that she even brought me something to eat herself, and I always had enough left over to take home for my uncle and aunt. At first they asked me where I'd got the food, but I didn't tell them, so they just warned me not to get into trouble, and said nothing more about it.

But, one day when I entered the canteen, instead of my friend's warm smile I met the angry glare of an unfamiliar waitress who turned on me sharply. 'What are you doing here? What do you want?' 'Nothing in particular', I said, 'I'm just looking around'. Then some other people came in and took me outside where quite a crowd of waitresses and officials had gathered. A skinny man approached with two others of middling height. They were dressed in a semi-military uniform. I stood there surrounded by all these people. The situation was very strange and incomprehensible as they hadn't caught me actually stealing anything. Apparently, the skinny man was the canteen investigator. He began to question me in very bad Ukrainian, but I replied that I hadn't done anything wrong, that I was very hungry and only wanted to ask for the scraps. 'Where do you live?' 'Nowhere, I'm an orphan. All my family died in the famine. I'm the only one left, and I want to stay alive. That's why I came to the canteen'. The man turned aside and quickly whispered to one of his companions, then he said, 'Well, you can go home kid - but don't come snooping around here anymore'. I thanked him, grateful to have escaped so lightly. Everyone dispersed and I, too, turned to go. Suddenly, my friend the waitress ran up and took my hand, thanking me tearfully for keeping quiet about her role in my "crime". She was overjoyed that they hadn't punished me, adding, 'Our director isn't such a bad man after all'. In return, I thanked her for all her help and for staying human amidst all the inhumanity around us.

Following this incident I decided to return to Troyetzka. I was anxious about my mother and father from whom I'd heard nothing in months. I told my aunt and uncle about my plans, adding that I would be safe now the famine seemed to be ending and the harvest looked so abundant. I thought the harvest would change things, so

I wanted to get home. My mother was always in my thoughts, as I'd left her little knowing whether she would really survive or not.

Within the week I had taken leave of Uncle Tymochy and his wife and was on a train heading for Mezhova. Along the way the conductor caught me but he was a good man and, when I'd explained my story, he let me ride unhindered. After arriving at Mezhova I still had to walk the thirty kilometres to Troyetzk. I chose to cut across the fields instead of following the main road. This way, I could fill my stomach as I walked with the bounty of the ripe fields. I walked slowly and, as far as I could see, the wide Ukrainian steppes shimmered with their magnificent harvest in the sun. As I went, I broke off ear after ear of corn and ate them to appease my hunger. I ground the golden ears in my palms, separating the corn from the chaff and ate it. I knew I was stealing "state property", but I didn't care — today nothing seemed to matter.

As I approached my village I hoped I'd meet someone familiar and, as if in answer to my thoughts, I saw someone riding towards me. As the figure drew nearer I noticed it was an official and instantly I was on my guard, as I still had some corn in my hand. The figure loomed nearer and I realized it was none other than Ivan Zayets riding up in a one-horse buggy.

Our eyes met in a steel-cold stare, but I was young and full of anger and I stood mute, refusing to speak. But he spoke to me: 'So, you wanted to run away from the kolhosp, but I see you've changed your mind', and he smirked disgustingly. I said nothing, but he carried on, 'Follow this road until you reach a large palob¹² in a field—that's where the 6th Brigade is - that's where your mother's working'. I ignored the triumph in his voice, thinking only that soon I'd see my mother again. I walked off in the direction he'd given me and, once I was out of his sight, began to run. When I approached the 6th Brigade, they had stopped for lunch. I looked around for my mother. She was sitting on the ground. Seconds later I was in her arms. She held me tight, hardly believing it was her son, and for some time we couldn't speak through our tears. Then I began to tell her about my adventures, and all the good people from our village rejoiced to see us reunited.

All the people in the Brigade looked haggard and pale but somehow, like my mother, they'd survived. Everyone took their lunch with them to work, but there was also a large cauldron near the field in which a woman was cooking wheat germ. She handed out a portion to everyone, and I also received some. Then, I sat down with my mother to eat and talk again about the past un-

forgettable months. Mother said she'd heard nothing from father since, in despair, he'd left her dying on the stove to go in search of food.

When lunch was over, everyone returned to work and I also helped, as good workers were scarce after the famine. A number of men were reaping whilst the women walked behind tying the corn into sheaves. Then we took the sheaves and carried them aside to build them into stacks. I'll never forget that harvest - there was so much corn that we couldn't bring it all in, and much of it rotted in the fields.

We worked until evening, and then everyone went home. The field was quite a distance from our village, and some of the women were still too weak to walk all the way back. So the brigade - leader found an old cart in which to take the women home, and I rode home with my mother too. Our house looked old and empty, but we hardly noticed - we were so glad to be alive and together once again.

We continued to hear nothing from my father, and we didn't know if he was alive or dead. Our life began again, and it was hard for everyone after the famine. Those were terrible times. When I saw the village it looked so sad and desolate and still frightened me with a lingering smell of death.

Winter came again and my mother needed warm clothes, but there weren't any to be had, and I was anxious about her.

During the winter my father returned unexpectedly. I didn't ask him where he'd been, but after their long separation my mother and father often argued and their life together was changed, for my mother distrusted my father. I suppose this had to be. It would have been unusual if the feelings between my parents had remained untouched after such suffering....

Now I live in Canada...

I own a grocery store. Everything is paid for - I have no debts. The store and everything in it is our property - mine and my wife's.

Was it my past that made me choose a grocery store? Well, whatever the reason, anyone who's searched for a crust of bread has an indescribable feeling when feeding others.

I am still haunted by a paradox: there, in Ukraine, in our land, famed throught the world for its fertile, black soil, I almost died of starvation. But here, in rock-strewn, sandy Ontario, I, a foreigner have lived for years in a "kingdom of food", and have never once seen a starving person.

What a chimerical fate man often undergoes.

Man is a small creation who can endure unimaginable ordeals. I remember my own fate, and how many times I brushed with death. Whilst still a child I saw indescribable horrors. But later the horrors subsided as if an invisible force had swept them away, and that force was God, who is the Saviour of man.

And no matter where fate led me and in what circumstances I later found myself, I could never forget the year of 1933. Always in my mind I carried the images of my brothers and sister, and all the people of my village who were thrown naked into a pit. No matter where I travelled, or where I lived, the memory of that famine always haunted me.

How could I accept a system that deliberately destroyed seven million, and perhaps more, of my Ukrainian people?

Finally, I want to add that everything I have written here is what I saw, and what I lived through. And it is true.

I dedicate this book to all those who died in the famine, which was created intentionally to break the Ukrainian nation's resistance.

May the memory of this tragedy always remain with the Ukrainian people, and may our historians record it in black letters to the eternal dishonour of Moscow, so the world may know of the unprecedented barbarism with which Moscow achieved its horrific ends.

And may the memory of the dead pass from generation to generation forever.

During the destruction of our village many families suffered torture and imprisonment, and many others were deported to Siberia. Only some managed to escape and hide from the searching eyes of the GPU¹³. Others fled and changed their identity to start a new life. I can no longer remember all their names, but I include here a list of those I still recall. Many of these people are no longer alive; but some live in the West - others perhaps still live in Ukraine.

Those who are still alive, and who read these memoirs, can themselves testify to their truth.

these are the names of the people from my village:

M. Makohon

I. Luhansky

I. Lantuch

P. Makohon

H. Mykas

M. Tzvirkun

V. Mykas

S. Siryj

I. Andrychenko

O. Malyshko

M. Rudenko

Y. Dulin

A. Kosivsky

K. Kovalenko

A. Skrypnyk

NOTES

1. *Zaporozhian Sich*: Organization of Ukrainian Cossacks of a knightly order whose stronghold was situated on the River Dnipro.
2. *NEP* ("*New Economic Policy*"): Period in the Soviet Union in which private property was permitted (1920-1928).
3. *with birches*: Ukrainian Easter tradition.
4. *SOZ*: An early form of collective farm.
5. *Kolhosp*: Collective farm run by the Communist Party in the Soviet Union.
6. *So-called "activists"*: terrorist groups used by the authorities to enforce their plans in the villages.
7. "*bidniaks*": poor farmers
"*seridniaks*": farmers of average standing
"*kurkuls*": all the most aware and resistant farmers in the villages.
8. *Donbas*: Mining region in southeastern Ukraine.
9. "*de-kurkultsation*": Destruction of the Kurkuls by the Soviet authorities.
10. *Kopiyka*: smallest unit of currency in the Soviet Union, equal to one cent.
11. *Komsomol*: Communist Youth Organization
12. *GPU*: One of the early names for the KGB.
13. *Palob*: Primitive covered wagon in which the field workers could shelter from the sun or rain.

**All responses concerning this book
can be sent to the following address:**

**PAVLO MAKOHON
215 Leslie Street
Toronto, Ont. M4M 3C8, Canada**