1933 - Holodomor

I was born in 1923. Yet I remember my childhood well. One evening a constable from the commandant's office from the city of Satanov, came and took our father away, this was 1931 or 1932. They were taking away people who had been to America because they were suspected of having gold. However, they also arrested and jailed many others - up to 10% of the population, on evidence of possession of gold. My father had been to America where he worked in a Ford automobile factory for 10 years. He put his money in a savings bank. He came back during the Russian revolution. Everyone said that life would get better and many residents returned home. Anyone suspected of possession of gold was jailed. The prisoners were fed only once a day, the toilet was in the cell and no one was permitted to leave the cell. The prisoners were called out one by one for interrogation. Questioning was brutal, some were not able to endure it and died. Those who did have gold would give it up and were released.

One late evening my father came home with two soldiers. His savings book was kept in the attic, behind the rafter. Father climbed to the attic and one of the soldiers followed him. The soldier opened the book and said: "So girls, I am taking your dowry." If that money went for rebuilding the economy of the country then it's fine, but someone made a living off of it. I think, and many older people are saying that, the famine was maliciously/purposfuly created because, even though there was a drought, it wasn't severe enough to cause the death of so many people. No one really knows how many people actually died from hunger, no one kept track of this in our village.

People were beaten and tortured to force them to give up their gold. When no more gold could be extracted from the people, Stalin probably decided to create an artificial famine and use it to extricate – draw out any remaining gold from the population, and this he did.

When people started to swell with hunger, new stores opened up selling various high quality products. There was one such store in Satapiv in Satanivs'kyj Rajon. This store was called Turksyn - you could buy anything there for gold. My grandfather sold some horses for paper money and for 3 gold coins 'fivers' and there was also a gold watch cover from my father's hand watch. We were able to buy flour and some grain for the gold coins, but we didn't get anything for the gold watch cover. When they checked it out, it turned out to be gilded only, so they gave it back. We were at home, hungry and waiting, but my mother returned with no food.

The situation in the villages as related by people born between 1900 and 1903.
Our neighbour Varvara said that people went to work hungry, I remember clearly. When the rye was ready to be harvested, all the women were in the fields working, watched over by a supervisor / brigadier. It was way past midday and no lunch cart with the 'balanda' (a thin tasteless soup) arrived.
With no strength left, they lay down to rest. Two Rayon (region) representatives

arrived and asked why they were lying around and not working. The Brigadier - Dyshkant Ivan Pavlovych interceded for the women, (he has passed away, but his wife, son and daughter are still alive).

The brigadier told the officials that the women had been working all day without any food and were extremely weak and tired. After the officials left, the "balanda" appeared immediately, very thin soup, everyone called it balanda.
People would bring containers from home to be able to take part of their ration home to their children.

When the first sheafs of grain were threshed, they were immediately ground into flour. Bread rations were then given out in the fields and to other workers. The head of the kolhosp, Kremeniuk Oleksij was a very good manager of the collective farm.
He always made sure that everything was planted and harvested on time, that the bread was given to the state and that his workers were well taken care of .
Older people say that even up to this day, there has never been a better head of the collective farm than Kremeniuk.

However, in another year or two, they were taken away, arrested and jailed.
Dyshkant Ivan, Kremeniuk Oleksij, Kremeniuk Mykhajlo (brother) and many more.
Dyshkant Ivan was able to return home and did say who betrayed him. Personally,
I don't know, but his family knows who it was. They accused him of being connected to the White Guard from outside the country.

When our mothers returned home from work in the evenings, we children would run to greet them, because they brought pieces of bread. They would eat the soup for lunch and hide the bread to take home to the children. We would run after our mothers inquiring "It's true, isn't it, that the bread is from the bunny in the field?"

I remember this one incident. We would have to submit [to the state], without fail, quantities of milk, meat and the required taxes. There were no exemptions due to the famine. Our parents would go to work. My sister or I would take the milk to the dairy. During lunchtime, you could get some whey for 10 kopeks per litre. There would always be a very long line up for this. People would use the whey to make soup, adding some whole grain cereal.

Not everyone had cows. One man started yelling in the line up " There won't be enough for everyone, I'm going hungry while some are taking food to feed their pigs".
An older man, Kudria Stepan, became very bloated from hunger. He came out to the field when the rye was in bloom, he picked an ear, sniffed the blossom and said
" I hope to survive until the kernel of grain appears." Having said this, he fell onto the road and died.

Children from the families who suffered from hunger did not attend school.

Our neighbour had 4 children. Families with many children, 3 or more, suffered the most. The teacher came to our neighbour's house and asked why the children were not at school. The mother was making breakfast at the time.
She crushed corn cobs with an axe, ground them into flour on a millstone, and cooked soup. At a later time, children would get breakfast at school and lunches would be organized for them.

We often went on field trips. Returning from a field trip, the teacher gave everyone in the class a piece of bread. The bread was round and difficult to cut evenly. Some pieces ended up smaller than others. The teacher would pick one student and cover his eyes. Another student would grab a piece of bread and the student with the covered eyes would say the name of another student to whom that piece of bread would be given. After that, no one was upset as to who got which piece of bread.

There was no sabotage of production in our village, nor in any neighbouring villages.
If you go to the village, you can probably gather more information.

Please forgive my illiteracy.
Goodbye.