As I read in a newspaper about the famine of “33”, it is straining my nerves, because I have seen it all, lived through it and remember it to this day. I was seven years old at the time and survived by a miracle. My mother left me with an uncle in Kyiv and although there I was fed leftovers, I had something to eat. There were five children in our family and two of my brothers aged three and fourteen, died of hunger. I do not know why we had been stripped of everything. My mother’s father died from typhus in 1919 leaving his wife and three daughters.

My father lived with his father , two brothers and three sisters, but no mother. Grandfather worked as drayman for a rich landowner in village Snizhna , Pohrebyshchynsky district.
I remember these episodes from the times: father was arrested and taken away. They also took away all our possessions and then came to demand bread. Mother had hidden a small amount of wheat, which they found and took away. The members of the communist youth group (komsomol), who were doing the search, even took away dirty underwear and some sunflower seeds which they found in the pantry.

At this point mother lost consciousness , while we, five children, were sitting on a bed and screaming. The komsomol youths threw us some sunflower seeds, the neighbours came running and revived our mother. When mother regained consciousness, she appealed to the komsomols asking them how she was supposed to continue living with her children, to which they replied: you want to continue living? My grandmother arrived at this time, wearing her sheep-skin coat. The same komsomols threw her to the ground (it took three of them because grandmother was a sturdy woman) trying to tear the coat off her. They wrestled for a long time, grandmother was screaming loudly and so were we.

I also remember mother bringing us peat to eat and some roots that she dug up on the shore of a river. Later, already as a mature woman, I often asked my mother why were we so abused, why did she not join the collective (kolhosp)? Her answer was that we were considered to be peasants of average means and so the collective would not accept her. I could not understand why a peasant who had a pair of horses, one cow, five sheep and five children could be considered of average means.

At the same time, the members of komsomol such as Stachowa from Winnycia region, who dug up the ground in our home and did not find anything, this I remember. She did not steal alone, together they took everything and shared it among themselves, thus their families all survived the famine. When my mother brought me back from Kyiv and we children played in the neighbourhood, we often found in the weeds, human bones and skulls. Because there were so many dead bodies they did not have time to remove them all.
When my father came back from jail in 3.., my mother and elder brother were already working in the collective. Father was also accepted by the collective, but in 1938 he was again taken away and his fate remains unknown to this day. At the time we were living in the village of Berezianka.

Pilkewych M. Y. (maiden name)
Forgive me.