

Sivatchenko, Ksenia An.

Dea Editors! After reading the article “33-rd famine”, I too decided to write to you of what I remember from my early childhood. Not long ago, I happened to see on television “legal proceedings” in which Shekhowtsew was defending Stalin’s regime. I cried a lot and also wrote in defence of Adamowich, A.M. Let Shekhowtsew go to the Kirowograd region, he used to work there, let him go to the village of Suchyj Tashlyk , let him look at the cemetery where there are no crosses and no monuments, but oh so many mounds overgrown with grass, they condemn Stalin together with his lackeys and defenders such as Shekhowtsew. I remember the horrors that were happening in our village.

Our village with two ponds was large and beautiful and people were dying there like flies in the fall. I remember the fires that burned almost every night, the activists roaming around the village, searching for bread and turning everything upside-down in the houses, yards and taking everything to the last crumb. I remember how three “criminals” were put on trial, including our mother. This was their “crime”: In March, two women and one man went at night to get some year old, unthreshed, rotting peas from a field.

They were caught by the activists and put on public trial in the village. I remember our mother taking us, four little children, the eldest was ten, with her and how she cried and taught us to cry, because if we did not, she would be sent to prison and we would be left alone, because by that time our father was already dead. Our mother was pardoned, maybe because they did not want to have additional trouble with us on their hands. She had to travel to some regional city and pay a fine, the other two were convicted to five years each and died somewhere in prison. Mother died at home from hunger. The difference was that we saw her die. She cried bitterly at the end and when we asked “Mama, are you going to die?” Obviously not wanting to scare us because it was night, tears rolling down her cheeks, she shook her head “no”, as she no longer had strength to speak.

After that, we scattered; I happened to end up in a home for orphans all the way in Zaporizhia. It was not much of a home , just cold barracks with food to match. I remember the slogan, which you could see, no matter which way you turned your head: “Thanks to Comrade Stalin for our happy childhood”. Thus passed my childhood under this slogan as well as my youth. I also remember, that in the morning people would enter our home and ask if there was anyone dead. A wagon would drive around and pick them up. They would be thrown onto the wagon like logs, some wrapped in covers, some without. They were buried in the village cemetery, not individually but in a common grave until it was full. I don’t know how many were buried there? I don’t know how many died? I was too young to understand, but probably not one household was spared.

This is how I remember my village. Overgrown with weeds, no people around, the ones you meet, swollen and scary. I also remember that there was talk that our close neighbour ate his own child. I also remember that her name was Frania and we played together. Her father’s name was Anton. My younger sister still lives in that village, but I was afraid to visit because I could visualise all the terrible things that happened there throughout my whole life. This year I did go

back, because in the final stretch of life, the pull of my own small Fatherland became irresistible. I cannot reconcile myself with the idea that in such a beautiful land, not in a desert, so many people were starved to death! I went to the cemetery, cried and called my father, my mother, where are they, where is their mound? They were still young at the time, a little over forty years old. So many orphans were left! So much sorrow, so many tears! We were afraid to tell even our children about this calamity. Thank you for doing a good deed, thank you for the memory of our parents and for our fate.

P.S. Please forgive my mistakes, I only finished seven grades of school (suffered through them). Also, not everything of the Ukrainian language remained in memory. Only a parody of the Ukrainian language remained, what a pity! I have written what remained clearest in my memory. In the war my brother and sister perished, we were left to bear the grief, of also losing our young son. The village of which I am writing is located in:

Kirowohrad (formerly Odessa) region,

Olshanskyj district,

Sukhyj Tashlyk village

My present address: 332560 Zaporizska region,

Weseliwsky district,

Wesele town,

Sverdlowa Street, 45

Siwachenko Ksenia An.

Thank God, my children don't know this. We now feel like people, fear and hunger are not stalking us any more. Once more a big thank you to all of you. Please, excuse me if something is not right. Wishing You happiness in your life!

I am also grateful to the leaders of the village Skhyj Tashlyk for not disturbing the bones of those who died, but enclosing the site with a fence, even though there is nothing but mounds covered with grass and shrubs. There are still enough fools who keep turning the soil over whether it's necessary or not. I also remember a beautiful church and big lime-trees that grew there. When they were removing the church bells and burning something, the people were crossing themselves and crying. The song the perpetrators were singing "down, down with monks, rabbis and priests we will climb up to heaven and chase away all the gods"... they did not chase away the Gods, but chased out of our souls everything humane, good, merciful. Such is my "archive". If I was to describe my whole life it would be a whole book. It so happened that I had no happiness in my childhood and none even to this day. Good bye. Till we meet again.