Letter from Oksana Klymenko to Volodymyr Maniak, ca 18 December 1988

Regarding events in a *khutir* in Orzhytsia raion, Poltava oblast

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I, Klymenko, Oksana Khomivna read in the newspaper *Silski visti* (The Village News) the article titled “Famine: 33.” I’m writing to you because I know this famine well. I was 19 years old during the famine of 1933. My parents lived on a farmstead in the Orzhytsia district of Poltava oblast. My father had 7 hectares of land. We had a family which included my mother, my father and 5 children. I was the oldest. I knew how to till the land and sow [the seeds], and everything about farming. In 1932, we were evicted from our house and the authorities took everything. We had a horse, cow, lambs, and pigs. My father worked during the NEP (New Economic Policy) era. He was a red labourer. He had been awarded a citation for an abundant harvest of grain (hard red spring wheat), and for the pigs that we raised. He would raise and deliver pigs weighing 18 poods. Our horse served the entire village. My father so loved his pigs and horses. He was included onto the list of kulaks [Ukr: kurkuls] and delukakized. He asked to be accepted into the collective farm [kolhosp]. The authorities said, “We do not need kulaks.” They evicted us from our house in the month of November, and we left. They took everything we had, including the beans in a little bag. I’m 75 years old now. If I saw them again today, those traitors, I would spit in their faces. Unfortunately, they are not among the living. But we are alive and we have a good pension, a nice house, a nice garden and everything we need. For the time being, we are still alive. My father and mother died. Our father lived to the age of 88.

Good people who wish to write a book – I implore you, please do not judge me. Perhaps I didn’t write something correctly. I am not very erudite. That which came to pass – I am unable to describe. These are such long-standing wounds that it’s simply too frightening to open them up again. They are so painful that they never heal. I am 75 years old. I recall everything well and did not forget anything. I have such sorrow about the life of my younger days. I loved my village and the land and the farmstead, and we had to abandon everything. And then so often I had to listen to all kinds of disparaging remarks, namely, “you have the mug of a kulak.” Please understand just what kind of “kulak” was my father – he was a good farmer who made a living on his own. He taught us [how to work], we were all hardworking, and we knew our responsibilities. I don’t know how we survived the year of 1933 – we all managed to stay alive. After the war, I met those who confiscated our last bean seeds. They were surprised to realize that we were alive. We worked like “Stakhanovites” and were exceptional workers.

Dear people who intend to write a book. I ask you to forgive me for writing in such a manner. If something is not entirely correct then please do not become offended. It’s painful. I subscribe to the newspaper *Silski visti* and I read everything and do not by pass anything. A lot of truth has come into plain sight, even though it is too late to sound the alarm.