Letter from Ms. [no first name given] Parkhomenko to Volodymyr Maniak, 5 January 1989.

Regarding events in Fasova, Makariv raion, Kyiv oblast

5 January ’89. Dear Editorial Board,

This letter is being written by a resident of the village of Fasova, Makariv raion, Kyiv oblast. There I was born and I spent my childhood and lived through the famine of ’33. My parents were villagers. In ’32 my parents joined the collective farm. My father gave away his horse and all of the inventory in his possession. He worked on the collective farm himself and so did my mother, and the three of us went to pick flax seeds with my mother on the collective farm’s field. We worked and they gave us nothing for a labour day, not one kopek of money nor a gram of grain. They told father – you can survive on your own. And so father left the collective farm. They took that which my father collected from his garden as a tax but very little was left. We survived half-starved until spring, waited to be able to at least plant something in the garden. We ate rotten potatoes, dug up the garden and dug out potatoes, and mother baked them. We called them pancakes from rotten potatoes. We dug up the garden and the potatoes ran out. We collected all kinds of weeds and then we caught fish with a net and we cooked the weeds with the fish. Then we could no longer catch fish. Father, his grandson, and we began to swell up. Mother took earrings to the Torgsin, hers were gold. They gave her a pood of flour for those earrings. There was still enough for a few days. We ate barley straight from the garden or picked and ate it on the street sitting by the fence. Father then reaped unripened barley and we baked bread. Mother dug up potatoes that were just budding and cooked them with weeds and was so happy that we had satisfied our hunger. She cried and laughed. You survived, she said, you will not die now. But a great many died. Some were carried on carts, some were carried wrapped in bedding, some thrown into a grave while others were thrown out anywhere. Our neighbour died, he was mute. They brought him to a grave site and laid him next to the hole. He sat up and he’s begging for food. Some woman was carrying milk and bread and walked into the cemetery, saw that he was begging for food, she gave him some, and he sits and eats. They took him home but in two days he died again. My father was a shoemaker so he earned a little bit when there was work. One day the priest brought him work. We had a church, and they always talked about the famine. The priest says to my father that by his count 884 souls had already died, and how many others died, I don’t know and undoubtedly no one knows. Two women travelled to Kyiv and one took her daughter with her and they stopped to visit friends. One went to the market and the one with the daughter stayed behind. The other one returned and asked where is Iivha [Yevheniia]. They say that she went into the garden. She left immediately and went to the militia because she had seen the clothing that they did not hide in time and the militia found a woman butchered and her daughter and a cannibal. This was Samiil’s Iivha—I do not recall the family name. There was a lot of suffering but I will not write any more on this. Still, I will tell you about myself. We survived the famine but more trouble awaited us. Father was burdened by taxes and there was not much bread around, no money, no bread, and for defaulting on payments they sold the house for 100 karbovantsi and people took apart the barn. The village council came and threw us out of the house. Father went out of his mind, and not long thereafter mother was taken to prison because she was taking bread from the neighbours. Mother helped to take a sack [of grain] because there were 8 children at the neighbour’s who screamed as if they were being butchered, but all the same they took the grain away, and mother and one other neighbour who was walking down the street were each sentenced to 3 years in prison. We were taken in by a neighbouring lady, and we were left naked and barefoot and hungry because the brigade took everything and then thieves stole what was left. And we walked barefoot in the snow to the neighbours with the hope that someone would give us something to eat. It is frightening to think about what we survived. The head of the village council was Bomba, this was his nickname, while the other activists were Hrek and Hershko. Someone came up with a poem – Bomba is walking through the mud and pulling out buttercups, skinny Hershko and black Hrek are stealing from the poor. They walked around and pillaged, people called them bandits. Later this dark Hrek was the head of the collective farm. All police were being ordered at this time to search and punish, and what’s more they believed they were in the right. They emptied bottles, with ramrods they burrowed, searched, and took everything. Millions of Ukrainians were starved to death. A man who came to visit Kuzka Melashka told us that a mother ate her children, that he left to earn some money and by the time he returned his wife had eaten the children and she herself had died of hunger. He was telling father and crying. They emptied the house that he sold and they found a child that she had not finished eating preserved in salt. The bastards need to be told and not they telling us that they were doing the right thing by earning their stripes on human suffering. I currently live in Zhmiivka, Ivanykiv raion near my children. I live well. Well, my health is failing. I often recall the suffering I lived through. But I survived while people died for nothing. I will conclude.

Parkhomenko is my family name. Maybe one of my fellow villagers can write this better because I was small. Family names I do not remember.

Irene Mycak