

Kateryna Shcherban

The Famine was in 1933, and on 24 February 1934, we were resettled to Kharkiv oblast. There was a resettlement of people. And a second group of activists came, without the teacher, and tried to convince us to leave our village in Kyiv oblast and go to Kharkiv oblast, because there was a good land, lots of grain, and that we would always have a lot of food. These meetings would take place in someone's house, and I was already a bit older, so I was interested in what they would be saying after the Famine. So they were telling us all this, agitating, and we were all silent, not asking anything, just listening, because people were scared - that if you said anything, you would be considered a spy or whatever. But we kids were at the back, I had a strong voice, and I asked. Because people were asking where we would live once we got there. And they said there's a lot of empty houses. And we asked them, "why are there so many empty houses? Where are the people? Did they all die? Did you bury them all?" The activists said, "Nobody died there. The young people left to the city, they don't want to work in the village, and the old people can't tend to the fields. And there's a lot of empty houses and nobody to work the fields."

When they sowed the fields in 1932, in 1933 there was nobody there to harvest the fields. They didn't till the fields, nothing. So the fields were covered in huge weeds, like a forest. When we arrived there and they were taking us from the Kolemak station to the village on sleds, we thought there was a forest growing. It was still before dawn, very early in the morning when we arrived there, and the men would stop the wagons and go to take a look - did they bring us to the taiga, or somewhere, because there's such a forest here? These were weeds, because all summer, nobody had worked or planted anything. And sowing, nobody sowed buckwheat, oats, or millet. There was nobody left. And if they did sow, there was nobody left to harvest. Weeds were everywhere. I was still going to school, I didn't work in the fields, but my brothers and sisters were taken from home with their axes and large knives, and they cut down the weeds and burned them, starting in the winter.