

Natalia Talanchuk

NT - The children of the directors of factories – the children of the Communist elite – vacationed there, [in the school] across the street from our house. There was a summer cafeteria there, and during the Famine, villagers came there searching for food. They had eaten everything in the village – nettle, cats. So they came and rummaged through the garbage [from the cafeteria] at night.

Interviewer – You saw this?

NT – I saw this. And I asked my mother what they were doing there during the night. My mother explained to me that [they were collecting] potato peels, apple cores, and so forth. In the mornings, my mother didn't let me look out the window. Because I saw people [who had died] sitting under our fence. Our front windows looked out onto the street, and my mother forbid me to look out those windows. My mother cried, and I asked her why she was crying. Later on she very delicately told me why. You weren't allowed to even talk about the Famine. It was against the law to talk about it. The [Famine] was a big secret. I was already going to school, and there a little boy had a huge swollen stomach. I asked what was wrong with him. My classmates told me that he had a big family, and didn't have anything to eat. I saw swollen children in our class.

I'm haunted by all this to this day. I've been carrying this in my heart and memory for almost eighty years, and telling children about this. This affects my whole life. I can't throw out a piece of bread. I can't. I dream about those women who came to our door with their little children asking for a piece of bread because their children were dying. My mother often gave them some.