

Summary of Oral History: Ivan Bratanchuk

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Ivan Bratanchuk, born in 1929, a resident of the village of Tsybulivka. No Jews lived there. However, they lived in the neighboring village of Zhabokrych. They brought clothes, shoes from there, traded, and had friendly relations with them. In 1941, Ivan witnessed how three columns of the Jews from Chernovits (now Chernivtsi), about 1,000 people each, were passing by the village for an hour and stretched for a kilometer. The columns were led by Germans and Romanians (it was recognized by the uniform). The Jews were walking, followed by a German car. Boys secretly ran from the column to the village to ask for food. Local children threw food into the column and fled, including the interviewee. The whole village helped the second column with food.

In October, the third column was brought and placed in the village in cowsheds and sheepfolds. Two Tsybulivka polizei [Police] were watching the Jews. They were not allowed to go to the village. Children and women from the village brought them food, and they thanked them and gave them the clothes they had. They spoke to the villagers in Ukrainian.

Until winter, they stayed in the cowsheds. They died of hunger, disease, and cold. Handel'man was the superior of the Jews. According to him, 1,200 Jews came and 76 survived. The interviewee brought food to the cowshed, often saw covered bodies, and knew that the Jews put the dead in the calf cage. Once he helped bury 18 bodies. The Jews were buried in pits dug by villagers for silage, measuring 5 by 5 meters and 3 meters deep. Three graves remained, 10 meters, 500 meters and 1 kilometer from the cowshed.

He tells about the events he witnessed. One day, a villager's pig entered a room with the dead and ate half of the body. The second case occurred in the winter. Ivan and another boy were cleaning snow in the shed, found a Jew and took him to warmer rooms.

There were 20 gendarmes in the village and one commandant. At the end of 1943, there was a new commandant who was said to be related to a guerrilla. He would allow the surviving Jews to leave the cowsheds, and the villagers would shelter the Jews. Ivan's father sheltered Handelsman, whose wife Tsilia was a seamstress, she sewed clothes for them. They lived with their family until the Nazis were expelled. Then the Jews went to Chernivtsi and they corresponded for the first year.

The interviewee worked as the commander of a complex brigade in the fields where the graves of the Jews were located. They weeded them, brought flowers. He does not testify about the murders of people of other nationalities.