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Summary

Nicolay Procofieovich Gubyonok was born in February 1935, in village Velikaia Topal, Klintsy district, Briansk oblast, Russian Federation.

There were 4 children in the family. Before the war, Jews lived in 4-5 houses in the village; there was a Jewish store, the director of the collective farm was a Jew named Rakhlin, and there were a few Jewish doctors.

When the war broke out the villagers were working in the fields, people didn't have radio, they had no information. On July 22nd an old man announced the war. People stopped working and Nikolay with his four siblings and his mother stayed at home. He remembers children crying, everybody felt scared. Men were enlisted into the army, women stayed with children. He remembers that at one point when Germans occupied the village they ordered not to give anything, land or houses, to the communists and the Jews. His wife was a daughter of a communist, but she got some land. He remembered that bad people started working for the Germans, they became police. The policemen sent people to the labor camps, and to massive killings. People who tried to go to partisans were punished.

Nicolay remembered an episode when the Germans gathered the villagers to watch shooting of a man, but he wasn't killed, he died during the war.

The house where he lived was at the end of the village, close to the deep pits overgrown with bushes. The Germans were afraid to go to this part of the village. Many people were trying to hide in those pits. One day Nicolay saw a horse cart with children, it was stopped by policemen and Germans; he saw a German soldier pulling a girl out by the leg and throwing her into far into the bushes.

When the Germans left the area, his mother went out and brought the girl home. The girl was crying, her name was Sonya, she was Jewish. Nicolay's mother took her to the relative who lived near that pit. When Nikolay became an adult and left the home, a young woman came to visit his mother and brought her gifts, that were made in Klintsi.

After that incident the policemen organized a station; they had one rule; eliminate communists and Jews. His wife's father was a communist and the president of another collective farm and a teacher by the name of Bykov were communists and they were killed in September. Now on the Liberation day and on the day of their execution the villagers go to the newly installed monument and pay respect.

He thinks that during the executions all together 10,000 people were executed.

Nicolay remembered that Germans took away cattle from the families. One German wanted to kill some cows, but he was stopped.

Germans used to gather kids to do some work for them. He and his brother quarreled while working, and the policemen threw him away for not following the discipline. There were 4-5 Jewish families in their village, but he has no information, because he was young. He remembers Rahlin, who was a president of the collective farm. Some Jews were doctors.

All Jews dropped everything and left the village right before the occupation. He doesn't know what happened to them. Their houses were occupied by the villagers.

After the war the policemen especially the heads of the groups, they were persecuted and received 5 to 10 years in prison.

Nicolay remembered that people who survived the war rebuilt the village, people who suffered the most had support from the Government. His wife's mother was present during the massive killings near the pit, she saw people who were trying to say good bye.