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Commission for Compiling the Chronicle of the Great Patriotic War

Transcribed during a personal interview with the senior researcher of the commission, B.L. Likhter

Dikanka village, Poltava region, Ukrainian SSR

February 17, 1945

Gordievskaya, Priyska Nikolaevna. Born in 1889, native of the village Dikanka. During the German occupation, she lived with her daughter, a teacher, in the village Dikanka. Guarded [the building of] the Raion Committee of Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine. Non-party member, Ukrainian.

Our village was beautiful before the war, but now, you see – only ruins remain. Some of it was destroyed during the fighting for Dikanka in 1941, but most of it was destroyed, burned down, when they retreated. A 2-story brick community center, 2 10-year schools, not counting other schools, were burned down. The 10-year schools were in new brick buildings on the main square. The raion committee,¹ the raion executive committee² was located in a 3-story brick building. Only the frame was left of it. We had a dairy processing facility, an industrial plant – the Germans burned them all down.

And the Germans shot people in the gullies. The gullies run right through the center of our village, and so almost openly, right before our eyes, the Germans were shooting people. Right after liberation, we dug up the corpses from the gully, which is about 500 steps, no more than that, from the center of the village. We dug up no fewer than 300 people.³ We buried them in the park, in a mass grave. We fenced it off with a red fence and erected a wooden monument for now, and later, we'll probably put a better one.

In this park, there used to be a monument to Taras Shevchenko⁴. While the Germans were here, they removed the Shevchenko bust, then put it up again, and finally, when they retreated and burned everything, they smashed the monument.

Under the Germans, there were always about 15 barrels of butter standing near the dairy processing facility. There were those foolish old women who would say, "The Germans eat well, they have both butter and lard, they eat everything with butter, they even eat soup with bread that's smeared with butter." But of course they were eating at our expense. So much milk was taken away! Under Soviet rule, we handed over 125

¹ The highest organ of party authority at the district level.

² The highest organ of state authority at the district level.

³ These are likely to be captured Soviet military personnel for the most part. Dikanka Raion was home to only 59 Jews, according to the 1939 all-Soviet census.

⁴ Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), famous Ukrainian writer, poet and painter, and chief founder of Ukrainian culture.

liters per cow each year, the rest was all ours, while the Germans immediately imposed [a quota of] 750 liters, and they took even more, they also collected fines. That's why they gorged on butter, and they had 15 barrels of butter each. And there was a tax on everything – on cats, on dogs, on everything. We no longer had any cats, any dogs, any poultry left.

Now, we are gradually restoring everything. There're already chickens in every yard, and cats are starting to show up, but there're no dogs. It wasn't for nothing that people said this proverb about the Germans – which is all-too-true:

While under German rule
Don't dare slip outside the hut,
Cross the threshold and you'll face
a fine plus a tax.

Our people came to hate the Germans. We had German flunkies. There was a widow and her daughter – they got involved with the Germans, they had some kind of den in their house. And the Germans would drag all kinds of things to their place. It's a pity that they're still alive now and haven't been punished to date. I've already told Antonets several times, "Com. Antonets, the people are outraged that you won't remove this girl and her mother from the village." And he laughs and says, "Wait a little, give it some time, we'll remove them if we have to." They were the ones who ~~were~~ *lived*, along with the [local] policemen and their families, while the rest of the people suffered severely and lived in agony under the Germans.