

THE HOLOCAUST IN VINNITSA OBLAST

by

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History is humanity's memory and hope that violence and cruelty will be prevented in the future. One of the most important obligations of a historian is to propagate knowledge about the Holocaust. The Holocaust was unique; there had never before been such a massive, premeditated and systematic annihilation of a people. The documents testifying to this fact are studied with great interest all over the world.

At the State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast, there are 275 fonds (14,000 files) concerning the persecution and genocide of the Jewish population of Vinnitsa region from 1941 to 1944.

A significant amount of important information on the Holocaust is concentrated in the Vinnitsa regional, district and town commission fonds, because of the destruction of property and crimes perpetrated against Jews by the German and Romanian occupiers. The historical value of this material is the richness of content and unique information, including witness statements, documents and photographs. There are documented records and statements about the exhumation of graves of people who were executed, the schemes (map plots) of the graves' locations and lists of genocide victims, with numerous photographs, testimonies and eyewitness accounts from those who survived the Holocaust.

In a general statement and questionnaire of Yakov Spivak (in Vinnitsa) is the following testimony: "On April 16, 1941, at the maternity hospital, Jewish women in labor were arrested and carried away to the Pyatnychany forest. On April 17, at the maternity hospital N2, the Fascists packed the new-born Jewish babies into two sacks and threw them from the second floor."

The summary report for Nemirov District states that "on August 7, 1941, the German occupiers and their collaborators first forced the Jewish population of the town to pay 100,000 rubles as a contribution for residence rights. In September 1941, 2,400 Jews (including old men, women and children) were shot at the brickworks near

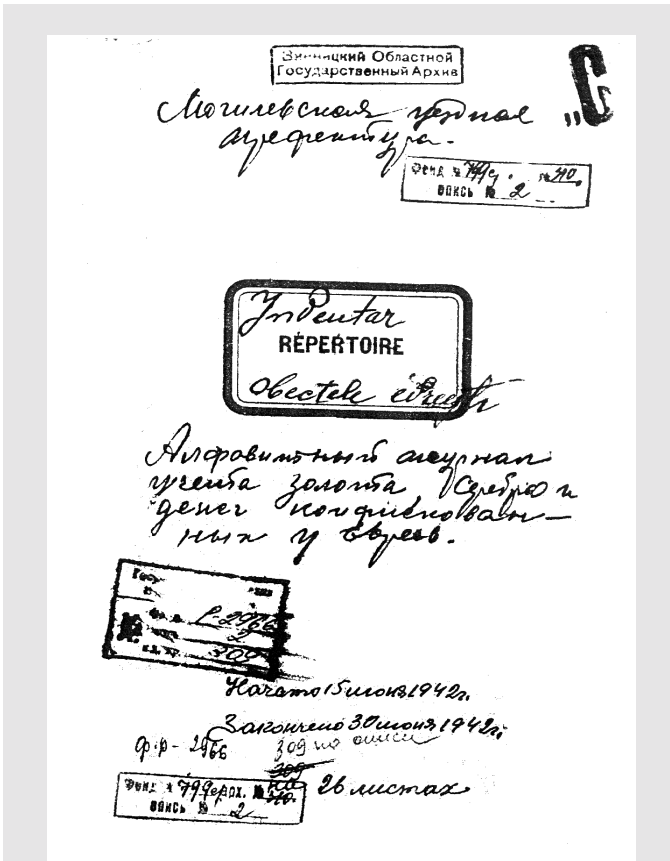
Nemirov. On November 7, 2,580 people were annihilated. In May 1942, the Fascists brought 1,000 Jews from the Romanian zone of occupation and killed them." These notes are followed by signatures of the commission members.

The German and Romanian documents testifying to the practical implementation of the policy of total annihilation of the Jewish population are kept in the fonds of the occupation administration, police departments, Ukrainian local authorities, *Gebietskommissariat* (office of district commissioner), prefectures (chief officers or magistrates) and district and town halls. The orders, declarations and circulatory letters regulated the life of Jews in Vinnitsa Oblast before and after ghetto formation. The information about contributions and fines, forced labor, ghetto formation, confiscation of property, registration of the Jewish population (in order to issue identify cards), statistical data about able-bodied Jews and lists of people for labor duty—all these have great significance for researchers of the Holocaust period.

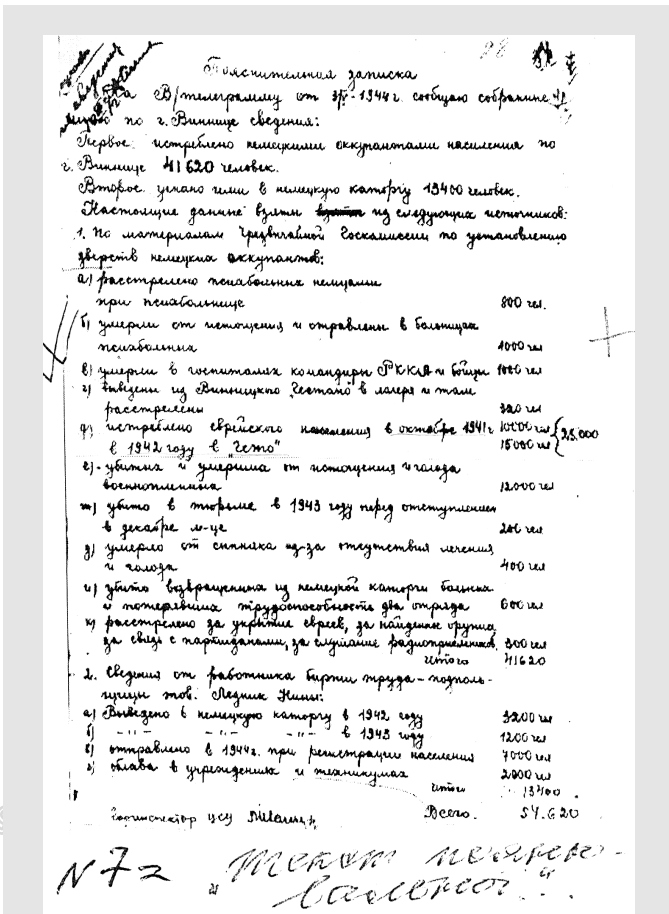


Faina A. Vinokurova, vice-director of the State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast, 1998

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Title page of book (26 pages) with alphabetical list of confiscated gold, silver and money from the Jews in Mogilev Podolskiy and surrounding towns, 1942. Note the "C" (Cyrillic "S") stamped in the upper-right corner, which denotes "secret document."



Supplemental report (1945) of a government commission to tabulate Holocaust victims and cause of death in Vinnitsa; it shows a total of 54,620

According to the official records of Vinnitsa Oblast, 200,000 Jews from remote areas and districts beyond the borders of the region as well as from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were murdered outright or died as a result of starvation or disease in numerous ghettos and concentration camps.

The documents kept in the German and Romanian fonds show the specific character and characteristic features of genocide in the German and Romanian zones of occupation. By the end of July 1941, the Germans occupied all of the territory of Vinnitsa Oblast and artificially dismembered it. Southern and southwest areas from a line drawn through Mogilev Podolskiy, Zhmerinka and Bershada were given to Romania (as the nearest vassal of Nazi Germany). These areas were part of the so-called Transnistria region. The remaining part of Vinnitsa region was ruled by the Reichskommissariat of Ukraine.

In the German zone of occupation, all of the Jews were annihilated by the summer of 1943, except for those who

escaped to Romanian territory or to partisan detachments and those who were helped by the local population.

The collection of documents from the regional branch of the Security Administration of Ukraine contains interesting information about Adolf Hitler's headquarters, "Wehrwolf," not far from Vinnitsa and the organization of the Judenfrei ("Jew-free") zone on the territory of Vinnitsa and its suburbs. These documents consist of correspondence between the Reich Security Service and the Gebietskommissariat of Vinnitsa and the "Wehrwolf Guard Service." One of the reports states: "In Strizhavka [a small town not far from the headquarters], there lived 227 Jews. As the construction site is at risk from the Jewish population, it should be 'evacuated.' On January 10, 1942, the Jews were arrested. In order to complete the 'action,' a big hole was dug and after the destruction, it was blown up. On January 11, twelve Jews were arrested, brought to Vinnitsa and then shot. The district became Jew free."

In the Romanian zone of occupation, there were no mass actions against the Jewish population, but there were cases

when Romanian military formations joined with the Wehrmacht and Security Service subunits, such as in the small town of Zhabokrich (Kryzhopol District), where they committed a terrible crime: 600 Jews, including women and children, were driven into cellars and shot by machine gun. Several punitive actions were held in Komargorod, Tomashpol and other small towns.

Many documents devoted to the deportation and living conditions of Bessarabian and Bukovinian Jews in ghettos and concentration camps can be found in the fonds of the Romanian occupation administration. Among them are unique documents about the Pechora concentration camp, known as “the dead loop” (Romanian zone of occupation), where more than 35,000 Jews of Vinnitsa Oblast (Bratslav, Tulchin, Shpikov, Ladyzhin and Mogilev Podolskiy) and those deported from Romania, Moldova and Northern Bukovina were prisoners. Every day, 150 to 200 people lost their lives there. More than 12,000 prisoners were tortured or died of starvation and disease in ghettos and concentration camps in Bershad, Obodovka and Shargorod.

As the Romanian authorities also used Jewish labor, different archival documents of an administrative-economic character can be found. In the Romanian administration fonds, there are lists of prisoners (mostly from Mogilev and Yampol Districts), lists of workers sent to Nikolayev region, notes about labor conditions for the workers in the enterprises and ghettos and reports about the confiscation of Jewish property.

Due to the efforts of Wilhelm Filderman, the leader of the Romanian Jewish community, the prisoners of concentration camps and ghettos of Transnistria were sent money and clothes, but unfortunately only in the winter of 1942–1943. Assistance from the American Joint Distribution Committee (the “Joint”) was provided until late 1943. Documents are preserved from the Mogilev Podolskiy Prefecture, including postal-order checks and lists of those who received assistance, with their addresses.

There are judicial-inquiry documents about the former head of the Bar police department, Hryhory Andrushev, who took an active part in the murder of 10,000 Jews. (He was found in Romania in 1966 and sentenced to death by a Soviet court.) In addition, we have previously unknown documents about the Zhmerinka Ghetto and its chief, Adolph Gerschman, a Jew from Bukovina. Rumors spread that the prisoners were not killed in the Zhmerinka

Ghetto. Dr. Gerschman was an experienced lawyer and skillfully sued, based upon the German laws and the deficiencies of the Romanian authorities, in the Jewish population’s favor. Many Jews from Vinnitsa, Khmelnik, Litin and other small towns survived during the Holocaust because they were in the Zhmerinka Ghetto. However, it was alleged that 275 Jews from Brailov were betrayed by Gerschman and subsequently shot by German authorities. The official documents include a selection of testimonies and recollections of former ghetto prisoners and their rescuers.

I started the document selection in 1989; at present, it numbers 890 documents. Practically all of the ghettos that existed in Vinnitsa Oblast are represented among the documents. Also represented are situations where Jews were saved by local Ukrainians and people of other nationalities, confirmed by the testimonies of the rescuers and the rescued, and the records of the Righteous among the Nations. These are true examples of human generosity and self-sacrifice.

The Dikih family from the village of Kuliga saved the Jewish family of Nakhlis (consisting of eight members)—and sacrificed their lives as a result. A train engineer from Kazatin, Nestor Semko, saved Yosif Braverman, age 13, by transporting

НАКАЗ № 21
По Барській Районній Управі
від 15 грудня 1941 року

§ 1.
Жидівське населення Барського району з 20 грудня н. р. розміщується в ізольованих місцях (ГЕТТО) м.м. Бару та Ялтущокова.

§ 2.
Жидівське населення населених пунктів району повинно до 20 грудня переселитися до м. Бару, або Ялтущокова (куди буде зручніше) і теж з 20 грудня розміститися в (ГЕТТО).

§ 3.
Жидівське населення м. Бару розміщується у таких частинах міста: ГЕТТО №1—бушня вулиця Шолом-Алейхеми місцевість бушної старої синагоги, ГЕТТО №2—бушня вулиця 8 березня, Комсомольська, Кооперативна та ГЕТТО №3 частина бушної вулиці 8 березня, що прилягає до стадіона.

ПРИМІТКА: ГЕТТО №3 заселяють виключно ремісники за списком, який оголошується через жидівську раду.

§ 4.
ГЕТТО для жидівського населення м. Ялтущокова визначає сільська Управа м. Ялтущокова.

§ 5.
Всяому жидівському населенню району в зв'язку з переходом у ГЕТТО, забороняється руйнування житлових та не житлових приміщень, які вони залишають.

§ 6.
Українському населенню, що живе в місцях, які виведені під ГЕТТО звільнити свої приміщення і з'явитися до житлового відділу Районної Управи для одержання іншого приміщення.

§ 7.
Житловому відділу наказую взяти на облік всі приміщення, які будуть звільнені жидівським населенням.

§ 8.
На органи безпеки м. Бару та району покладено відповідальність за організацію вищезгаданого міроприємства та застерення від грабунків.

**Голова Барської Районної Управи
НОМВЕРНИК**

**ХТО ГРАБУЄ, ТОЙ БУДЕ
РОЗТРІЛЯНИЙ!**

Regulation establishing ghettos in the towns of Bar and Yaltushka, 1941

Винницька державна управа
Відділ безпеки
Генеральний поручений

А.Л.Нахліс'янин' список висхідних паспортів 8 вразованих жидівських родин

№	Прізвище, ім'я, по батькові, дата народження	Стать	Дата вступу в громадянство	Місце народження	Місце проживання
58	Штернман Левко Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
59	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
60	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
61	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
62	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
63	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
64	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
65	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
66	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
67	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
68	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
69	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
70	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
71	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
72	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
73	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
74	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
75	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
76	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
77	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
78	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
79	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
80	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
81	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
82	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
83	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
84	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
85	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
86	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
87	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
88	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
89	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
90	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
91	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
92	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
93	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
94	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
95	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
96	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
97	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
98	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
99	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар
100	Штернман Яков Якович	чоловік	1918	м. Бар	м. Бар

List of passport applicants (note that only Jewish names are underlined), 1942

him from the German zone of occupation to the Romanian zone in the locomotive coal box. Yaryna Bombela, a farmer from Oratov, saved her former husband's children from his second marriage (born by a Jewish woman).

A large number of documents is held in the fonds of partisan detachments and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. These documents reveal significant information about the participation of Jews in the anti-Nazi and underground movement in Vinnitsa Oblast. The underground group under the leadership of Ivan Prokopovych-Byaller, the members of the Vinnitsa underground (Maria Irkis, Israel Pekker and Olena Savranskaya) and the participants in the Trostyanets organization were tortured in prison.

Documents about the Jewish partisan detachment that operated in Illintsy in Vinnitsa Oblast may be found here. This list of Jewish heroes of the resistance is lengthy. Six hundred Jewish partisans and members of secret organizations are included in the list.

More than 50 years have passed since the catastrophe of the Holocaust. The Jewish people suffered terrible losses and will need many more years to recover from this damage. According to the 1939 Census of Vinnitsa Oblast, the general population was 2,344,736 people. Jews represented 6 percent of the population, or 141,825 individuals. During the Holocaust, the Nazis murdered 120,000 Jews from Vinnitsa Oblast and 50,000 more who were deported to Vinnitsa from other areas. Jews represented 95 percent of those killed.

At present, the Jewish community of Vinnitsa Oblast is decreasing in number by death and emigration. As of November 1998, only 8,000 Jews remained.



Faina A. Vinokurova with a 1943 map of camps and ghettos in Mogilev District (photo, 1998)

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Faina A. Vinokurova is a professional historian-archivist. She graduated from the Moscow Historical-Archival Institute in 1973. She is currently vice-director of the State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast. She has participated in more than a dozen international and local conferences on Jewish history and has lectured at several of them. Ms. Vinokurova is a specialist in the history of the Jews of Podolia and the author of the forthcoming monograph *The Repressed Generation: From the History of*

Jews in Podolia in the 1920s–1930s. She is co-editor (with Iosif Maliar) of the first Ukrainian–Israeli selection of testimonies and recollections of Holocaust survivors from Vinnitsa Oblast, *The Catastrophe and the Resistance* (Tel Aviv/Kiev: Ghetto Fighters' House, 1994). The results of her archival research on the Holocaust are represented in document examples to be published by Anthex Publishing in 1999, under the title *The Jews of Vinnitsa Oblast During the Holocaust*.