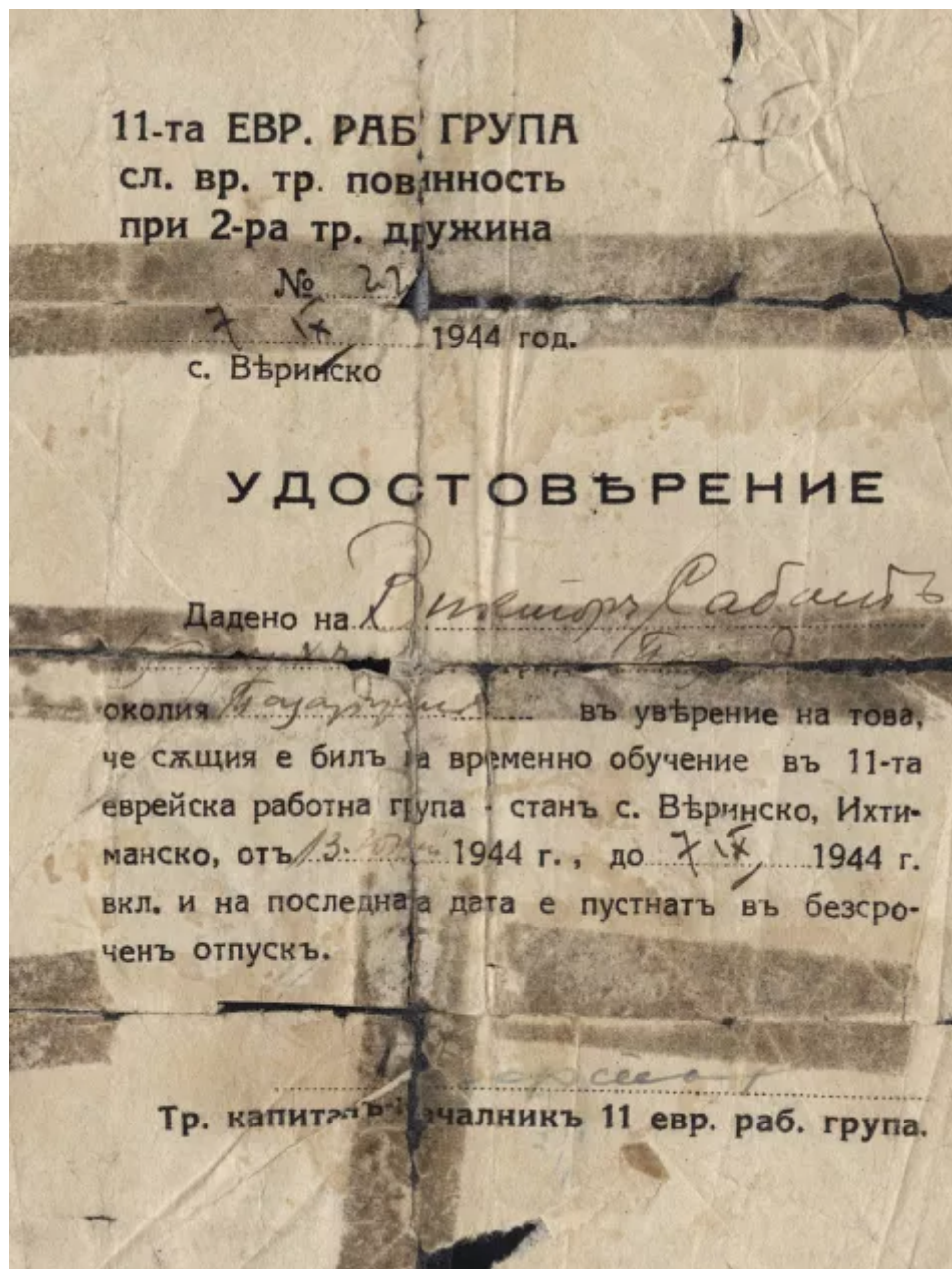


Forced Labor Certificate



This is a certificate, issued to me by the 11th Jewish labor group on 7th September 1944, at the time when I was discharged from the forced labor brigades. In the summer of 1944 my brother Armand and I were mobilized in the Jewish labor group in Verinsko [a village between the towns of Ihtiman and Vakarel]. We lived in tents next to some petrol tanks. In August 1944 after the Yash-Kishinev Operation at the Eastern Front some defeated German units withdrew, passing through Bulgaria. I remember that trucks full of German soldiers passed nearby. There was a Bulgarian unit in the neighborhood and they were commanded to disarm the passing German soldiers. We asked them why they didn't disarm them. 'Why don't you disarm them!', they answered. And how exactly could we do it - with spades? Afterwards they really did take captives and sent them to the yard of the Vakarel church. The Germans knew that their soldiers were there and one day an airplane flew past very close to the ground - as a final salute and in a few days they bombarded the tanks. The government changed. But we had already removed the yellow stars beforehand. In July Slaveiko Vasilev, a famous military officer who had taken part in the coup d'état in 1923 passed through. [A

coup d'etat by the military officers, helped by the conservative parties and by tsar Boris the Third against the government of Alexandar Stamboliiski, the leader of Bulgarian Peasant Party] He stopped his car and said, 'You don't have stars anymore.' On 6th-7th September 1944 I was in Pazardjik; there was an ex-priest, 'the red priest', who held a meeting where he spoke a satirical and symbolic public prayer to bury fascism. My brother Armand was called to Sofia on 9th September 1944 and I joined him at the end of 1944. My brother Emil came from Pleven to Sofia right after 1944. Armand and I lived together for a while until we found separate lodgings.