

Frima Bursuk's Identity Card



This is the identity card, issued by the Romanian occupational authorities to my mother Frima Bursuk, nee Derman, in Chernovtsy in 1942. In October 1941 a ghetto was established in Chernovtsy. There were about 50,000 Jews in the town. They were all allowed to live in one neighborhood of the town, fenced with barbed wire. We received a room there and moved our belongings into this room. Our Russian neighbors helped us to move there. There were no restrictions about walking in the town, but it was only allowed to live in the designated area. Within two weeks the Romanians expanded the territory of the ghetto and our former house happened to be located within this area. We returned home. Three other families were accommodated in our apartment. Later the Romanians began to send all people to Transnistria from the ghetto. We were directed to go to the railway station and board a train. We hired a cart for our luggage and went to the railway station. But it turned out that the neighborhood in the ghetto where we lived wasn't moving yet. We didn't go back home. Instead, we stayed with our acquaintances for two months. Romanian gendarmes came to the families to announce that they had to go to Transnistria, but they weren't insistent or violent. And people were gradually moving. We delayed our departure. My parents didn't want to go. We already knew that the situation in Transnistria was much worse than in Chernovtsy. We knew it from letters that we received. I remember a German officer, who brought us a letter from my father's sisters Golda and Dvoira. They wrote that they had been sent to Transnistria. My grandfather and grandmother Bursuk died on the way there. Their families didn't get a chance to bury them. Their bodies were thrown off the train and we don't even know where their graves are. After two months they stopped moving Jews to Transnistria. The ghetto was eliminated and about 15,000 Jews out of the original 50,000 stayed in town. 35,000 were deported. About 10,000 obtained an official permit to stay in Chernovtsy. Those were the ones that couldn't move out for some reason or specialists that couldn't be replaced. After the elimination of the ghetto in June 1942 they began to deport the 5,000 Jews that didn't have a permit to live in Chernovtsy according to the list to Transnistria. We were on the list. We were hiding in the attic of our acquaintances'. They were Romanians and the police didn't search their attic. The authorities issued certificates to the Jews that remained in the town. Such a certificate was called authorization. My father had money and connections, but it was still a problem to obtain this certificate. The individual helping my parents to obtain this authorization was under a certain risk. He would have been shot if this had become known. But everything went well and we were able to stay in Chernovtsy until 1944, when Bukovina was liberated by the Soviet army, and we had the authorization to do so.