

Odessa (Ukrainian: Одеса; Russian: Одесса; also called Odess)

(adopted from <http://www.geocities.com/bargfamily/odessa.html>)

This major seaport city on the Black Sea, located 30.44 longitude and 46.28 latitude is the largest port in Ukraine. The city was founded only in 1794 but its bay had a chequered history. It was first colonized by the ancient Greeks but their stronghold ports disappeared in the 4th century. In spite of its favoured position no further settlements was made until the 14th century. Then, for 200 years it changed hands between Poles, Lithuanians and Tatars. The Turks conquered it from the Tatars and finally the Russians got it in 1789 after the Russo-Turkish war. They built a settlement on the ruins of the small Turkish fortress, Khadzhi-Bei and it gained city status in 1794. Tight from the beginning the mild climate, easy water connections to many foreign countries, the industrial and construction developments and above all the liberal attitude by the local authorities toward newcomers attracted people of all nationalities, including Jews. Odessa became a cosmopolitan centre where Russians and Ukrainians worked side-by-side with Greeks, Jews, Italians and many others. This is reflected in the streets names such as Grecheskaia ulitsa (Greek street), Evreiskaia ulitsa (Jewish street) Ital'ianskaia ulitsa (Italian street), Frantsuzkii bul'var (French boulevard), Pol'skaia ulitsa (Polish street), Bolgarskaia ulitsa (Bulgarian street), etc.

When the Russians took Khadzhi-Bei they encountered only 6 Jews. In 1794 five Jewish families received plots to build houses and shops and in 1795 a Hevra Kaddisha (burial society) was founded. In 1817 Odessa was granted duty free port status (the so-called "porto-franko") and the grain trade and other types of foreign trade where Jews were prominent developed rapidly. The population growth in Odessa was meteoric: 2,319 citizens in 1795, 9,000 in 1830, 60,000 in 1845, 97,000 in 1852, 125,000 in 1866, 271,000 in 1887, 339,000 in 1892, 450,000 in 1902 and 552,000 in 1909. By 1795 10% of Odessa's population was Jewish. In 1845 20% (12,000) of the city's population was and in 1909 Jews were 30% (165,000). Intensive pre-Revolution emigration and pogroms during the 1917 Revolution and subsequent civil war reduced the Jewish population. However, after the Revolution and with the ensuing abolishment of the Pale of Settlement, many Jews from small shtetlach moved to Odessa. According to the 1939 census, Odessa's Jewish population reached 180,000, while the total city population was 608,000. From 1880 to 1920 Odessa was the fourth largest city in the Russian Empire (after St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw) and second only to Warsaw in Jewish population.

As described elsewhere the Barg family dealt with grain and indeed Odessa was a major centre in the trade. In 1890 Odessa exported 1,360,000 tons of grain and in 1895 2,000,000 tons were exported. In addition to being heavily involved in grain exporting, (in 1910 over 80% of the grain export companies were Jewish-owned) Jews in Odessa were engaged in the retail trade (56% of small shops were owned by the Jews), in crafts (63% of Odessa craftsmen were Jewish) and in finance (around 1900 70% of Odessa banks were administered by the Jews). Jews were also heavily represented in the medical and pharmaceutical professions (70% of the total in these professions being Jews) and in law (56% of the city's lawyers and lawyers' assistants were Jews).

The more influential the Jews the more anti-Semitism flourishes and anti-Jewish outbreaks provoked by Russian and Ukrainian merchants and business people were unfortunately common, most of the time encouraged or even led by the Russian government, that saw such outbreaks as a safety valve against revolutionary mood and anti-government feelings. There were pogroms in 1821 (the first pogrom ever in Russia), 1859, 1871, 1881, 1882 and 1905 (the most severe - triggered by the failed Revolution - "Potemkin" - with more than 300 Jews being murdered and thousands injured, becoming a strong stimulus to Odessa's Jews to immigrate to Palestine, Canada, USA and South America - including many **Barg families**).

In October 1917 the town was occupied by the Ukrainian Rada. January 1918 saw the Proclamation of a Bolshevick Republic but on March 1918 and up to April 1920 Odessa was under German-Austrian occupation, with all the havoc of war going on: troops, bombardment from the sea, partial occupation by foreign armies (French, Greek, Serbian, Polish). When in February 1920 the Bolsheviks returned to power, one third of the city was destroyed. Many were killed and many more fled to neighbouring villages. In 1920 the Jewish Community Organizations were destroyed. In the years 1920-1922 famine, diseases and the lack of fuel killed many more and almost all the wooden houses were demolished. This is the time the last **Barg Family** we know of fled from Odessa (my grandparents **Simche and Eva**) and my GGF **Zelig** and GGM **Reitse** died, probably as a combination of hunger and disease. The lack of trade due to the absence of diplomatic relations with Rumania made things worse. Only in 1926 the population reached its pre-war dimensions and in 1939 Odessa had 604,000 inhabitants.

But this was not the end of the ordeal. Odessa fell under the German claws on October 16 1941 and by the time it was liberated, on the winter of 1943-1944 the Nazis and their Romanian accomplices had carried away the extermination of Jews in Odessa and surrounding towns. The main atrocities in the so called territory of Transnistria happened during the autumn of 1941 and the winter of 1942 in a series of massacres and killings. Depending on the definition, the "ODESSA MASSACRE" can either refer to the events of October 22 - October 24, 1941 in which between 25,000 and 34,000 Jews were shot or burned alive, or to the murder of well over 100,000 Ukrainian Jews in the town and the areas between Dniestr and Bug rivers, over the course of the Romanian and German occupation. As mentioned, before the War Odessa had a large Jewish population of approximately 180,000 (30% of the total). By the time that the Germans and Romanians had taken the city, between 80,000 and 90,000 Jews remained, the rest having fled or been evacuated by the Soviets. As the massacres occurred, Jews from surrounding villages would be concentrated in Odessa and Romanian concentration camps set up in surrounding areas. On October 16, the Germans and the Romanians marched into Odessa following the Soviet evacuation. One week later on October 22, a bomb detonated in the Romanian HQ, killing the Romanian commander, 16 officers, 9 non-commissioned officers and public servants, and 35 soldiers. Blaming the Jews incorrectly for the massacre, General Ion Antonescu ordered from Bucharest that for every killed Romanian and German officer, 200 Jews were to be killed, and for every soldier, 100 were to be executed. One person was to be taken hostage from every Jewish family. The order demanded "immediate retaliatory action, including the liquidation of 18,000 Jews in the ghettos and the hanging in the town squares of at least 100 Jews for every regimental sector." The Romanians slaughtered 5,000 Jews on October 23, first shooting them in groups of 30-40 or hanging

them. In the afternoon, more than 25,000 Jews were assembled and taken out to the gates of Dalnik. When they reached the gates, 50 people were moved into the trenches and shot by Lieutenant-Colonel Nicolae Deleanu himself. The Romanians were concerned that the killing would take too long a time and moved the rest of the Jews (approximately 22,000) inside four large storage buildings in which they made holes for machine guns. The doors were closed and the Lieutenant-Colonel Nicolae Deleanu ordered the soldiers to fire into the buildings. In order to make sure that nobody had survived, they set the buildings on fire at 17:00 hours. The next day grenades were thrown into one of the buildings. Other Jews were herded into the harbor square, sprinkled with gasoline, and set on fire. Over 22,000 corpses were found in mass graves after the war. Around 35,000 – 40,000 of the Jews that remained were moved into the ghetto in the suburb of Slobodka where most of the buildings were destroyed, and left outdoors for ten days, between October 25 and November 3, and many Jews froze to death. On October 28, a new massacre was started when 4,000-5,000 Jews were herded into stables and shot. By the end of December an additional 50,000 Jews from the concentration camp at Bogdanovka had been killed. One month later, 10,000 were taken on a death march to the three concentration camps in Golta. In January, the extermination was ended, by killing those who remained in Slobodka. From January 12-23, the last 19,582 Jews were transported in cattle wagons to Berezovka from where they were transported to the concentration camps in Golta. Eighteen months later almost everyone had died in Golta.

Although the facts are not doubted by historians, some accounts differ (often greatly) in the numbers, partially due to different definitions of what constituted the Odessa massacres, as opposed to other acts of genocide in Transnistria carried out by the Germans, Romanians, and their allies. The official report on the Romanian role in the Holocaust states that in the city of Odessa from October 18, 1941 until mid-March 1942, the Romanian military, aided by local authorities, murdered up to 25,000 Jews and deported over 35,000, most of whom were later killed. The report also details 50,000 Jews killed in Bogdanovka, and tens of thousands more in Golta and the surrounding areas. The Jewish Virtual Library cites figures of 34,000 Jews murdered during October 22-25, and the US Holocaust Museum concludes that "Romanian and German forces killed almost 100,000 Jews in Odessa during the occupation of the city."

Besides being the Centre of Jewish-Russian trade Odessa was also the birthplace of Politicians, Zionist Leaders and Artist and here are some noteworthy Jews (beside the Barg family...) who lived in this community

Authors, Poets and Writers

Mendele Moyher-Sforim - 1836-1917
Shalom Aleichem 1859-1916
Haim Nahman Byalik - 1873-1934
Dr Saul Tchernihovskiy - 1875-1943
Zeev Zhabotinskiy 1880-1940
Isaac Babel - 1894–1940

Musicians

Nathan Milstein - 1909-1992 Nathan Milstein plays Mendelssohn
Mischa Elman - 1891-1967 Mischa Elman plays Schubert Serenade
David Oistrakh - 1908-1974 David Oistrakh plays Debussy, Clair de lune
Benno Moiseiwitsch - 1890-1963 Benno Moiseiwitsch plays Prokoffiev
Emil Gilels - 1916-1985 Gilels plays Rachmaninoff Prelude Op. 23 No. 5
Josef Kaminski - 1903-1972

Performers

Yakov Smirnoff
Sonya ("Sophia") Adler
Ida Kaminska 1899-1980

Painters, Sculptors and Architects

Leonid (Yitzhok-Leib) Osipovich Pasternak 1862- 1945 :
Impressionist painter
Yitzchak Frenkel (1899-1981), Israeli artist, g-grandson of
Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev..

Scientists

Sergei Natanovich Bernstein - 1880 - 1968 Mathematician

Links to Web Pages on Odessa

- [Official Odessa web page](#)
- [Virtual Excursion on Jewish Odessa](#) [Link from TheWholeMishpukah - JewishHeritageWeb]
- [2odessa.com](#) guide on Odessa
- [Odessa History Page \(HTML\)](#). Retrieved on May 10, 2007. History of cities, towns and villages with Odessa in their name
- [Odessa tour overview \(HTML\)](#). Retrieved on July 3, 2006.
- [Odessit.com](#) Photo gallery.
- [Odessa picture collection](#)
- [Pogroms](#) The Florida Center for Instructional Technology, A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust
- [Photos of Odessa by G. Garbuzov](#)
- [Interactive map of Odessa](#)
- [Wikipedia Odessa](#)
- [Wikipedia History of the Jews in Russia and the Soviet Union](#)