

Bogdanovka

(Rom., Bogdanovca), extermination camp established in October 1941 by Romanian occupation authorities in the village of that name on the Bug River, in the Golta district of Transnistria, on orders of Col. Modest Isopescu, the district commissioner. Most of the people deported to Bogdanovka - some forty-eight thousand - came from Odessa, and about seven thousand from Bessarabia. The last transport arrived at Bogdanovka on December 1, 1941; by then over fifty-four thousand Jews were being held there.

Several cases of typhus broke out in the camp in mid-December. In consultation with Fleischer, the German adviser to the Romanian administration of the district, Isopescu decided to kill the entire camp population and issued an order to this effect to Vasile Manescu, the military government official in charge of the district. Taking part in the operation were Romanian troops and gendarmerie, Ukrainian police, and civilians from the town of Golta brought in for this purpose, as well as local ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche). The chief of the Ukrainian regular police, Kazachievici, was in overall command.

The mass slaughter began on December 21, 1941. The sick and disabled prisoners, some 5,000 in all, were locked into two stables; layers of kerosene-drenched straw were spread over the roofs and set alight, and all the prisoners packed inside were burned to death. The rest of the prisoners, lined up in columns of 300 to 400 each, were marched to a nearby forest and driven to the banks of a watercourse (Garla Mare, "the great valley," as the Romanian camp commandants called it). They were ordered to remove their clothes, get on their knees, and lean over the valley, and were then shot in the back of their necks with dum dum bullets or killed with hand grenades. The massacre went on for four days, in the course of which 30,000 Jews were murdered. The rest were left freezing in the cold, waiting on the banks of the river for their turn to die. With their bare hands they dug holes in the ground, packing them with frozen corpses and trying in this way to shelter themselves

from the cold. Nevertheless, thousands of them froze to death. On Christmas Eve the killing came to a temporary halt, only to be renewed four days later, on December 28. By the end of the day on December 31, the remaining 11,000 Jews were also dead. Isopescu ordered all traces of the slaughter to be obliterated and the corpses to be burned. For two months, in January and February of 1942, 200 Jews who had been selected for this gruesome task were kept busy burning the corpses, piling them up in pyres with layers of straw and timber, and using gasoline to set the fire to the pyres. Of these 200 Jews, 150 died of cold and hunger or were shot to death by their Ukrainian guards.

In early 1945 Isopescu, Manescu, and the camp commandants were put on trial, in the first such proceedings against Romanian war criminals. The men responsible for the mass murder were sentenced to death (although the sentences were commuted to life imprisonment), and the other defendants were given long prison terms.