



UNITED STATES COMMISSION  
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD

WARREN L. MILLER  
CHAIRMAN

June 26, 2008

H.E. Oleh Shamshur  
Embassy of Ukraine  
3350 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Ambassador Shamshur:

I am writing to ask that you convey to all pertinent officials of Ukraine the request of the Government of the United States that they act to prevent construction in the Jewish cemetery in Vinnitsa identified on the attached map. According to news articles, the municipal government issued a permit to erect two high-rise buildings on the site and construction began a month ago. The U.S. Department of State reports that an officer of the U.S. embassy in Kiev has confirmed excavating construction activity and that Ambassador Taylor has contacted the mayor of Vinnitsa to request that it not continue.

Excavating in burial places violates an important tenet of the Jewish religion. Additionally, government has a solemn obligation to help prevent non-cemetery activities in Jewish cemeteries in areas such as Vinnitsa because the local Jewish communities were devastated by the Holocaust and subsequent communist repression. This is particularly the case in Ukraine in light of the involvement of many Ukrainians in actively assisting the Germans in perpetrating mass murder, including at Vinnitsa.

These were the principal reasons that our governments entered into an agreement negotiated by our Commission and signed March 4, 1994 by the Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Minister of Ukraine in the presence of the Presidents of both of our countries that commits each government to "take appropriate steps to protect and preserve ... cemeteries" and other cultural heritage properties of groups that were "victims of genocide during the Second World War."

I, therefore, strongly urge that the Government of Ukraine take all necessary measures to ensure that construction in the cemetery does not proceed. I also ask that you transmit to relevant officials the Commission's wish that they seriously consider the request of local Jewish leaders that the local government return ownership of the cemetery to the Jewish community so that they can restore and preserve it.

Mr. Ambassador, we have held meetings and had to communicate too often regarding interference with Jewish cemeteries in Ukraine. Problems such as the construction in the Vinnitsa cemetery occur because of the failure of your government to address other cases of intrusion into Jewish cemeteries, such as the desecration of the cemetery in Sambor. I hope that you will do all that you can to rectify this recurring offense. A nation that truly embraces cultural pluralism and democratic values would do no less.

Sincerely



Warren L. Miller

cc: Hon. Condoleezza Rice  
Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
Hon. Howard L. Berman  
Hon. Richard G. Lugar  
Hon. Illeana Ros-Lehtinen  
Hon. William B. Taylor