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The Persecution and Destruction of Jews in the Black Sea Region

Translated by Paul Vickers

In the area around the Black Sea, the Jewish population's settlement patterns were highly diverse. This meant that during World War II, their experiences were also very different. Romania and Bulgaria were aligned with the German Reich and occupied territories in the Soviet Union were thus put under German administration. In Romanian-controlled Transnistria, over a quarter of a million Jews were killed in massacres and by disease in 1941/42. The Bulgarian government handed over to the SS some 11,000 Jews from its occupied areas in 1943. In southern Ukraine, the German *Einsatzgruppe D* conducted the systematic destruction of the Jewish population. In other parts of Ukraine, it was primarily *Einsatzgruppe C* that murdered Jews, although that aspect does not form part of this chapter. Nor will I go into detail on the massacres carried out by occupying German forces around Rostov and the North Caucasus. Although Turkey remained neutral until 1945, Jews faced discrimination there, too. Nevertheless, some Jewish refugees from Romania managed to reach Palestine via Turkey.

1 The Situation Facing Jews in Romania: From Inclusion towards Exclusion

During Ottoman rule, many Jews had already settled the west coast of the Black Sea. The Romanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, which had been united since 1859, were ruled by Carol I from 1866 on. His army secured the territories' independence in 1877 with the assistance of Russian troops. The 1878 Congress of Berlin awarded the coastal region of Dobruja (Romanian: Dobrogea) to the principalities. This area was inhabited not only by Romanians, but also by many Jews, Tatars, and Turks. The Jews there were awarded citizenship, whereas the majority of Jewish inhabitants of the Kingdom of Romania remained stateless until 1919. It was only when its territory was doubled at the Paris Peace Conference that Romania, under pressure from the Entente powers, awarded citizenship to all Jews in Greater Romania. Jews from the newly-incorporated areas of Transylvania and Bukovina already had full civil rights under Habsburg rule from 1867 on, while those from Bessarabia received them in the wake of the 1917 February Revolution in Russia. Romania's territorial expansion in 1918 brought with it an increase in members of minorities, who accounted for 28 percent of the entire population. The 728,115 Jews (according to 1930 figures) formed 4 percent of the population, although this group was in itself highly culturally diverse. Many Transylvanian Jews associated themselves with Hungarian culture,

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while those in Bukovina had affinities with German-Austrian culture. In Bessarabia, they spoke both Yiddish and Russian, with the state police persecuting many for supposed pro-Soviet sympathies.[1]

In the wake of the economic crisis that emerged in 1929, two anti-Semitic organizations succeeded in mobilizing many youths, some craftspeople and workers, as well as elements of the farming community, who then blamed Jews for the social upheavals. Following the significant increase in votes received by the far-right Iron Guard in the December 1937 parliamentary elections, the king formed a government of loyal anti-Semites.[2] It then passed legislation in January 1938 that resulted in a third of Romanian Jews being stripped of citizenship by 1939. The 225,222 stateless Jews, who were thus also deprived of their civil and political rights, came largely from the regions that were incorporated into Romania in 1918.[3] Although French pressure soon led to this government's resignation, the law remained in place. By 1938, Carol II had imposed authoritarian rule and parliamentary elections were a thing of the past.

The non-aggression pact signed by the German foreign minister Ribbentrop and his Soviet counterpart Molotov in August 1939, together with the subsequent partition of Poland, brought about a shift in Romanian foreign policy. Until that point, France had acted as guarantor of Romania's territorial integrity after the state had doubled in size. The Soviet Union had not recognized the incorporation of the province of Bessarabia, even though the population was 60 percent Romanian. While the wording of the passage on Bessarabia contained in the secret supplementary protocol was not known in Romania, the king sought to use intensified economic relations with Nazi Germany to secure a guarantee for the integrity of the state's borders from Hitler. Romania was exporting crude oil, wood, grain, and food to the Reich.[4]

In the immediate aftermath of France's capitulation in June 1940, the Soviet government issued an ultimatum for Romanian troops to evacuate Bessarabia, which they duly did before attacking Jews in Dorohoi and Galaţi on the other side of the new border, resulting in 450 deaths.[5] Many Jews who had been deprived of their rights left Romania, which had lost parts of its territory, moving to Soviet-occupied areas. The Romanian press treated this as evidence that Jews were supposedly Bolshevik sympa-

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1 Mariana Hausleitner, "Rumänien," in *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, ed. Susanne Heim et al., vol. 13, *Slowakei, Rumänien, Bulgarien*, ed. Barbara Hutzelmann, Mariana Hausleitner, and Souzana Hazan (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018), 46–52.

2 The Iron Guard emerged in 1930 from the right-wing youth movement Archangel Michael Legion, which also found support among impoverished town dwellers and farmers during the Great Depression. See Armin Heinen and Oliver Jens Schmitt, eds., *Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts: Die "Legion Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien 1918–1938* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2013).

3 Carol Iancu, *La Shoah en Roumanie* (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 2000), 33.

4 Armin Heinen, "Der Hitler-Stalin-Pakt und Rumänien," in *Hitler-Stalin-Pakt 1939: Das Ende Ostmitteleuropas?*, ed. Erwin Oberländer (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1989), 98–113.

5 Radu Ioanid, *Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime 1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 2000), 41–42, 61.

thizers. Jewish state employees were dismissed from their jobs, while the race law passed on August 8, 1940 featured further discriminatory measures, including forbidding marriage between Jews and non-Jews. Jews were barred from public service and from many occupations, while Jewish children were banned from state schools.[6]

The far-right Iron Guard held Carol II responsible for the loss of one third of the state's territory. He abdicated in favor of his nineteen-year-old son, Mihai, and left Romania. Government power resided with General Ion Antonescu from September 6, 1940 on. He was able to enter into a close alliance with the Third Reich only after Romania accepted the Second Vienna Award of September 1940, which the foreign ministers of Italy and Germany presided over. The Award required Romania to cede Northern Transylvania to Hungary. Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria subsequently became signatories to the Tripartite Pact established by Germany, Italy, and Japan.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union allowed General Antonescu to retake Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, having already offered Hitler the support of the Romanian army on June 12, 1941. In order to "cleanse the territory," Eugen Cristescu, head of the *Serviciul Secret de Informaţii* (Secret Information Service) formed two special units, each comprising 160 men, modeled on the German *Einsatzgruppen.*[7] To what extent they were responsible for the murders of some 14,000 Jews in Iaşi towards the end of June that year, cannot be established conclusively. During a series of mass arrests, a pogrom broke out, with numerous soldiers and civilians involved in looting and murders.[8] Some members of the rural population were involved in murders in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, regions that were also combed by the special units as they searched for possible enemies of the state. In several places, German *Sonderkommandos* carried out murders. Many Jews fled together with the Red Army, but were often overtaken by the quickly advancing enemy troops and shot. Jews that had remained behind in small localities were in the large part murdered on site, while those from larger settlements were driven out on foot and many died in the course of these actions.[9] The *Wehrmacht* allowed only the first convoy of 25,000 Jews to cross the Dniester, with subsequent convoys having to camp out in the open air in Bessarabia without supplies. Tens of thousands of Jews died in such conditions as a result of disease and deficiencies. There were mass shootings in the Bălţi (Russian: Beltsy) district.[10] The census of 1930 counted 41,065 Jews living in the provincial capital Chişinău

6 Jean Ancel, *The Economic Destruction of Romanian Jewry* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), 33–68; "DOK. 136: Das neue Rassengesetz regelt am 9. August 1940 die Diskriminierung der Juden," in Heim et al., *Die Verfolgung*, 13:356–60.

7 Cristian Troncotă and Alin Spânu, *Documente SSI privind spaţiul sovietic: 22 august 1939–23 august 1944* (Bucharest: Academia Română, 2004), 259–73.

8 Henry L. Eaton, "The Story Created Afterward: Iaşi 1941," in *Romania and the Holocaust: Events – Contexts – Aftermath*, ed. Simon Geissbühler (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2016), 41–58.

9 Simon Geissbühler, *Blutiger Juli: Rumäniens Vernichtungskrieg und der vergessene Massenmord an den Juden 1941* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2013), 59–81.

10 Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord: Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941–1943* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 163–77.

(Russian: Kishinev), forming 37.3 percent of the population. Some were able to flee. The Romanian authorities established a large-scale ghetto in the city, with significant numbers of Jews dying there of nutritional deficiencies and in shootings.[11] There had been anti-Semitic attacks before 1941 in the Cetatea Albă district (formerly Akkerman – now Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi in Ukraine), where a Greek Orthodox priest, for example, had blamed Jews for many social problems.[12] In 1930, this Black Sea district had 11,390 Jewish inhabitants, forming 3.3 percent of the population. The exact number of people killed is unknown because some of the Jewish population fled as Soviet troops retreated. Those who did not flee were deported or killed.

Negotiations between representatives of Germany and the Romanian general staff over the extent of a Romanian zone of occupation in southern Ukraine lasted two months. The Tighina Agreement of August 30, 1941 awarded Romania the territories between the Dniester and Bug rivers, which came to be known as Transnistria. It included an extensive stretch of the Black Sea coast, including the important port of Odesa. This fertile region provided supplies for the Romanian and German armies, while at the same time serving as the destination for Jews deported from northeastern Romania.[13]

In the summer of 1941, tens of thousands of Jews in southern Ukraine were shot dead by Romanian and German units. There were an estimated 130,000 Jews in Transnistria. How many managed to escape to other parts of the Soviet Union in time is unknown. The systematic deportation of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina, where in 1930 Jews formed 7.2 percent and 10 percent of the population respectively, began in October 1941. Almost a quarter of a million Jews were forced to move to Transnistria, where in winter 1941/42 there was a typhus epidemic among the starving deportees who had ended up in localities destroyed by war. Tens of thousands died as a result. The majority of Jews performed forced labor, receiving no pay for it. Leaving the ghettoes in order to exchange their possessions for food in the villages was punishable by death. It was only in a few places, such as the large ghetto in Mohyliv-Podilskyi (Russian: Mogilev-Podolskii, Romanian: Moghilău), that some Jews received lunch in exchange for working on the restoration of administrative buildings and bridges.[14]

The largest number of victims was recorded in Odesa. A bomb exploded in the former office of the Soviet secret service, the NKVD (*Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh*

11 Paul A. Shapiro, *The Kishinev Ghetto 1941–1942: A Documentary History of the Holocaust in Romania's Contested Borderlands* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama University Press, 2015).

12 Diana Dumitru, *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 77.

13 "Vertrag von Tighina," in Ekkehard Völkl, *Transnistrien und Odessa 1941–1944* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1996), 110–13.

14 Siegfried Jagendorf, *Jagendorf's Foundry: A Memoir of the Romanian Holocaust 1941–1944*, ed. Aron Hirt-Manheimer (New York: Harper Collins, 1991); Mariana Hausleiter, "Überleben durch Korruption: Das Ghetto Mogilev-Podol'skij in Transnistrien 1941–1944," in *Lebenswelt Ghetto*, ed. Imke Hansen, Katrin Steffen, and Joachim Tauber (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 242–66.

del, People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs), during a meeting of high-ranking Romanian and German military officials. Among the sixty victims was General Ion Glogojanu, the Romanian commander of the city. Ion Antonescu, who had just been promoted to the rank of marshal, ordered brutal retaliation. According to a report by the German military intelligence (*Abwehr*) office, some 19,000 men, women, and children were arrested in the Jewish quarter and murdered at the edge of the city at Dalnyk (Russian: Dalnik).[15] The survivors were transported in open trucks between January and March 1942 to temporary camps in Transnistria. A quarter of them froze to death along the way, while others were shot dead as epidemics developed among them. Mass shootings occurred on the left bank of the Bug in Domanivka (Russian: Domanevka, Romanian: Domanovca), Akhmechetka (Romanian: Acmecetca), and Bohdanivka (Russian: Bogdanovka, Romanian: Bogdanovca). Some 14,500 people were driven out, over the Bug. They were murdered together with the Jews in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine.[16] In an autonomous region within Transnistria inhabited by the German minority, members of the so-called Self-Defence (*Selbstschutz*) also murdered Jews who had been brought to the area by Romanian gendarmes in 1941/42. According to Romanian foreign ministry sources, there were around 28,000 Jewish victims in this case.[17]

Ion Antonescu and his followers justified the deportation of Jews from northeastern Romania by arguing that Romania must become an ethnically homogenous state. On October 15, 1941, the statistician Sabin Manuilă presented the head of state with a plan that would enable the deportation of over one million Ukrainians and Russians from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. They were to be replaced by Romanians who from the eighteenth century had emigrated to Russia. Manuilă sent a group of researchers into the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, traveling from Crimea along the coast of the Sea of Azov, to register these Romanians. Events on the Eastern Front meant that only very few Romanians arrived in Bessarabia, from where the German minority had been resettled and taken to areas occupied by the German Reich in the autumn of 1940.[18]

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15 Saul Ia. Borovoi, "Gibel evreiskogo naseleniia Odessy vo vremia rumynskoi okkupatsii," in *Katastrofa i soprotivlenie ukrainskogo evreistva/Katastrofa i opir urkainskoho ievreistva*, ed. Ster Ia. Elisabetskii (Kyiv: Natsionalnaia Akademiia Nauk Ukrainy, 1999), 118–53; Alexander Dallin, *Odessa, 1941–1944: A Case Study of Soviet Territory under Foreign Rule* (Iaşi: The Center of Romanian Studies, 1998), 74, 219–21; David Z. Starodinskii, *Odesskoe Getto* (Odesa: Haitekh, 1991).

16 Herwig Baum, *Varianten des Terrors: Ein Vergleich zwischen der deutschen und rumänischen Besatzungsverwaltung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944* (Berlin: Metropol, 2011), 505; Armin Heinen, *Rumänien, der Holocaust und die Logik der Gewalt* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2007), 140–45.

17 Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik*, 279–87; Eric C. Steinhart, *The Holocaust and the Germanization of Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

18 Viorel Achim, "The Romanian Population Exchange Project Elaborated by Sabin Manuilă," *Annalli dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* 27 (2001): 593–617; Vladimir Solonari, *Purificarea Naţiunii: Dislocări forţate de populaţie şi epurări etnice în România lui Ion Antonescu 1940–1944* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2015), 99–100, 117.

In the summer of 1942, the Romanian gendarmerie deported 25,000 Roma, half of whom were children, to Transnistria. Some 11,000 starved and froze to death, while others were shot by Romanian gendarmes.[19] Furthermore, around 5,000 Jews were deported from Czernowitz (Ukrainian: Chernivtsi, Romanian: Cernăuți, Russian: Chernovtsy) in the summer of 1942, the majority of them losing their lives.

2 Mass Shootings Committed by *Einsatzgruppe D* in the Crimean Peninsula

From July 1941, in Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, and Transnistria, *Kommandos* belonging to the German *Einsatzgruppe D* had been carrying out murders of, first and foremost, Jewish men. Their commander, Otto Ohlendorf, received instructions from the Inland Security Service (Inland-SD) of the Reich Security Main Office that in accordance with Hitler's order of September 14, the entire Jewish community was to be killed. *Einsatzgruppe D* proceeded to shoot dead 5,000 Jews in Mykolaiv (Russian: Nikolaev) and the same number in Kherson. Himmler arrived in Mykolaiv, not far from the Black Sea coast, on October 5, 1941 and promoted Ohlendorf to the position of *SS-Oberführer* before assembled colleagues. Himmler outlined his vision for German settlement of Crimea, which was to be renamed "Gotengau."[20] *Einsatzgruppe D* then proceeded through southern Ukraine and Crimea until June 1942. The 11th Army of the *Wehrmacht* was engaged in battles in Crimea in October and November 1941, fighting Red Army units that had been retreating towards Sevastopol. As soon as a place had been captured, members of *Einsatzgruppe D* then ordered all Jews to be registered for supposed resettlement. The Jews were then loaded into trucks before being shot in isolated locations.[21] The diary of a Russian in Simferopol shows that he had believed that his Jewish neighbors were being deported to labor camps.[22]

In early December 1941, *Sonderkommando 11b* murdered Jews in Feodosiia and in the city of Kerch.[23] In the Tatar settlement of Qarasuvbazar (Russian: Belogorsk, Ukrai-

19 Brigitte Mihok, "Der 'einseitige Transfer': Die Deportation rumänischer Roma 1942–1944. Zum Forschungsstand," in *Holocaust an der Peripherie: Judenpolitik und Judenmord in Rumänien und Transnistrien 1940–1944*, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Brigitte Mihok (Berlin: Metropol, 2009), 178, 184.

20 Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik*, 364; Ralf Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen und die "Genese der Endlösung"* (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), 208.

21 Norbert Kunz, *Die Krim unter deutscher Herrschaft 1941–1944: Germanisierungsutopie und Besatzungsrealität* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005); Margret Müller, Werner Müller, and Boris Zabarko, eds., *Leben und Tod in der Epoche des Holocaust in der Ukraine* (Berlin: Metropol, 2020), 1039–41.

22 "DOK. 127: Chrisanf G. Laškevič kommentiert am 7. Dezember 1941 Gerüchte, dass bald alle Juden Simforopol's erschossen würden," in Heim et al., *Die Verfolgung*, vol. 7, *Sowjetunion mit annektierten Gebieten I*, ed. Bert Hoppe and Hildrun Glass, 391–94.

23 Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik*, 354–55; "DOK. 126: Die Ortskommandatur I/287 in Kertsch (Kerč) meldet am 7. Dezember 1941 die Erschießung von 25.000 Juden," in Heim et al., *Die Verfolgung*, 7:389–94.

nian: Bilohirsk), Romanian members of the army were involved in the shooting of 76 men, women, and children. *Wehrmacht* soldiers assisted with the transportation and creation of cordons in many locations.[24]

It was *Sonderkommando 11b* that was primarily responsible for the largest massacre in Crimea, with 13,600 Jews, Krymchaks, and Roma shot dead in Simferopol in the first half of December 1941. The Krymchaks were in part descended from Sephardic Jews, who no longer professed the Jewish faith. Still, Himmler demanded their murder for racial reasons. The military leadership there demanded extensive mass murders because the Red Army had taken provisions with them during their retreat, leaving the food supply in a critical condition. The military police units of the *Feldgendarmerie* and the secret field police were also involved in the massacres. Enquires were submitted to Berlin to ascertain whether Turkic-speaking Jews were to be eradicated. The Krymchaks' holy book was the Quran, which was not the case for the Karaims. After extensive discussions, the latter group was spared as it was classified in the summer of 1942 as belonging to the Turkic-speaking Tatars,[25] several of whom served in the SS auxiliary troops.[26] Among the victims in Bakhchisarai (Crimean Tatar: Bağçasaray, Ukrainian: Bakhchysarai) and Yalta were also Russians and Ukrainians suspected of being partisans. The final large-scale massacre took place in July 1942, following the capture of Sevastopol, with five hundred Jews being shot dead. By the second half of 1942, almost all of the Jews and Krymchaks caught in Crimea had been killed. Large numbers of Roma were also shot dead, while from 1943 on Slavs suspected of being partisans were murdered in increasing numbers. Sabotage attacks increased in Crimea from 1943 on after a central coordination unit started receiving support from the Red Army.[27] Historians have suggested that some 40,000 Jews were murdered in Crimea, including 6,000 Krymchaks.[28]

Some *Sonderkommandos* belonging to *Einsatzgruppe D* headed towards the Sea of Azov in the autumn of 1941, murdering the Jewish population and Roma during their march on Rostov-on-Don. Several thousand Jews were shot dead in Melitopol, Mariupol, and other locations.[29] In April 1948, during the Nuremberg Trials, Otto Ohlendorf stated that *Einsatzgruppe D* had murdered around 90,000 Jews in 1941/42.[30] This number included those from Bessarabia and Transnistria.

24 Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik*, 323–44; Kunz, *Die Krim*, 189–93.

25 Hannelore Müller-Sommerfeld, "Gunst und Tragik einer Privilegierung: Karäer im Osten Europas im 20. Jahrhundert," *Judaica* 67, no. 1 (2011): 85.

26 Yitzhak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, eds., *The Einsatzgruppen Reports* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 250, 284–85; Kirill Feferman, "Nazi Germany and the Mountain Jews: Was there a Policy?," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 96–114.

27 Baum, *Varianten*, 309–29.

28 Müller, Müller, and Zabarko, *Leben*, 1040.

29 Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik*, 307–17; Kunz, *Die Krim*, 182.

30 Jean Ancel, *Transnistria* (Bucharest: Editura Atlas, 1998), 2:220–24; Baum, *Varianten*, 507.

3 Romania Moves Away from a Policy of Extermination in the Autumn of 1942

In the autumn of 1942, Marshal Antonescu began to doubt that Germany would achieve a final victory. As a long-standing member of the general staff, he recognized the growing defensive capabilities of the Red Army. The equipment that the German Reich had promised Romanian units fighting at Stalingrad never materialized as German units were given priority. The Romanian foreign minister Mihai Antonescu issued a complaint to Hitler regarding this matter on September 22 and 23. At their meeting, they also disagreed on the German proposal to pay for grain exports from Romania only after the end of the war.[31]

These tensions meant that around 250,000 Jews remaining in Romania were ultimately spared. In July 1942, the foreign minister had indeed agreed to the deportation of Jews to German camps, but soon afterwards BBC reports revealed details of the planned destruction in Romania. After the *Bukarester Tageblatt* (Bucharest Daily), a newspaper financed by the German embassy, had presented the deportation plan under the headline "Rumänien wird judenrein" [Romania is being cleansed of Jews] on August 8, 1942, the endangered Jewish population sought to rescue their lives by all means possible.[32] Large financial donations for wounded Romanians and several interventions from abroad brought about a gradual shift in the situation. On October 13, some people being held under arrest, who were due to be transported from Bucharest to Transnistria, were released. Speaking to the Council of Ministers, Mihai Antonescu, the marshal's deputy, referred to a decision taken by Marshal Ion Antonescu. Manfred von Killinger, the German envoy in Romania, wrote to the Foreign Ministry on December 12, 1942, stating that deportation was now unlikely with the Romanian government planning to send 75,000 Jews to Palestine.[33]

After two Romanian armies were trounced at Stalingrad, Romanian diplomats abroad enquired into the conditions for a separate peace. In Ankara, Romania's representative entered into negotiations with the US Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt regarding the transfer of 75,000 Jewish survivors in Transnistria to Palestine. The Romanian government demanded that ships be made available. The establishment of the US War Refugee Board in January 1944 meant that funding was available for refugee ships. Most of the money for these measures came from the World Jewish Congress. The Ro-

31 Ion Calafeteanu, *Români la Hitler* (Bucharest: Univers enciclopedic, 1999), 125–33.

32 Dennis Deletant, *Aliatul uitat a lui Hitler: Ion Antonescu şi regimul său* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008), 221–28; Hildrun Glass, *Deutschland und die Verfolgung der Juden im rumänischen Machtbereich 1940–1944* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014), 157–87.

33 "DOK. 203: Der deutsche Gesandte berichtet am 12. Dezember 1942, dass die rumänische Regierung mehr als 75.000 Juden die Auswanderung nach Palästina gestatten will," in Heim et al., *Die Verfolgung*, 13:462–63.

manian government received a fee for each rescued Jew.[34] Owing to German pressure, by August 1944 it had only been possible to carry out the transportation of around 3,000 Jews from the Black Sea port of Constanţa to Turkey. From there, they were taken by train to Palestine. Among those rescued were many of the 5,000 orphans left behind in Transnistria after their parents had been killed. Jews from Hungary, who had fled to Romania with the onset of mass deportations in the spring of 1944, were allocated places on the refugee ships too.[35] This rescue effort was only possible because Turkey was a neutral state.[36]

Resistance increased appreciably following the German defeat at Stalingrad. German and Romanian special units combed Transnistria, searching for partisans. In early 1944, the Romanian military court in Transnistria sentenced many Slavs to death for supporting partisans. There were often Jews accused of assisting partisans among those executed. Towards the end of 1943, Jews who had been involved in constructing a road linking Lemberg (Polish: Lwów, Russian: Lvov, Ukrainian: Lviv) with the Caucasus were shot dead by SS special units once this infrastructure project had been abandoned.[37] With the Romanian army retreating from Transnistria, the *Wehrmacht* took over the administration of the region in March 1944. During this period, an SS unit shot Jewish political prisoners from Romania who were being held in the jail in Răbniţa (Russian: Rybnitsa, Ukrainian: Rybnytsia).[38]

The Red Army retook possession of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in the spring of 1944 before marching over the old Romanian borders in August that year. On August 23, Ion Antonescu was arrested, along with his closest aides, during an audience with the king. A government formed of military representatives and experts led the Romanian army to join forces with the Red Army. Together they were involved in recapturing Northern Transylvania. The discrimination against Jews ended in the autumn of 1944, although only very few were given back their property.

4 Turkish Authorities' Attitudes towards Jews

The role of Jews in the Turkish economy has been emphasized regularly, even though they constituted just 1 percent of the country's population in 1938. Most often, it is the

34 Mariana Hausleitner, *Eine Atmosphäre von Hoffnung und Zuversicht* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2020), 147–56.

35 Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel 1939–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 257.

36 Adina Babeş (Fruchter), "Romanian Jewish Emigration in the 1940s," *Holocaust: Studii şi cercetări* 5 (2013): 32–43; Florin C. Stan, *Situaţia evreilor din România între ani 1940–1944* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2012), 425–39.

37 Deborah Schultz and Edward Timms, *Arnold Daghani's Memories of Mikhailowka* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2009), 220–23.

38 Matei Gall, *Finsternis: Durch Gefängnis, KZ Wapniarka, Massaker und Kommunismus. Ein Lebenslauf in Rumänien 1920–1990* (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 1999), 111–92.

amicable acceptance of emigrants from the German Reich, including Ernst Reuter, that has been highlighted, even though only around five to six hundred people arrived in Turkey this way. The larger the number of emigrants to Turkey after 1938, the worse their situation became. They were accused of causing inflation and faced attacks as a result. Far-right groups published articles and drawings taken from the Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* (*Völkisch* Observer). Turkish translations of anti-Semitic books, such as Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* also appeared. While no anti-Jewish legislation was passed, non-Muslims were prevented from practicing certain professions and had to pay special taxes. It was for this reason that many Jews emigrated to Palestine.[39]

The German Reich was Turkey's most important trading partner, which meant that the government sought to maintain good relations. There were many people who sympathized with Hitler's politics in the Turkish security apparatus and military. From 1938 to 1940, Turkey effectively banned the arrival and transit of Jews traveling to Palestine. After that, Jews were only allowed to enter Turkey if they were in possession of a British travel permit. These certificates were limited in number, which is why between 1940 and summer 1944, only around 11,600 Jews travelled to Palestine via Turkey. Emigration along this route was halted on two occasions. On February 25, 1942, the *Struma*, a ship carrying 769 Jewish refugees who had boarded in the Romanian port of Constanţa, sank. Aboard the ship were many Jews who did not possess a travel permit for Palestine and were thus refused permission to go ashore in Turkey. The ship spent seventy days anchored off the Turkish coast before being driven out to sea in an unseaworthy state. Refugee ships were subsequently refused permission to depart Constanţa until March 1944. During the intervening period, German warships sailed in the Black Sea and could pass through the Bosporus Strait. There were protracted negotiations over the transit route, with Germany threatening to issue sanctions. The British authorities opened the way to entering Palestine from the summer of 1943 after it became clear just how few surviving Jews there were in Central and Eastern Europe. From that point on, the Turkish authorities also issued transit visas. From March to August 1944, 2,844 Jews from Romania were able to travel by ship to Istanbul and from there on to Palestine. But then, on August 5, 1944, a Soviet submarine sank the *Mefkura*, believing the refugee ship, with 379 passengers on board, to be a German vessel. It was only in November 1944 that refugee ships took to the seas again.[40]

The German Reich had sealed a Treaty of Friendship with Turkey on June 18, 1941, guaranteeing Turkish neutrality just four days before the attack on the Soviet Union. Until 1944, the Reich imported chromium, a key component in weapons production, from Turkey. Turkish security personnel collaborated for an extended period with the Gestapo.[41] The Turkish government stripped of citizenship many Jews from Turkey

39 Hatice Bayraktar, "Türkische Karikaturen über Juden (1933–1945)," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 13 (2004): 85–108.

40 Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust*, 249–64.

41 Stefan Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 209–22.

who were living in areas occupied by the *Wehrmacht*. Thus over 2,200 Jews of Turkish origin were deported to the death camps of Auschwitz and Sobibor. It was only in February 1945 that Turkey declared war on the German Reich, albeit without subsequently contributing actively to any military efforts. The Turkish studies scholar Corry Guttstadt argues in her key study that the image of Turkey's positive stance towards persecuted Jews is a myth.[42]

5 Extradition of the Stateless Jews of Bulgaria and the Rescue of Others

During World War I, Bulgaria was an ally of Germany, meaning that the country had to accept territorial losses after the war and pay reparations. From 1935 on, King (Tsar) Boris III imposed authoritarian rule on Bulgaria, forbidding all political parties. Parliament, now consisting solely of directly-elected members, was left with a merely advisory role. In 1934, there were 48,565 Jews in Bulgaria, forming a very small minority making up 0.8 percent of the population. The constitution of 1879 granted Jews equal rights. Most of the Jewish population lived in cities and worked as tradespeople and businesspeople. Jewish businesses were targeted by organized anti-Semitic attacks in September 1938.[43] In 1939, some 4,000 foreign Jews were extradited to Greece and Turkey. In October 1939, Petar Gabrovski was appointed minister of the interior. He had been involved in the Ratniks movement, the "Warriors for the Advancement of the Bulgarian Spirit," which called for the elimination of Jews. He wrote the Law for the Protection of the Nation, which was passed in January 1941 and was modeled on the Nuremberg Race Laws. It forbade the marriage of Jews to non-Jews, with Jews barred from public office and many professions. From May 1941, Jewish males conducted forced labor, often in harsh conditions in provincial locations. In July that year, the government issued an order for Jews to hand over up to 25 percent of their wealth.[44]

Prior to 1940, Bulgaria had been supplied with weapons by France. But following the latter's capitulation, Bulgaria entered into close economic collaboration with the German Reich while declaring its neutrality in respect of German wars of aggression.[45] Thanks to its collaboration with the German Reich, Bulgaria was awarded the Southern Dobruja region in 1940, which had been part of Romania since 1913. On March 1, 1941, Bulgaria joined the Tripartite Pact. German troops were permitted to march through the country in order to wage war against Yugoslavia and Greece. Following the occu-

42 Corry Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: University Press, 2013).

43 Stefan Troebst, "Antisemitismus im 'Land ohne Antisemitismus': Staat, Titularnation und jüdische Minderheit in Bulgarien 1878–1993," in *Juden und Antisemitismus im östlichen Europa*, ed. Mariana Hausleitner and Monika Katz (Berlin: Harrassowitz, 1995), 117.

44 Souzana Hazan, "Bulgarien," in Heim et al., *Die Verfolgung*, 74–92.

45 Hans-Joachim Hoppe, "Bulgarien, " in *Dimension des Völkermordes*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: dtv, 1996), 277–78.

pation of those countries, North Macedonia was transferred to Bulgaria from Yugoslavia, while Eastern Macedonia together with Western Thrace were taken from Greece in April 1941. Following their annexation, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers imposed its own legislation on these regions. The population of around 13,000 mostly Sephardic Jews was not granted Bulgarian citizenship. In December 1941, Bulgaria declared war on the United Kingdom and the United States, although it did not break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and never sent troops to the Eastern Front.[46]

Following the Wannsee Conference, the German Foreign Office demanded the deportation of Bulgaria's Jewish population. The German authorities planned the operation in October 1942, with the Bulgarian government accepting the plan in the November. As a first step, on the initiative of a German advisor, the Bulgarian Commissar for Jewish Questions Aleksandar Belev signed off on the deportation of 20,000 Jews on February 22, 1943. With the agreement of the Bulgarian government and the support of the Bulgarian authorities, 11,364 Jews from Thrace and Macedonia were deported in March 1943. The majority were murdered immediately at Treblinka. The deportations then stopped because on March 17, Dimitar Peshev, deputy president of the parliament, made a case for pre-war Bulgaria's Jews. Prime Minister Bogdan Filov demanded an open ballot on Peshev's policies and the forty-two members of parliament who had previously signed Peshev's protest letter no longer put their name to it. Peshev was subsequently deselected.[47]

In light of the defeats on the Eastern Front and in Africa, Boris III hesitated to deliver more Jews into the hands of the SS. In May 1943, the 19,150 Jews who remained in employment in Sofia were taken to an internment camp in the provinces. Only part of the Jewish population was evacuated from some Black Sea coast cities, including Varna and Burgas. The German authorities believed that the internment was a signal that the Jews were soon to be turned over to the SS. However, they came to recognize that the situation on the military fronts meant that this was unlikely to happen. The US War Refugee Board made an offer to facilitate emigration, although a response was first issued in August 1944. On September 9, 1943, Boris III died suddenly, with his six-year-old son succeeding him. The government dissolved the alliance with the German Reich on August 28, 1944, five days after the fall of Marshal Antonescu in Romania. On August 30, the special laws were suspended. The Red Army reached Bulgaria's borders in early September.[48] Despite his brave stance, Peshev was barred from working as a lawyer after 1945, as he had upheld the previous regime. He was honored by Yad Vashem in 1973, yet his memoirs did not appear in Bulgaria until 2004.

46 Hoppe, "Bulgarien," 298; Troebst, "Antisemitismus," 118.

47 Jan Rychlik, "Zweierlei Politik gegenüber der Minderheit: Verfolgung und Rettung bulgarischer Juden 1940–1944," in *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS-Zeit: Regionalstudien*, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Juliane Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 4:61–98.

48 Hazan, "Bulgarien," 90–92; Hoppe, "Bulgarien," 300.

6 Working through the Holocaust in Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine

The deportation of the entire Jewish population of Western Thrace and Macedonia by the Bulgarian authorities was concealed for a long time under communism. Bulgaria had had to cede control of these regions in 1944.[49] Later, historians focused primarily on acts of rescuing Jews. In her book, Nadège Ragaru reported statements given by Jewish eye witnesses during trials at the People's Tribunal in Sofia in 1944/45, when Bulgarian perpetrators were sentenced for forcibly removing Jews from the occupied territories. Bulgarian involvement in the murder of over 11,000 Jews was then concealed.[50]

In Romania, trials of the most notorious war criminals held at the People's Tribunal in 1946 also addressed the large number of victims in Romanian-occupied Transnistria. Some five hundred survivors were interviewed, with the media reporting the findings.[51] The accused Ion Antonescu claimed that he only learned of the 27,000 victims in Odesa from foreign sources in 1944.[52] Three volumes of documentation collected by the secretary of the Jewish community relating to the mass crimes of the Romanian Army and the *Wehrmacht* were published in 1946/47. Yet they disappeared from libraries after Stalin in 1948 forbade publication of a Russian "black book" on the suffering of the Jewish people.[53]

Communist historians in Romanian subsequently no longer wrote about the military alliance with the German Reich and its consequences for the Jewish population. The mass murders in Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria were also ignored because these territories were taken over by the Soviet Union in 1944. Nothing could be published on the Hitler-Stalin Pact or the Soviet ultimatum of June 1940 that preceded the annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. Ion Antonescu ensured that it was primarily the Jewish population that was deported from the region in the autumn of 1941 because he suspected that it included Soviet sympathizers. After 1990, there was a sudden revision of the reputation of Marshal Antonescu, who was now framed as an anti-Bolshevik hero who reclaimed the territories that had been annexed in 1940. The Romanian parliament honored him in June 1991 with a minute's silence on the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary of his execution. It was only when the Romanian gov-

49 Iva Arakchiyska, *Kann ein Mensch dabei untätig bleiben? Hilfe für verfolgte Juden in Bulgarien 1940–1944* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2016), 81–90; Gabriele Nissim, *Der Mann, der Hitler stoppte: Dimitar Pešev und die Rettung der bulgarischen Juden* (Berlin: Siedler, 2000), 122–84.

50 Nadège Ragaru, *"Et les Juifs bulgares furent sauvés…": Une histoire des savoirs sur le Shoah en Bulgarie* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2020).

51 Andrei Muraru, "Romanian Political Justice: Holocaust and the Trails of War Criminals, The Case of Transnistria," *Holocaust: Studii şi cercetări* 10 (2018): 127.

52 Marcel-Dumitru Ciucă, *Procesul mareşalului Antonescu: Documente* (Bucharest: Editura Saeculum, 1998), 3:425.

53 Hausleitner, *Eine Atmosphäre*, 214–18.

ernment sought to secure membership of NATO that the Antonescu cult was abandoned. In 2004, the final report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania was submitted, with historians finding that the Romanian Army was jointly responsible for the deaths of between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews.[54] These figures include the victims from Transnistria.

This is a far greater number than the estimated 40,000 people murdered by German *Kommandos* in Crimea and the 11,365 Jews that the Bulgarian government deported in 1943. In Soviet Ukraine, the anonymous term "Soviet victims" was the favored phrase. After 1991, however, some younger historians began to investigate the persecution of Jews. Today, there is also research on the unjust death sentences passed on *Judenrat* representatives by the Soviet authorities after 1944.[55]

54 Mariana Hausleitner, "Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Holocaust in Rumänien," in *Die späte Aufarbeitung des Holocaust in Osteuropa*, ed. Micha Brumlik and Karol Sauerland (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2010), 71–90; International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, *Final Report* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2005).

55 Vadim Altskan, "On the Other Side of the River: Dr. Adolph Herschmann and the Zmerinka Getto 1941–1944," in *Holocaust and Studies* 26, no. 1 (2012): 2–28.