

## Transcarpathian Ukraine

Region in the Carpathian Mountains that now belongs to the Ukraine. Before World War I the Transcarpathian Ukraine was part of Hungary; after the war, it was taken over by Czechoslovakia. Just months before World War II broke out, the region was returned to Hungary. After the war, it was annexed to the Soviet Union, and made part of the Ukraine.

In 1939 some 500,000 people lived in the region; about 15 percent were Jews. The Jewish community, known for its strict religious observance, was very poor. Despite this, the Jews in the Transcarpathian Ukraine administered a large network of Jewish and Hebrew educational institutions and sponsored a great amount of Zionist activity.

Until Germany occupied Hungary in 1944, the Jews in the Transcarpathian Ukraine were basically able to maintain their way of life. They even aided many Jews who had come to the region from Slovakia and Poland seeking refuge. Although Jewish business owners were forced to hand over their enterprises to non-Jews, this generally happened in name only.

One group of Jews, however, was singled out by the authorities; some 18,000 "Jewish foreign nationals," whose families had actually been living in the Transcarpathian Ukraine for generations, were kicked out of the region. Most were then exterminated by the SS in German-occupied Poland. Another group of Jews was also affected by the war before the Germans ever invaded; these were the young Jews who were drafted into the Hungarian Labor Service System, many of whom died or were murdered while serving as laborers for the Hungarian army.

Germany occupied Hungary in March 1944. The Nazis began their campaign to annihilate Hungarian Jewry in the Transcarpathian Ukraine. They quickly set up ghettos, and brought the Jews from small towns and villages to the large population centers. By May, the Germans began deporting the Jews to the east. In general, the Hungarian authorities themselves were in charge of the deportations. In all, about 80 percent of the Jews of the Transcarpathian Ukraine perished during the holocaust. A few Jews managed to survive by fleeing to the mountains or hiding.

