

## Bukovina

Region in east-central Europe, today divided between Romania and the Ukraine. Bukovina was annexed by Romania after World War I. In June 1940 the Soviet Union took control of northern Bukovina. During the annexation process and the furious retreat of Romanian troops, Romanian soldiers murdered hundreds of Jews. Under the Soviets, traditional Jewish life was restricted and many Jewish leaders were deported to forced labor camps.

Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, including northern Bukovina. Organized groups of peasant thugs, mainly Ukrainians, tortured, raped, and robbed Jews before the Germans and their Romanian allies even arrived. When the Nazis entered the region they immediately began killing Jews: German and Romanian soldiers carried out pogroms killing thousands of Jews, while an *Einsatzgruppe* unit murdered thousands more. The remaining Jews were forced to wear the Jewish badge (see also badge, Jewish) and move into ghettos. Jews were deported in brutal fashion from there to camps in northern Bessarabia, where many died. The survivors were sent to Transnistria, where they were made to do forced labor under extremely harsh conditions.

Right before the Germans entered northern Bukovina, Romanian leader Ion Antonescu also ordered that the Jews in southern Bukovina be sent to camps in Romania. From there they were sent on to Transnistria. By November 1941, 57,000 Jews from all over Bukovina had arrived in Transnistria. Deportations were then halted, but began again in summer 1942; at that point, 4,000 more Jews were sent to Transnistria.

In October 1943 the Jewish badge decree was cancelled and Jews were allowed to move freely around the main city of northern Bukovina, Chernovtsy. In February 1944 the Romanians left Chernovtsy to the Germans, who planned to finish off the city's Jews. However, the Soviet army quickly arrived to liberate the city, and rescued the Jews from almost certain death. Thousands of deportees returned to the city in late 1944 and early 1945. In all, about half the Jewish population of Bukovina had perished. After the war, most of the survivors fled to Romania, and later settled in Israel.

