

## Popovici, Trajan

In July 1941, Northern Bukovina, which had been part of the Soviet Union, was occupied by the German and Rumanian armies. For three days, the rioting soldiers carried out a massacre among the local Jewish population. Some 5,000 Jewish residents of the Czernowitz and Stroznitz regions lost their lives. Those who remained alive were subjected to house curfew for twenty-one hours out of the day. The Jews were forced to wear badges, their property was confiscated, prayer and work were prohibited, and they were taken to forced labor. On October 11 1941, a ghetto was established in Czernowitz, and within a few days, 40,000 Jews from Czernowitz and 35,000 from Southern Bukovina were loaded onto freight trains and transported to Transnistria. The terrible conditions and the inhuman labor led to the death of approximately half of the deportees.

The Jews of Czernowitz had a savior during the period of Nazi occupation - Mayor Dr. Trajan Popovici. He served as the address for all the persecuted Jews, and courageously extended various forms of aid in the face of the Nazis and the Rumanian fascists. Popovici opposed Nazi orders to establish a ghetto in Czernowitz; and when the orders to deport the Jews to Transnistria arrived, he once again protested before the officials responsible for the execution of the order. His protests placed his own personal safety at risk. He sent letters to his superiors and demanded that they appeal to the Germans to and attempt to save at least Jews of certain professions such as doctors, engineers, lawyers and judges. With his courage, he was able to save 20,000 Jews from annihilation.

Popovici's office was at all times filled with needy Jews. He took care that Jewish pensioners received the full pension which they had received before the occupation. He also distributed professional authorizations to many Jews - well above the quota he was given. All of this was done at great personal risk.