

FINAL REPORT

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THE HOLOCAUST IN ROMANIA

The National Legionary State and Its Attempt to Solve the “Jewish Question”

According to Antonescu’s supporters, the leadership of the Legion had three objectives in terms of the Jews: to take revenge, instill terror, and acquire property.¹ In order to reach these objectives, the Guard had to control the state’s repressive functions. The National Legionary government of September 14, 1940, had fifteen ministers appointed by the Legionary movement. Additionally, by September 20, 1940, Legion members also held the key position of prefect in forty-five counties.²

The Legionnaires started abusing Jews (through beatings, abusive arrests, torture, massive lay-offs from the civil service, economic boycotting of Jewish businesses, and vandalism of synagogues) immediately after they entered the government.³ The Jewish community was worried by the rapid fascization of much of Romanian society. This process was visible in public statements made by intellectuals as well as antisemitic outbursts in the ranks of labor unions and professional associations with which Jews were affiliated.

The Instruments of Legionary Terror

When the Iron Guard came to power, the organizational infrastructure for carrying out its plans was already in place. Its most dangerous instrument was the “Legionary Police,” an organization modeled on the Nazi paramilitary units. Formally established on September 6, 1940, to defend the new regime and oppress its adversaries, its leaders saw it as a Romanian version of the German SA. Antonescu himself blessed the organization at the beginning. It is also important to point out that in late October 1940, Himmler sent representatives of the Reich Main Security Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*; RSHA), headed by Heydrich, to Romania in order to establish a liaison with the Legionary movement. Although German intelligence indicated that the Legion was not pleased by this visit, the eventual outcome was

¹ In September 1941, the Antonescu regime published two volumes of investigative work that revealed the criminal and terrorist character of the Legionary movement. The report was entitled *Pe marginea prapastiei, 21-23 ianuarie, Bucharest, 1941* (henceforth: *Pe marginea prapastiei*) (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial si Imprimeriile Statului Imprimeria Centrala, 1941).

² Aurica Simion, *Regimul politic din Romania in perioada septembrie 1940-ianuarie 1941* (henceforth: Simion, *The Regime* (Cluj-Napoca: “Dacia,” 1976), pp. 68, 76.

³ Matatias Carp, *Cartea neagră: Suferintele Evreilor din Romania, 1940-1944* (henceforth: Carp, *Cartea neagră*), vol. 1, *Legionarii si Rebeliunea* (Bucharest: Editura Diogene, 1996), pp. 56-57.

an organization modeled largely on the structural and functional blueprints of the SS.⁴ With regard to its personnel, it is worth noting that in September 1940, the official publication of the Antonescu regime described the Legionary Police as “an assembly of unskilled, uneducated, ruthless and underprivileged people.”⁵ The Legionnaires also colonized the Ministry of Interior and occupied key positions in the National Police Headquarters (*Directia Generala a Politiei*). Another direct terror organization controlled by the Legion was the Corps of Legionary Workers (*Corpul Muncitoresc Legionar*; CML), a so-called labor union established in 1936 and strengthened after King Carol II banned unions proper. After September 1940, this organization was reorganized in the form of a paramilitary unit (*garnizoana*).

Students represented another recruiting pool for the Legion’s death squads. Since its establishment in the early 1920s, the National Union of Christian Students (NUCS) unequivocally held the banning of Jewish students from universities as one of its main objectives. After September 1940, NUCS became an actual terrorist organization controlled by the Legion. The head of this student organization, Viorel Trifa, was a Nazi-educated student leader. This was a new student organization modeled on the leadership system of German students so that the organization would fit into the authoritarian structure of the “new Romanian state.”⁶ The Iron Guard also recruited from middle school and high school students who had been instilled with the imagery of the slain Codreanu as a kind of Orthodox saint and guardian of the Romanian people. The Legion failed to make the army join its ranks, yet many retired army officers did offer their skills to assist in organizing the Legion’s paramilitary units.⁷ Legion leaders ordered these organizations and groups of individuals to commit murder, taking care to absolve them of their responsibility by inundating them with religious language and symbols. Likewise, clergymen who joined the Legion granted these proselytes moral absolution, while Legion leaders told them that the “time of revenge on all the opponents of the Iron Guard” was near.⁸ Finally, it should be stressed that while the Legion controlled the county *Prefecturi* as well as the Ministry of Interior and the Bucharest Police Headquarters, Antonescu controlled the army, the gendarmerie, and the Intelligence Service.

⁴ Wilhelm Hoettl, *The Secret Front: The Story of the Nazi Political Espionage* (London, 1953), p. 178.

⁵ *Asasinatale de la Jilava, Snagov si Strejnicu, 26-27 noiembrie 1940* (Bucharest, 1941), p. 166.

⁶ Horia Sima, *Era Libertatii. Statul National Legionar* (Madrid: 1982), pp. 137-139.

⁷ Simion, *The Regime*, pp. 92, 96.

⁸ *Pe marginea prapastiei*, vol. 2: pp. 85-87

The Anti-Jewish Attacks Orchestrated by the National Legionary State

On November 27, 1940, several Legionary terror squads carried out “revenge” for the assassination of C.Z. Codreanu. These actions were directed against leaders of the Royal Dictatorship and against Jews. As a result, sixty-five former leaders of the Royal Dictatorship were murdered in their Jilava prison cells. Two days later, Legion assassins shot former Prime Minister Nicolae Iorga. These events poisoned the Legion’s relationship with Antonescu, and particularly his relationship with Horia Sima, the commander of the Legion. The “revenge” against Jews commenced with illegal fines and taxes and progressed to random searches and arrests, robberies, deportation from villages, torture, rapes, and Nazi-style public humiliation, and they increased in number as the day of open confrontation with Antonescu neared. On November 29, Antonescu ordered the Legionary Police to disarm.⁹ The intended effects of his order, however, were attenuated by the Minister of Interior, who ordered the transfer of “competent staff” from the Legionary police to regular police units.¹⁰

The Eviction and Expropriation of Rural Jews

The deportation of Jews from villages in many regions of Romania is of particular importance, as the isolation of Jews from the rural population always figured high in the antisemitic narrative of the Legion and the Legion’s intellectual references.¹¹ In addition, the deportation aimed to seize Jewish property. These actions were illegal, even by the standards of the antisemitic legislation adopted by the National Legionary government. The deportation campaign was well planned, and the deportation order was issued verbally by the Interior Minister.¹² The campaign started in October 1940 and basically ended two months later in December. Local Legion commanders were the chief organizers. Jews were deported from dozens of villages where they had lived for more than a hundred years.¹³ Specially-established “commissions for the administration of Jewish property” took part in the expropriation proceedings before county courts.¹⁴ In smaller villages, the robbers—whether they were Legionnaires or ordinary citizens—were unconcerned about the illegality of their actions. Only in larger villages and small towns did they bother to force Jews to sign sales

⁹ Simion, *The Regime*, p. 400; *Pe marginea prapastiei*, p. 201.

¹⁰ *Pe marginea prapastiei*, p. 13.

¹¹ Sima, *Era*, pp. 251, 253; Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1: p. 203.

¹² Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1: p. 203.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁴ Jean Ancel, ed., *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust* (henceforth: Ancel, *Documents*) (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986), vol. 2: no. 37, pp. 75-76.

contracts, and the “agreement” to sell was sometimes obtained after the owner had been illegally detained.¹⁵

As a consequence of these actions, Jews residing in the countryside became refugees in county capitals, where they took up residence with Jewish families that were themselves subject to robberies. Some of the elderly deportees were veterans of Romania’s wars, who proudly wore their military medals. By mid-December 1940, the Legionnaires were confident enough to start robbing Jews in Bucharest of their property. Homes and other immovable property were prized. After severe beatings Jewish owners reluctantly signed sales contracts and requests for the termination of rent contracts.¹⁶ The deportees never returned to their homes, as Antonescu himself agreed that deportation was desirable. Out of 110,000 Jews residing in the countryside, about 10,000 of them became refugees.¹⁷

Army units located far from Bucharest also took part in the Legion’s anti-Jewish actions. On Yom Kippur (October 12) in 1940, for example, army personnel participated in a Legion-organized day of terror in Campulung Moldovenesc, a town controlled, in effect, by Vasile Iasinschi, the Legionary minister of labor, health, and social welfare. Thus, Colonel Mociulschi, commander of the local army base, ordered army soldiers to prevent Jews from entering or leaving their homes while police and Legionary squads burgled and pillaged. The booty was collected in the local Legion headquarters. Later, the local rabbi, Iosef Rubin, was tortured and humiliated (he was made to pull a wagon, which his son was forced to drive), and the synagogue was vandalized and robbed.¹⁸

A particularly harsh episode was the forced exile and even deportation of what the regime called “foreign Jews” (roughly 7,700 people in 1940). Antonescu gave the order and set a two-month deadline for all foreign Jews to leave Romanian territory.¹⁹ Hundreds of them were subsequently arrested and their property confiscated. The arrested were then taken to Dornesti, a new customs point on the Soviet border, where they were forced to walk on Soviet territory. Since Romanian authorities did not inform the Soviets about this, the Soviet border patrol shot to death dozens of these foreign Jews. After similar episodes were repeated, the Romanian authorities decided to intern the survivors in the Calarasi-Ialomita camp in southern Romania.²⁰

¹⁵ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1: p. 152; for the list of the villages, *ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

¹⁶ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1: no. 42, p. 84.

¹⁷ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 1: no. 138, p. 556; Safran, *Memorii*, (Jerusalem, 1991), p. 55

¹⁸ *Pe marginea prapastiei*, vol. 1: p. 164.

¹⁹ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 1: no. 138, p. 556; Safran, *Memorii*, p. 55

²⁰ *Pe marginea prapastiei*, vol. 1: p. 164

²⁰ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 102, p. 344.

The Bucharest Pogrom

The fate of Romanian Jews during the brief term of the National Legionary government depended on the developments in the power struggles taking place within the Legion as well as between Antonescu and the Legion. Various Nazi officials, including representatives at the German embassy in Bucharest, German intelligence officers, and members of the German minority from Transylvania, indirectly contributed to the fate of Romanian Jews through their influence on relations between Antonescu and the Legion.

As the Legion grew rich by taking possession of most Jewish property, Marshal Antonescu and his supporters began to perceive the Legion as a threat. The Marshal agreed that Jews should lose their property, yet he did not agree with the means and pace of expropriation. Neither did he agree with the fact that an organization and individuals, rather than the Romanian state and Romanian people, benefited from these actions. This conflict demonstrates that the confrontation between the Legion and Antonescu was not a confrontation between a gross, violent antisemitism and a compassionate, humane attitude, or between a savage form of nationalism and a form of “opportunistic” antisemitism. Rather, the Legionnaires wanted everything, and they wanted it immediately; Antonescu, while sharing the same goal, intended to achieve it gradually, using different methods. The Marshal stated this clearly in an address to Legion-appointed ministers: “Do you really think that we can replace all Yids immediately? Government challenges are addressed one by one, like in a game of chess.”²¹ By early January 1941, Antonescu was convinced that the Legion’s actions no longer served the interests of Romanian nationalism and that the Legion had become an instrument of extortion for its own members.²²

On January 14, 1941, Antonescu met Hitler in Obersalzberg and obtained agreement on his plan to do away with the Legion.²³ The days preceding the Legionnaire rebellion against Antonescu and the pogrom that occurred simultaneously were marked by strikingly vehement antisemitic statements from the Legion’s propaganda apparatus. The Legionary movement’s print media, while avowing its support of Nazi Germany’s antisemitic policies with increasing frequency, indicated in detail what was soon to follow on the “day of reckoning.”²⁴ The rebellion began when armed Legionnaires occupied the Bucharest Police

²¹ *Pe Marginea prapastiei*, vol. 1: pp. 178, 184.

²² H. Sima, *Era libertatii: Statul-National Legionar* (Madrid, 1986), vol. 2: p. 282.

²³ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, series D (1937-1945), vol. 11: no. 652, pp. 1089-1191 (henceforth: *DGFP*).

²⁴ *Cuvantul*, January 21, 1941.

headquarters, local police stations, the Bucharest City Hall, several ministries, and other public buildings. When army soldiers attempted to regain control of these buildings, the Legionnaires opened fire on them. Although Hitler had granted him a free hand, Antonescu maneuvered cautiously in order to avoid irritating the Nazi leadership in Berlin and to let the Legionnaires compromise themselves through their own actions.²⁵ This strategy included keeping the army on “active defensive.” Until the evening of January 22, the army’s actions were limited to returning fire when shot at first and to encircling sites controlled by Legionnaires. This allowed the Iron Guard to kill Jews and to pillage or burn their property unimpeded in several counties of Bucharest. As a result, Jewish homes and businesses over several kilometers—on Dudesti and Vacaresti streets—were severely damaged. The army offensive ended the rebellion on the morning of January 24.

At this point it was clear that the Bucharest pogrom was part of a Legion-drafted plan and not the manifestation of a spontaneous outburst or the strategic exploitation of a moment of anarchy. The pogrom was not a development isolated from the terrorist atmosphere and policy typical of the National Legionary State, but the climax of the progression. The army did not take part in the Bucharest pogrom. The perpetrators came from the ranks of organizations controlled by the Legion: Legion members and members of terrorist organizations, police from the Ministry of Interior and the *Siguranta* (the security police), and Bucharest *Prefectura* personnel. Many ordinary civilians also participated.

The Minister of Interior ordered the burning of Jewish districts on January 22, 1941; this signaled the beginning of the pogrom.²⁶ Yet, the attack on the two Jewish districts as well as on neighboring districts inhabited by Jews had, in effect, been launched at noon the day before. Moreover, by January 20, 1941, the Legion had already started to launch mass arrests of Jews, taking those apprehended to the Bucharest Prefectura.²⁷ Almost two thousand Jews, men and women from fifteen to eighty-five years old, were abusively detained and then taken to the Legion’s fourteen torture centers (police stations, the Bucharest Prefectura, the Legion headquarters, Codreanu’s farm, the Jilava town hall, occupied Jewish buildings, and the Bucharest slaughterhouse).²⁸ The arrested included wealthy Jews and employees of Jewish public organizations.

²⁵ Mihai Ionescu, “Tehnică și resorturile teroarei în perioada dictaturii legionar-antonesciene,” in *Impotriva fascismului* (Bucharest, 1971), p. 202; N. Mareș, Note on Assassination of Madgearu and Iorga, December 4, 1942, Arhiva Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român, Fond 103, file 8218, p. 3.

²⁶ S. Palaghița, *Garda de Fier. Spre Învierea României* (Buenos Aires, 1951), p. 147.

²⁷ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1: p. 77.

²⁸ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1: p. 186.

The Bucharest slaughterhouse was the site of the most atrocious tortures. On the last day of the rebellion, fifteen Jews were driven from the *Prefectura* to the slaughterhouse, where all of them were tortured and/or shot to death. Antonescu appointed a military prosecutor to investigate the events. He reported that he recognized three of his acquaintances among the “professionally tortured” bodies (lawyer Millo Beiler and the Rauch brothers). He added, “The bodies of the dead were hanged on the hooks used by slaughterers.”²⁹ Mihai Antonescu’s secretary confirmed the military prosecutor’s description and added that some of the victims were hooked up while still alive, to allow the torturers to “chop up” their bodies.³⁰

Evidence indicates that the CML actively participated in the pogrom—torturing, killing, and looting. The “Engineer G. Clime” CML headquarters was a particularly frightening torture center. There, CML teams tortured hundreds and shot dozens of men and women.³¹ Also, members of the CML selected ninety Jews of the two hundred who had been tortured in the CML torture centers and drove them in trucks to the Jilava forest. After leaving the trucks, these Jews were shot from a two-foot distance.³² Eighty-six naked bodies were found lying in the snow-covered forest, and the mouths of those with gold teeth were horribly mutilated.³³ Rabbi Tzvi Gutman, who was shot twice, was among the few who did not die in this massacre.³⁴ His two sons were killed. In all, 125 Jews were killed during the Bucharest pogrom.³⁵ The Bucharest pogrom also introduced the chapter of mass abuse of Jewish women, who were sometimes raped in the presence of their families.³⁶

In addition to the slaughter, there were also severe Legionary attacks on synagogues during the Bucharest pogrom. The assault began in the afternoon of January 21, climaxed during that evening, and continued the next day. This was a predictable turn of events because, since its establishment in 1927, Iron Guard rallies typically ended in acts of vandalism directed against synagogues. The Legionnaires attacked all synagogues at the same time, burning Torah scrolls, pillaging religious objects, money, furniture and valuables, and vandalizing the interior of the synagogues. In some instances, the Legionnaires began their attacks during the prayer, which happened at the Coral Temple (those who were present at the time were taken to Jilava and killed). In the end, the perpetrators set the synagogue on fire,

²⁹ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 72, pp. 195-197; *Jurnalul de dimineata*, no. 57, January 21, 1945.

³⁰ E. Barbul, *Memorial Antonescu, Le troisieme homme de l’Axe* (Paris, 1950), vol. 1: p. 106.

³¹ Memo of the Federation, March 8, 1941.

³² Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 72, pp. 195-197; *Jurnalul de dimineata*, no. 57, January 21, 1945.

³³ Memo of the Federation, March 8, 1941, p. 297.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 298-304.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 291. The list of victims can be found in the *Revista Cultului Mozaic*, no. 592.

³⁶ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 72, p. 197

and two burnt entirely to the ground. One of these was the Cahal Grande Synagogue, one of the most beautiful in Europe. When fire brigades—alarmed that the fire might reach adjoining buildings—came to put it out, they were prevented from doing so by the Legionnaires overseeing the scene.³⁷ Antonescu’s military prosecutor who investigated the events gave a graphic description of what he saw: “The Spanish Temple seemed like a giant torch that lugubriously lit the capital’s sky. The Legionnaires performed a devilish dance next to the fire while singing ‘The Aria of Legionnaire Youth’ and some were kicking three naked women into the fire. The wretched victims’ shrieks of despair tore through the sky.”³⁸

Finally, the Legionnaires, their affiliated organizations, and regular mobs all participated in destroying and pillaging Jewish commercial and private property during the pogrom. Some homes were burned down or completely demolished. In total, 1,274 buildings—commercial and residential—were destroyed.³⁹ The Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania evaluated the damage to be worth 383 million lei (this sum also includes the damage to synagogues).⁴⁰ After the Legionary rebellion was put down, the army found 200 trucks loaded with jewels and cash.⁴¹

The Political and Ideological Foundations of the Antonescu Regime, February-June 1941

The Antonescu regime arose against the backdrop of tumultuous political and social developments in Romania during the 1930s. “The national-totalitarian regime, the regime of national and social restoration,” as Antonescu described it, was an attempt to realize nationalist ideas and demands, which preceded the 1940 crisis, when Romania was thrown into turmoil after being forced to cede parts of its territory to its neighbors.⁴² However, even as this crisis precipitated Antonescu’s rise to power, his regime owed its existence to Nazi rule in Eastern Europe.

The Antonescu regime, which was rife with ideological contradictions and was considerably different from other fascist regimes in Europe, remains difficult to classify. It was a fascist regime that dissolved the Parliament, joined the Axis powers, enacted

³⁷ Memo of the Federation (March 8, 1941), p. 304.

³⁸ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 72, p. 197.

³⁹ The list of burned buildings can be found in *Cartea neagră*, pp. 243-244.

⁴⁰ Memo of the Federation to Antonescu (April 1, 1941), p. 339.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

⁴² Letter dated June 23, 1941, from Antonescu to leaders of the opposition, Bucharest State Archive; I.C. Dragan, ed., *Antonescu, Maresalul Romaniei si razboaiele de reintregire* (Venice, 1988), vol. 2: p. 213. (henceforth: Dragan)

antisemitic and racial legislation, and adopted the “Final Solution” in parts of its territory. At the same time, however, Antonescu brutally crushed the Romanian Legionary movement and denounced their terrorist methods. Moreover, some of Romania’s antisemitic laws, including the “Organic Law,” which was the basis for Antonescu’s antisemitic legislation, were in force before Antonescu assumed power. And, the regime did succeed in sparing half of the Jews under its rule during the Holocaust.

The political and ideological foundations of Antonescu’s regime were established earlier by prominent Romanian intellectuals, extremist right wing and traditional antisemitic movements, nationalist politicians who opposed democracy in Romania, and nationalist organizations and political parties that arose in the 1930s under King Carol II. Even prior to these developments, the Romanian system of parliamentary democracy had been destabilized and its principles challenged from various quarters. Antonescu did not redefine the goals of Romanian nationalism; rather, he sought to achieve them. Thus, it appears that the political philosophy of the new regime, its methods of rule, and its ideological-intellectual matrix were distinctly Romanian and not imported from Germany; and they were inextricably bound with the local hatred of Jews.

Likewise, the underlying principles of Antonescu’s “ethnocratic state” were conceived earlier—in 1932 by Nichifor Crainic, the veteran Christian-nationalist and antisemitic combatant who would serve for a brief spell as Antonescu’s minister of propaganda, and by Octavian Goga, leader of the National Christian Party with A.C. Cuza.⁴³ Crainic insisted that his program was an elaboration of the Romanian nationalism formulated as early as 1909 by one of Romania’s outstanding intellectuals, Nicolae Iorga: “Romania for Romanians, all Romanians, and only Romanians.” The cosmopolitan, multi-cultural foundation of the democratic state, Crainic pointed out, “cannot create a nation-state.” Crainic’s concept of an ethnocratic state was also based on the fundamental principle that “the Jews pose a permanent threat to every nation-state.”⁴⁴ His call for the nationalization of Jewish property as well as other “practical” ideas, were translated into antisemitic statutes under Antonescu and served as benchmarks for Antonescu’s policies. The core of the Romanian rendition of fascism, as reflected in Antonescu’s regime without the Legionnaires, consisted not only of antisemitism, but also the rejection of fundamental Western

⁴³ See Goga’s speech and political program, *Timpul*, January 2, 1938.

⁴⁴ Nichifor Crainic, *Programul Statului Etnocratic*, *Colectia Nationalista* (Bucharest: Colectia Nationalista, 1938), pp. 3-5, p. 12.

philosophies: liberalism, tolerance, democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of organization, open elections and civil rights.

After the Legionary rebellion was put down, the Antonescu regime considered itself to be the successor of the political, cultural, and spiritual ideas of the antisemitic nationalism of the Goga government. In short, the Antonescu regime adopted the objectives of this Romanian fascist ideology rather than drawing upon the principles of National Socialism. Antonescu's regime without the Legionnaires did not negate the antisemitic legacy of the Legionary movement and did not cease the state onslaught on the Judaic faith and values or on humanist values. Rather than negating the antisemitic legacy of the Legionary movement, the Antonescu regime made it clear that it would continue the antisemitic policies of the National Legionary government.⁴⁵ An antisemitic journal even warned the Jews who felt relieved after the repression of the Legionary rebellion to stop deluding themselves, because the repression was not ordered by Antonescu "to soothe the Jewish community."⁴⁶

The nature, timing and span of Antonescu's policies vis-à-vis the Jews depended solely on his own initiatives. After the repression of the Legionary uprising and at the very beginning of his term as sole Leader (*Conducator*)—before he accepted Hitler's arguments about the necessity of the Final Solution—Antonescu outlined the blueprints of his policies vis-à-vis the Jews in the Old Regat and southeastern Transylvania. The basic principles of these policies were valid until the beginning of the war against the Soviet Union and were published in the press, which advocated a radical solution to the "Jewish issue" inspired by the tenets of "radical nationalism," and threatened that any other approach should be considered a betrayal of Romanianism.⁴⁷ The main components of this policy as it was implemented during the following months were: continuing Romanianization using state-sanctioned means (legislation, trials, expropriations) rather than terror; the gradual elimination of Jews from the national economy (based on his assumption that Jews had great economic power, which led to undue influence in other realms); and the integration of anti-Jewish repression in the regime's official plans, designed to lead to such aspects of "national rejuvenation" as the creation of an (ethnic) Romanian commercial class and of an (ethnic) Romanian-controlled economy. At the beginning of his term Antonescu adopted a cautious attitude:

⁴⁵ See Crainic's statement to the press: *Timpul*, January 4, 1941.

⁴⁶ *Porunca Vremii*, March 7, 1941.

⁴⁷ *Timpul*, February 20, 1941.

I will solve the Jewish problem simultaneously with my reorganization of the state by gradually replacing Jews in the national economy with Romanian public servants. The Legionnaires will have priority and time to prepare for public service. Jewish property shall be largely nationalized in exchange for indemnities. The Jews who entered Romania after 1913 shall be removed as soon as this becomes possible, even though they have since acquired citizenship. Jews will be allowed to live, yet they will not be allowed to capitalize on the resources of this country. Romanians must benefit first. For the rest, this will be possible only if opportunities remain.”⁴⁸

Like the 1937 Goga government, Antonescu also waged a symbolic war against Judaism, which the regime, the press, and some Romanian Orthodox Church clergy portrayed as satanic, deviant, and anti-Christian. Additionally, Jews were directly blamed for causing the regime’s domestic difficulties ensuring the general welfare of the citizenry.⁴⁹

The Antonescu regime was not “revolutionary” in terms its intellectual proponents or the composition of the civil service. Basically, with few exceptions, the civil servants of past regimes of all political stripes (including high-ranking civil servants, such as ministers), the professional class, middle class, and academics showed growing support for the regime. Motivated by their fear that the Romanian economy would otherwise fall into Nazi hands, even Liberal Party members joined in this effort (Antonescu appointed a Liberal Party member as minister of the economy). This widespread collaboration of mainstream Romanian politicians and intellectuals does not, however, mean that all Romanians identified with the antisemitism of the Antonescu regime. The antisemitic press indicated the existence of several “pockets of intellectual resistance” in the Romanian majority which rejected the regime’s onslaught against the Jews.⁵⁰

Ultimately, Antonescu’s regime was not the embodiment of the most intense Romanian extremist antisemitism and nationalism. During the Second World War, there were even more extremist antisemitic political groups, such as the Legionnaires, who were ready to act on their hatred and exterminate the Jews. Unlike them, Antonescu was also guided by strategic considerations, at least in regard to the Jews in the Regat and southern Transylvania, since he understood their usefulness to Romania. Moreover, even his antisemitic legislation

⁴⁸ *Timpul*, September 30, 1940.

⁴⁹ Filderman, Draft of Memoirs, Yad Vashem Archive, P-6/58, p. 151.

⁵⁰ *Invierea*, April 27, 1941.

excluded specific categories of Jews, such as decorated and reenlisted soldiers, considered to have “made a real contribution” to the welfare of Romania.

Forced Labor under the Antonescu Regime

The Antonescu regime continued the forced labor campaign started under the National Legionary State. Jews were ordered to pay the so-called military taxes—officially levied because Jews were exempt from mandatory army service—and to do community work under army supervision.⁵¹ In total, 84,042 Jews, aged eighteen to fifty, were registered to supply free labor.⁵² Some Jews were ordered to work in their own towns, which was usually an opportunity for public humiliation, while others had to work in labor camps on construction sites and in the fields, under military jurisdiction. Jewish labor detachments were used to build an extra set of railway tracks between such far-away towns as Bucharest and Craiova, Bucharest and Urziceni, or Bumbesti-Livezeni-Petrosani.

Life and work conditions in these camps were horrendous.⁵³ Medical assistance was scarce and hygiene precarious. The sick and the crippled were sometimes forced to work and, as the “mobilization” was done in haste and with little bureaucratic organization, many workers had to wear their summer clothes until December 1941, when labor camps were temporarily closed. In some camps, Jews had to buy their own tools and pay for their own food, and livable accommodation was provided only when guards and administrators were bribed. When work needed to be done around villages, rural notables (priests, teachers) usually expressed fear that Jews would be placed in peasant homes, concerned as they were about the “destructive” influence Jews might have on peasants. Explicit orders were given that accommodation for Jewish workers could not be provided within a three-kilometer radius around Romanian villages.

In exchange for an official ransom, Jews declared “useful” to the economy were exempted from forced labor and allowed to have jobs. As the decision to grant “useful” status to a Jew was an important source of corruption, top military and civilian leadership vied for control of the “revision process”—the review of the situation of working Jews, which began in March 1942. The civilian bureaucracy, led by Radu Lecca who headed the government department charged with “solving the Jewish issue,” temporarily won the power struggle over the military, which nevertheless continued to be involved. This was, in fact, a state-

⁵¹ Instructions on the Decree 3984 of December 5, 1940, *Monitorul Oficial* 113 (July 14, 1941), pp. 5-8.

⁵² Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 4: no. 21, p. 251.

⁵³ For an extended description see Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 3; Carp, vol. 1: pp. 190-197.

sanctioned mechanism of extortion that enriched army and civilian bureaucrats who were empowered to establish the amount of the ransom. It resulted in the strengthening of the culture of bribery in the Romanian administrative and military systems, which contrasted violently with the tough stance of the regime.⁵⁴ It was also decided that the ones unable to work or pay a high ransom were to be deported.⁵⁵ In June 1942, the Chief of Staff ordered that Jewish workers who committed certain “breaches of work and discipline” (lack of diligence, failure to notify changes of address, sexual relations with ethnic Romanian women) were to be deported to Transnistria along with their families.⁵⁶ Those Jews in labor detachments often met with severe punishment, such as whipping and clubbing.

In the end, the essence of the “revision” was that the labor camp system was considered to be damaging to the economy. So, beginning in 1942, labor detachments became the preferred system. However, this reorganization of the Jewish compulsory labor system was also an abysmal failure, even according to a report of the Chief of Staff issued in November 1943, which concluded that the Romanian economy could not do without the skills of the Jewish population.⁵⁷ This episode in the life of Romanian Jewry left deep social scars. Many careers were ruined, the education of Jewish youth was interrupted, old Jewish authority structures and practices broke down, and the corruption of the exemption system undermined upright social mores. Many became very sick or crippled and dozens, maybe hundreds, perished.

The Eviction of Jews from Small Towns and Villages during the Antonescu Regime

Ion Antonescu continued what had begun under the National Legionary State: the evacuation of Jews from villages and small towns. On June 18, 1941, he ordered these Jews to be moved to county (*judet*) capitals and boroughs. Some of these capitals had only a meager Jewish presence, so the rural Jews were crowded into warehouses, abandoned buildings, synagogues, Jewish community buildings, and other precarious forms of

⁵⁴ For a description of the scope and form of corruption practices in the exemption system see the memoirs of Radu Lecca himself: Radu Lecca, *Eu i-am salvat pe evreii din Romania* (I Saved Romanian Jews) (Bucharest: Roza Vanturilor), pp. 181-181.

⁵⁵ Government press release, *Universul*, November 24, 1941.

⁵⁶ Instructiuni generale ala M.St.M., no. 55500, June 27, 1942; Ancel. *Documents*, vol. 4: no. 21, pp. 32-44.

⁵⁷ Note of Antonescu's Military Cabinet, November 17, 1943, Romanian State Archives in Bucharest, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Military Cabinet, file 4/1943, p. 167.

accommodation. The local Jewish communities could not cope with the needs of the evacuated rural Jews, whose household belongings had been confiscated upon deportation.⁵⁸

Male Jews, eighteen to sixty years old and living in the area between the Siret and Prut Rivers, were ordered to be interned in the Targu Jiu camp in southern Romania. The Jews evacuated from Dorohoi and southern Bukovina as well as the survivors of the Iasi death train were interned in other southern Romanian camps in the counties of Romanati, Dolj, Vlasca, and Călărași-Ialomita. Many Jews were declared hostages by order of Antonescu himself.⁵⁹ Antonescu ordered his chief of staff to set up several temporary labor camps in southern Romania.⁶⁰ As one intelligence officer later stated, this was part of a larger strategy to remove Moldavian Jews through “deportation and extermination.”⁶¹ The property of the evacuated Jews was nationalized, and some of it was simply looted by locals. During the evacuation, villagers often openly expressed their joy at the Jews’ departure and insulted, humiliated, or attacked them. On several occasions the deportation trains stopped in the same train stations as military trains on the way to the front, and many soldiers used the opportunity to show their approval of the deportation or to use violence against the Jews.

By July 31, 1941, the number of evacuees had reached 40,000 people.⁶² Four hundred forty-one villages and small towns were thus cleansed.⁶³ Jews were forced to wear a distinctive patch beginning in July/August, though Antonescu repealed the measure on September 9, 1941, after Filderman’s protests. The revocation, however, did not apply to Jews from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria, for whom a special degree was issued.⁶⁴ The obligation to wear the distinctive badge revealed Romanians’ antisemitism, as numerous ordinary people displayed excessive zeal in making sure their Jewish compatriots wore their patches, and wore them properly.⁶⁵ As the deportations had a grave impact on the economic life of many villages and towns, Antonescu grew concerned by September 1941 and took steps to divide Jews into two categories: “useful” and “useless” to the economy. This represented his first step away from complete Romanianization: “There are certain Jews who

⁵⁸ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 210, p. 497.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 166, pp. 451-452.

⁶⁰ Summary of the government session of July 22, 1941, Archive of the Ministry of Interior, file 40010, vol. 11: p. 27.

⁶¹ Testimony of Col. Traian Borcescu, chief of the SSI counterespionage division, November 12, 1945, *ibid.*, file 108233, vol 24: p. 122 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (henceforth: USHMM), RG 25.004M, microfilm 47).

⁶² Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 197, p. 492.

⁶³ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 3: no. 368, pp. 598-611.

⁶⁴ Decree no. 3303/1941 of the General Chief of Staff, August 8, 1941, NDM, Fourth Army Collection, file 79, p. 138.

⁶⁵ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 3: no. 62, p. 115.

we cannot replace....We forced between 50,000 and 60,000 Jews out of villages and small towns, and we moved them into cities where they are now a burden to the Jewish communities there, since they have to feed them.”⁶⁶

The Iasi Pogrom: The First Stage of the Physical Destruction of Romanian Jewry

The evacuation of Jews from Iasi—where 45,000 Jews were living on June 29, 1941—was part of a plan to eliminate the Jewish presence in Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Moldavia.⁶⁷ “Cleansing the land” meant the immediate liquidation of all Jews in the countryside, the incarceration in ghettos of Jews found in urban centers, and the detention of all persons suspected of being Communist Party activists. It was the Romanian equivalent of the Final Solution. The pogrom against the Jews of Iasi was carried out under express orders from Ion Antonescu that the city be cleansed of all Jews and that any Jew who opened fire on Romanian or German soldiers should be eliminated without mercy. Section Two of the General Headquarters of the Romanian army and the Special Intelligence Service (SSI) laid the groundwork for the Iasi pogrom and supplied the pretext for punishing the city’s Jewish population, while German army units stationed in the city assisted the Romanian authorities.

On June 27, 1941, Ion Antonescu issued the formal order to evacuate Jews from the city via telephone directly to Col. Constantin Lupu, commander of the Iasi garrison. Lupu was instructed to take steps to “cleanse Iasi of its Jewish population.”⁶⁸ On the night of June 28/29, as army, police, and gendarmerie units were launching the arrests and executions, Antonescu telephoned again to reiterate the evacuation order. Lupu made careful note of his mission:

1. Issue a notice signed by you in your capacity as military commander of the city of Iasi, based on the existing government orders, adding: “In light of the state of war...if anyone opens fire from a building, the house is to be surrounded by soldiers and all its inhabitants arrested, with the exception of children. Following a brief interrogation, the guilty parties are to be executed. A similar punishment is to be implemented against those who hide individuals who have committed the above offenses.”

⁶⁶ Minutes of the September 9, 1941, government session, NDM, file 40010, vol. 77, p. 52.

⁶⁷ Telephone Communication from prefect of Iasi, Captaru, to Ministry of Interior in Bucharest, June 29, 1941. Ministry of Interior Archives, file 40010, vol. 89, p. 478; a copy can be found in USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 36.

⁶⁸ Lupu to Gen. Antonescu, July 25, 1941, Romanian State Archives, fond Presidency of the Council of Ministers, file 247/41, file 10.

2. The evacuation of the Jewish population from Iasi is essential, and shall be carried out in full, including women and children. The evacuation shall be implemented *pachete pachete* [batch by batch], first to Roman and later to Targu-Jiu. For this reason, you are to arrange the matter with the Ministry of Interior and the county prefecture. Suitable preparations must be made.⁶⁹

Before these orders were issued, an understanding was reached with the commander of the German army corps (the *Wehrmacht*) in Iasi about the methods to be employed against the Jews. But Colonel Lupu was unable to control the situation and faithfully carry out Antonescu's order, and was therefore stripped of his post on July 2, 1941. During his court-martial by the Fourth Army Corps in January 1942, the order he had received from the Marshal and his deputy, Mihai Antonescu, came to light.

The expulsion of the Jews from Moldavia was part of a larger plan, influenced by the belief of Ion and Mihai Antonescu in the German army's ultimate victory, which would also encompass the physical extermination of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina.⁷⁰ The first step of this plan, according to Ion Antonescu's order to General Steflea, then chief of the army general staff, was to "identify all Yids, communist agents, or their sympathizers, by county [in Moldavia]" so that the Ministry of Interior could track them, restrict their freedom of movement, and ultimately dispose of them when and how Ion Antonescu chose.⁷¹ The second step was to evacuate Jews from all villages in Moldavia, and to intern some of them in the Targu-Jiu camp in southern Romania.⁷² The final step was to provide grounds for these actions by transforming Iasi's Jews into potential collaborators with "the Soviet enemy," thereby justifying retaliatory action against rebels who had not yet rebelled. To achieve this, Antonescu issued a special order, which was relayed by the security police (*Siguranta*) to police headquarters in Iasi on June 27, 1941: "Since Siguranta headquarters has become

⁶⁹ "Telephone order," June 28/29, 11:00 p.m. Investigative file in matter of Col. (res.) Constantin Lupu, 1941, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233: vol. 28, p. 183; copy in USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 48.

⁷⁰ Testimony of Col. Traian Borcescu, November 12, 1945. Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233, vol. 24: p. 122; copy in USHMM, roll 47. Ion Antonescu explicitly referred to this unwritten plan in the directives he sent from the front to Mihai Antonescu on September 5, 1941; see I. Antonescu to M. Antonescu, September 5, 1941, Archives of Office of Prime Minister, file 167/1941, pp. 64-65.

⁷¹ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1: no. 1, p. 39.

⁷² Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 136, pp. 414-415.

aware that certain Jews have hidden arms and ammunition, we hereby request that you conduct thorough and meticulous searches in the apartments of the Jewish population....”⁷³

On the basis of Antonescu’s order to General Steflea, directives were issued to the Ministry of Interior, which commanded the gendarmerie and police, and the Ministry of Propaganda, headed by Mihai Antonescu. These directives were then translated into an actual plan of operation by military command structures (Military Cabinet and Section Two) and the SSI in coordination with the two ministries. Antonescu’s second order to Colonel Lupu to evacuate all 45,000 of the city’s Jews and his authorization to execute any Jew “who attacked the army,” in effect gave the gendarmerie and police *carte blanche* to torture and murder Jews and to evacuate thousands of them by rail to southern Romania.

The SSI, by order of Antonescu and the General Staff, established a special unit shortly after Antonescu’s meeting with Hitler on June 11, 1941. Operation Echelon No. 1 (*Esalonul I Operativ*)—also known as the Special Echelon—consisted of some 160 people, including auxiliary personnel, selected from the most talented, reliable, and daring members of the SSI. Their assignment was to “protect the home front from acts of espionage, sabotage, and terror.”⁷⁴ The Echelon left Bucharest for Moldavia on June 18, accompanied by a Romanian-speaking officer from the Intelligence Service of the German army, Major Hermann Stransky, who served as liaison between the Abwehr and the SSI.

On June 26, antisemitic agitation in the local press suddenly intensified. At the same time, the police were flooded with reports from Romanians claiming that Jews were signalling enemy aircraft, hiding paratrooper agents, holding suspicious gatherings, and the like. The emergence of this psychosis was no accident; it was contrived by the Section Two and the Special Echelon. The scheme behind the pogrom was explained in advance to the 14th Division headquarters and the commanders of the police and gendarmerie.⁷⁵ On June 26, against a backdrop of threats issued in the local press by General Stavrescu, commander of the 14th Division, Romanian soldiers (many of whom were inebriated) began to break into Jewish flats near their camps on the outskirts of the city.⁷⁶ Although some who joined in the

⁷³ Order to Iasi police headquarters from Siguranta, June 27, 1941, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 40010, vol. 89: p. 283; copy located in: USHMM, 25.004M, roll 36.

⁷⁴ Testimony of Cristescu, July 4, 1947, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233, vol. 54: p. 226; Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 2: no. 3, pp. 42-43. It is plausible that Einsatzgruppe D served as a model for this special unit; for more information on the temporary deployment of Einsatzgruppe D on Romanian territory in Bessarabia, see: Jean Ancel, “The Jassy [Iasi] Syndrome (I),” *Romanian Jewish Studies* 1:1 (Spring 1987): pp. 36-38.

⁷⁵ Affidavit of Col. Captaru, May 1946, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233, vol. 36: p. 46; copy in USHMM, RG 25.004M roll 43.

⁷⁶ Excerpt of Iasi pogrom trial, June 26, 1946, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233, vol. 1: section 2, p. 11; copy in USHMM, RG 25.004M roll 47.

rioting or looting were former Legionnaires and their followers as well as supporters of Cuza's antisemitic movement, most were civilians who armed themselves or were given weapons in advance of the anti-Jewish actions.

Other signs of impending violence included the mobilization of young Jews to dig huge ditches in the Jewish cemetery about a week before the pogrom⁷⁷ and the marking with crucifixes of "houses inhabited by Christians."⁷⁸ The next stage of preparation began on June 27, when authorities officially accused the Jews of responsibility for Soviet bombings. All heads of administration in Iasi convened at the palace of the prefect—ostensibly to reach decisions regarding law and order—to deploy the forces that were to participate in the pogrom. False attacks on soldiers were then organized to rouse the soldiers' anger and create the impression of a Jewish uprising and the need for strict measures against it. Jewish "guilt" was thus already a *fait accompli*. At 9:00 p.m. on June 28, an air alert was sounded and several German aircraft flew over the city, one of them signaling with a blue flare. Shots were immediately heard throughout the city, chiefly from the main streets where army units marched their way to the front.⁷⁹ The numerous shots fired wherever there were soldiers posted in full battle dress created the impression of a great battle, and Romanian military men accompanied by armed civilians began their attack on wealthy Jews residing in the center city where the false shootings had taken place.⁸⁰

Pillaging, rape, and murder of Jews began in the outskirts of Iasi on the night of June 28/29. Groups of thugs broke into their homes and terrorized them. The survivors were taken to police headquarters (the Chestura). Organizers of the pogrom, such as General Stavrescu, reported that the "Judeo-communists" and Soviet pilots, whose planes had been shot down, had opened fire on the Romanian and German soldiers. In response, Romanian troops and gendarmes "surrounded the buildings from which the shots had been fired, along with entire neighborhoods, and evacuated those arrested—men, women and children—to police headquarters. The guilty were also executed on the spot by the German/Romanian forces that captured them."⁸¹ Romanian officials who were either unaware of the plan or knew only part of it, recounted the start of the pogrom differently. For example, Nicolae Captaru, prefect of

⁷⁷ Testimony of Natan Goldstein, n.d. [August 1945], Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233, vol. 31: part 1, p. 62; copy located in: USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 41; Testimony of Gheorghe Leahu, October 29, 1945, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233, vol. 26; copy in: USHMM, roll 48.

⁷⁸ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 2: no. 44, p. 110.

⁷⁹ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 2: no. 43, p. 108.

⁸⁰ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: no. 9, p. 35.

⁸¹ Report on pogrom, June 30, 1941, by Stavrescu to Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 40010, vol. 89: pp. 475-476; copy located in: *Cartea neagră*, vol. 2: no. 39, p. 93.

the county of Iasi, who had no knowledge of the plan, reported to the Ministry of Interior: “There are those who believe that the shots were the act of organized individuals seeking to cause panic among the army units and civilian population....According to the findings gathered thus far, it has been shown that certain individuals are attempting to place the blame on the Jews of the city with the aim of inciting the Romanian army, the German army, and also the Christian population against the Jews in order to provoke the mass murder of Jews.”⁸²

Those participating in the manhunt launched on the night of June 28/29 were, first and foremost, the Iasi police, backed by the Bessarabia police and gendarmerie units.⁸³ Other participants were army soldiers, young people armed by SSI agents, and mobs who robbed and killed, knowing they would not have to account for their actions. The implementation of the Iasi pogrom consisted of five basic elements: (1) spreading rumors that Jews had shot at the army; (2) warning the Romanian residents of what was about to take place; (3) fostering popular collaboration with the security forces; (4) marking Christian and Jewish homes; and finally (5) inciting rioters to murder, rape, and rob.⁸⁴ Similar methods were used in the pogrom plotted and carried out by Romanian units in Dorohoi one year earlier in July 1940.

In addition to informing on Jews, directing soldiers to Jewish homes and refuges, and even breaking into homes themselves, some Romanian residents of Iasi also took part in the arrests and humiliation forced upon the convoys of Jews on their way to the Chestura. The perpetrators included neighbors of Jews, known and lesser-known supporters of antisemitic movements, students, poorly-paid, low-level officials, railway workers, craftsmen frustrated by Jewish competition, “white-collar” workers, retirees and military veterans. The extent to which they enlisted in the cause of “thinning” Iasi’s Jewish population—as the pogrom was described at a Cabinet meeting in Bucharest⁸⁵—is a topic in and of itself, and worthy of separate study. War criminals among Romanians numbered in the hundreds, and not all of them were located and identified after the war.⁸⁶

⁸² Report of Captaru to Interior Minister, June 29, 1941, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 40010, vol. 89: p. 482.

⁸³ 360 policemen gathered in Iasi to be deployed in Chişinău and in other Bessarabian cities after the liberation of the province. Most of them had served in Bessarabia before 1940.

⁸⁴ Ancel, “Jassy Syndrome,” pp. 43-46.

⁸⁵ Protocol from November 13, 1941, Cabinet meeting, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 40010, vol. 78: p. 13; copy located in: USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 35.

⁸⁶ List of 286 civilian participants in Iasi pogrom, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233, vol. 40: pp. 115-127; copy located in: USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 43. The does not include army personnel, gendarmes, and ordinary police, nor does it identify all the criminals.

The idea of the pogrom crystallized in the headquarters of the General Staff and its secret branch, Section Two, and in the SSI. These offices collaborated with the Wehrmacht in Romania and the headquarters of the German 30th Army Corps in Iasi. During the course of the pogrom, Romanian authorities lost control of events, and the city of Iasi became a huge area in which the soldiers of both armies, the gendarmes, and Romanian policemen and civilians—organized and unorganized—hunted down Jews, robbed them, and killed them. This temporary loss of control and the fear of Antonescu’s reaction to it led the various branches of the Romanian regime to fabricate excuses for their ineffectiveness in the final hours of the mayhem, casting the blame on each other and, together, on the Germans.⁸⁷

The German soldiers in Iasi acted on the basis of an understanding with the Romanian army.⁸⁸ They were divided into cells and sent out to arrest Jews, assigned to escort convoys, and stationed at the entrance to the Chestura. They, too, broke into homes—either with Romanian soldiers or alone—and tormented Jews there and during the forced march to Chestura. They shot into crowds of Jews and committed the same acts as their Romanian counterparts. In addition, they photographed the pogrom, even going so far as to stage scenes. It is important to note here that the units of Einsatzgruppe D, although they operated in territories reclaimed by Romania after June 22, 1941, did not operate in Romania itself—and thus did not participate in the Iasi pogrom—nor did any other SS unit.⁸⁹

Antonescu’s administration did not allow the SS or Gestapo to operate on Romanian territory after the Legionnaires’ revolt. The representatives of Himmler and of the Foreign Department of the Nazi Party were forced to leave Romania in April 1941; they were joined, at Antonescu’s request, by the known Gestapo agents in Romania.⁹⁰

The Iasi Death Trains

On June 29, 1941, Mihai Antonescu ordered the deportation of all Jews from Iasi, including women and children.⁹¹ The surviving Jews were taken to the railway station and

⁸⁷ See USHMM, RG 25.004M, file 108233.

⁸⁸ Affidavit of Capt. Ioan Mihail, January 25, 1942, in Lupu file, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 108233, vol. 29: p. 221; copy in USHMM, roll 48. Mihail served as interpreter during conversation with General Salmuth.

⁸⁹ This conclusion is based on an examination of the reports of the Einsatzgruppe. See Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5, and Helmut Krausnick and Hans Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, 1938-1942* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1981), pp. 195-200. See also: Ancel, “Jassy Syndrome.”

⁹⁰ Letter from Himmler’s office to Ribbentrop, April 2, 1941, *DGFP*, vol. 7: no. 258, pp. 443-444.

⁹¹ Major Plasnila to Military Court, September 13, 1941, Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, *Arhiva Operativa*, file 108.233, p. 344.

were beaten, robbed, and humiliated along the way.⁹² Moreover, the Iasi sidewalks were piled with dead bodies, and the deportees had to walk over some of them along the street leading to the station.⁹³ Once they were at the station, the deportees were forced to lie face-down on the platform and in the square in front of the station. Romanian travelers stepped on them as Romanian and German soldiers yelled that anyone raising his or her head would be shot.⁹⁴ Finally, Jews were forced into freight train cars under a volley of blows, bayonet cuts, clubbings and insults. Many railway workers joined the pandemonium, hitting the deportees with their hammers.

The intention of extermination was clear from the very beginning. As it was later established in the Iasi trials, the train cars in which Jews were forced had been used for the transport of carbide and therefore emitted a stifling odor. In addition, although no car could accommodate more than forty people, between 120 and 150 Jews—many of them wounded—were forcibly crammed inside. After the doors were safely locked behind them, all windows and cracks were sealed.⁹⁵ “Because of the summer heat and the lack of air, people would first go mad and then perish,” according to a survivor.⁹⁶ The deportation train would ride on the same route several times.

The second train to leave Iasi for Podu Iloaiei was even more crowded (about 2,000 Jews were crammed into twenty cars). The last car contained the bodies of eighty Jews who had been shot, stabbed, or beaten.⁹⁷ In the summer heat, those crammed inside had to wait for two hours until departure. “During the night,” one survivor recounted, “some of us went mad and started to yell, bite, and jostle violently; you had to fight them, as they could take your life; in the morning, many of us were dead and the bodies were left inside; they refused to give water even to our crying children, whom we were holding above our heads.”⁹⁸ When the doors of the train were opened, the surviving few heard the guards calling on them to throw out the dead (because of the stench, they dared not come too close. As it happened on a holiday, peasants from neighboring villages were brought to see “the communists who shot at

⁹² Diary of Hirsch Zielle submitted to the People’s Court, 1944, Arhiva Ministerului de Interne, vol. 37, p. 25; USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 3.

⁹³ Testimony of Jean Haimovici, 1945, Arhiva Ministerului de Interne, vol. 37, p. 49; USHMM, RG 25.004M roll 48.

⁹⁴ Testimony of Manase Iscovici, September 7, 1944, *ibid.*, vol. 42, p. 403; USHMM, *ibid.*, roll 43.

⁹⁵ Bucharest Tribunal Indictment, June 26, 1948, Archives of the Ministry of Interior, vol. 1, p. 59; USHMM, RG25.004M, roll 47.

⁹⁶ Testimony of Iancu Florea Ramniceanu, June 18, 1948, Archives of the Ministry of Interior, vol. 1, p. 699; USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 47.

⁹⁷ *Cartea neagră*, vol. 2: p. 33.

⁹⁸ Testimony of David Bandel, 1944, Archives of the Ministry of Interior, vol. 45, pp. 338-339; USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 47.

the Romanian army,” and some of the peasants yelled, “Kill them! What’s the point of giving them a free ride?”⁹⁹

In the death train that left Iasi for Calarasi, southern Romania, which carried perhaps as many as 5,000 Jews, only 1,011 reached their destination alive after seven days.¹⁰⁰ (The Romanian police counted 1,258 bodies, yet hundreds of dead were thrown out of the train on the way at Mirceasti, Roman, Sabaoani, and Inotesti.)¹⁰¹ The death train to Podu Iloaiei (15 kilometers from Iasi) had up to 2,700 Jews upon departure, of which only 700 disembarked alive. In the official account, Romanian authorities reported that 1,900 Jews boarded the train and “only” 1,194 died.¹⁰² In total, up to 14,850 Jews were killed during the Iasi pogrom. The Romanian SSI acknowledged that 13,266 Jews died,¹⁰³ whereas the figure advanced by the Jewish Community after carrying out its own census was 14,850.¹⁰⁴ In August 1942, the army labor recruiting service in Iasi reported that it could not find 13,868 Jews.¹⁰⁵

The Romanian Authorities and Solving the “Jewish Problem” in Bessarabia and Bukovina

“The special delegates of the Reich’s government and of Mr. Himmler,” as Mihai Antonescu described them, arrived in Bucharest in March 1941 to discuss the fate of Romanian Jewry. The delegation was comprised of several SS officers, a member of the Gestapo, Eichmann’s special envoy to Romania and the future attaché in charge of Jewish affairs at the German Legation. “They formally demanded,” Mihai Antonescu would later claim, “that the control and organization of the Jews in Romania be left exclusively to the Germans, as Germany was preparing an international solution to the Jewish question. I refused.”¹⁰⁶ But this was a lie; not only had Mihai Antonescu accepted, but he bragged in government meetings that he and the Conducator had consented. During their third meeting on June 12, 1941, in Munich, Hitler revealed the “Guidelines for the Treatment of the Eastern Jews,” (*Richtlinien zur Behandlung der Ostjuden*) to Antonescu. The Romanian leader later

⁹⁹ Testimony of Israel Schleier, 1945, *ibid.*, vol. 24: p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ Inventory, July 7, 1941, Arhiva Ministerului de Interne, file 108233, vol. 37: p. 281.

¹⁰¹ Telephone Report no. 6125, July 1, 1941, *ibid.*, file 40010, vol. 89 (page no. illegible); Report of Triandaf, July 1, 1941, *ibid.*, vol. 30: p. 217 (copy in USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 49).

¹⁰² Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 2: no. 64, p. 141.

¹⁰³ Report of SSI Iasi, July 23, 1943, Consiliul Securitatii Statului, Fond documentar, file 3041, p. 327; Cristian Trancota, *Eugen Cristescu, asul serviciilor secrete romanesti. Memorii* (Bucharest: Roza vanturilor, 1997), p. 119.

¹⁰⁴ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: no. 4, p. 49.

¹⁰⁵ Report of Georgescu to Romanian government, November 8, 1941, Romanian State Archives, fond Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Cabinet collection, file 86/1941, p. 251.

¹⁰⁶ M. Antonescu to Romanian legation in Ankara, March 14, 1944, Romanian Foreign Ministry Archives, “Ankara” file, vol. 1: pp. 108-109.

mentioned the document in an exchange of messages with the German Foreign Office,¹⁰⁷ and Mihai Antonescu noted that he had reached an understanding with Himmler's envoys regarding the "Jewish problem" in an August 5 government session. The agreements with the SS concerning the Jews in Bessarabia and Bukovina were acknowledged during talks between Mihai Antonescu and Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop at Hitler's Zhytomyr headquarters on September 23, 1942, when Ribbentrop asked Mihai Antonescu for continued Romanian cooperation to exterminate the Jews in the Old Kingdom and southern Transylvania. Mihai Antonescu agreed to deport the Jews of Romania and replied that in Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria an understanding had been reached with the SS for the execution of these measures.¹⁰⁸

The adoption of the Final Solution was apparent in the Conducator's rhetoric. On June 22, 1941, he boasted that he had "approached with courage" the Romanianization process,¹⁰⁹ disowned the Jews, and promoted cooperation with Germany "in keeping with the permanent interests of *our vital space* [emphasis added]."¹¹⁰ Anticipating Germany's victory, Romania's leaders informed the government (on June 17/18, 1941) of their plans for the Jewish population in the two provinces. The leadership left no doubt about the significance of the order to "cleanse the land." Mihai Antonescu's July 3, 1941, speech at the Ministry of Interior was distributed in limited-edition brochures entitled, "Guidelines and Instructions for the Liberation Administration." Guideline 10 revealed the regime's intentions regarding the Jews: "This is the...most favorable opportunity in our history...for cleansing our people of all those elements foreign to its soul, which have grown like weeds to darken its future."¹¹¹ He elaborated on this theme during the cabinet session of July 8, 1941:

At the risk of not being understood by traditionalists...I am all for the forced migration of the entire Jewish element of Bessarabia and Bukovina, which must be dumped across the border....You must be merciless to them....I don't know how many centuries will pass before the Romanian people meet again

¹⁰⁷ *DGFP*, vol. 13: no. 207, pp. 318-319.

¹⁰⁸ Note on Mihai Antonescu's conversation with Ribbentrop, September 23, 1942, in United Restitution Organization, *Dokumentensammlung*, Frankfurt/M, 1960, vol. 3: p. 578.

¹⁰⁹ Romanianization was the Romanian equivalent of Aryanization.

¹¹⁰ I. Antonescu to I. Maniu, June 22, 1941, in *Antonescu, Mareșalul României și războaiele de reîntregire* (Marshal Antonescu and the Recovery Wars), ed. J. C. Drăgan (Venice: Centrul European de Cercetari Istorice, 1988), vol. 2: no. 13, p. 197.

¹¹¹ M. Antonescu, "Pentru Basarabia și Bucovina, Îndrumări date administrației dezrobitoare" (For Bessarabia and Bukovina, Guidelines for the Liberation Administration) (Bucharest, 1941), pp. 60-61.

with such total liberty of action, such opportunity for ethnic cleansing and national revision...This is a time when we are masters of our land. Let us use it. If necessary, shoot your machine guns. I couldn't care less if history will recall us as barbarians...I take formal responsibility and tell you there is no law....So, no formalities, complete freedom.¹¹²

Policies and Implementation of Ethnic Cleansing in Bessarabia and Bukovina

The order to exterminate part of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and deport the rest was given by Ion Antonescu of his own accord under no German pressure. To carry out this task he chose the gendarmerie and the army, particularly the *pretorate*, the military body in charge with the temporary administration of a territory. Iosif Iacobici, the chief of the General Staff, ordered the commander of the General Staff's Second Section, Lt. Col. Alexandru Ionescu, to implement a plan "for the removal of the Judaic element from Bessarabian territory [...] by organizing teams to act in advance of the Romanian troops." Implementation began July 9. "The mission of these teams is to create in villages an unfavorable atmosphere toward the Judaic elements, thereby encouraging the population to...remove them on its own, by whatever means it finds most appropriate and suited to the circumstances. At the arrival of the Romanian troops, the feeling must already be in place and even acted upon."¹¹³ Sent by the General Staff, these teams indeed instigated Romanian peasants, as many Jewish survivors, astonished that old friends and neighbors had turned against them, later testified. The army received "special orders" via General Ilie Ștefleă, and its pretor, General Ion Topor, was in charge of their execution.¹¹⁴

The special orders were reiterated every time military or civil authorities avoided liquidating Jews for fear of the consequences or because they did not believe such orders existed. In Cetatea Albă, for example, Major Frigan of the local garrison requested written instructions to execute the Jews. The Third Army pretor, Colonel Marcel Petală, traveled to Cetatea Albă to inform Frigan of the provisions regarding the Jews in the ghetto. The next day, 3,500 were killed.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: no. 15, pp. 199-201.

¹¹³ "Plan for the removal of the Jewish element from the Bessarabian territory," NDM, Fourth Army Collection, roll 781, file 0145-0146, n.p.

¹¹⁴ For the Romanian army's enforcement of the "special orders," see Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la Istoria României, Problema evreiască* (Contributions to the History of Romania, the Jewish problem) (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001), vol. 1, part 2: pp. 119-125.

¹¹⁵ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: no. 15, p. 214.

The Romanian Army

The first troops to enter Bukovina were primarily combat units: a cavalry brigade as well as the 9th, 10th, and 16th elite infantry battalions (*Vanatori*), followed immediately by the Seventh Infantry Division under General Olimpiu Stavrat. The route these units followed was crucial to the fate of the Jews in northern Romania, where some of the largest Jewish settlements—Herta, Noua Sulita, Hotin and Lipcani—comprising thousands of inhabitants, were concentrated.¹¹⁶ The execution of the special orders was carried out by only a very small number of soldiers under Pretor Vartic's command. These actions were recorded by Dumitru Hatmanu, the pretor's secretary who accompanied the unit, and can thus be retold with great precision.¹¹⁷

The first killings took place at Siret (southern Bukovina), five kilometers from the new border with the Soviets. The Jews of the town were deported on foot to Dorneti, twelve kilometers away. Dozens of Jews who were not able to walk—the elderly and some crippled—remained behind with a few women to care of them. These Jews were driven to a valley not far from town, where the women were raped by several soldiers of the Seventh Division. The elderly were brought to Division headquarters and accused of “espionage and attacking the Romanian army.” That same day, all of them were shot at the bridge over the Prut in the presence of the inhabitants of Siret, who had been brought to the execution site.¹¹⁸

On July 3, in the Bukovinan village of Ciudei, 450 local Jews were shot.¹¹⁹ Later that day, two hundred Jews of Strojinet were gunned down in their homes. On July 4, nearly all Jews of the villages of Ropcea, Iordanesti, Patrauti, Panca, and Broscuti, which surrounded the town of Strojinet, were massacred with the active collaboration of local Romanians and Ukrainians.¹²⁰ The radius of murder was extended on July 5 to include thousands of Jews in the villages of Stanesti, Jadova Noua, Jadova Veche, Costesti, Hlinita, Budinet, and Cires as well as many of the surviving Jews of Herta, Vijnitsa and Rostochi-Vijnitsa.¹²¹ The slaughter

¹¹⁶ Crimes committed by Romanian troops who occupied Northern Bukovina as well as crimes at Siret are described in detail in “Charge Sheet against General Stavrat,” in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6 (henceforth: “Charge Sheet”). This information is confirmed by survivors' memoirs and numerous testimonies in the Yad Vashem Archives (henceforth: YVA), Collection 0-3. Another important source is Hugo Gold, ed., *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina: Ein Sammelwerk*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: Edition “Olamenu,” 1958).

¹¹⁷ “Charge Sheet,” p. 425.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* See also: Gold, vol. 2: pp. 105-108.

¹¹⁹ See Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: pp. 145-153. See also Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 29.

¹²⁰ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 30.

¹²¹ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: pp. 30-31. See also: Marius Mircu, *Pogromurile din Bucovina si Dorohoi*, *Collectia Pogrom* (Bucharest: Editura Glob, 1945), pp. 23-51; and Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: p. 148.

of Cernăuți's large Jewish population, which would last for days, also began on July 5, as the combined German-Romanian armies entered that city.¹²²

Herta was conquered by the Ninth Battalion on July 4/5, after a successful incursion. The Jews who came to welcome the soldiers were met with beatings and forced to undress. On the same day, the Seventh Division, under the supervision of General Stavrat and his aide, entered Herta. Vartic immediately named a new mayor and formed a "civil guard" whose unique function was to identify the Jews and round them up with the help of the army. A total of 1,500 Jews were assembled in four synagogues and a cellar by patrols of soldiers and the civil guard who severely beat the victims.¹²³ The round-up of the Jews was completed rapidly with the aid of a local fiddler who was familiar with the Jewish homes.¹²⁴ The new local authorities and the army representative compiled a list of "suspects" and the next day, July 6, a selection of Jews to be shot was made pursuant to the orders of the army.¹²⁵ A member of the civil guard identified the "suspected" Jews. The civil guard also forcibly removed young Jewish girls from the synagogues and handed them over to the soldiers, who raped them. Jews—primarily women with small children and the elderly—were brought to a mill on the outskirts of the city and shot by three soldiers.¹²⁶ The shooting of this large group posed certain technical problems, as no thought had been given to the need for graves. Therefore, after the execution, a heap of corpses lay in a pool of blood, guarded by a soldier, who "from time to time fired shots with his rifle when one of the dying moved."¹²⁷ Conversely, a smaller group of thirty-two Jews, mainly young men, was brought to a private garden where they were forced to dig their own graves. They were then lined up facing the graves and shot dead. In addition to larger actions, there were countless instances of individual terror and murder. For example, the rabbi of the community was murdered in his home together with his entire family; a five-year-old girl was thrown into a ditch and left to die; and a soldier, who had just participated in the massacre of the thirty-two Jews, then proceeded to shoot a young mother solely for personal gratification.¹²⁸ Any survivors were later deported to Transnistria.¹²⁹

The Sixteenth Battalion, followed immediately by the Ninth and Tenth Battalions, occupied Noua Sulita on July 7, 1941. After only one day, 930 Jews and five Christians lay

¹²² See chapter 20, about the the fate of Cernăuți Jews in: Ancel, *Contributii*, vol. 1, part 2: pp. 230-278.

¹²³ "Charge Sheet," p. 426.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 426

¹²⁵ "Charge Sheet," pp. 426-427.

¹²⁶ "Charge Sheet," p. 427.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

dead in the courtyards and streets.¹³⁰ On July 8, the Seventh Division entered the city and found it in a deplorable state. Pretor Vartic took command and detained 3,000 Jews in a distillery.¹³¹ Additionally, fifty Jews were shot—at the behest of Vartic and with the approval of Stavrat—allegedly in retaliation for “an unidentified Jew [who] had fired a gun at the troops.”¹³² While Lieutenant Emil Costea, commander of the military police, and another officer refused to kill Jews, several gendarmes from Hotin quickly murdered eighty-seven in their stead.¹³³

Despite Russian resistance, the scope of the task, and challenging physical terrain, Bessarabian Jewry suffered the greatest losses to the Romanian campaign to “cleanse the land.” On July 6, just one day after the Romanian re-conquest of Edineti, some five hundred Jews were shot by the troops, and sixty more were murdered at Noua Sulita. July 7 marked the liquidation of the Jews of Parlita and Bălți, and on the following day thousands of Jews were shot in Briceni, Lipcani, Falesti, Marculesti, Floresti, Gura-Kamenca and Gura-Cainari.¹³⁴ By July 9, the wave of exterminations implemented by the combined German-Romanian forces had reached the Jewish settlements of Plasa Nistrului (near Cernăuți), Zonlachie, Rapujinet and Cotmani in Northern Bukovina, and dozens of small villages became *judenrein* (cleansed of Jews).¹³⁵ On July 11, Lincauti and the village of Cepelauti-Hotin were “cleansed” of their Jewish inhabitants.¹³⁶ On the same day, Einsatzgruppe D began its activities at Bălți.¹³⁷ On July 12, the 300 Jews of Climauti-Soroca were shot.¹³⁸ July 17 marked the onset of the extermination and deportation of the tens of thousands of Jews of Chișinău. Several thousand Jews, perhaps as many as 10,000, were killed on that single

¹³⁰ “Charge Sheet,” p. 429. See also: Testimony of Steinberg in YVA, Romanian Collection 0-11/89. This account is confirmed also by two other testimonies in YVA, 0-3/1915, 3446.

¹³¹ “Charge Sheet,” pp. 429-430.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.430.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 431.

¹³⁴ The fate of the Jews of Briceni, Lipcani, Falesti, Marculesti and Floresti has been described in Jean Ancel and Te’odor Lavi, eds., *Pinkas Hakehilot. Rumania* (Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Romania) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), vol. 2. See also: “Bill of Indictment against the Perpetrators of the Iasi Pogrom,” YVA 0-11/73; and Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: no. 39, pp. 410-411.

¹³⁵ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 35; see also: Addendum to Jacob Stenzler’s deposition, YVA 0-11/89, PKR III, pp. 261-262.

¹³⁶ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 35. The shooting of the Jews of Cepelauti-Hotin is better known due to the testimony of Eng. Leon Sapira, a native of this town; see: YVA, Romanian Collection 0-11/89, PKR III, pp. 116-117.

¹³⁷ Einsatzgruppe D carried out the orders regarding the extermination of the Jews. On June 21, 1941, the entire Einsatzgruppe D left Dueben and reached Romania on June 24. See: Ereignismeldung UdSSR (detailed reports of Einsatzgruppe D actions in the USSR, quoted from the Nuremberg trial), no. 37, July 29, 1941, regarding the killings in Bălți. Copy in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 16, pp. 23-24.

¹³⁸ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 36.

day.¹³⁹ In the month of July, the Einsatzgruppe also shot 682 Jews in Cernăuți, 551 in Chișinău, and 155 in Tighina, and by August 19 it had murdered 4,425 Jews in the area between Hotin and Iampol.¹⁴⁰ The liquidation of Bessarabia's greatest Jewish center had thus begun and would continue until the last Jew was exterminated or deported in late October 1941. The slaughter of the Jews of Cetatea Alba (southern Bessarabia) followed approximately the same pattern. This was the general itinerary of the first phase of the Romanian Holocaust, implemented with the aid, but not under the coercion, of the German Eleventh Army and Einsatzgruppe D.

The Gendarmerie

The gendarmerie was ordered to “cleanse the land” a few days before June 21, 1941, in three places in Moldavia: Roman, Falticeni, and Galati.¹⁴¹ On June 18 and 19, the gendarmerie legions to be deployed were told about the special orders. The inspector general of the gendarmerie, General Constantin (Piki) Vasiliu, instructed the officers in Roman: “The first measure you must undertake is *cleansing the land*. By cleansing the land we understand: exterminate on the spot all Jews in rural areas; imprison in ghettos all Jews in urban areas; arrest all suspects, party activists, and people who held accountable positions under the Soviet authority and send them under escort to the legion.”¹⁴² As one of his subordinates recorded later, the commander of the Orhei gendarmerie legion told his subordinates to “exterminate all Jews, from babies to the impotent old man; all of them endanger the Romanian nation.”¹⁴³ On July 9, the administrative inspector general of the new Bessarabian government reported to the governor, General C. Voiculescu, from Bălți County, that “the cleansing of the land” began as soon as the gendarmes and police arrived.¹⁴⁴

In Roman, the Orhei Legion was given the order to “cleanse the land” by its commander, Major Filip Bechi. He spoke frankly, saying that they were “going to Bessarabia, where one must cleanse the terrain entirely of Jews.”¹⁴⁵ He made a second announcement to the chiefs of the sections that “the Jews must be shot.”¹⁴⁶ Some days later,

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 36. See also Ancel, “Kishinev,” in *Pinkas Hakehilot*, vol. 2: pp. 411-416.

¹⁴⁰ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, rev. ed., (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), vol. 2: p. 768.

¹⁴¹ Jean Ancel, “The Romanian Way of Solving the ‘Jewish Problem’ in Bessarabia and Bukovina, June-July 1941,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 19 (1988): pp. 207-208.

¹⁴² Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: nos. 41 and 43, pp. 444-445.

¹⁴³ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: no. 43, p. 477.

¹⁴⁴ Popescu to Voiculescu, July 9, NDM, Fourth Army Collection, file 0473, roll 655.

¹⁴⁵ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: p. 207.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

on the orders of Bechi and under the supervision of his deputy, Captain Iulian Adamovici, the Orhei Legion was dispatched to the frontier village of Ungheni.

Platoon leader Vasile Eftimie, secretary of the legion and commander of the Security Police Squad, mimeographed and distributed to all section and post heads the orders for “cleansing the land” as they had been elucidated at Roman.¹⁴⁷ The Orhei Legion then crossed Bălți County on foot, and on July 12 arrived at Carnova, the first village of Orhei County, where the gendarmes began shooting the local Jews. The route of the Orhei Legion, which can be precisely determined, serves as an example of the way the order was issued and implemented. In rural areas, the gendarmes were the principal executors of the orders for “cleansing the land.” The majority had served in the same villages prior to 1940, and their familiarity with the terrain and the Jewish inhabitants facilitated their task. The inspector general of Bukovina, Colonel Ion Manecuta, and General Ion Topor in Bessarabia headed the gendarmerie. The territory was apportioned among the legions, each headed by a colonel or lieutenant colonel. The gendarmerie command, aware of the scope of its task—not only the murder of the Jews, but also the identification and arrest of suspects, deserters, stranded Soviet soldiers, partisans and parachutists, among others—reinforced the gendarmes with reserves of young soldiers mobilized to serve for a limited period in the gendarmerie rather than in the regular army. Young local men, aged eighteen to twenty-one, known as the “premilitary,” were also placed at the disposal of the gendarmerie after a short training period. A network of informers, which had kept an eye on the population since 1940, also served the gendarmerie, as did local volunteers who helped identify, arrest, and murder Jews.¹⁴⁸

On their arrival in the villages, the gendarmes first would arrest the Jews. Most of these arrests were carried out with the assistance of the local population and informers. On some occasions, even the local priests came to the aid of the gendarmerie.¹⁴⁹ As a rule, Jews turned over to the gendarmes by the army had no chance of survival and were shot immediately.¹⁵⁰ Strange as it may seem, the most serious problem for the murdering gendarmes was burying the victims, *not* killing them, which was considered to be “clean” work.¹⁵¹ A report sent by the chief of the Security Police and SD to Ribbentrop, on October 30, 1941, stated:

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., no. 41, p. 445.

¹⁴⁸ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: no. 43, pp. 512-513.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 458, 461.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 449. See also: Ibid., no. 42, pp. 470-471.

¹⁵¹ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: pp. 211 and 498.

The way in which the Romanians are dealing with the Jews lacks any method. No objections could be raised against the numerous executions of Jews, but the technical preparations and the executions themselves were totally inadequate. The Romanians usually left the victims' bodies where they were shot, without trying to bury them. The Einsatzkommandos issued instructions to the Romanian police to proceed somewhat more systematically in this matter.¹⁵²

But despite German protests, the system of forcing Jews to dig their own graves was generally not adopted since the gendarmes used deceit and subterfuge to kill with speed, thus precluding any forewarning by making the victims dig pits. However, they often made use of trenches (antitank and others) left from the Soviet prewar days, making civilians cover the slain bodies with earth before the next batch of victims was brought to the execution site. The Prut and Raut Rivers, and the Dniester in particular, became the execution and burial sites favored by the gendarmes as well as by the Romanian and German armies. The first 300 Jewish victims from Storojinet were pushed into the water by the gendarmes and shot, while some sixty Jews managed to save their lives by swimming to the opposite bank of the Dniester.¹⁵³ On August 6, the gendarmes of the 23rd Police Company shot 200 Jews and threw their bodies into the Dniester.¹⁵⁴ Members of Einsatzgruppe D shot 800 Jews on the bank of the Dniester on August 17 because they were unable to return to Bessarabia by crossing the river as they had been ordered.¹⁵⁵ The Jews of Noua Sulita, who reached the bank of the Dniester on August 6, saw the river covered with the floating bodies of the last victims.¹⁵⁶

In the summer and fall of 1941, on the roads and in the fields of Bessarabia, Jews walked in rows, accompanied by gendarmes and followed by peasants, who were mobilized by gendarmes, clerks, and village mayors, carrying shovels and spades, all going to the execution fields. They waited patiently until the gendarmes had shot the Jews, then buried them and returned home with the victims' clothes and other personal effects; the valuables and money were taken by the gendarmes. Quite often the gendarmes would get drunk and

¹⁵² Nuremberg Documents, NO-2651; Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: p. 499.

¹⁵³ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: nos. 20-26, pp. 37, 65-70.

¹⁵⁴ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 35, p. 42. See also: Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: nos. 23-24, pp. 67-69.

¹⁵⁵ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 38.

¹⁵⁶ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: nos. 20-26, pp. 37, 65-70.

revel all night after such a day's work. In the village of Grigoriefca, in Lapusna County, they so indulged after murdering 60 Jewish men and before liquidating another 140 the next day; a few gendarmes remained in the killing field "to guard the corpses."¹⁵⁷

Back in Bucharest, after the liberation of Bessarabia and Bukovina and before charging on Odessa, Antonescu outlined his ideas concerning his war against the Jews:

The fight is bitter. It is a fight to life or death. It is a fight between us and the Germans, on the one hand, and the Jews, on the other....I shall undertake a work of complete cleansing, of Jews and of all others who have sneaked up on us....Had we not started this war to *cleanse our race of these people* who sap our economic, national, and physical life, we would be cursed with complete disappearance....Consequently, our policy in this regard is to achieve a *homogenous whole* in Bessarabia, Bukovina, Moldavia, and...in Transylvania."

Do not think that when I decided to *disinfect* the Romanian people of all Jews, I did not realize I would be provoking an economic crisis. But I told myself that this was the war I was leading. And as in any war, there are damages to the nation. But if I win this war, the nation will receive its compensation. We are undergoing a crisis because we are removing the Jews....Should we miss this historical opportunity now, we'll miss it forever. And if the Jews win the war, we'll no longer exist" [emphasis added].

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Implementation of the Arrangements

Although Mihai Antonescu had concluded the *Abmachungen* (the understandings regarding field cooperation) with the SS (i.e., Einsatzgruppe D, which was active in the Romanian troops' operation area) and with other German bodies, relations between the various units of Einsatzgruppe D and the Romanian army, gendarmerie, police, and Special Echelon were far from ideal. The Germans were content only when the Romanians acted

¹⁵⁷ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 6: no. 37, p. 341.

¹⁵⁸ Council of Ministers session, September 5, 1941, in *Problema Evreiască în stenogramele Consiliului de Miniștri* (The Jewish Problem in the Council of Ministers' Transcripts), ed. Lya Benjamin (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), no. 109, pp. 298-299. (Henceforth: Benjamin, *Stenograme*.)

according to their directives. Whenever their Romanian comrades deviated from the plan—whenever they failed to remove all traces of the mass executions and instead left corpses unburied, whenever they plundered, raped, or fired shots in the streets or received bribes from Jews—the Nazis fumed. Their letters, protests, and orders in this regard decried the lack of organization and planning, *not* the crimes themselves. On July 11, 1941, for example, the commander of Einsatzkommando 10b (a sub-unit of Einsatzgruppe D) reported the plunders at Falesti (where all the Jews were shot) and noted, “the measures taken against the Jews before the arrival of the Einsatzkommando lacked any planning.”¹⁵⁹ Each time such actions were taken, not only against the Jews but also against the Ukrainians of Bukovina and Bessarabia, the Germans hastened to object.¹⁶⁰ The RSHA went so far as to claim that the solution to the Jewish problem between the Dniester and the Dnieper had been placed in the wrong hands.¹⁶¹

The Hasty Deportations

In late July and early August, on the heels of the Wehrmacht, German extermination units were advancing rapidly in Ukraine, rounding up and gunning down tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews. Under these circumstances, lacking coordination with the German army, and based only on the talks between Hitler and Antonescu in Munich on June 12, the Romanian army began to deport tens of thousands of Jews who had been arrested in boroughs and on the roads to the other side of the Dniester in that area that would soon become Transnistria. This action commenced the moment the troops reached the Dniester. Toward the end of July, the Romanian army concentrated about 25,000 Jews near the village of Coslav, on the Dniester.¹⁶² Some had been marched from Northern Bukovina and others were caught in northern Bessarabia, particularly in and around Briceni.

On July 24, shortly after the German-Romanian forces had entered Ukraine, these Jews were sent across the river. The Romanian soldiers did not provide the convoys with food or drinking water and imprisoned the Jews in an improvised camp surrounded by barbed wire in the middle of a plowed field. Whoever attempted to escape was shot. The weak died of hunger. At this stage, the German officers ordered the convoys to head for Moghilev. Romanian gendarmes also pushed thousands of Jews through Rezina and Iampol and across

¹⁵⁹ Nuremberg Documents, NO-2934, 2939.

¹⁶⁰ Nuremberg Documents, NO-2651, 2934, 2938, 2949, 2950.

¹⁶¹ Nuremberg Documents, NO-52 (Ereignismeldung UdSSR) and NO-4540.

¹⁶² Report of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers re: 30,000 Jews in Hotin and Bukovina, August 11, 1941, Bucharest State Archives, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Cabinet Collection, file 76/1941, p. 86; copy in USHMM, RG 25.002M, roll 17.

the Dniester, although Transnistria was still under German military occupation. The German military authorities started forcing the Jewish columns back to Bessarabia. In response, “General Antonescu ordered that any penetration into our territory be strictly forbidden. The Jews who have crossed and will further attempt to cross the border should be considered spies and executed.”¹⁶³ The Conducator’s representative in Bukovina, Alexandru Riosanu, reported on July 19 that, “in accordance with the telegraphic order received,” the Jews recrossing the Dniester were “executed according to the order I gave upon my arrival.”¹⁶⁴ The commander of the Romanian Fourth Army instructed his units and the gendarmerie to force back all Jews identified as returning from Ukraine.¹⁶⁵

The Romanian soldiers continued to drive convoys of Jews from northern Bessarabia to the Dniester, ordering nightly stopovers used for plunder and rape, and then shooting hundreds to convince the rest to cross makeshift bridges. Hundreds of Jews were pushed into the Dniester; whoever attempted to climb out was shot. Hundreds more were gunned down on the riverbanks and cast into the dark waters, which had started to overflow after the heavy rains. The transfer of the convoys from one place to another created an additional problem, which the Romanian General Staff had not foreseen and which angered the Germans, i.e., thousands of Jewish bodies were strewn everywhere, signaling the routes and attracting Bessarabian peasants, who eagerly stripped the corpses and yanked out gold teeth.

On July 30, the German Eleventh Army Command requested that the Romanian General Staff stop pushing Jews across the Dniester. “At Iampol there are several thousand Jews—including women, children, and old men—whom the Romanian authorities have sent across the Dniester. These masses are not being guarded, and their food supplies have not been ensured. Many have started to die of hunger...the danger of disease is increasing. Accordingly, the German Army Command has taken measures to prevent [more] Jews from being [sent] across the Dniester.”¹⁶⁶ In practical terms, these measures meant shooting thousands of Jews on the riverbanks.

As stated, Antonescu protested to Ambassador Killinger about the German army’s return of Jews to Romanian territory, claiming it contravened Hitler’s statements in Munich.

¹⁶³ Antonescu to Orhei police, August 6, 1941, National Archive of the Republic of Moldova, Directorate General of the Police, Security Archive (henceforth: Chişinău Archive), collection 229, subcollection 2, file 165 (henceforth 229-2-165), p. 79.

¹⁶⁴ Telegram, Riosanu to Ion Antonescu, July 19, 1941, Bucharest State Archives, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Cabinet Collection, file 89/1941, p. 15.

¹⁶⁵ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 10: no. 27, p. 83.

¹⁶⁶ Eleventh Army Command to General Headquarters, July 30, 1941, NDM, Fourth Army Collection, file 781, p. 136; copy, USHMM, RG 25.003M, roll 12; copies in Ancel, *Transnistria*, vol. 2: doc. 10, and USHMM, RG 25.003M, roll 12.

Foreign Office officials in Berlin dared not ask Hitler what he had told Antonescu, instead insisting that “the official transcript of the talks...contains nothing in this regard.”¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Ambassador Karl Ritter, a member of Ribbentrop’s office admitted the possibility that “the problem of the Eastern Jews had also been also discussed,” and therefore recommended that “General Antonescu’s request that the Jews not be pushed back into Bessarabia should be taken into account.”¹⁶⁸ On August 4, most of the huge column of Jews pushed by the gendarmes across the Dniester was concentrated in Moghilev. For three days, the Germans conducted “selections” and shot the old and sick, while the young were forced to dig graves. German and Romanian soldiers murdered some 4,500 Jews. The convoy was driven further along the Ukrainian bank of the Dniester. With each stop, the number of Jews grew smaller from executions, exhaustion, illness, and infant starvation. On August 17 the convoy returned to Bessarabia at Iampol, by crossing a narrow pontoon bridge made by the Romanian army. Of a convoy of up to 32,000 Jews, somewhere between 8,000 and 20,000 were killed on the Ukrainian side of the Dniester, and most of the survivors were imprisoned in the Vertujeni camp.¹⁶⁹

Transit Camps and Ghettos

War Headquarters concluded that until the status of the Ukrainian territory to be given to Romania was established, the deportations had to stop. Consequently, temporary camps and ghettos were set up in Bessarabia. The special order for this project, given on August 8, regulated the imprisonment regime, delegated responsibilities, and stressed that the Jews would not be maintained at the state’s expense. Before leaving for Chişinău, Bessarabia’s governor, General Constantin Voiculescu, was summoned by the Conducator, who outlined his policy in the two provinces and issued several unwritten orders. The first problem the governor had to solve was the Jewish matter. Voiculescu subsequently reported to Antonescu: “In this order of ideas, upon seeing the Jews swarming all over Bessarabia, particularly in Chişinău, within no more than five days since the arrival of the undersigned in Chişinău, I ordered the setting up of camps and ghettos.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ *DGFP*, vol. 13:1 (1979), no. 207, p. 264.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 332, p. 431.

¹⁶⁹ National Police Headquarters report to Central Information Service, August 27, 1941, Bucharest State Archives, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Cabinet Collection, file 71/1941, p. 91. Regarding this convoy, see also: correspondence between General Headquarters and the army pretor, in Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: pp. 104-106.

¹⁷⁰ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 10: no. 61, p. 143.

Ghettos were new for Romania. Therefore, Presidency advisor Stanescu traveled to Warsaw “to study the concentration structure in the German quarters and use their experience.”¹⁷¹ Warsaw was an excellent model: its ghetto became the largest in the world, packed with up to 350,000 Jews awaiting extermination. Even before Stanescu’s return, the military commander of Chişinău City, Colonel Dumitru Tudose, followed Voiculescu’s guidelines. On August 12, Tudose proudly reported: “I have purged the city of Jews and enemy remains, giving it a Romanian and particularly Christian face. I have organized the Jewish ghetto such that these elements no longer pose any present or future danger.”¹⁷²

Pending the resumption of deportations, the Romanian authorities set up several dozen camps and ghettos, from which the Jews were evacuated to seven larger camps, and established the ghetto of Chişinău. By late August there were already about 80,000 Jews in these ghettos: 10,356 at Secureni; 11,762 at Edineti; 2,634 at Limbenii Noi; 3,072 at Rascani; 3,253 at Rautel; 22,969 at Vertujeni; 11,000 at Marculesti; 11,525 in Chişinău; and 5,000-6,000 in smaller facilities in southern Bessarabia.¹⁷³

At the end of August, Voiculescu informed the press, “The Jewish problem has been solved in Bessarabia. Today, in the Bessarabian villages there are no longer any Jews, while in towns, ghettos have been set up for those remaining.”¹⁷⁴ The first phase of extermination was executed in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina under Antonescu’s direct command. General C. Niculescu’s Committee for the Investigation of Irregularities in the Chişinău ghetto (formed at Antonescu’s request to probe the rapid and inexplicable enrichment of certain officers and the “failure” to confiscate deportees’ gold) found that between the establishment of the camps—after the “cleansing of the land”—and the beginning of the deportations, “25,000 Jews died of natural causes, escaped, or were shot.”¹⁷⁵

The fate of the survivors of the first wave of extermination in both provinces was decided by Ion Antonescu and announced to the military. This operation, too, lacked written orders, initially leaving no traces and assigning no responsibility. But corruption in the Romanian military and civil government led to occasional investigations at the request of Antonescu and other high-ranking officers responsible for the campaign. The resulting reports disclosed almost all the secret orders, including the verbal ones. Thus, the Antonescu

¹⁷¹ Telegram, M. Antonescu to I. Antonescu, Bucharest State Archives, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Cabinet Collection, file 167/1941, p. 42.

¹⁷² Tudose to administration of Bessarabia, August 12, 1941, NDM, file 656, p. 13.

¹⁷³ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: pp. 52, 99, 131-133, and vol. 10: pp. 100-102, 138.

¹⁷⁴ *Curentul* (The Current), August 27, 1941.

¹⁷⁵ Niculescu Commission, Report 2, December 1941, Chişinău Archive, 706-1-69, pp. 48-49. The report recorded 75,000-80,000 Jews in Bessarabia at the end of August.

regime failed to conceal its culpability for the imprisonment of the survivors in camps and ghettos, the reign of terror therein, and the eventual deportations. Conditions in these camps—characterized by forced labor, corruption, hunger, plunder, suffering, rapes, executions, and epidemics—accounted for tens of thousands of deaths.¹⁷⁶

Deportations from Southern Bukovina and Dorohoi County

The deportation of Bukovinan Jews was the outcome of the two Antonescus' decision to carry out ethnic cleansing. Transcripts of the government meetings of June 25, 1941, and October 6, 1941, document this decision.¹⁷⁷ In 1941 and 1942, 21,229 Jews from southern Bukovina were deported.¹⁷⁸ The best researched is the deportation of Jews from the county of Dorohoi. Despite his promise to Filderman on September 8, 1941, that he would treat Regat Jews differently than non-Regat Jews, Antonescu nevertheless ordered the deportation of Dorohoi Jews soon thereafter, followed by the Jews from Campulung, Suceava, and Radauti counties.¹⁷⁹ This sent shockwaves through the Romanian Jewish community. Upon learning of the deportation, the civilian population in Dorohoi promptly pillaged Jewish property and moved into their homes (even so, 244 out of 607 Jewish homes remained empty; there were too few Romanians in the town).¹⁸⁰ Prior to the deportations, county authorities themselves (the prefect and mayor) pleaded with the government to remove the Jews citing “concerns of the citizenry.”¹⁸¹

Filderman tried hard to reach Antonescu, yet he failed. The chairman of the Romanian Supreme Court, Nicolae Lupu, relayed his memo to the Conducator on December 3, 1941. Antonescu hypocritically declared to Lupu that he was “deeply moved” by the deportations, that he had ordered an investigation, and that he would order the return of the deportees.¹⁸² No such investigation was conducted, no Jew returned home by December 1943, the prefect of Dorohoi was promoted, and only the last deportation train was stopped.

¹⁷⁶ See chapter 18, “Camps and Ghettos in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina,” chapter 19, “Ghetto Kishinev,” and chapter 20, “Czernovitz,” in Ancel, *Contributii*, vol. 1, part 2: pp. 143-278.

¹⁷⁷ Benjamin, *Stenograme*, no. 95, p. 242 and no. 113, p. 326.

¹⁷⁸ Archive of the Ministry of Defence, fond central, *Problema evreiasca*, vol. 21: p. 131; Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: pp. 196-197.

¹⁷⁹ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 3: no. 74, p. 132.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, vol 5: no. 145, p. 265.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3: no. 74, p. 143.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, vol. 3, no. 258, p. 425.

Tighina Agreement

On August 30, Transnistria's status was finally resolved: The province was transferred to Romania, in keeping with Hitler's promise to Antonescu. General Nicolae Tataranu of Romanian War Headquarters and General Arthur Hauffe of the Wehrmacht signed the "Agreement for the Security, Administration, and Economic Exploitation of the Territory between the Dniester and the Bug and the Bug-Dnieper." Paragraph 7 referred to the Jews in the camps and ghettos of Bessarabia and Bukovina and the Jewish inhabitants of Transnistria: "The evacuation of the Jews across the Bug is not possible now. They must, therefore, be concentrated in labor camps and used for various work until, once the operations are over, their evacuation to the east will be possible."¹⁸³ The agreement thus confirmed that the final goal was to "cleanse" Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria of Jews.

At the end of August, Antonescu met at Tighina with Governors Voiculescu of Bessarabia, Corneliu Calotescu of Bukovina, and Gheorghe Alexianu of Transnistria. Voiculescu summarized the event: "I was given instructions as to how the operation of driving the Jews across the Bug should be carried out."¹⁸⁴ Antonescu made War Headquarters responsible for the deportation, under Topor. There would be no administrative formalities, no nominal lists of deportees, only "strictly numerical groups." Major Tarlef of the Romanian General Staff relayed an unwritten order that "any document found upon the Jews should be confiscated." Jews indeed arrived in Transnistria with no identity; their papers had been burned at the crossing points over the Dniester. Colonel Ion Palade succinctly told the gendarmerie officers in charge of transferring the convoys from the camps to the Dniester: "By order of War Headquarters, Jews who cannot keep up with the convoys, due to exhaustion or sickness, shall be executed."¹⁸⁵ To this end, a local gendarme was to be sent ahead two days before each convoy set out to ensure (with the assistance of the gendarmerie precincts along the deportation route and the premilitary youth) that "every ten kilometers there would be graves for about 100 people, where those who could not keep pace with the convoy could be gathered, shot, and buried."

Antonescu scheduled the first deportations for September 15, 1941. Beforehand, War Headquarters made an urgent request to Topor for a report on "the exact status of all Jewish camps and ghettos in Bessarabia and Bukovina," including numbers of Jews and guard

¹⁸³ Gosudartsveni Archiv Odeskoi Oblasti, Ukraina (State Archive of Odessa County, Ukraine) (henceforth: Odessa Archive), collection 2361, subcollection 1c, pp. 45-46; German version: Nuremberg Documents, PS-3319.

¹⁸⁴ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 10: no. 61, p. 139.

¹⁸⁵ Niculescu commission, report no. 2, p. 54.

units.¹⁸⁶ These reports reveal no German military involvement. The Dniester was crossed at five points, listed here from north to south: Atachi–Moghilev, Cosauti-Iampol, Rezina-Rabnita, Tighina-Tiraspol, and Olanesti-Iasca. Most Jews were deported through the first three points. The deportations commenced September 16 with the Jews in the Vertujeni camp and concluded by the end of December. Palade and his subordinates relayed the verbal order concerning the assassination and plundering. The commander of the 60th Police Company, who supervised the deportation to Atachi, requested a written order. Capt. Titus Popescu replied: “Regarding the Jewish matter we do not work with written documents.”¹⁸⁷

On October 6, Ion Antonescu updated the government on the ethnic cleansing in Bessarabia: “As far as the Jews are concerned, I have taken measures to remove them, completely and for good, from these regions. The measures are under way. I still have about 40,000 Jews in Bessarabia who will be dumped over the Dniester in a few days and, circumstances permitting, dumped further over the Urals.”¹⁸⁸ According to the gendarmerie inspector general in Bessarabia, the deportations proceeded “in the most perfect order and quietly.”¹⁸⁹ Both before and during the deportation, hundreds of Jews died every day of hunger, thirst, beatings, and torture; women and girls who resisted rape were killed; many Jews were murdered during searches for their valuables. Even before the convoys headed for the Dniester, bodies were everywhere, and additional corpses were left on the roadsides during the deportation. The method of plunder and assassination was such that peasants would approach a gendarme in the escort, indicate a Jew with attractive clothing or footwear, and propose a price, usually 1,000-2,000 lei. After briefly haggling, the gendarme would shoot the Jew, and the peasant would pay the agreed amount and quickly strip the body.

The official plundering of the Jews was ordered by Antonescu and facilitated by the National Bank of Romania. On October 5, the Marshal demanded “the *exchange* of all jewelry and precious metals owned by the Jews *vacating* Bessarabia and Bukovina [emphasis added].”¹⁹⁰ Other orders provided for the “exchange”¹⁹¹ of Jewish-owned lei into rubles, then German occupation marks (RKKS). On November 17, after the first phase of this plunder, the National Bank hastened to inform the finance minister: “As the seizure of valuables from the

¹⁸⁶ Inspectorate General of Transnistria to Topor, September 11, 1941; Carp, *Cartea neagră*, pp. 122-123.

¹⁸⁷ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 110, p. 170.

¹⁸⁸ Benjamin, *Stenograme*, p. 326.

¹⁸⁹ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 44, p. 101.

¹⁹⁰ Davidescu to Voiculescu and Calotescu, Chişinău Archive, 1607-1-2, p. 171.

¹⁹¹ This “exchange” was, in fact, seizure.

Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina is over, please dispatch your delegate to witness the opening of the boxes containing these objects in view of taking their inventory.”¹⁹²

Antonescu’s handling of the Jews did not escape Hitler’s attention. Several days before the signing of the Tighina Agreement on August 30, he told Goebbels: “Regarding the Jewish problem, it can be established that a man like Antonescu acts in this field in a more extremist manner than we have done so far.”¹⁹³ According to reports, 91,845 Jews were deported from Bukovina,¹⁹⁴ 55,867 from Bessarabia, and 9,367 from Dorohoi. In Transnistria, the Germans caught 11,000 Jews who had tried to flee the Romanian and German armies.¹⁹⁵ The rest were slaughtered, mainly by German soldiers.

In the meantime, the Romanian authorities did their best to mislead Western powers about their ethnic cleansing. On November 4, after meeting with Ion Antonescu and Mihai Antonescu and protesting the anti-Jewish atrocities, U.S. ambassador Franklin Mott Gunther reported to the State Department in Washington:

I have constantly and persistently drawn the attention of the highest Romanian authorities to the inevitable reaction of my government and of the American people to such an inhuman treatment, including the unlawful killing of innocent and defenseless people, by describing in detail the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews of Romania. My observations triggered expressions of regret from Marshal Antonescu and the ad-interim PM, Mihai Antonescu, for the excesses committed “by mistake” or “by irresponsible elements” and [promises] of future temperance....The systematic extermination program continues, though, and I don’t see any hope for Romanian Jews as long as the current regime controlled by the Germans stays in place.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 114, p. 179.

¹⁹³ Joseph Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1924-1945* (Munich: Piper, 1992), vol. 4: pp. 1059-1060.

¹⁹⁴ Calotescu to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, April 9, 1942, Foreign Ministry Archive, Central Collection, vol. 20: pp. 130-131.

¹⁹⁵ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: nos. 39, 41, 43, 46, 55, pp. 95-97, 99, 104; *DGFP*, series D, vol. 13: no. 207, pp. 318-319.

¹⁹⁶ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 3: no. 221, p. 339.

Transnistria: Ethnic Dumping Ground

The territory between the Dniester and the Bug, with which Hitler rewarded Antonescu for Romania's participation in the war against the Soviet Union, was dubbed "Transnistria." According to the Soviet census of 1939, the area's population exceeded three million people comprised mostly of Ukrainians and Russians, about 300,000 Moldavians (Romanians), 331,000 Jews, and 125,000 Germans. Jewish men, who for the most part did not think of themselves as Soviet citizens, had been drafted into the Soviet army, but not all had reached their units. Part of the Jewish population did not evacuate or run off with the Soviet forces, although doing so would have increased their chances of survival. But, they knew little about the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and the Germans' swift advance from Lvov to the Black Sea prevented a number of them from escaping.

The occupation regime (excluding not-yet-occupied Odessa) was inaugurated at Tiraspol on August 9, 1941. Heading the government was law professor Gheorghe Alexianu, a friend and former colleague of Mihai Antonescu and well-known antisemite. Transnistria was divided into thirteen counties, each run by a prefect; all prefects were colonels or lieutenant colonels in the army or gendarmerie. These counties encompassed sixty-four districts, each administered by a pretor. At the beginning of the war, Antonescu believed Transnistria would be occupied indefinitely. In the government session of December 16, 1941, he told Alexianu to "govern there as if Romania had been ruling these territories for two million years. What will happen afterward, we'll see....You are the sovereign there. Force people to work—with a whip if they don't understand otherwise...and if necessary, and there is no other way, prod them with bullets; for that you don't need my authority."¹⁹⁷ Alexianu boasted to Antonescu that the administration followed "the Fuehrer's principle" (*Führerprinzip*): "One man, one guideline, one accountability. The will of the Conducator, of the army's commander in chief, transmitted to the farthest bodies."¹⁹⁸ Transnistria's official currency was the RKKS, a worthless bank note used throughout the Soviet territory occupied by the Germans. The exchange rate was initially 60 lei or 20 rubles to the mark. Against this background, the true dimension of the plunder of the Jews—even before deportation—becomes clearer. The National Bank of Romania confiscated Jewish money, replaced it with rubles at an absurd exchange rate, and then confiscated the rubles in exchange (sometimes) for RKKS.

¹⁹⁷ *Procesul Marei Trădări Naționale* (Trial of the National High Treason) (Bucharest, 1946), pp. 148-149.

¹⁹⁸ Alexianu to Antonescu, September 12, 1941, Odessa Archive, 2242-1677, pp. 18-19b.

Early in the war, the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies operated in Transnistria. Even more than the gendarmes and police, the army was responsible for retaliation, imprisonment, and persecution of local Jews. Officers initiated direct measures against the Jews, closely supervising implementation by the civil authorities, and even the gendarmes. When such orders were improperly executed, the officers requested the punishment of those at fault. In the early stages of the occupation, between August and late September 1941, Romanian forces cooperated with the German army and the Einsatzgruppen—who, in the estimation of Ohlendorf, murdered about 90,000—in killing Jews¹⁹⁹

Gendarmerie units that had “cleansed the land” in Bessarabia and Bukovina were attached to Romanian armies and spread across Transnistria. The gendarmerie chose where the deportees crossed the Dniester. They also attended to the “transportation, discipline, and surveillance of the Jewish population, i.e., the removal of the Jews from densely populated areas and their settlement in sparsely populated areas”—in other words, the marching of convoys of both deported and local Jews to the camps on the Bug.²⁰⁰ The dreaded Ukrainian police—or, more accurately, the Ukrainians armed by the Romanians—also played an important role in the administration’s crimes during the winter of 1941/42 in the concentration camps along the Bug. These men guarded the ghettos and camps throughout Transnistria and entered the ghettos whenever necessary to help carry out the various actions dictated by the Romanian authorities, primarily the mass executions.

Daily Life in Transnistria

As of December 24, 1941, there were 56,000 Romanian Jews in Moghilev County, close to the Dniester. More Jews survived here than in the other counties. German involvement was less frequent, and, especially in the town of Moghilev, the Jewish community was better able to organize itself. Although especially numerous in the counties of Moghilev and Balta, deported Romanian Jews found themselves in 120 localities throughout all the counties in Transnistria; some of these received one to six deportees, while others ended up with thousands, and living conditions were extremely cruel. For example, a number of the Jews of Moghilev were deported to Shargorod and other nearby localities where their lot was awful. M. Katz, former president of the Jewish Committee of the town, related the following:

¹⁹⁹ *Nuremberg Military Trials*, vol. 4: case 9, p. 168.

²⁰⁰ Tasks of Transnistrian police, December 1941, Odessa Archive, 2242-4-5c, p. 3.

“...[I]n the town of Konotkauti, near Shargorod, [there was] a long and dark stable standing alone in a field. Seventy people were lying all over the place, men, women, children, half-naked and destitute...They all lived on begging....In the ghetto of Halcintz people ate the carcass of a horse which had been buried....The authorities poured carbonic acid on it, yet they continued eating it...The Jews in Grabvitz lived in a cave....They couldn't part from the seven hundred graves of their loved ones....I found similar scenes at Vinoi, Nemerci, Pasinca, Lucinetz, Lucincic, Ozarinetz, Vindiceni: everywhere men exhausted, worn out; some of them worked on farms, others in the tobacco factory, but the majority lived on begging.”²⁰¹

The Jews deported from Bessarabia and Bukovina typically died as a result of typhus, hunger, and cold. Food distribution was erratic. Many lived by begging or by selling their clothes for food, ending up virtually naked. They ate leaves, grass, and potato peels and often slept in stables or pigsties, sometimes not allowed even straw. Except for those in the Peciora and Vapniarka camps and in the Rabnita prison, the deported Jews lived in ghettos or in towns, where they were assigned a residence, forced to carry out hard labor, and subjected to the “natural” process of extermination through famine and disease. This “natural selection” ceased toward the end of 1943, when Romanian officials began changing their approach toward the deported Jews.

In January 1942, the typhus epidemic reached major proportions. In Tibulovca (Balta County) 1,140 out of 1,200 deportees died during the winter of 1941–1942.²⁰² On January 20, 1942, of the 1,200 Jews interned since November 1941, only 100 men, 74 women, and 4 children survived, most of these suffering frozen extremities. With money or clothes, some were able to purchase permission to live in the village.

Of the 9,000 Jews in Shargorod (Moghilev County), 2,414 caught typhus and 1,449 died of it. In June 1942, the epidemic ended, but it broke out again in October. By then, however, the community was prepared for it, taking efficient measures to delouse the area. Ninety-two cases of typhoid fever appeared, though with a negligible mortality rate, as well

²⁰¹ Julius Fisher, *Transnistria: The Forgotten Cemetery* (South Brunswick, NJ: T. Yoselof, 1969), p. 105.

²⁰² USHMM/SRI, RG 25.004M, fond 40012, vol. 1: roll 28.

as 1,250 cases of severe malnutrition, of which fifty proved irreversible.²⁰³ Hygienic conditions were very bad in the town of Moghilev, as well. As of April 25, 1942, there were 4,491 recorded cases of typhus, 1,254 of them deadly. The Moghilev Health Department estimated that there were 7,000 cases of typhus at a certain point throughout the city. During the winters the extreme cold made it impossible to bury the corpses, which only continued to spread the epidemics. In addition to disease and the dearth of adequate food, clothing, and shelter, forced labor was often imposed on the deportees in Transnistria. In Ladijin, for example, 1,800 Jews from Dorohoi and Cernăuți were used for work in a stone quarry under very harsh conditions.²⁰⁴

There were two camps in Transnistria, Vapniarka and Peciora. In September 1942 almost 2,000 Jews (“communist sympathizers” or people who had applied to emigrate to the USSR under the population transfer in 1940) were deported to Transnistria. Some of them were killed upon arrival, but about 1,000 went to the Vapniarka camp where they were fed a variety of pea (*Tathyrus savitus*) that is not fit for humans. As a result, 611 inmates became seriously ill, and some were partially paralyzed.²⁰⁵ The other Transnistrian camp, Peciora, displayed the phrase “death camp” on its signpost above the entrance.²⁰⁶ General Iliescu, inspector of the Transnistrian gendarmerie, had recommended that the poorest be sent there, since they were going to die anyway, and it was not intended that anyone survive Peciora.²⁰⁷ Peciora was the most horrific site of Jewish internment in all of Transnistria, as Matatias Carp’s research showed: “Those who managed to escape told incredible stories. On the banks of the Bug, the camp was surrounded by three rows of barbed wire and watched by a powerful military guard. German trucks arrived from the German side of the Bug on several occasions; camp inmates were packed into them to be exterminated on the other side...Unable to get supplies, camp inmates ate human waste, and later [fed] on human corpses. Eighty percent died and only the twenty percent who [fled when the guard became more lax] survived.”²⁰⁸ Testimonies of the Peciora survivors also report cases of cannibalism in this camp.

²⁰³ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 325.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 3: p. 280.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 201, 376–77.

²⁰⁶ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 285.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

Local Jews

Following the first wave of executions upon the occupation of the province, the surviving local Jews returned to their destroyed and ransacked houses. According to gendarmerie and government reports, of the 331,000 Ukrainian Jews counted during the census of 1939, at least 150,000 and perhaps over 200,000 were still alive in Transnistria then, including up to more than 90,000 in the district of Odessa. Upon entering the district capitals, the Romanian army—followed by the gendarmerie units and then the prefects—immediately and energetically identified all Jews for purposes of imprisonment in ghettos and camps.²⁰⁹

On August 4, 1941, the Fourth Army informed all military units, the gendarmerie, and the police that “the Jews in the towns and villages of Ukraine will be gathered in ghettos.”²¹⁰ This decision was made by Antonescu, conveyed through War Headquarters, and signed by General Tataranu: “To prevent any act of sabotage and terrorism by the Jews, we have taken the measure of imprisoning them in ghettos and using them for labor.”²¹¹ Upon arrival in the District capitals, the prefects ordered the Jews to register with the new authorities and move into the ghettos, abandoning their homes. On September 3, for instance, Colonel Vasile Nica, prefect of Balta, gave “all kikes” three days to move to the ghetto (composed of four streets). He imposed forced labor on all Jews between the ages of fourteen and sixty and ordered them to wear yellow badges: “Any kike—from the town of Balta, the county, or anywhere else—who is found in Balta is to be sent to the ghetto. Similar ghettos will be set up in other towns of the district. Any insubordination, attempted rebellion, or terrorism by a kike will be punished with his death and that of another twenty kikes.”²¹²

Deportations and Death Marches

On September 30, 1941, the commander of the Fourth Army posed the question to the General Staff: “What is there to be done with the *civilian* Jews of Transnistria?”²¹³ Antonescu’s answer was clear: “All the Jews in Transnistria will be immediately imprisoned in the camps on the Bug established by the governor of Transnistria....Their estates will be

²⁰⁹ Military Command of Transnistria, order no. 1, Odessa Archive, 2730-1-1.

²¹⁰ Fourth Army, Order no. 209.221, August 4, 1941, Chişinău Archive, 693-2-299, p. 26.

²¹¹ Fourth Army to General Headquarters, NDM, Fourth Army Collection, file 781, p. 162.

²¹² Nica, Order no. 4, September 3, 1943, Odessa Archive, 2358-1-2, p. 4. The order was issued in Romanian and Russian.

²¹³ Telegram, Fourth Army to General Headquarters, September 30, 1941, NDM, Fourth Army Collection, file 779, p. 164.

taken over by the local authorities.”²¹⁴ In early October, Antonescu ordered the deportation—which meant extermination—of the Ukrainian Jews to the Bug and the expropriation of their property. Not only Ukrainian Jews were deported to the Bug. Eichmann’s envoy, Richter, announced to his superiors that Antonescu had decided to concentrate near the Bug 110,000 Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina, “in view of exterminating them.”²¹⁵ Their transfer and eventual execution fell to the Government of Transnistria, which had gendarmerie units and occupation troops at its disposal. Alexianu described the operation to the Fourth Army commander on October 11:

As to the given instructions, all the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina are being evacuated from these provinces to the region west of the Bug, where they will stay this fall until—in accordance with the agreement concluded with the German state—we are able to dump them east of the Bug. Over 15,000 Jews have entered Transnistria so far....The rest, up to the approximately 150,000 envisaged for this fall, will arrive soon.²¹⁶

The Romanian authorities took no responsibility for the Jews’ subsistence, both during the deportation and in the camps and ghettos. “The Jews will live on their own,” it was written. Yet, they were to be used for agricultural or any other work, and the gendarmes mercilessly shot dead any laggards.²¹⁷

Each convoy was first plundered by the gendarmes. Young women and girls in each convoy were raped, particularly by the officers, who chose stops where they could organize orgies. Gangs of Ukrainians attacked the Jewish convoys as well—killing, looting, and sometimes even stripping hundreds of Jews bare and leaving them to freeze to death. The convoy commanders were not responsible for Jews’ lives, only for their transfer—these Jews had no name or identity. Ukrainian volunteers (later called the Ukrainian police) accompanied the convoys, exhibiting even greater cruelty than the gendarmes. Unfamiliar with the area, the gendarmes relied on these volunteers, assigning them partial escort and

²¹⁴ General Headquarters to Fourth Army, October 6, 1941, NDM, Fourth Army Collection, file 779, p. 165.

²¹⁵ Richter to RSHA, October 11, 1941, Nuremberg Documents, PS-3319; copy in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 87, p. 110.

²¹⁶ Alexianu to Fourth Army commander, Odessa Archive, 2242-2-76.

²¹⁷ “Guidelines Concerning the Organization of the Convoys,” September 6, 1941, Odessa Archive, 2242-2-680, p. 50.

guard duties. Einsatzgruppe D had armed some Ukrainians, who assisted in murdering tens of thousands of Jews.

The transfer of the Jews toward the Bug in convoys of thousands continued apace throughout October, November, and December 1941 in total disarray. Thousands of Jews were left in towns or villages that had not been slated to house ghettos or temporary camps. Monitoring the deportation as if it were a military operation, Antonescu remarked in a government session that he had enough trouble “with those I took to the Bug. *Only I know how many died on the way* [emphasis added].”²¹⁸ On November 9, Vasiliu, the gendarmerie inspector general, reported to the Conducator that the first stage of the deportations from Bessarabia and Bukovina was over: 108,002 Jews had been “relocated as in the annexed table.” A map accompanying the report indicated that the Jews had been taken to three areas near the Bug: 47,545 to the north, in Mitki, Peceora, and Rogozna; 30,981 to the center, in Obodovca and Balanovka; and 29,476 in Bobric, Krivoie-Ozero, and Bogdanovka.²¹⁹ Richter’s sources proved accurate: Antonescu had indeed concentrated 110,000 Jews—Romanian citizens—near the Bug, intending to kill them.

Meanwhile, Antonescu ordered the SSI to investigate why “all the Jews had not been evacuated east of the Jmerinca-Odessa railway,” near the Bug. The investigation revealed that in December 1941, 79,507 Jews deported west of that line from Romania were still alive.²²⁰ But at the beginning of the Romanian occupation, 150,000 to 200,000 Ukrainian Jews were still alive in Transnistria, too.

Golta County Massacres

The German occupation authorities’ refusal to receive and execute the Romanian and Ukrainian Jews deported to the Bug forced the Transnistrian administration to resolve the matter on its own. The murder of Ukrainian and Romanian Jewry took place in Golta County, near the Bug, from the end of December 1941 until May 1942. Under prefect and gendarmerie Lieutenant Colonel Modest Isopescu, Golta became known as the “Kingdom of Death,” site of the three largest extermination camps—Bogdanovka, Domanovka, and Akmechetka—and dozens of smaller ones. Imprisoned in these camps were about 10,000 local Jews, 30,000 from Bessarabia (particularly the Chişinău ghetto), and 65,000-70,000 from Odessa and the counties in southern Transnistria. Even before the extermination

²¹⁸ Benjamin, *Stenograme*, no. 119, p. 337.

²¹⁹ Vasiliu to Antonescu, December 15, 1941, Ministry of Interior Archive, file 18844, vol. 3.

²²⁰ Military Cabinet report, January 4, 1942, Bucharest State Archives, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Cabinet Collection, file 86/1941, pp. 325-327.

campaign, so many died every day that Isopescu ordered gendarmes and municipalities “to bury the dead kikes two meters underground. Those buried at half a meter will be reburied deeper. All sick, old, and infant kikes will be sent to Bogdanovka.”²²¹ By mid-November 1941 Bogdanovka had become a human garbage dump.

When taking over the county, Isopescu wrote, he had found several camps of Jews “gathered from the neighboring boroughs” (i.e., Ukrainian Jews), but most were “sent from across the Dniester” (i.e., deported from Bessarabia and Bukovina). In early October, “about 15,000” Jews had “gathered” (i.e., been imprisoned) in the village of Vazdovca, in the Liubasevca subdistrict, and another 3,000 in Krivoie-Ozero and Bogdanovka. “Those in Vazdovca were hit by typhus and about 8,000 died,” Isopescu reported. The mayor and the infantry regiment staying in the village requested that the camp be moved, “because it posed a constant danger of infection.” Weakened by hunger and contaminated with typhus, the Jews could not bury the corpses, and the soldiers and villagers refused to come near the camp.²²²

Isopescu transferred the roughly 10,000 Jews remaining in Vazdovca and Krivoie-Ozero to “swine stables of the sovkhov [state agricultural farm]” in Bogdanovka. But even before the “transport of kikes from Vazdovca” had arrived, “about 9,000 kikes were sent from Odessa, so that today, with what was already there and what has arrived now, there are 11,000 kikes in the kolkhoz [collective agricultural farm] stables, which can hold only 7,000 pigs.”²²³ Isopescu continued, “Today the mayor and the head of the kolkhoz came to me in despair for they have been told that another 40,000 [Jews] are coming from Odessa. Since the sovkhov can no longer accommodate them all, and those outside the stables are killing those inside to take their place, while the [Ukrainian] police and the gendarmes are overwhelmed by the burials, and as the water of the Bug is being drunk, the epidemic will soon spread throughout the region.”²²⁴ More than 67,000 Jews were concentrated at Bogdanovka and partially at Domanovka, together with 29,479 deported from Bessarabia, as stated in a Romanian gendarmerie report.²²⁵

To understand the details mentioned by Isopescu, it must be recalled that the first frost of 1941 came on November 4, and temperatures continued to drop, plummeting to -35° C in December. Those who were unable to sneak into one of the filthy stables, which were teeming with lice and feces, would freeze to death during the night; hence the fierce

²²¹ Isopescu to Bivolaru, November 4, 1941, Derjavnii Archiv Mikolaisvoi Oblasti, Ukraina (Central Archive of Nicolaev County) (henceforth: Nicolaev Archive), 2178-1-66, p. 90.

²²² Isopescu to Government of Transnistria, November 13, 1941, *ibid.*, p. 155.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 151b.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-151b.

²²⁵ Vasiliu to Antonescu, December 15, 1941, Ministry of Interior Archive, file 18844, vol. 3.

competition for a place in the stables. The overcrowding in the camp peaked, and most Jews were sick with typhus. Five hundred Jews died daily at Bogdanovka, while another 200 perished each day at Domanovka. Both Isopescu and Alexianu hoped the Germans would take the Jews and exterminate them on their own side of the territory. As the governor reported to Antonescu on December 11, 1941: “In view of solving the Jewish problem in Transnistria, we are currently holding talks with the German authorities about dumping [the Jews] over the Bug. At certain points, such as Golta, some Jews have already started crossing the Bug. *We shall not have peace in Transnistria until we have enforced the provision of the Hauffe-Tataranu agreement concerning the dumping of the kikes over the Bug* [emphasis added].”²²⁶

The military units quartered in the Golta district requested that the Prefecture “move” the local camps, but there was no place available for this purpose.²²⁷ Antonescu’s Ukraine ended at the Bug, and by mid-December, immense masses of Jews—alive, dead, and dying—were concentrated in the camps at Bogdanovka and Domanovka: Isopescu’s worst nightmare had come true. He estimated 52,000 living Jews in Bogdanovka and about 20,000 in Domanovka. Some crowded into stables (of which there were no more than fifty), pigsties, and barracks, while others stayed outside, spread over three kilometers along the west bank of the Bug. The silos were full of bodies, and both the living and dead were packed into the stables and barracks in the deadly cold of winter.

Antonescu ordered the murder of the more than 70,000 surviving Jews at Bogdanovka and then at Domanovka. In the cabinet session of December 16, Alexianu informed the Marshal that 85,000 Jews carried typhus “in the villages where the Jews came. I must disinfect them, or they’ll infect everybody.” Antonescu’s recommendation was brief: “Let them die.”²²⁸ Another factor in the decision to execute tens of thousands of Jews and burn their bodies was the nature of relations with the German occupation authorities in Ukraine and the Einsatzgruppe’s dissatisfaction with Romanian disorganization and, particularly, their failure to bury corpses. Berezovka’s Landau subdistrict was home to tens of thousands of local Germans—*Volksdeutsche*—and tens of thousands more lived on the eastern bank of the Bug, in the Nazi-occupied part of the former Soviet county of Nicolaev. On February 5, 1942, Gebietskommissar Schlutter of Nicolaev, Isopescu’s German counterpart, warned Alexianu about the immense epidemiological catastrophe created by the Romanian

²²⁶ Alexianu to Antonescu, December 11, 1941, Odessa Archive, 2242-1-677, p. 197.

²²⁷ Georgescu to Golta prefecture, Nicolaev Archive, December 4, 1942, 2178-1-12, p. 22.

²²⁸ Government session, December 16, 1941, Ministry of Interior, Operative Archive, file 40010, vol. 78: p. 358.

authorities on the banks of the Bug. The Germans did not request the killing of the Jews, but “possibly the transportation of the Jews so far inside Transnistria that their crossing the Bug would become impossible.”²²⁹

Although the Nazi authorities across the Bug clearly wanted the Romanians to solve their own “Jewish problem,” Alexianu countered that the Tighina Agreement obligated the *Germans* to liquidate the Jews concentrated near the Bug: “We shall answer that in keeping with the Tighina Agreement of August 30, 1941, art. 7, until the Jews of Transnistria are evacuated east of the Bug when operations allow, we are keeping them here and cannot return them inland, in view of dumping them over the Bug. Please advise whether the convention can be applied.”²³⁰ As the Romanian reply was delayed, Schlutter sent another telegram reiterating his evacuation request: “Every day a number of Jews die and are buried superficially. This absolutely impossible situation poses an imminent danger to the German villages of Transnistria and the neighboring territory of the German commissariat of Ukraine. To save the troops, the German administration, and the population, you are hereby asked to take rigorous measures.”²³¹ “What was our answer?” Alexianu jotted on the translated telegram. His deputy, Secretary General Emanoil Cercavschi, wrote back: “We answered Commissioner General Oppermann that we have taken measures to burn the Jewish corpses.”²³²

Assisted by local gendarmes, Ukrainian policemen brought from Golta County shot about 48,000 Jews at Bogdanovka. The massacre began on December 21 and continued until the morning of December 24. After a break for Christmas, the executions resumed on December 28 and continued until December 30, only to start anew on January 3, lasting until January 8, 1942. The Jews were forced to undress and then shot in the back of the neck by killers drunk on Samagoon, a local liquor made from beets.²³³ Any gold teeth were removed with rifle blows or tongs, and rings were cut off, together with fingers if necessary. The bodies were immediately burned by a team of 200 young Jews selected for this work, 150 of whom were eventually shot, as well. One survivor described the process in this way: “We

²²⁹ Telegram, Schlutter to Alexianu, February 5, 1942 (German version and Romanian translation), Odessa Archive, 2242-1-1486, pp. 180-180b.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Telegram, Schlutter to Alexianu in Tiraspol, February 14, 1941 (German version and Romanian translation), Odessa Archive, 2242-1-1486, pp. 200-200b.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ This mass execution and burning of bodies was detailed during Isopescu’s trial in 1945. That description has been confirmed by Romanian documents in the archives at Nicolaev and Odessa. See *Actul de acuzare, Rechizitoriile si replica acuzarii la procesul primului lot de criminali de razboi* (Indictment, remarks by the prosecution, and response by the defense in the trial of the first group of war criminals; henceforth: *Actul de acuzare*) (Bucharest: Apararii Patriotice, 1945).

would make piles for burning the corpses. One layer of straw, on which we placed people [in a space] about four meters wide, more than one man high, and about ten meters long. On the sides and in the middle we put firewood, and then again one layer of people and a layer of straw with firewood. We would light one pile and prepare another, so it took about two months to turn our brothers to ashes. In terrible frosts we would warm up by the hot ashes.”²³⁴

At Domanovka, a Jewish borough on the road connecting Odessa to Golta, there were about 20,000 Jews from Odessa and the borough environs. Between January 10 and March 18, 1942, local Ukrainian police and the Romanian gendarmes killed 18,000. Although the corpses were initially buried, they were subsequently unearthed and burned in order to avert the threat of disease. Pretor Teodor Iliescu reported:

At Domanevca [*sic*] there is a Jewish camp that poses a constant danger to the authorities and the local population...due to the filth the Jews live in and the insects they are full of, which constitute the best environment for the spread of typhus, cholera, and other diseases. Since in this village a significant number of Jews have been shot and buried in graves...no more than half a meter deep, and that will jeopardize public health once the snow melts and the water infiltrates them...kindly order the relocation of the camp to Bogdanovka....They cannot produce anything, and due to lack of hygiene, about thirty to fifty are dying every day....²³⁵

Isopescu noted his decision on the margin of the report: “Proceed in accordance with Order no. 23. Burn the corpses to prevent the extension of the epidemic.”²³⁶

Akmechetka was located on the Bug, 18 kilometers (11 miles) south of Bogdanovka, 18 kilometers north of Domanovka, and 60 kilometers (37 miles) from the city of Golta. Although documents describe it as a village, Akmechetka was actually a large pig farm. Far from other populated areas and strictly guarded, Isopescu handpicked Akmechetka in early March 1942 to accommodate Jews who could not work or serve any other function, including

²³⁴ Testimony of Haim Kogan, April 24, 1963, YVA, PKR-V, no. 4, p. 70.

²³⁵ Iliescu to Golta prefecture, March 19, 1942, Nicolaev Archive, 2178-1-58, pp. 358-358b.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

the the elderly and children.²³⁷ Healthy Jews were also sent there as punishment for disobedience, resisting rape by gendarmes and Romanian government personnel or refusing to surrender valuables, for example. Several hundred orphans joined these prisoners, and Akmechetka soon housed 4,000 Jews.

The camp, occupying only part of the farm, consisted of four pigsties—completely exposed to the wind, snow, and rain—and one long warehouse. Boards divided the sties into sections, and approximately 1,000 people were crowded into each. The warehouse was reserved for the orphans. Akmechetka was surrounded by three rows of barbed wire and deep trenches and was guarded by Ukrainian police subordinated to Romanian gendarmes.²³⁸ The main purpose of the camp was extermination via isolation. Food was extremely scarce, and Jews there “lay for entire days on the ground or on beds and could no [longer] move.”²³⁹ After several weeks, most died of starvation, and the rest were utterly exhausted.²⁴⁰ At first one prisoner was to maintain order in the camp. This task became unnecessary, however, since the Jews were too weak to escape. The external guard was also relaxed, and Ukrainian policemen entered the camp only occasionally to conduct routine inspections. Romanian gendarmes bought Jews’ clothing in exchange for a few potatoes and the Ukrainian policemen followed suit, though this “business” was prohibited. Driven by hunger, most inmates were soon nearly naked, covered in rags or thick wrapping paper. The few Jews chosen by policemen in the winter of 1942 to work in the camps and in the area did so barefooted.²⁴¹

Starvation was not the only killer in Akmechetka. Most prisoners became infected with typhoid fever and suffered from dysentery and furunculosis. Malaria and tetanus claimed lives, as well. The Jews in Akmechetka received no medical treatment. Of the approximately 4,000 Jews initially sent to the camp, only several hundred were still alive in May. Despite the high death rate, there were usually a few hundred Jews in the camp at any given time since, as of April, Isopescu directed all the “human garbage”—Jews regularly sent by the government—to Akmechetka, the “kingdom of death.” There was another typhus outbreak in the area that month, and on May 24 Isopescu sent a telegram to the gendarmerie headquarters in Transnistria: “Instead of the Bogdanovka camp, I have reserved Akmechetka, also located in the Domanovka subdistrict, for the Yids. I therefore request that you send no

²³⁷ Ilya Ehrenburg, et al., *Cartea neagră* (The Black Book) (Bucharest: Institutul Roman de Documentare, 1946), p. 103.

²³⁸ *Actul de acuzare*, p. 30.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.70-71.

²⁴⁰ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, p. 225.

²⁴¹ Testimony of Golda Israel, July 14, 1994, recorded by Ancel.

more Yids to Bogdanovka but [rather] to Domanovka, and from there they will be escorted to the Akmechetka camp.”²⁴²

Akmechetka struck terror in the hearts of all the Jews in Golta—the survivors of the Romanian mass murders as well as the more recently arrived deportees, who trickled into the area until early 1943. The deputy prefect used the name Akmechetka to extort money from the Jews sent directly from Romania to Golta in the summer of 1942. His threat could be summed up in one sentence: “Akmechetka awaits you.”²⁴³

The Odessa Massacres

The ordeal of the 120,000 Odessan Jews rivaled that in the camps on the Bug. Contrary to Romanian propaganda, the Jews—who numbered from 70,000 to 120,000 when Odessa was captured—were no darlings of the Soviet regime. As the siege wore on, antisemitism increased, particularly in working-class neighborhoods, peaking on the eve of the evacuation of Odessa. In mid-September, after German planes dropped antisemitic leaflets over the city, young hooligans in one such district organized anti-Jewish rallies, chanting the old Czarist slogan: “Strike the Jews and save Russia.”²⁴⁴

The Tenth Infantry Division entering the city October 16, 1941, was ordered to gather “all the Jewish men aged 15-50 and the Jews who had fled from Bessarabia.”²⁴⁵ Some murders took place near the port and included victims who had not managed to board the last boats leaving Odessa. On October 17, the Romanian military authorities called for a census, leading to the establishment of several registration and classification centers around the city. On October 18, Romanian soldiers began taking hostages, especially Jews. Some were dragged from their homes, while others were arrested upon reporting to the checkpoints. The municipal prison was turned into a large camp of Jews. From October 18, 1941, until mid-March 1942, the Romanian military in Odessa, aided by gendarmes and police, murdered up to 25,000 Jews and deported over 35,000.

On the evening of October 22, the center and right wings of the Romanian military general headquarters exploded, killing sixteen Romanian officers (including the city’s military commander, General Ion Glogojanu), four German naval officers, forty-six other

²⁴² Cable no. 3572 from Isopescu to Gendarmerie headquarters in Transnistria, May 24, 1942, Nikolaev Archives, 2178-1-4, p. 478.

²⁴³ *Actul de acuzare*, p. 71.

²⁴⁴ Alexander Dallin, *Odessa, 1941-1944: A Case Study of Soviet Territory under Foreign Rule* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1957), p. 42.

²⁴⁵ Jipa Rotaru, et al., *Maresalul Ion Antonescu, Am facut razboiul sfantimpotriva bolsevismului* (Oradea, Romania: Editura Cogito, 1994), p. 177.

members of the Romanian military, and several civilians.²⁴⁶ The command of the Tenth Division had formerly served as NKVD (the Soviet secret police) headquarters. Warnings had been issued as early as September that “the fleeing Communist units not only mined certain buildings and locations, they installed explosives inside certain objects and even toys.”²⁴⁷ Immediately upon learning of the disaster, Antonescu ordered General Iosif Iacobici, chief of staff and commander of the Fourth Army, to “take drastic punitive measures.”²⁴⁸ That night, Iacobici cabled Antonescu’s military cabinet, informing them that he had begun to act: “As a retaliatory measure, and as an example for the population, I have taken steps to hang a number of suspected Jews and Communists in the town squares.”²⁴⁹ That same night, Iacobici sent General Nicolae Macici, commander of the Fourth Army’s Second Army Corps to Odessa. General Tataranu’s deputy, Colonel Stanculescu, delivered Antonescu’s Order no. 302.826 to Trestioreanu demanding “immediate retaliatory action, including the liquidation of 18,000 Jews in the ghettos and the hanging in the town squares of at least 100 Jews for every regimental sector....”²⁵⁰

At noon, Stanculescu again cabled Tataranu, reporting about the punitive measures: “Retaliatory action has been taken within the city via shooting [and] hanging, and notices warning against terrorist acts have been posted. The execution of the Jews in the ghettos is well under way....”²⁵¹ Jews were rounded up and brought to these sites by the army, the gendarmerie, and the police (who had come from Romania). The major executions were carried out in neighboring Dalnic or enroute to Dalnic; tens of thousands of Jews were brought there for this purpose. Although the Germans had offered to send in an SS battalion to assist in “dismantling mines” and ridding Odessa “of Jews and Bolsheviks,” the Romanian authorities chose to act alone.²⁵² The executed, including hostages and locals who had disobeyed orders, were given no trial and were hanged from balconies overlooking the main streets. After the explosion, long lines of poles were erected along the trolley tracks leading

²⁴⁶ See list of victims and casualty figures (apparently provisional), October 24, 1941, NDM, pp. 673-679.

²⁴⁷ Circular from Transnistrian police headquarters (signed by Alexianu), September 22, 1941, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1067.

²⁴⁸ Cable from the Military Cabinet to Fourth Army headquarters, October 22, 1941, NDM, Fond MAPN, Armata 4a; copy in USHMM/RG 25.003M, roll 12, Fourth Army collection, file 870, p. 634. From January 27 to September 22, 1941, Iacobici had served as minister of national defense, later doubling as chief of staff and commander of war headquarters. On September 9, Antonescu appointed him commander of the Fourth Army as well, after General Nicolae Ciuperca’s unsuccessful storming of Odessa.

²⁴⁹ Cable from Iacobici to the Military Cabinet, October 22, 1941, *ibid.*, p. 633.

²⁵⁰ Cable from Stanculescu to Tataranu, October 23, 1941, *ibid.*, pp. 654-656.

²⁵¹ Cable from Stanculescu to Tataranu, October 23, 1941, *ibid.*, pp. 651-653.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

out of town.²⁵³ Some 10,000 Jews who were arrested were jailed, but not immediately executed. General Iacobici hastened to send the Military Cabinet a status report detailing the retaliatory actions taken, which included “executions by shooting and by hanging, and the posting of notices warning anyone who would dare attempt such acts of terrorism.”²⁵⁴ By the next morning, hundreds of Jewish corpses hung in the town squares and at intersections.²⁵⁵

The carnage did not end there. At least 25,000 Jews were driven into fields by gendarmes. One of the few survivors of this trek, then a girl of sixteen, reported that her convoy was so huge that she could not see “its beginning or its end.”²⁵⁶ Some 22,000 Jews of all ages were packed into nine warehouses in Dalnic, a suburb of Odessa, an operation that continued past nightfall on October 23. The massacre proceeded as follows:

One by one, the warehouses were riddled with machine gun and rifle fire, doused with gasoline and ignited, except for the last warehouse, which was blown up. The chaos and the horrifying sights that followed cannot be described: wounded people burning alive, women with their hair aflame coming out through the roof or through openings in the burning storehouses in a crazed search for salvation. But the warehouse[s were] surrounded on all sides by soldiers, their rifles cocked. They had been ordered not to let a single civilian escape. The horror was so great that it deeply shocked everyone there, soldiers and officers alike.²⁵⁷

Trucks carrying gasoline and kerosene were parked outside the warehouses. These buildings were ignited quickly, one after the next, since the soldiers had to be protected. The troops then retreated about 50 meters (about 55 yards) and encircled the area to prevent escape. A Romanian officer described what he saw:

²⁵³ Dallin, *Odessa*, p. 77.

²⁵⁴ Report from Iacobici to the Military Cabinet, October 23, 1941, NDM, Fond Fourth Army, roll 12, file 870, pp. 664-665.

²⁵⁵ Dallin, *Odessa*, p. 77.

²⁵⁶ Testimony of Milea Morduhovici, August 31, 1995, recorded by Jean Ancel, to be submitted to YVA (henceforth: Morduhovici’s testimony). Morduhovici contracted typhus at the Bogdanovka camp and fled toward Odessa. She made it home, where she convalesced with the help of a Russian physician. In February 1942, she was deported again by train with her family.

²⁵⁷ Report from Iacobici to the Military Cabinet, October 23, 1941, *ibid.*, pp. 662-663. Cable no. 302.861, from Iacobici to War Headquarters in Tighina, *ibid.*, pp. 664-665.

When the fire broke out, some of those in the warehouse who were lightly wounded or still unharmed tried to escape by jumping out the window or exiting through the roof. The soldiers were ordered to immediately shoot at anyone who emerged. In an attempt to escape the agonies of the fire, some appeared at the windows and signaled to the soldiers to shoot them, pointing to their heads and hearts. But when they saw the guns pointed at them, they disappeared from the window for a brief moment, only to reappear a few seconds later and signal to the soldiers once again. Then they turned their backs to the window in order not to see the soldiers shooting at them. The operation continued throughout the night, and the faces visible by the light of the flames were even more terrifying. This time, those who appeared in the windows were naked, having stripped off their burning clothing. Some women threw their children out the window.²⁵⁸

One warehouse was selected to fulfill Antonescu's express desire to blow up a building packed with Jews.²⁵⁹ The explosion occurred on October 25, 1941, at 5:45 p.m., precisely when the Romanian army headquarters in Odessa had exploded three days earlier. The force of the blast scattered body parts all over the area surrounding the warehouse. Officers Deleanu, Niculescu-Coca, Radu Ionescu, and Balaceanu all shot Jews who attempted to escape and even threw Soviet hand grenades into the warehouses. Some horrified soldiers and even officers did their best not to shoot the human flames. "Many of us, the officers who could not bear these sights, tried to hide, and they threatened us because of this."²⁶⁰ German sources—an officer in the Abwehr visited Odessa in late October and prepared a detailed report on the explosion of the Romanian headquarters there—confirm the scope and nature of the Romanian operation in Odessa. Yet, these sources emphasize that Soviet agents had planted the mines, rather than emphasizing the Romanian reprisals against the Jews.²⁶¹

Toward the end of November, the Romanians brought prisoners of war to Dalnic "to dig pits next to the warehouses, remove the corpses using hooks or various other means, and

²⁵⁸ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: no. 122, pp. 210-211.

²⁵⁹ Order no. 563 (302.858), October 24, 1941, NDM, Fourth Army Collection, file 870, p. 688; copy in USHMM, RG 25.003M, roll 12.

²⁶⁰ *Actul de acuzare*, p. 53

²⁶¹ "Bericht über Wahrnehmungen in Odessa," November 4, 1941, U.S. National Archives, RG 242, T 501, roll 278.

bury them.” After the liberation of Odessa, the Communist Party’s district committee, Obkom, reported that in the nine pits there were “more than 22,000 bodies there, among them children who had died of suffocation. Some bodies bore bullet wounds, severed extremities, or shattered skulls.”²⁶² At a cabinet meeting on November 13, the Conducator casually asked the governor of Transnistria if the retaliatory actions against the Jews of Odessa were severe enough, to which Alexianu replied that many were killed and hanged in the streets.²⁶³

The first Jewish deportee columns originating from Odessa set out on foot from Dalnic toward Bogdanovka in late October 1941, passing through Berezovka in early November.²⁶⁴ Jewish villagers along the deportation route were forced into these huge convoys as well. They were later split into smaller, more manageable groups and escorted by Romanian gendarmes with the eager assistance of Ukrainian and Russian police who had offered their services just ten days after the Romanians occupied Odessa.

The convoys were marched along the Odessa-Berezovka road for several days. After a day or two in Berezovka, they continued on foot to Mostovoye and from there on to Domanovka by way of Nikolaevka. For two weeks, the convoys trudged some 200 kilometers (124 miles) to Bogdanovka, mostly in pouring rain and freezing cold. They received no food or water, and any stragglers were shot by gendarmes. At night, the Jews were taken into the fields where they were forced to remain on the muddy ground, and the women and girls were raped by the gendarmes and the Ukrainian militia. The gendarmes, seeking mainly jewelry and gold, conducted searches and seized anything of value, including clothing. In the mornings, the convoy would regroup, and the gendarmes would shoot whoever did not or could not get up, leaving the corpses unburied. Despite the trail of bodies marking the deportation route, the convoys actually swelled along the way by absorbing Jews from the county of Odessa.²⁶⁵ The grouping of these Jews along the roadside was one of the gendarmes’ first assignments upon arrival in the district.²⁶⁶

²⁶² Communist Party of the Ukraine, Odessa County Committee (Obkom), Final Register and General Data of the Regional Commission to the Extraordinary State Commission on the Damage and Victims of the Fascist Occupation of the Region during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1944), December 31, 1944, Communist Party Archives in Odessa, II-II-52, p. 22.

²⁶³ *Actul de acuzare*, pp. 64-65.

²⁶⁴ Until the opening of the former Soviet archives (1993) and the discovery of Milea Morduhovici (see fn. 256), virtually nothing was known about this chapter in the liquidation of the city’s Jews. The description of the march from Dalnic to Bogdanovka in October-November 1941 is based on Morduhovici’s account.

²⁶⁵ Commander of Berezovka gendarmerie legion to the prefect, January 31, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2361-1-39, p. 15; Morduhovici’s testimony.

²⁶⁶ Commander of Berezovka gendarmerie legion to the prefect, January 31, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2361-1-39, p. 15.

The second stage of the deportations—those carried out by train—began on January 12, 1942, when 856 Jews departed for Berezovka. Gendarmerie headquarters estimated that 40,000 Jews remained in Odessa.²⁶⁷ Petala, deputy head of the Odessa Evacuation Office, oversaw the operation there, and Ciurea, his civilian counterpart, stationed himself at the prefecture in Berezovka to direct matters from the field. Colonel Matei Velcescu, head of the Central Bureau for the Evacuation of the Jews from Odessa, coordinated the various authorities in Odessa in order to expedite the deportations. “The heads of [the municipality, police, army, military, court, and railroad] were assigned specific tasks involving the roundup, housing, and transfer of the Jews, for which they were given the necessary manpower in the field.”²⁶⁸

Each transport began with a random selection of 1,000-2,000 Jews from among those who had reported or been brought to Slobodka as well as from those brought before the deportation committees in Odessa. These Jews were promptly robbed by representatives of the authorities and by an emissary of the Romanian National Bank, who had come from Bucharest for this purpose.²⁶⁹ The gendarmes then pushed and shoved their charges onto the freight platform in Sortirovka (Sortirovocnia), some 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the ghetto and even farther from the deportation centers in the city. The deportations began in -20° C (-4° F) weather and continued despite blizzards, even when temperatures dropped to -35° C (-31° F).²⁷⁰ The only interruptions were caused by suspensions in rail service due to the extreme cold, the low-grade coal powering the locomotives, and the huge snowdrifts blocking the tracks. Until late January, the Jews were transported in trains provided by the Germans through the Wehrmacht Liaison Headquarters in Tiraspol.²⁷¹

The Jews were transported in boxcars, carrying some 120 people each. “There were so many Jews in the railway car that it was hard to keep your feet on the floor.”²⁷² Hundreds froze to death in the ghetto, on the way to the train station, or waiting on the loading platform for the trains. Hundreds more perished while sleeping in the streets of the ghetto when there was no room in the houses. Fearing a typhus epidemic, the administration’s Health Department and the Romanian army’s medical personnel ordered all dead bodies to be

²⁶⁷ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 133a, p. 216.

²⁶⁸ Affidavit of Velcescu, April 1, 1950, in Pantea file, p. 171.

²⁶⁹ Cable from Alexianu to the Civilian-Military Cabinet, January 13, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-11486, p. 36.

²⁷⁰ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: no. 137, pp. 221-222.

²⁷¹ Wehrmacht Liaison Transnistria Headquarters to Alexianu, February, 1, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1084, p. 2.

²⁷² Starodinskii, *Odesskoe Getto*, p. 35; and Ehrenburg, p. 98.

removed from the city.²⁷³ Thus, the frozen corpses were also loaded onto the trains. With no room to lay them on the floor of the cars, the bodies had to be placed upright—the frozen dead alongside the living and those who perished en route. On February 13, 1942, Colonel Velcescu reported that 31,114 had been evacuated by train to Berezovka²⁷⁴ These Jews were shot by local German extermination units in cooperation with Romanian gendarmes, and their bodies were burnt by the Germans. In all, 35,000 Jews out of 40,000 were deported, as stated by Dr. Tataranu in April 1942.²⁷⁵

According to Vidrascu, 20-25 percent of the deportees froze to death before and during the deportations.²⁷⁶ This figure might have been much less had greedy gendarmes and other officials not stripped the Jews of their property, their clothing, and especially their coats (particularly those made of leather or fine fabrics). The gendarmes and soldiers who brought the Jews to Sortirovka referred to the deportation train as the “hearse.” A Romanian officer who rode this train on January 18 (in a special car provided for the military) recorded his impressions:

It was a terrible winter, the kind one encounters only in Russia...It was twilight. Some 1,200 women, children, and old people from Odessa were brought to the train station under armed German guard. [...] On three sleds, towed by women, lay five old people who had forgotten to die at home....The Jews were allotted ten boxcars; that is, 120 people to a car. On the cars was written: 8 horses or 40 people; nevertheless, 120 were forced in. They were shoved, prodded with metal rods, jammed into the cars, but they got in. [...] During the loading an old man and three women died. Their bodies were still loaded onto the train....

That dismal night, a bundle [suddenly] fell from one of the cars...and hit the platform with a sound like a stone shattering. A few bits scattered here and there on impact. They were pieces of a frozen baby [who had fallen] from his mother’s arms....The mother lost her mind and stood wailing on the platform, clawing

²⁷³ Tataranu, “*Tifosul exantematic in Transnistria*,” April 1942, Nikolaev Archives, 2178-1-424, pp. 4-5. (Henceforth: Tataranu report).

²⁷⁴ Velcescu to Alexianu, Odessa Archive, 2242-1-1487, pp. 132-132b.

²⁷⁵ Tataranu report, p. 4.

²⁷⁶ Affidavit of Vidrascu, June 17, 1950, copy in USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 30; Bogopolski’s testimony. She testified that temperatures dropped to –40°C (–40°F) during the deportations.

her face....Then the train began moving forward. Toward death. It was a funeral train, a hearse.²⁷⁷

Major Apostolescu, a General Staff emissary sent by the Romanian army to oversee the deportation and confiscation, reported on January 18, 1942, that Romanian gendarmes had been in charge of the operation and that “some of the Jews are dying in train cars due to the cold.” The officer attested that ten Jews had perished in the first transport and sixty in the second “on account of the bitter cold and harsh blizzards.”²⁷⁸ In addition, having departed without any food, Jews were dying from hunger on the way from the ghetto to the train station. All the Jews, the officer noted, were either old men, children under the age of sixteen, or women: “There are no men younger than 41 years of age and very few between 41 and 50. All are in miserable condition, clearly proving that they are the poorest Jews in Odessa.” Among his recommendations: “In light of the [harsh] weather, which is completely unsuitable for transport, and the impression made [on me] by the considerable number of Jews dying in the ghetto, en route [to the loading platform] and on the trains, it would perhaps be better if there were no transports on those days when it is too cold....The Jews must be forbidden to take [with them] family members who have fallen [dead] in the ghetto or on the way.”²⁷⁹

Despite the cold, German railway workers (until January 31) and gendarmes accompanying the transports picked through the Jews’ belongings in search of valuables. The platform was littered with pillows, blankets, coats, and overshoes that the Jews had not been allowed to take with them. The gendarmes shot anyone who tried to run along the platform, usually attempting to rejoin family in another car. All the while, German soldiers photographed the scene. The trip to Berezovka, added the Romanian officer who rode the train, took all night instead of the usual three hours. During the lengthy stopovers, he heard the “desperate cries” of the deportees.²⁸⁰ Once the car doors closed, absolute darkness prevailed. At Berezovka, according to the officer cited above, the dead brought from Odessa and another fifty who died in transit were removed from the train. “While still at the station, the bodies were arranged in a pyre, sprayed with gasoline, and set alight.”²⁸¹ It was

²⁷⁷ V. Ludusanu, “*Trenul-Dric*” (Hearse), *Curierul Israelit* 9 (November 12, 1944). (Henceforth: *Trenul-Dric*.)

²⁷⁸ Report by Apostolescu with letter to Polichron, January 18, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1486, pp. 10-11.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁸⁰ *Trenul-Dric*.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

impossible to dig a mass grave, since the ground was frozen solid, so the bodies instead were burned in another effort by the Hygiene Service to avert a typhus epidemic.

Many Jews who had survived all the horrors of Odessa finally broke down at Berezovka. The sight of the bodies ablaze made it clear for the first time that they themselves were doomed. The fire and stench of the night snuffed out the last of their will to live: “The boxcar door creaked open, and we were blinded by the scarlet flames of the funeral pyres. I saw people writhing in the flames. There was a strong smell of gasoline. They were burning people alive.”²⁸² Most Jews thrown on the pyre were already dead, but some only appeared that way because they were frozen stiff; the heat of the fire revived them briefly before taking their lives.

Not all the transports were deposited at Berezovka. An unknown number were taken farther north to Veselinovo, a relatively large German-Ukrainian borough controlled by special units of the local SS.²⁸³ In both Veselinovo and Berezovka, Romanian gendarmes waited for the deportees, clubbing them to hurry them along. The gendarmes ordered the Jews to remove the bodies from the train and arrange them in piles, though the deportees were half-frozen themselves. The unloading took place in a nearby field. At Berezovka and Veselinovo, the convoys were divided arbitrarily, without regard for family unity, and immediately sent off on foot in different directions. The Jews were allowed no rest.

On January 17, five days into the operation, Transnistrian gendarmerie commander Colonel Emil Broșteanu sent a progress report to the administration in Transnistria and to gendarmerie headquarters in Bucharest. This document sheds light on the technical aspects of the deportation:

I have the honor of informing you that, on January 12, 1942, the evacuation of the Jews from Odessa began. In accordance with the order issued by the Transnistrian administration, the Jews about to be evacuated have been assembled in the ghettos after each [Jew] has appeared before the Committee for the Assessment of Property (Jewelry) and surrendered his money in return for RKKS. Convoys of 1,500-2,000 individuals are put together inside the ghetto and loaded onto German trains. They are

²⁸² Ehrenburg, citing a witness, p. 100.

²⁸³ Commander of Wehrmacht Liaison Transnistria Headquarters to Headquarters of Romanian Third Army in Tiraspol, March 20, 1942, Special Archives in Moscow, 492-1-5, p. 262.

transported to the Mostovoye-Veselyevo [Veselinovo] region, in the Berezovka district. From the Berezovka station, they are escorted to the relocation area. To date, 6,000 have been evacuated, and the transports are continuing daily.

It is very difficult to find shelter for them in the relocation villages, since the Ukrainian population does not accept them; consequently, many end up in the stables of the collective farms. Because of the freezing temperatures (which sometimes reach -20°C) and the lack of food, and [because of] their age and miserable condition, many die along the way and freeze where they fall. The Berezovka [gendarmerie] legion has been recruited for this operation, but due to the severe cold, the escort personnel must change off frequently. Bodies are strewn along the route [and] buried in antitank trenches. We are rarely able to recruit local people to bury the bodies, since [the locals] try as much as possible to avoid such operations. We shall continue reporting on the progress of the operation.²⁸⁴

Gendarmerie headquarters repeated the above almost verbatim in its first summary report on the operation, updating only the number of deportees: “As of January 22, 12,234 Jews have been evacuated out of a total of 40,000.”²⁸⁵

The depleted convoys proceeded to various destinations. An estimated 4,000-5,000 Jews were sent to Bogdanovka, where the liquidation operation had been completed but the body burnings were still at their height. Some of the new arrivals were taken straight to the pit, shot, and burned. Other Jews were brought to Domanovka, where Padure was conducting selections and separating out the “expert craftsmen.” Tens of thousands of Odessa Jews brought to these two camps in November 1941 had already been slaughtered. At Domanovka, the liquidations continued, and the latest convoys met the same fate as those before.

Several transports were directed to the local state farms, which had passed into Romanian hands wherever uninhabited by German villagers. The bulk of the convoys, however, were led to improvised camps in ethnic-German villages in Berezovka. The march

²⁸⁴ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 129, p. 222.

²⁸⁵ Report re: December 15, 1941, to January 15, 1942, by gendarmerie headquarters in Transnistria, *ibid.*, no. 133a, p. 216.

to these camps was prolonged in order to thin the ranks along the way, or, as one survivor put it, so as many as possible would die a “natural death.”²⁸⁶ Convoys sent to camps 18 kilometers (11 miles) from the Berezovka train station were walked in circles for three days in the frozen, snow-covered wasteland, with most of the exhausted adults and children expiring in the fields. Each convoy was robbed by the gendarmes, who seized anything that appeared valuable: “They took our last possessions from us. By the time we reached Domanovka, we were paupers.”²⁸⁷

The Berezovka Massacres

Transnistria contained the largest concentration of Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans) in the Ukraine. A census conducted by the Nazis in early 1943 registered 130,866 Germans living in the region, compared with 169,074 in the entire Reichskommissariat Ukraine.²⁸⁸ Some 100,000 of those in Transnistria were scattered among the villages and towns ringing Odessa. Under the Soviets, Greater Odessa had encompassed almost all of southern Transnistria.²⁸⁹ The local Germans in the Odessa area constituted some forty percent of the Soviet Germans under Nazi occupation. Based on the Nazis’ wartime figures, Transnistria comprised more than thirty German villages whose populations exceeded 1,000 each.²⁹⁰

Convoys of Jews from Bessarabia were marched past German villages north of the Dniester estuary, northwest of Odessa and east of Tiraspol. Likewise, convoys deported on foot from southern Transnistria to the county of Golta passed dozens of German communities. One witness described the thirst for Jewish blood among the SS’s new German recruits, who shot into crowds of Jews.²⁹¹ Another Nazi body operating among the ethnic Germans in and around Odessa was Einsatzgruppe D, numbering some 500 men. Secondary units reached the area in late August 1941 after conducting extermination campaigns in

²⁸⁶ Ehrenburg, p. 99.

²⁸⁷ Ehrenburg, p. 98.

²⁸⁸ Figures from the 1943 census of ethnic Germans, cited in Meir Buchsweiler, *The Ethnic Germans in the Ukraine toward the Second World War* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Diaspora Research Institute, Society for Jewish Historical Research, 1980), pp. 345-348. This research, together with documentation uncovered following the opening of the archives in Russia and the Ukraine, has helped to provide a more complete picture of the extermination of Odessa Jewry in Berezovka.

²⁸⁹ K. Stumpp, “*Verzeichnis der deutschen Siedlungen in Gebiet Odessa (mit Karte)*” (Survey of the German settlements in the Odessa county [with map]), in *Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Russland* (Homeland book of the Germans from Russia), 1956, pp. 181-193. Identification of the German villages is problematic, since the Soviet regime renamed some as part of Russification, while the Nazis—and, to a certain extent, the Romanian occupation authorities—used the German place names predating the 1917 revolution.

²⁹⁰ See Buchsweiler, *Ethnic Germans*.

²⁹¹ Testimony of Malca Barbalata of Bolgrad, recorded in Nahariya, April 3, 1967, YVA, PKR/V, pp. 1263-1265.

Bukovina and Bessarabia.²⁹² Einsatzkommando 12 terrorized the regions of Bergdorf-Glückstahl, east of the town of Dubossary; Hoffnungstal, in the counties of Tiraspol and Ananyev, north of the town of Katarzi; and Speyer-Landau, in the eastern section of Berezovka County, near the Bug.

Einsatzkommando 11b operated in the Seltz region (southeast of Tiraspol, near the Dniester); in the German-populated area known as Kutshurgan, south and southwest of the Ukrainian town of Rasdelnia, on both sides of the railroad tracks leading there; in the Gross-Liebenthal region, southwest of Odessa, near the border with Bessarabia; and around occupied Odessa. As shown above, Odessa itself was left to the Romanians. The Einsatzgruppen quickly moved on to Simferopol and the Crimea. While still in the vicinity, though, the Einsatzgruppen organized the new administration, handled matters of health and education, and issued certificates attesting to German bloodlines. In October, Einsatzgruppe D departed from most of Transnistria and moved on to the Crimea, but the Dubossary area retained a small secondary unit, known as Nachkommando SS, to continue liquidating the Jewish population.²⁹³

A third Nazi body operating in the region was the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (VoMi), which served as a “liaison office for ethnic-German affairs.” The VoMi organized the local Germans into cogs in the extermination apparatus. Heinrich Himmler instructed the VoMi to “exercise control over the local Germans in the occupied areas of the USSR.”²⁹⁴ In Transnistria, the VoMi set up the Sonderkommando Russland (SkR), an extermination unit composed of local German SS men.²⁹⁵ SS Oberführer (Commander) Horst Hoffmeyer, who was promoted to *Brigadierführer* (SS brigade commander) on November 9, 1943, set up headquarters in the German town of Landau, in Berezovka County. Landau was situated in the middle of a densely German region near the Bug. Secondary units moved into Halberstadt, a German village east of Landau on the Bug, and elsewhere. The original VoMi was comprised of the eighty men who founded the SkR; but, by late 1942 their ranks had swelled to 160—all SS agents. The German areas were divided into eighteen sub-regions, each headed by an SS man assisted by at least three SkR members.²⁹⁶

²⁹² Buchsweiler, *Ethnic Germans*, p. 267.

²⁹³ Liaison Headquarters in Tiraspol to Transnistrian government, April 3, 1942, *ibid.*, 2242-1-1086, p. 64.

²⁹⁴ Heinrich Himmler, “Erfassung der deutschen Volkszugehörigen in der Gebieten der europäischen Sowietunion” (The census of German nationals in the European regions of the Soviet Union), July 11, 1941, Nuremberg Documents, NO-4274.

²⁹⁵ Buchsweiler, *Ethnic Germans*, p. 274.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The SkR began operating in Transnistria on September 20, 1941.²⁹⁷ Even before any agreements had been signed with the Romanian authorities, the unit set up a state-within-a-state and recruited the local population for service to the Reich. Aside from their patrols, even the Romanian gendarmes had no access to the region under SkR control. This territory was in addition to the German villages and towns, since the Germans had seized—or demanded and received—some of the land that had been theirs prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. For this reason, the German villages (actually a minority within a large Ukrainian area) dominated more than their actual territory and created German “pockets” where Himmler’s henchmen reigned. The county of Berezovka was comprised of forty-two such villages—including twelve in the Berezovka subdistrict, thirteen in Mostovoye, and twelve in Landau—that numbered some 16,200 Germans.²⁹⁸

The status of the German communities in Transnistria was negotiated in Bucharest and Odessa. Correspondence between German Ambassador Manfred von Killinger and Antonescu in November 1941 made it clear to the Romanians that the VoMi alone would represent the ethnic Germans in Transnistria. Alexianu and his prefects were to cooperate with Hoffmeyer and the sub-regional commanders regarding the Germans.²⁹⁹ Alexianu and Hoffmeyer met on December 8 in Odessa, and on December 13 in Tiraspol they officially established the state-within-a-state already operating in Transnistria. In the end, the Romanian government recognized the self-defense units “armed and trained by the SS headquarters of the VoMi and subject solely to its orders.”³⁰⁰

With the opening of the archives of the former Soviet Union, an exchange of letters between the Transnistrian administration and the *Gebietskommissar* (county head) in Nikolaev was revealed. Contrary to what was previously believed, the convoys transported mainly from Odessa to Berezovka and Veselinovo were not directed immediately to the German villages there; rather, these Jews were marched straight to the Bug with the aim of getting them to the other side, come what may. On February 5, Gebietskommissar Schlutter in Nikolaev sent Prefect Loghin of Berezovka a telegram warning of the ecological catastrophe wrought by the Romanians:

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 274.

²⁹⁸ List of German villages in Berezovka, compiled by the prefecture, early 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1087, p. 114; list of German communities in the county, n.d. [late 1941], Odessa Archives, 2361-1c-2, p. 240.

²⁹⁹ Correspondence between Killinger and M. Antonescu, November 14-15, 1941, Odessa Archives, 2359-1-24, p. 3.

³⁰⁰ Romanian version of the understanding, Tiraspol, December 13, 1941, Odessa Archives, 2359-1-24, pp. 4-8; German version, U.S. National Archives, T 175, roll 194, 233076-2733072.

Some 70,000 Jews have been concentrated on the [Romanian] side of the Bug, approximately 20 kilometers [12 miles] into [Transnistria], opposite the towns of Nikolaevka and Novaya Odessa, which lie about 60 kilometers [37 miles] north of Nikolaev on the Bug. Rumor has it that the Romanian military guard has been removed, so the Jews are being left to their fate and are dying of starvation and cold. Typhus has spread among the Jews, who are trying in every which way to exchange articles of clothing for food. In so doing, they are also endangering the German territory, which can easily be reached by crossing the frozen Bug River. The Gebietskommissar of Nikolaev requests that a decision be made as soon as possible regarding the fate of [these] Jews. They can be led so deep into Transnistria that crossing the Bug will become impossible for them. The Gebietskommissar asks to be apprised of what is being done by the Romanian side.³⁰¹

The governor's reply, written in the margins of the prefect's letter, asserted that the existing agreement had to be honored:

Send a cable stating that, in accordance with Article 7 of the Tighina Agreement of August 30, 1941, the Jews of Transnistria shall be deported east of the Bug when [military] operations so permit. We are holding them here in preparation for crossing the Bug and cannot return them further inland [inside Transnistria]. Request that we be informed if implementation of the agreement is possible.³⁰²

Schlutter indeed received such a telegram from Acting-Governor Emanoil Cercavschi-Jelita.³⁰³ The message, which was worded in accordance with the written instructions of Alexianu, explained that the assembling of the Jews in concentration camps (*Konzentrationslagern*) along the Bug was being done in accordance with the Tighina

³⁰¹ Telegram from Schlutter, February 5, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1486, pp. 180-180b; Romanian translation, presented to Alexianu is found on p. 179.

³⁰² Loghin to Alexianu, February 8, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1486, p. 178

³⁰³ Telegram from Cercavschi to Schlutter, February 14, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1486, p. 177.

Agreement (Article 7) signed by General Hauffe: “For technical reasons,” the telegram stated, “the transfer of the Jews deeper into Transnistria is not possible at present.”³⁰⁴ On February 16, Alexianu received a translation of a second telegram and inquired: “What answer was given?” Cercavschi replied: “We responded to Generalkommissar Oppermann that we were taking steps to burn the Jewish bodies.”³⁰⁵

Alexianu and Hoffmeyer met periodically to make practical arrangements and monitor the killings, burials, and burnings. These “arrangements” were concluded orally, and the Romanians generally avoided mentioning burning the bodies or mass executions in the documents sent to the Germans. However, in the margins of letters, reports, and telegrams, there are comments and instructions referring to the burning, to corpses strewn in fields, to agreements allowing the Romanians to drive convoys of tens of thousands of Jews across the Bug. On the agenda of a March 7 meeting between the two, was a discussion of “Rastadt, in the Berezovka district—Jews shot and left unburied.”³⁰⁶

Once cooperation became routine with regard to the exterminations in Berezovka—and once most of Odessa Jewry was dead—Eichmann produced a memo-cum-study on the “Deportation of Romanian Jews to the Reichskommissariat Ukraine.”³⁰⁷ In this document, the foremost Nazi expert on the liquidation of Jews contrasted the German and Romanian methods of genocide. Eichmann praised the Romanians’ desire to eliminate their Jews but did not welcome the Romanian operation “at present.” He agreed with the deportations “in principle” but criticized the “disorderly and indiscriminate” evacuation of thousands of Jews to the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, which threatened not only the German forces but also the local residents with epidemics, insufficient food, and other hazards. Eichmann explained: “Among other things, these unplanned and premature evacuations of Romanian Jews to the occupied territories in the east pose a serious threat to the deportation [operation] presently being carried out among the German Jews. For these reasons, I request that the Romanian government be approached to put an immediate end to these illegal transports of Jews.”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Romanian translation of Oppermann’s telegram, Alexianu’s comment of February 16, and Cercavschi’s response of February 18, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1486, p. 199.

³⁰⁵ Ibid. One difficulty in seeking documentation concerning the murder of Jews in the archives of the Transnistrian administration stems from the fact that such documents were not filed separately and are scattered among hundreds of thousands of pages of correspondence related to other matters.

³⁰⁶ Problems discussed at meeting in Odessa, March 7, 1942, between the governor and Oberführer Hoffmeyer, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1085, p. 4. Page 5 of this document is entitled, “The Responses to the Requests of the German Delegation,” but mentions no decision about the corpses in Rastadt.

³⁰⁷ Eichmann to the Foreign Office, April 14, 1942, Nuremberg documents, NG-4817.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

If the Romanians continued deporting Jews across the Bug, Eichmann proposed that the SD (the Nazi security service) be given a free hand to deal with the situation. However, Eichmann, although a high-ranking RSHA official, had no jurisdiction over the security police in the Ukraine, the Einsatzgruppen, or the VoMi; only Himmler did.³⁰⁹ In Bucharest, Killinger met with Mihai Antonescu, who then summoned Alexianu for an update, promising an early response.³¹⁰ The Foreign Office in Berlin replied to Rosenberg on May 12 that it had appealed to the Romanian government. The embassy in Bucharest cabled back that Alexianu would soon report to Mihai Antonescu, after which “the deputy prime minister would clarify the Romanian position.” Nevertheless, a German Foreign Office official added, “28,000 Jews have been brought to German villages in Transnistria. They have since been eliminated.”³¹¹ This figure represented the bulk of the Odessa Jews deported by train.

It is now known that 14,500 Jews—one transport of 6,500 and another of 8,000—all from Bessarabia and Bukovina were taken as close possible to the Bug in the area of Nikolaev and driven across the river into German hands. Once on German territory, they were apparently murdered by the local Germans, who were organized into Nazi bands on both sides of the Bug. The German authorities did not want masses of dying Jews in the vicinity, since there was a sizable German presence on both sides of the river.³¹² According to the Nazi census of 1943, the Nikolaev district (under Soviet administration) was home to 27,078 ethnic Germans.³¹³ After the attempt to foist the Jews of Odessa upon the Germans aroused such strong opposition, the transports to Voznesensk were discontinued. The convoys reaching Berezovka and Veselinovo were marched to another area not far from the Berezovka-Veselinovo line—within a triangle of sorts formed by Berezovka, Mostovoye, and Lichtenfeld and Rastadt.

The convoys trudged for days over the snow-covered plateaus to the Bug during the brutal winter of 1941/42. Along the way, the gendarmerie sergeants were re-routed, thereby sparing a few fortunate Jews who never reached the German villages. These Jews have testified to the weeks of aimless trudging in circles. The cold was intolerable, yet the

³⁰⁹ Transcript of the pre-trial interrogation of Eichmann by the Israeli police, YVA: *Police d’Israel, Adolf Eichmann, Tonbandskription und Maschine*, pp. 1123-1125, 3038.

³¹⁰ Rademacher to Eichmann, Berlin, May 12, 1942, Nuremberg Documents, NG-4817.

³¹¹ Rademacher to the Ministry of Eastern Occupied (Soviet) Territories, May 12, 1942, *ibid.*

³¹² Protocol of conversation between Davidescu and Stelzer, March 13, 1942, Foreign Ministry Archives, roll 6, p. 58; copy in USHMM, RG 25.006M, roll 6. Stelzer asked that the Romanians cease pushing Jews onto the German side of the Bug, since 14,500 had already crossed the river, and another 60,000 in the Berezovka county were to follow.

³¹³ Buchsweiler, *Ethnic Germans*, p. 347. The Soviet census of 1926 found 30,911 Germans there, constituting 6.2 percent of the population (see *Ethnic Germans*, map no. 3).

deportees had no shelter; convoys were left in the fields to fend for themselves, while the gendarmes hurried off in search of the nearest village.³¹⁴ The Jews had nowhere to run in the little German kingdom by the Bug, and most Ukrainians did not want or dare to help them. As Schlutter reported in telegrams, the Jews were left unguarded, and many perished every day. The dead remained in the fields; the problem of burial arose only in the spring.³¹⁵

Most convoys were eventually directed to Ukrainian villages in the Berezovka district, where the Jews were housed in unused stables, storage sheds, and other structures on farms. Others ended up in the ruins of villages emptied by war and by the SkR's evacuation of Ukrainian villagers. The gendarmes moved on, leaving the Ukrainian militia to guard the deportees. News of their fate was not long in coming. The few gendarmes scattered among the hundreds of villages primarily oversaw farming and were too small in number to maintain order. Moreover, as noted by an SS officer at SkR headquarters in Landau, the Romanians "did not wish to get their hands dirty,"³¹⁶ even their mass exterminations in the "kingdom of death" relied on the Ukrainian militia. Thus, the convoys were dispersed outside Berezovka's German villages so others would do the dirty work.

The first known extermination of the Jews deported from Odessa took place on January 31, 1942, in the village of Podoleanca, near the German enclave of Novo America, north of Veselinovo and Rastadt. Ten "German civilian police [Selbstschutz], took 200 Jews out of [Podoleanca], led them to the outskirts of the village, and shot them dead." The dead were burned, and their belongings taken to Novo America.³¹⁷ The Jews of Odessa learned what was to be their fate on February 1 from Major Ion Popescu, the gendarmerie commander in Berezovka: "The Rastadt police shot 130 Jews from the village of Novaya Uman, burned the bodies, and divided the spoils among the inhabitants of the German villages."³¹⁸ Two weeks later, Popescu reported:

The gendarme legion in Mostovoye informs us that the Jews in the work camp at Gradovka, 800 in number, were shot to death by the German police from the village of Rastadt. In addition, [the legion] reports that there is no room for the Jews being exploited [for work] in the villages of Dvoreanca, Kriniski,

³¹⁴ See "The Killing Grounds," in Berezovka County in Ancel, *Transnistria*, vol. 1: pp. 313-320.

³¹⁵ Buchsweiler, *Ethnic Germans*, p. 322.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

³¹⁷ Intelligence Report no. 82, from Popescu to gendarmerie headquarters in Transnistria and to the prefect of Berezovka, February 11, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2361-1-7, p. 101.

³¹⁸ Popescu to the Berezovka prefect, February 1, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2361-1-7, p. 96.

Cudznea, Maitova, Cotonea, and Ripeaki. [The legion] proposes that approval be granted for the transfer of the 650 Jews located in the villages to the space now available in the village of Gradovka, where they can be housed under good conditions.³¹⁹

Over the next few months, gendarmerie bulletins referred to thousands of Jews slaughtered by the SkR and the Selbstschutz. The Romanians transported the Jews and prevented their escape; whereas, the Selbstschutz, under SkR orders, carried out the extermination. The gendarmerie assembled Jews wherever the German death squads could operate as quickly and efficiently as possible. The victims' belongings fell to the executioners. Unlike the Romanians, the Germans burned the bodies immediately to avert epidemics. The SkR appealed to the Romanian authorities to block the convoys' passage through or alongside German villages.³²⁰

On March 9, German death squads from Mostovoye and Zavadovka murdered 772 Jews from the Jewish camp in the village of Cihrin. On March 13, outside the German village of Cartaica, seventeen Germans "from SS units" gunned down 650 Jews from the Julievka camp. "Before the execution, the Jews were stripped down to their shirts, and their valuables, money, and clothing were taken by the German police to the village of Cartaica. The corpses of the victims were burned."³²¹ On March 16, it was reported that 120 Jews from the Catousea camp had been liquidated by an "SS police unit" consisting of sixteen Germans from the German village of Nova Candeli, east of Berezovka; these Jews, too, were robbed just before their death. This report reveals the degree of Romanian-German cooperation in exterminating Jews: Following the executions, 300 panic-stricken Jews fled the Lisinovka camp, but "[t]he gendarme legion was ordered to capture them and return them to the camp."³²² In short, the gendarmerie held the Jews in place, while the SkR killed them.

On March 18, it was disclosed that 483 Jews "brought to [Bernadovka] from Odessa" had been murdered by a German police unit from that village.³²³ This time the SkR did not have to travel, since the gendarmes led the Jews straight to the scene. And in late

³¹⁹ Popescu to the Berezovka prefect, February 17, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2361-1-7 p. 98.

³²⁰ See SkR request not to lead a Jewish convoy through the German village of Cartaica, and a report on the murder and body burning of sixty Jews in the village of Mikhaylovka, Odessa Archives, 2361-1-7, pp. 102-105.

³²¹ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: no. 144, p. 226. Original report reprinted in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 144, p. 263. The reports published in Carp, *Cartea neagră*, are among the summaries Brosteanu sent his superiors in Bucharest. These dispatches were presented at the trials of the Romanian war criminals in 1945-1946.

³²² Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: no. 145, pp. 226-227. See original in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 145, p. 264.

³²³ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: no. 146, p. 227.

May, the new gendarmerie commander, Colonel M. Iliescu, reported that SS police from Lichtenfeld had murdered 1,200 Jews brought to the Suha-Verba collective farm.³²⁴

Since we now have all the gendarmerie reports on the liquidation of Odessa Jewry, we know that the SkR relayed the following to the RSHA in Berlin, almost as an afterthought: “As of early May, the 28,000 Jews transported to the German villages in Transnistria have been exterminated,” hence the disappearance of most Odessa Jews deported by train. Not one survivor has been found. The German natives of this region, who escaped to Germany, the United States, and Canada, have never admitted to genocide. The West German State Attorney’s Office asserted in 1961 that no Jew in the German settlement areas is known to have survived the VoMi era.³²⁵

In September 1942, 598 Jewish men, women, and children—mostly Bessarabians—were deported from Bucharest to Mostovoye. And in early October, 150 Jews—allegedly communists—were also transported to Transnistria. Handed over by the gendarmerie there to the German death squad in Rastadt, the first group was immediately shot dead. Only sixteen survived.³²⁶ In May 1942, the Army Headquarters asked the Conducator whether the German policemen (SkR) are allowed to shoot thousands of Jews in the Berezovka district and burn their corpses. Antonescu responded: “it is not the army’s job to worry about this matter.”³²⁷

During the summer of 1943, the Rastadt death squad executed more than 1,000 Jews assembled in the village. Apparently for the first time, a witness survived to describe the killings. We therefore have the only known testimony—apart from gendarmerie reports—concerning the extermination method used by the Selbstschutz under VoMi command. Jews handed over to the SkR were herded by the Romanian gendarmes into the courtyard of the Berezovka Gendarme Legion’s headquarters. Told they would be transferred to Mostovoye, the deportees were instead brought to Rastadt. The village, according to the aforementioned witness, stood on a hill near Mostovoye:

When we arrived there...we found a large convoy. We were ordered to remove our clothes and, at the same time, to hand over anything we had of value....Afterward they told us to line up

³²⁴ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: no. 147, p. 227. See original in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 153, p. 274.

³²⁵ Quoted in Buchweiler, *Ethnic Germans*, p. 317.

³²⁶ General Inspectorate of Gendarmerie to Ministry of Interior; list of 598 Jews deported in Transnistria, having requested repatriation in the USSR in 1940; list of 18 Jews of the previous list who were alive as of September 1, 1943, Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: nos. 211-212, pp. 442-454.

³²⁷ Note from Military Cabinet and Antonescu’s remarks, May 12, 1942, Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 30, p.193.

facing pits, where we saw something black. It was tar. We were on the slope, while the Germans crowded together on the hilltop in their black clothes with the shiny armbands....We stood there, thousands [actually hundreds] of Jews in the open field...

Meanwhile the beasts became drunk and began abusing all the pretty girls and women. They created a small wave of panic by shooting several small children, whom they had wrenched from their mothers' bosom. And then, drunk, their consciences no longer functioning, they began mowing down row after row of people, under orders from a commander. The shots were accompanied by sounds of screeching and wailing that echoed throughout the German settlement. For [the Germans], it was entertainment, a celebration.

People fell, one after another or several at a time, into the prepared pits. These filled up [quickly], since they were quite shallow; they were dug to be long rather than deep.

At about 6 in the evening, the killing ended. Two [Jews] remained standing. One was tied to a car and dragged across the ground at high speed, and the other was run over by a speeding motorcycle driven by a drunken Nazi officer. All this took place before our eyes. [...] The Germans had set the corpses on fire, and they burned like straw, since [the Germans] had poured kerosene on them, and there was tar at the bottom of the pit. There was great rejoicing in the Nazi camp.³²⁸

Immediately after the war, Soviet sources estimated that 20,000 Jews were murdered this way in Rastadt and Suhaia (Suha) Balca, a sovkhos north of Mostovoye.³²⁹ The threat of epidemics prompted the burnings, and the tar was apparently intended to avoid contaminating water sources. The Romanian practice of throwing corpses into the Bug had sparked intense criticism from local German officials, since the river provided drinking water. Evidently, the Germans started torching the bodies in the mass graves in the summer of 1942 or even later. Until then, corpses may have been cremated in specially constructed facilities.

³²⁸ Testimony of Max Haimovici, n.d. [1961], YVA, 0-33779, pp. 23-25.

³²⁹ Ehrenburg, p. 105.

Rumors of body burnings by local Germans reached Alexianu's interrogators in April 1946, prior to his trial in Bucharest. The killing of Jews was not their focus, but they did ask the former governor where these atrocities had occurred. He replied: "[Jews] were burned at Rostov. The Germans buried the corpses in antitank trenches. Afterwards they brought gasoline, and the bodies were burned."³³⁰ Alexianu, a professor of law who corrected every typographical error in his affidavits, "confused" Rostov with Rastadt. Rastadt was a German village in Transnistria to which Jews were brought by the Romanian gendarmes who reported directly to him; Rostov was a Russian city some 750 kilometers (466 miles) to the east. No one noticed this "mistake," though in February 1942 Alexianu and Hoffmeyer had discussed the problem of the Jews shot to death and left unburied in Rastadt.

The Transfer of Jews to SS Units across the Bug

In their haste to liquidate Ukrainian Jewry, by the spring of 1942 the Germans found themselves short of slave labor to construct the *Durchgangstrasse IV*, the strategic highway linking Poland to southern Ukraine. Therefore, the Transnistrian administration began providing deportees from Romania as well as local Jews to the Nazi regime in Ukraine and to SS squads of local Germans. The highway stretched from Lvov to Stalino, north of the Sea of Azov, and east of Rostov (the gateway to the Caucasus Mountains and Stalingrad). It also passed through Bratslav (west of the Bug) and through Nemirov, Gaysin, Ivangorod, and Kirovograd (east of the Bug). Thousands of Romanian Jews perished in the labor camps in these towns. SS squads periodically crossed over to the Romanian side of the Bug and brought back with them thousands of Jews at a time to work on the highway. Ukrainian militia and volunteers from Lithuania helped to guard, and later to liquidate, Jews on the German side of the river. The Jews supplied by the Romanians, and ultimately delivered to their deaths, totaled at least 15,000.³³¹

In August 1942, the prefect of Tulchin (and former prefect of Berezovka), Loghin, sought Alexianu's permission to hand over 5,000 Jews to the SS for construction of the Nemirov-Bratslav-Seminki-Gaysin segment of the highway. The prefect asked that the governor accede to this request from "the headquarters of the SS squads," since he himself did not need those Jews for any large-scale project in his district and did not want to continue

³³⁰ Transcript of Alexianu's interrogation, April 14, 1946, p. 12, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 40010, vol. 45: p. 246.

³³¹ See "The Transfer of Jews to SS units across the Bug," in: Ancel, *Transnistria*, pp. 322-330.

feeding them.³³² Alexianu approved the transfer.³³³ The first “delivery” consisted of some 3,000 Jews, most of whom had been deported from Cernăuți two months earlier. On August 18, an SS unit headed by SS Hauptsturmführer (Captain) Franz Kristoffel transferred them to the German side. The children and elderly were put to death first, and by October 1943 most of the Jews had been killed—even those still able to work.

On August 2, 1942, 200 Jews working on farms in Tulchin were handed over to the Germans and loaded onto trucks for the journey across the Bug. Fifty-two children were saved when their parents threw them off the vehicles: Jews and local farmers brought the youngsters to the Tulchin ghetto. The Romanian authorities overlooked the rescue in exchange for a large sum of money. By the time the children reached the ghetto on foot, they were orphans.³³⁴ Another 100 deportees from Cernăuți were entrusted to the Germans on March 1, 1943. A survivor described his transfer to the work camp at Seminki, near Bratslav:

It was known that the Germans in the labor camps across the Bug—and at the...work sites on [the Romanian] side, such as Seminki and Bratslav—used bestial methods to kill many of the Jewish deportees turned over to them. For this reason, the deportees considered their transfer to the Germans a final and irreversible death sentence. On the Romanian side, they tortured us, starved us, and let us freeze to death, but there was always some chance we might survive.³³⁵

The German work camps across the Bug merit a separate study. Since the opening of the archives in Ukraine, we can examine the role of the Romanian authorities in transferring Jews to the SS units in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine. The administration in Transnistria understood the significance of this act, and no Jews were handed over without Romanian approval. Alexianu saw these transfers both as liquidation and a means of threatening the

³³² Telegram from Loghin to the governor’s cabinet, August 5, 1942, *ibid.* Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1088, p. 150.

³³³ Alexianu to gendarmerie headquarters in Transnistria, August 11, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1088, p. 151; Administration approval to Loghin, August 11, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1088, p. 148.

³³⁴ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 300. The prefect of Tulchin, who issued the directive to hand over the 200 Jews, was Col. Constantin Nasturas, a Romanian poet better known by his pen name, Poiana Volbura.

³³⁵ Testimony of Shimon Rosenrauch of Cernăuți, November 1959, YVA, 03-1536, pp. 7-8. Jewish artist Arnold Dagani, who fled back to Transnistria just prior to the last killing action, faithfully described the interaction between the German-speaking Jews and their killers in the camps across the Bug; Dagani, *Groapa este in livada de visini* (The pit is in the cherry orchard) (Bucharest: n.p., 1947); published in German as *Lasst mich leben* (Let me live), trans. Siegfried Rosenzweig (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1960).

deportees: work or else. On September 20, 1942, in Odessa, the governor told the Eighth Conference of Prefects and senior administration officials: “Prefects who have Jews and Gypsies must put them to work somewhere, in accordance with the directive [Order no. 23] and the orders given. Those who do not wish to work shall be transferred to the other side of the Bug. There, [the Germans] are willing to accept them.”³³⁶

Prefect Isopescu of Golta could not fulfill the German request for Jews, because he—like his neighbors to the east—had “exhausted” his supply in the spring of 1942. In March 1943, he wrote to Alexianu: “The German authorities across the Bug are asking us to provide 2,000-3,000 Jews to work for them in exchange for food. Request approval in principle and permission for the county of Berezovka to give us a certain number of Yids from the camp at Mostovoye, since we do not have enough. We wish to send those who refuse to work, the suspicious, and the useless.” Alexianu authorized the transfer of deportees from Mostovoye, Slivina, and Vapniarka. Everyone knew these Jews would never return.³³⁷

Another project was the construction of a new bridge over the Bug, linking southern Transnistria with the Reichskommissariat Ukraine. The Romanian segment of the bridge connected Trihaty and the town of Ochakov, and construction was entrusted to German firms from the Reich. Work began in spring 1943 and concluded that December. Four thousand Jews, mostly deportees from Romania, were turned over to SS squads and held in three camps on the Romanian side of the Bug (Trihaty, Varvarovka, and Kolosovka) and two on the German side (Kurievka and Matievka). Initially, the Germans requested 1,500 “civilian workers”; Antonescu himself decided to provide Jews.³³⁸ The Romanians dispatched Jewish youth and craftsmen from the counties that still actually had Jews: Moghilev, Tulchin, Balta, Jugastru, and Rybnitsa. Balta released more than 800 Jews to the Germans: 700 unskilled workers and 130 professionals.³³⁹ Moghilev sent several “shipments,” totaling 829 Jews.³⁴⁰ Tulchin supplied 1,000-2,000 and others as needed.³⁴¹

Even the county of Golta was asked, in a letter from the governor, to place at the Germans’ disposal “all [remaining] Gypsies aged 20-40” along with all able-bodied Jews.³⁴²

³³⁶ Report no. 8 from Eighth Conference of Administration Heads in Transnistria, September 20, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-22, p. 69.

³³⁷ Isopescu to Alexianu, March 24, 1943, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1496, p. 161. The governor wrote his approval in the margins.

³³⁸ Office of the Prime Minister to Alexianu, May 13, 1943, Odessa Archives, 2264-1c-40, p. 157

³³⁹ Administration to German Liaison Headquarters in Transnistria, June 24, 1943, Odessa Archives, *ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁴⁰ Administration to German Liaison Headquarters in Transnistria, June 10, 1943, Odessa Archives, *ibid.*, p. 166.

³⁴¹ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: no. 215, p. 386.

³⁴² Administration to Isopescu, August 7, 1943, Nikolaev Archives, 2178-1-372, p. 7.

In October 1943, approximately 2,000 Jews were still alive in Golta; the administration mobilized only fifty, as “the rest [were] sick and crippled.”³⁴³ The Romanian Railway Authority in Transnistria handed over 400 “fit and healthy” Jews recruited from the ghettos to maintain its Juralevka-Tulchin line. The administration ordered that “these Jews shall be made available to Einsatzgruppe Russland/Süd.”³⁴⁴ After a medical exam, they were handed over to the gendarmes. That October, a gendarmerie representative transferred them to the Sonderkommando in Varvarovka, and they proceeded to lay railroad tracks between Kolosovka and Trihaty. By early December, about 100 “strong” laborers remained. The Railway Authority engineer who had approved their departure two months earlier now requested that the survivors undergo an immediate physical examination “by a certified Romanian physician, and that all the sick and those unequipped to withstand the winter be returned to whichever ghetto they had come from,” with others sent in their place.³⁴⁵

Romanian and German Plans to Eliminate the Jews from Regat and Southern Transylvania

From February 1941 to August 23, 1944, the lives of Romanian Jews depended solely on the wishes of Antonescu and his assessment of how the Jewish presence could serve Romanian national interests. With the arrival in April 1941 of the Nazi advisor for Jewish affairs, Gustav Richter, the approach to the “Jewish question” in Romania changed. In his first report, Richter outlined future policy options; but he did so without taking into account the character of the country to which he had been sent, the personality of the Romanian dictator, and the special relationship between Hitler and Antonescu. He also did not realize the extent of German dependence on Romanian oil and wheat.³⁴⁶

German Ambassador Killinger informed Berlin at the end of August 1941 that Antonescu had concentrated 60,000 Jewish men from the Regat for forced labor and that he intended to send them to the east “to areas just now occupied.”³⁴⁷ This information seriously worried German authorities responsible for the annihilation of the Jews. It was the first hint that Antonescu was determined to immediately solve the Jewish problem in the Regat, too. According to an internal memo of the German Foreign Office sent to a director of the Reichsbank, it was decided that deporting all Romanian Jews would hurt Romania’s

³⁴³ Head of the Labor Authority in Golta County to Isopescu, October 27, 1943, *ibid.*, 2178-1-372.

³⁴⁴ Constantin Sidorovici to Berezovka Prefecture, October 1, 1943, Odessa Archives, 2361-1-591, p. 92.

³⁴⁵ Maintenance supervisor of Romanian railway in Transnistria, to the inspector-general of the railroad, December 15, 1943, Odessa Archives, 2361-1-592, p. 4.

³⁴⁶ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 2: no. 129, pp. 401-403.

³⁴⁷ Nuremberg Documents, NG-3989, September 1, 1941; copy, in Ancel, vol. 3: no. 51, p. 102.

economy and the commitments the country had taken on vis-à-vis the Reich, since Jews still held key positions in the economy. Moreover, “Aryanization” was still in its early stages, and many Romanians had been drafted. It went on to warn that deporting the Jews would “have a deleterious effect on the exchange of merchandise and on the new German business initiatives.”³⁴⁸

The German Legation acted immediately, and about a week after Antonescu gave his order to concentrate and deport 60,000 Jews, Mihai Antonescu was asked “to work toward removing the Jewish elements only in a slow, systematic manner.”³⁴⁹ Unsigned editorials reflecting the official government position appeared in the Romanian press at the end of October 1941. They informed Romanians that “the Jewish question had entered the final stage of solution, and no one in the world nor any miracle could prevent its solution.” The government announced that Romania “is counted among the nations prepared to cooperate resolutely in the final solution of the Jewish problem—not only the local one, but also the European one.”³⁵⁰ Antonescu pledged to expel every Jew from Romania: “No one and nothing can stop me, as long as I live, from carrying out the task of purifying [ourselves]” from the Jews.³⁵¹ Speaking to his ministers, he summarized the war’s internal goals: “Gentlemen, as you know, one of the battles that I have promised to wage is that of changing the face of this nation. I will turn this nation into a homogeneous group. Anything foreign must leave slowly...any dubious Jewish element, all the Jewish communists, are destined to go back where they came from. I will push them to the Bug and from there they will move on....”³⁵²

In mid-1942, Antonescu truly believed that victory would be achieved that very year and that at issue was the final, large-scale effort to bring about the collapse of the USSR. His policy toward the Jews stemmed from this belief. He wanted to succeed in making Romania homogeneous, as he had promised the ministers; this included not only the Jews, but also the Gypsies, though the Jews were his greatest concern. Toward the end of that summer he began to prepare the plan to deport *all* the Jews of southern Transylvania. On July 10, 1942, the head of the Conducator’s military cabinet presented to the Minister of Interior Antonescu’s

³⁴⁸ German Foreign Office in Berlin to Inspector Hoppe of the Reichsbank, Berlin, August 12, 1941, NG 3106.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ “Rezolvarea problemei evreiesti” (Solution of the Jewish Problem) in *Unirea*, October, 10, 1941; copy in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 3: no. 208, p. 318.

³⁵¹ “Raspunul d-lui Maresal Antonescu la scrisoarea profesorului I. Gavanescu” (Marshal Antonescu’s response to the letter by Prof. Gavanescu), in *Curentul* (November 3, 1941); copy in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 3: no. 219, p. 332.

³⁵² Stenogram of government meeting, October 11, 1941, Ministry of Interior Archives, file 40010, vol. 11, p. 47; copy in USHMM, RG 25.004M, roll 32.

decision that in order “to make space, to offer shelter, and to house the Romanian refugees from Northern Transylvania,” the government should prepare an estimate of the Jews currently living in southern Transylvania and “to investigate the sending to the Bug all the Jews of [southern] Transylvania, with the exception of intellectuals essential for our needs (physicians, engineers, and the like) and industrialists required for running various industrial installations.”³⁵³

In summer and autumn 1942, the following groups were on the verge of deportation: most of the remaining Jews in Cernăuți and southern Transylvania; people who had broken the laws and orders of forced labor; Jewish communists, or whomever the regime defined as such, and their sympathizers; new converts to Christianity; Jews who had requested in autumn/winter 1942 to be repatriated to Bessarabia after the region had been forcibly annexed to the USSR; and the Roma. Thus, some 95,000–100,000 Jews were destined for Transnistria. This plan, however, was not implemented.

Simultaneously, negotiations with Gustav Richter and the German government on the general deportation of Romanian Jewry to the Belzec camp in Poland were nearing their conclusion. These negotiations were held in secret to avoid arousing panic among the Jews and to keep from opposition circles—particularly from the chairman of the Romanian National Peasant Party, Iuliu Maniu, and his colleagues—any hint of the negotiations on the deportation of the Jewish population. When the impending deportation became publicly known, Maniu did indeed intervene to prevent it.³⁵⁴

Final destination: Belzec

The extermination camp Belzec in the Lublin district of Poland, in which Jews were killed by means of a diesel engine that issued carbon monoxide, had been selected by the RSHA and the German Foreign Office to serve as a mass grave for Romanian Jewry. In June 1942 the camp was refurbished, and its capacity for extermination was enhanced with the construction of six gas chambers larger than the previous three; they could now hold 1,000–1,200 victims at a time (half of the daily transport of 2,000 people) and kill them in 20–30 minutes.³⁵⁵ By September 1942 it was possible to exterminate a daily transport of 2,000 Romanian Jews in about three hours.

³⁵³ Colonel Radu Davidescu to the Minister of Interior, July 10, 1942, State Archives, Prime Minister’s Office, Cabinet, file 104/1941, p. 61; copy in USHMM, RG 25.002M, roll 18.

³⁵⁴ Regarding Iuliu Maniu’s and fellow NPP members’ successful intervention against the deportation of the Romanian Jews, see Ancel, *Contributii*, vol. 2, part 2: pp. 245–248.

³⁵⁵ *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, Sifriyyat ha-Po’alim, 1990), pp. 190–93.

Richter was not aware that Ion Antonescu had been told directly by Hitler about the Final Solution, or that he and Mihai Antonescu as well as all Romanian diplomatic missions in the Reich and German-occupied countries knew of the extermination camps in Poland. The Romanian concept for deportation to Transnistria disturbed Richter and ruined his plan and that of his superiors, since it agitated the Jews and propelled them to turn for help to Romanian statesmen who had served in previous administrations.³⁵⁶

The first notice about Romanian agreement for deportation to Belzec is dated July 26, 1942. The chief of the Gestapo and head of Section IV of the RSHA, Gustav Müller, informed Undersecretary Martin Luther of the Foreign Office that the deportation of Romanian Jews in special trains “to the East” was about to begin on September 10, 1942. Müller expressed the hope that there would be no opposition from the Foreign Office to this action.³⁵⁷ During his interrogation in Jerusalem, Eichmann confessed that he had personally worded the letter bearing the signature of his superior, Müller.³⁵⁸ On August 11, Luther indicated to Müller that the Foreign Office had no opposition to the deportation of the Romanian Jews to the *East* and that the person handling Jewish problems in Bucharest, Radu Lecca, would be coming to Berlin to discuss in person “the conditions for the planned deportation.”³⁵⁹ Luther also noted: “Mihai Antonescu agreed, in accordance with the will of Marshal Antonescu, that the German authorities will carry out the evacuation of the Jews from Romania and immediately begin the transports from the counties of Arad, Timisoara, and Turda.”³⁶⁰

This is the first mention of the existence of a written commitment that Mihai Antonescu wrote on behalf of Ion Antonescu. At the same time Emil von Rintelen of the German Foreign Office wrote a memorandum to his superior, Luther, about the preparations for the deportation of the Romanian Jews. In accordance with RSHA instructions, Mihai Antonescu sent his agreement to the deportations in writing, and Rintelen added a photocopy of the agreement.³⁶¹ During Adolf Eichmann’s trial in Jerusalem, he stated that Richter had received instructions to obtain such a commitment in writing.³⁶² On August 23, Eichmann

³⁵⁶ Ancel, *Documents*, 10, no. 99, p. 242.

³⁵⁷ Ancel, *Documents*, 4, no. 41, p. 78.

³⁵⁸ Stenogram of Eichmann’s interrogation by the Israel Police, YVA, pp. 1768–73. Eichmann admitted that the term *Sonderbehandlung* (“special treatment”) that appears in the correspondence on the treatment of Jews in Romania meant execution.

³⁵⁹ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 4: no. 56, pp. 104–5.

³⁶⁰ Ancel, *Documents*, 4, no. 60, p. 111.

³⁶¹ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 4: no. 65, p. 120.

³⁶² Eichmann’s Interrogation, YVA, p. 2217.

summoned Richter to Berlin to participate in a meeting that would take place on August 29 at RSHA headquarters.³⁶³

The President of the Council of Ministers prepared a detailed plan regarding the deportation operations, “which should include the entire Jewish population,” stipulating very few exceptions.³⁶⁴ The deportation was ordered by Antonescu and mapped out “in the minutest detail by the Ministry of Interior, based on the indications given by Mr. Mihai Antonescu.”³⁶⁵ Radu Lecca succinctly summarized the Antonescu regime’s intention: “to evacuate to Poland all Jews found to be useless in the field of national work.”³⁶⁶ Thus, the Romanianization Ministry eagerly anticipated the lodgings it would obtain following the “decongestion of the capital, i.e., of the Jewish lodgings emptied by expulsions and emigrations.”³⁶⁷

Except for 17,000 Jews considered “useful” to the national economy or possessing special privileges, the Antonescu regime agreed to the deportation of the entire Jewish minority of Romania—292,149 people, according to a May 1942 census—to the Belzec death camp. While the Romanian press was completely silent about anything related to the deportation of Jews, the German press was not.³⁶⁸ It must be noted that local commanders of the police as well as the Siguranta pointed out that the deportation of the Jews would ultimately be harmful to Romanian interests in Transylvania. The Siguranta in Timisoara reported that the city’s Jews had been in a panic and had been preparing to sell property from the moment they learned of the possible deportation.³⁶⁹

On September 22, Mihai Antonescu left to meet with Hitler, Ribbentrop, and German army commanders in Vinnitsa. These meetings turned out to be decisive for the fate of the Romanian Jews. In September 1942 Mihai Antonescu feared not only for the fate of Northern Transylvania, but for the Antonescu regime in general. He had come to Vinnitsa to ask Hitler for “political guarantees” (the return of Northern Transylvania) and the completion of equipping the Romanian divisions with arms. All of his requests were rejected, except for a personal promise from Hitler guaranteeing the borders of Romania. Ribbentrop asked Mihai Antonescu to honor the commitment he had given in writing to Eichmann’s emissary in

³⁶³ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 4: no. 71, p. 131.

³⁶⁴ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 4: no. 85, pp. 165-167.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 119, pp. 252-253.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 138, p. 276.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Rumänien wird judenrein, *Bukarester Tageblatt*, August 8, 1942.

³⁶⁹ Report by the Siguranta in the Timisoara County on the Jewish Problem, n.d. [September 1942], Securitate, file 2710, vol. 23, pp. 239-40.

Romania—to turn over the Jews of Romania to the Nazis.³⁷⁰ At the same time, the Romanian demands were rebuffed one by one, and even the promises by Keitel and Hitler to provide arms remained empty. Moreover, Mihai Antonescu returned without any promise about the future of Northern Transylvania. Romania had given everything and received nothing. Hungary gave only a part of her army and had not yet turned over its Jews.

Mihai Antonescu's meeting with Hitler in Vinnitsa, Ukraine, on September 22-23, approached military issues as well as the deportation of Romanian Jews. Mihai Antonescu felt this meeting was so important that he decided to forgo its protocol. The German minutes of these talks reveal that Ribbentrop requested that Mihai Antonescu continue the work of exterminating the Jews, as he had in the past. Mihai Antonescu met three times with Ribbentrop in Vinnitsa, where the issue of hastening the annihilation came up explicitly, and he did not reject the Final Solution. It was at these same meetings, however, that his faith in Germany's ability to win the war was shaken.³⁷¹

Later, in a government meeting held on October 13, 1942, Mihai Antonescu announced a change in policy regarding the Jews: transports of Jews across the Dniester were to be suspended.³⁷² On the surface it seemed that Mihai Antonescu—in saying that “one must act systematically”—had adopted Richter's suggestions word for word; in fact, he meant something completely different. Antonescu referred instead to the revocation of authority to deport Jews by the General Staff, Ministry of Interior, and all other offices that had dealt with the Jews, their property, and their labor. Words such as deportation, evacuation, and transport would henceforth disappear from official communiqués.

The link between the cessation of the deportations to Transnistria and the suspension of the deportation to Poland was put in writing by the deputy director-general of Antonescu's cabinet, Gheorghe Basarabeanu, on November 4, 1942, in a note to the Romanian Railway Administration (CFR). In response to a query from the head of the CFR as to whether or not the Jews of Romania would be deported to the General Gouvernement, Besarabeanu replied: “At the Ministers' Council of October 13, 1942, we decided to stop the deportation of the Jews.”³⁷³ The plan's suspension resulted not from some latent humanity but from the

³⁷⁰ Protocol of talk between Ribbentrop and Mihai Antonescu on September 23, 1942 (German version, selections), September 28, 1942 (Frankfurt: United Restitution Organization (URO), Sammlung, 1960), band IV, doc. 13, p. 578.

³⁷¹ Regarding the rejection of the German plan for the Final Solution in Romania, see Ancel, *Contributii*, vol. 2, part 2: pp. 208-274.

³⁷² Stenogram of government meeting on October 13, 1941, State Archives, Collection of the Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet, file 473/1942(II), pp. 859-60.

³⁷³ Ancel, *Documents*, 10, no. 96, p. 236.

realization that German and Romanian interests no longer coincided: the Romanian army was in a difficult position at Stalingrad, and—despite all material (food, oil, natural resources) and human sacrifices—Hitler would never return Northern Transylvania to Romania. Romania, it seemed, had given everything and received nothing, while Hungary had given little, had not yet renounced its Jews, but had retained Transylvania.

The Situation of Jews Living Abroad

The Romanian Foreign Ministry suffered from the legal chaos emerging from the contradictory instructions of the Antonescu administration concerning the legal status of the Romanian Jews living abroad. According to international convention, Romanian consulates were expected to protect Romanian citizens abroad, regardless of their “nationality.” In May 1941 this protection was withdrawn from the Jews whose citizenship had been “revised” as well as from Jews born in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina (now held by the USSR); in summer 1942 Romania backtracked and once again treated Jews born in Bessarabia and Bukovina as its citizens.³⁷⁴

In January 1942, Romanian Jews in Amsterdam had to declare their assets before the upcoming deportations. The Romanian Consulate requested instructions on February 12 and learned that General Vasiliu opposed their repatriation.³⁷⁵ In March, Romanian citizens of Jewish ancestry in Germany and Austria were forced to wear the yellow star under orders from the Gestapo. This discriminatory measure applied to Croatian and Slovak (not to mention German and Austrian) Jews, but not to Hungarian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Italian, or Swiss. Furthermore, Romanian Jews in Berlin had to hand over furs, wool items, typewriters, bicycles, and cameras. The Romanian consulates in Berlin and Vienna, assured by German officials of the existence of an “agreement” between the Romanian and German governments, requested clarification from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in turn requested the same from the German Legation in Bucharest.³⁷⁶ While this bureaucratic exchange continued, in occupied Bohemia and Moravia the first Jewish families with Romanian passports were interned at Theresienstadt.³⁷⁷

In a July 1942 meeting in Berlin with Counselor Valeanu, Kligenfuss, a German Foreign Office official, asserted that Ion Antonescu “had agreed with Ambassador Killinger that Romanian citizens of Jewish ancestry in Germany and the occupied territories should be treated

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁷⁵ USHMM, RG 25.006M, fond Germania, vol. 33, roll 18.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, fond Germania, vol. 32, roll 17; Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 10: pp. 792–793; Calafetaenu, “Regimul,” p. 130.

³⁷⁷ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 10: pp. 182–83; Calafeteanu, “Regimul,” p. 130.

in the same fashion as German Jews.³⁷⁸ German Legation Counselor Steltzer did the same in Bucharest on August 8, in his meeting with Gheorghe Davidescu from the Romanian Foreign Office. As early as November 1941 Killinger told Auswärtiges Amt, that Antonescu had approved the intention of the Reich to deport Romanian Jews under German jurisdiction to eastern ghettos together with German Jews; the Romanian government “had stated no interest in bringing Romanian Jews back to Romania.”³⁷⁹

In the course of a discussion held on August 10, 1942, between Mihai Antonescu, Radu Lecca, and Richter, Richter alluded to the approval Ion Antonescu had originally given to Killinger. Mihai Antonescu concluded:

We have to realize that Romania has no interest in seeing Romanian Jews who have settled abroad returning. Henceforth the following instructions should be followed:

1. As regards German Jews living among us, the expired German passports should be cancelled and replaced with provisional certificates. It should be made obligatory for real property to be declared and [the documents] kept strictly up to date.
2. With regard to Romanian Jews in Germany, the Protectorate, and in the General Gouvernement, as well as those in the occupied territories, word will be sent to the Berlin Legation and the concerned consular offices that the measures to be undertaken have been agreed upon with the Romanian Government. The issue that interests us is the real estate of Romanian nationals abroad, the administration of this property, and the various means of liquidating it. The Berlin Legation and its subordinate Consulate is asked to draw up a register....³⁸⁰

The direct impact of the agreement as well as Mihai Antonescu’s exchanges with Richter on August 10 was the deportation of nearly 1,600 Romanian citizens of Jewish ancestry living in Germany and Austria (our last statistics, for 1939, indicated 1,760, of whom 618 were in the

³⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 131-132.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ USHMM, RG 25.006M, fond Germania, vol. 32, roll 16; Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 9: p. 421.

former Austria³⁸¹); of an unknown number from occupied Bohemia and Moravia, Poland, and Holland; and of 3,000 more from France. Most perished in concentration camps.³⁸² According to the September 1942 estimates of the Romanian chargé d'affaires in Berlin, M. Stanescu, most Romanian-Jewish residents of Germany had already been deported.³⁸³ On October 15, 1942, all Romanian Jews in Prague were arrested.³⁸⁴ The massive deportation of Romanian Jews from France began in late September 1942. (Deportations of Romanian Jews had taken place before that time, as well.)

More than 3,000 Romanian citizens of Jewish ancestry were deported between March 27, 1942, when the first convoy with a Romanian Jew left France, and September 25, 1942, when the thirty-seventh convoy left, this time filled mostly with Romanian Jews. A number of Romanian Jews found themselves among 2,000 of their co-religionists deported from Malines, Belgium.³⁸⁵ On March 25, 1943, a sweep of Romanian Jews in Vienna began;³⁸⁶ a round-up of Croatian, Slovakian, and Romanian Jews began in Berlin on April 6; Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Swedish Jews went untouched.³⁸⁷ With Mihai Antonescu's approval, the Romanian legation in Berlin began granting entry visas and requesting the German authorities to provide Romanian Jews with the same treatment as Hungarian Jews.³⁸⁸

Because of the change in the Romanian government policy concerning the protection of the Romanian Jews abroad at the end of spring 1943, the German occupation authorities in France and Belgium stopped arresting Romanian Jews. Twelve of the latter were repatriated from Belgium.³⁸⁹ In November 1943, the arrests of Romanian Jews in France did resume, but only briefly; on November 8 the Romanian ambassador in Vichy affirmed that all arrests had ended, and all Romanian Jews were required to return to Romania by December 31.³⁹⁰ On December 3 the same representative interceded with the German police chief in Lyon to cease interfering with repatriation.³⁹¹ It is estimated that more than 4,000 Romanian Jews in France survived as a result of such diplomatic interventions, several hundred being repatriated on a train

³⁸¹ USHMM, RG 25.006M, fond Germania, roll 16.

³⁸² Jean Ancel, "Simpozion stiintific Romano-Israelian, Jerusalem, 12-14 ianuarie 1986," *Anale de Istorie* 3 (1986), p. 139.

³⁸³ Calafeteanu, "Regimul," p. 133.

³⁸⁴ USHMM, RG 25.006M, fond Germania, vol. 32, roll 17.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., fond Belgia, vol. 28, roll 15.

³⁸⁶ USHMM, RG 25.006M, fond Germania, vol. 32, roll 17.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., fond Germania, vol. 32, roll 16.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 135.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 136.

³⁹¹ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 4: p. 702.

that crossed Reich territory.³⁹² In fact, even though the repatriated Jews were supposed to be deported to Transnistria, Ion Antonescu consented to their remaining in Romania.³⁹³

Statistical Data on the Holocaust in Romania and the Territories under Its Control

In 1930, 756,930 Jews lived in Greater Romania. They comprised 4.2 percent of the country's eighteen million inhabitants. By 1940 slightly fewer than 800,000 Jews lived in Romania according to the director-general of the Central Institute of Statistics of Romania. This number, from the yearly updates published by the Institute, is based on the results of the 1930 census.³⁹⁴ Archival materials collected both before and after the opening of archives in the former communist countries have been used to evaluate the number of Jewish victims, deportees, and survivors; this includes data from Romanian archives as well as from Soviet archives (Chişinău, Odessa, Nikolaev, Moscow-Ossobi). Copies of the original documents can be found in the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem. In addition to the information these documents provide regarding the fate of Jews under Romanian rule, they also reveal that the Antonescu regime carefully monitored the extermination process.

The Number of Jews in Bessarabia and Bukovina in August 1941

Bessarabia. At the end of August in 1941, after the order to “cleanse the land” had been issued and partially carried out, the Romanian gendarmerie counted 55,887 Jews left in Bessarabia and Bukovina. However, there were other Jews not included in the count. The “disorder” that took place in the Chişinău ghetto—the pillage of Jews for personal rather than state profit—angered Antonescu, who ordered the establishment of an investigative commission led by Colonel Nicolescu.³⁹⁵ The commission's report containing the Antonescu administration's orders to kill the Jews, basically confirms the number of Jews counted in Bessarabia (55,867 Jews, not including the county of Hotin), and also mentions 25,000 other Jews “who died a natural death, escaped or were shot.”³⁹⁶ The total number of Jews found there, then, amounted to roughly 80,000.

³⁹² Ancel, “Simpozion,” pp. 138–39.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Samuil Manuila, “Consideraţiuni asupra prezentării grafice a etnografiei României,” filed with Academia Româna, *Memoriile Secţiunii Istorice*, 3rd series, vol. 21, memo 14, annex 3.

³⁹⁵ Nicolescu Commission, report no. 2, December 1941, Chişinău Archive, 706-1-69, p. 49.

³⁹⁶ Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: no. 19, pp.62-63; copy in Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 5: no. 124, p. 193. The original document can be found in the Central Archive of the Republic of Moldova, 106-1-69, pp. 48-55.

By the end of July 1941, before the official surrender of Transnistria to the Romanian administration, Romanian soldiers and gendarmes concentrated tens of thousands of Jews in northern Bessarabia and began forcing them to leave Bessarabia by crossing the Dniester River, shooting hundreds of them and throwing their bodies into the river. Up to 32,000 Jews were forced to cross the Dniester by late July/early August 1941. This figure is derived from various reports and orders the gendarmes were given to prevent the return of these Jews to Bessarabia. Of the roughly 32,000, a mere 12,600 escaped; they were subsequently pushed back to Bessarabia from Ukraine via Cosauti and interned in the Vertujeni camp.³⁹⁷ At least 8,000 and up to 20,000 Jews were killed on the Ukrainian side of the Dniester by German and Romanian soldiers.³⁹⁸ Thus 32,000 Jews must be added to the roughly 80,000 found in Bessarabia by the Romanian army. This amounts to 112,000 Jews living in Bessarabia at the time of its occupation. But this figure is incomplete. In Ukraine, as of August 16, 1941, the German army had captured at least 11,000 Jews trying to flee to Russia.³⁹⁹ Therefore, at the beginning of the Romanian occupation of Bessarabia, there were at least 122,000 Jews.

Bukovina. According to an April 9, 1942, report by the governor of Bukovina, 103,172 Jews lived there before the deportations, and there were 11,923 Jews living in Dorohoi.⁴⁰⁰ In total, there were 170,962 Jews living in Bukovina and Bessarabia at the beginning of deportations and after the implementation of the order to cleanse the land.

³⁹⁷ Contemporary Romanian documents discuss the 1941 deportation of roughly 30,000 Jews across the Dniester. See, for example: SSI Report re: more than 30,000 Jews from Hotin County and Bukovina, National Archives, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Antonescu Administration, file 76/1941, p. 86 (copy in USHMM, RG 25.002M, roll 17). This report states, "from among those sent to the other side of the Dniester by the officials, some return, but the officials keep sending over other Jews." It also asks General Headquarters for urgent clarification on the status of the Jews as of August 18, 1941. On August 19, the SSI reported that the 30,000 Jews were interned in a camp and that "none...returned west of the Dniester," *ibid.*, p. 91. On August 27, the General Police Headquarters reported that the German Army returned 12,600 Jews to Bessarabia in two convoys and they were then interned in the Vertujeni camp; *ibid.*, p. 91. These were the only survivors of the "hasty deportations." The remaining were shot, mostly by the German army.

³⁹⁸ Raportul Directiei Generale a Politiei catre Serviciul Central de Informatii, August 27, 1941, Arhivele Nationale, Presedentia Consiliului de Ministri, Cabinet Antonescu, file 71/1941, p. 91. Regarding this convoy, see also the correspondence between General Headquarters and the army pretor, in Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: pp. 104-106.

³⁹⁹ Killinger to Foreign Office in Berlin, August 16, 1941, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, series D, vol. 13: no. 207, pp. 318-319.

⁴⁰⁰ Reports to Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 1942, Foreign Ministry Archive, Problem 33, vol. 22: p. 130; copy in USHMM, RG 25.006, Roll 11.

*The Number of Jews Killed during the “Cleansing of the Land”
in the Transit Camps and during the Deportations*

The exact number of Jews killed from the beginning of July to the end of August 1941 remains unknown, as does the number of Jews who managed to escape to the Soviet Union. What is known from government documents is that most Jews from villages and towns in southern Bukovina and in Bessarabia were murdered by the Romanian army and local population. Likewise, it is known that Einsatzgruppe D killed thousands of Jews in Cernăuți and Bessarabia. The only figures about the number of Jews murdered are those mentioned in Romanian documents: up to 25,000 in Bessarabia (the Nicolescu report) and up to 20,000 during the “hasty deportations.”⁴⁰¹ Additionally, the rescuer Traian Popovici refers to roughly 15,000 Jews murdered by their neighbors and the Romanian army in the villages and towns of Northern Bukovina.⁴⁰² More than 45,000 Jews—though probably closer to 60,000—were killed in Bessarabia and Bukovina.

The Number of Jews Deported

There were 147,712 Jews deported in 1941, according to the reports of the governors of Bukovina and Bessarabia to the Ministry for the Administration of Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria (CBBT). Out of these, 91,845 were from Bukovina (including the counties of Hotin and Dorohoi) and 55,867 were from Bessarabia.⁴⁰³

It is possible that the real number was higher. The December 15, 1941, report of Gen. C.Z. Vasiliu, inspector-general of the gendarmerie, indicated that 108,002 Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina were deported to three counties (*judete*) in eastern Transnistria along the Bug River: 47,545 were interned in Tulcin; 30,981 in Balta; and 29,476 in Golta.⁴⁰⁴ On December 24, 1941, the SSI reported to Antonescu that in western Transnistria—west of the Jmerinka-Odessa railroad, to be more precise—there were 56,000 Jews from Bessarabia

⁴⁰¹ National Police Headquarters report to Central Information Service, August 27, 1941, Bucharest State Archives, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Cabinet Collection, file 71/1941, p. 91. Regarding this convoy, see also: correspondence between General Headquarters and the army pretor, in Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: pp. 104-106.

⁴⁰² Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3: p. 182.

⁴⁰³ Reports to Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 1942, Foreign Ministry Archive, Problem 33, vol. 22; copy in USHMM, RG 25.006, roll 11.

⁴⁰⁴ Report of Vasiliu, December 9, 1941, Archive of the Ministry of Interior, file 18844, vol. 3; copy in USHMM, RG25.004M, roll 64. Gustav Richter, Eichmann’s envoy in Romania, reported on October 17, 1941, that Antonescu had sent 110,000 Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina into Transnistria along the Bug River, “in order to exterminate them”; Nuremberg Documents, PS-3313, *Der Prozes gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof Nürnberg*, vol. 31 (Nuremberg: n. p., 1949), pp. 183-184. Germans refused to receive Jews across the river, and these 108,002 Jews subsequently disappeared from all documents and statistics on deportees.

and Bukovina and a small number of Jews in other counties.⁴⁰⁵ These two reports were drafted around the same time and discuss two different areas of deportation. They suggest that in December 1941 there were at least 164,000 Romanian Jews in Transnistria. To this figure must be added 6,737 Jews deported in 1942—4,290 from Bukovina,⁴⁰⁶ 231 from Bessarabia, and 2,216 from the Regat and southern Transylvania.⁴⁰⁷ After this deportation, only 17,159 Jews were left in Bukovina (not including the Dorohoi district), of which 16,794 lived in Cernăuți. Together with the Jews in Dorohoi they formed a Jewish population of 19,475 people.⁴⁰⁸ In all, the total number of Jewish deportees from Bessarabia, Bukovina, Dorohoi and the Regat was between 154,449 (147,712 plus 6,737) and 170,737 people (164,000 plus 6,737).

The Number of Romanian Jews Who Survived in Transnistria

On November 15, 1943, an official report sent to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Romanian government indicated that 49,927 Jews were alive in Transnistria, of which 6,425 were originally from the Regat.⁴⁰⁹ The conclusion that can be drawn is that until November 15, 1943, between 104,522 and 120,810 Romanian citizens of Jewish descent died in Transnistria.

The Fate of Local Jews in Transnistria

According to the 1939 Soviet census, 331,000 Jews lived in Transnistria, of whom 200,961 resided in Odessa.⁴¹⁰ The Romanian occupation authorities found between 150,000 and 200,000 Jews in Transnistria. According to Romanian and Soviet sources, up to 25,000 Jews were shot, hanged, or burned alive in Odessa. Soviet authorities reported that they had

⁴⁰⁵ Report from the SSI to the Prime Minister's office on the transfer of Jews, December 24, 1941, State Archives of the Prime Minister's Office, Military Cabinet Collection, file 86/1941, pp. 325-327; copy in USHMM, RG 25.002M, roll 18. These other counties were: Iampol (262 Jews), Rabinia, (427 Jews), and Tiraspol (70 Jews).

⁴⁰⁶ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 1: no. 43, p. 287.

⁴⁰⁷ Regarding the deportations from Bessarabia, see Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 1: pp. 153-154. Regarding the deportations from Bukovina, see Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 1: pp. 215, 217.

⁴⁰⁸ Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 1: no. 43, p. 287.

⁴⁰⁹ Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Number of Jews in Transnistria on November 15, 1943, by areas of origin (Bessarabia, Bukovina, Dorohoi, and the Regat), Foreign Ministry Archives, "Jewish Problem," vol. 22: p. 589.

⁴¹⁰ Mordechai Altshuler, ed., *Distribution of the Jewish Population of the USSR, 1939* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1993), pp. 11, 21, 23. Transnistria included the Odessa *oblast* (county) and part of the Vinnitsa *oblast*. There were 233,155 Jews in the Odessa County and 141,825 in all of Vinnitsa County. But at least 43,444 lived on the German side of Vinnitsa, reducing Transnistria's local Jewish population to 331,636 on the eve of the war. The city of Odessa alone numbered 200,961 Jews.

exhumed 22,000 bodies in Dalnic alone.⁴¹¹ Additionally, there were Jews shot in the street and elsewhere who could be added to this number. According to the prefect of Golta, Modest Isopescu, approximately 10,000 local Jews were killed in Golta County at the beginning of November 1941 before the establishment of the Bogdanovka camp.⁴¹²

In January and February 1942, between 33,000 and 35,000 Jews were deported by train from Odessa to Berezovka.⁴¹³ Of these, 28,000 were executed by the SS. Thousands of Jews (maybe around 30,000) from the city and county of Odessa were marched to Bogdanovka in late 1941.⁴¹⁴ There were 32,433 Jews “evacuated from Transnistria” who were probably deported to Golta and liquidated there. According to German documentation, the testimonies of survivors, and the Romanian trial records, 75,000 Jews (most of them locals) were murdered in Bogdanovka, Domanovka, and Akmechetka in late 1941 and early 1942. In September 1942, the secretary general of the Government of Transnistria acknowledged that 65,000 local Jews had “disappeared” (code for killed) from the county of Odessa.⁴¹⁵ In addition, according to a Romanian report 14,500 local Jews from Transnistria were forced across the Bug River, where they were killed by the Germans.⁴¹⁶

The Soviet authorities estimated that 150,038 Jews were murdered in the counties of Golta and Berezovka.⁴¹⁷ On November 1, 1943, Third Army Headquarters recorded 70,770 Jews living in Transnistria, of whom 20,029 were local Jews.⁴¹⁸ Based on these numbers, between 115,000 and 180,000 local Jews were murdered or perished in Transnistria. At the end of the Romanian occupation, only 20,000 local Jews were left in Transnistria. At least 15,000 Jews from Regat perished during the Holocaust (in the pogrom of Iasi and the deportations to Transnistria).

Various researchers have calculated different estimates of the death toll of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews under Romanian administration during the Holocaust. Dinu C. Giurescu

⁴¹¹ Odessa County Committee (Obkom) Report on the Damage and Victims of the Fascist Occupation Regime (1941-1944), December 31, 1944, Communist Party Archives in Odessa, II-II-52, p. 22.

⁴¹² Report from Isopescu to the Government of Transnistria regarding the transports of the Jews, with a request that the government stop sending them, November 13, 1941, Nikolaev Archives, 2178-1-2, p. 151.

⁴¹³ Prefect of Odessa’s report to the Government of Transnistria at the conclusion of the deportation operation: 32,643 Jews deported, Odessa Archives, 2242-1-1487, pp.190-193; Report of major doctor Gheorghe Tataranu, director of Transnistria’s Health Department on the typhus epidemic in the region, 35,000 Jews evacuated from Odessa, Nikolaev Archives, 2178-1-424, p. 8.

⁴¹⁴ Commander of Berezovka Gendarme Legion to the prefect, January 31, 1942, Odessa Archives, 2361-39, p. 15.

⁴¹⁵ Gendarmerie commander in Transnistria to Transnistria Government, September 11, 1942, *ibid.*, p.161.

⁴¹⁶ Minutes of talks between Davidescu and Steltzer, March 13, 1942, Foreign Ministry Archive, Problem 33, vol. 16: p. 58; copy in USHMM, RG 25.006M, roll 6.

⁴¹⁷ Note from Odessa section of Soviet Communist Party, December 31, 1944, Odessa CPSU Archive, 2-2-52, p. 25.

⁴¹⁸ Special Archives in Moscow, 493-1-6, p.187; Ancel, *Documents*, vol. 7: no. 393, p. 547.

counts at least 108,710 Romanian Jews who died in Transnistria; but this number does not take into account the Ukrainian Jewish victims or the Jews killed on the spot in Bessarabia and Bukovina. According to Dennis Deletant, between 220,000 and 270,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews perished in Transnistria, while Radu Ioanid asserts that at least 250,000 Jews died under Romanian jurisdiction. Matatias Carp mentions 264,900 Romanian Jews missing, but this does not include Ukrainian Jewish victims. Raul Hilberg cites the destruction of 270,000 Jews under the Romanians, as does Mark Rozen, who counts roughly 155,000 Romanian Jews and 115,000 Ukrainian Jews killed in Transnistria. Finally, Jean Ancel maintains that 310,000 Jews perished in Transnistria alone, and to this must be added another 100,000 Jews killed in Bessarabia and Bukovina during the 1941 campaign in these provinces.⁴¹⁹

In summary, the total number of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews who perished in territories under Romanian administration is between 280,000 and 380,000.

⁴¹⁹ Dinu C. Giurescu, *Romania in al doilea razboi mondial* (Bucharest: All Educational, 1999), pp. 70, 91; Dennis Deletant, "Ghetto Experience in Golta, Transnistria, 1942-1944," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 18, no. 1 (2004): p. 2; Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p. 289; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. 3: p. 1220; Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1: p. 19; Marcu Rozen, *The Holocaust under the Antonescu Government: Historical and Statistical Data about Jews in Romania, 1940-1944*, 3rd rev. ed. (Bucharest: ARJVH, 2004), p. 109; Ancel, *Transnistria, 1941-1942: The Romanian Mass Murder Campaign* (Tel Aviv: Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center/Tel Aviv University, 2003), vol. 1: p. 531.