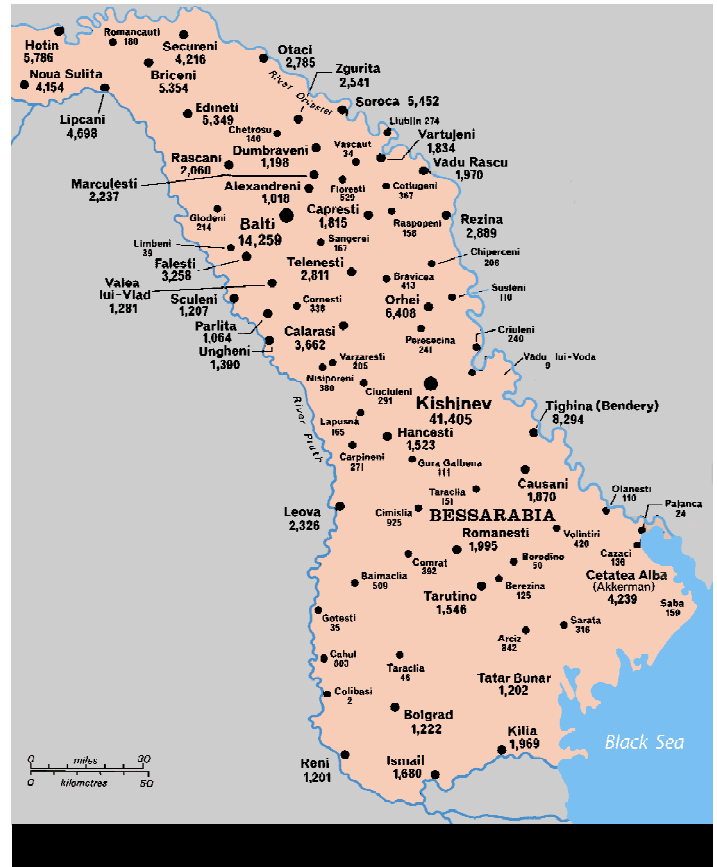


Until 1941, Bessarabia was part of the Russian Empire/ Soviet Union. The murder of 49 Jews during the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903 had led to protest demonstrations in London, Paris and New York, and a letter of rebuke from Theodore Roosevelt to the tsar. In 1918, the region became part of Romania but remained strongly anti-Semitic. The city of Kishinev was a focal point of Jewish culture and political life, while Jewish agricultural communities thrived throughout the province.

The maps and text on this page are adapted from Atlas of the Holocaust, rev. ed. (New York: William Morrow, 1993), and reprinted here with the permission of the author, Sir Martin Gilbert.



The Jews of Bessarabia on the Eve of the War Map 17



Massacres, Deportations, and Death Marches from Bessarabia, from July 1941 Map 18

With the return of Soviet rule to Bessarabia in June 1940, all Jewish institutions were closed, and on June 13, 1941, many of the Jewish leaders, as well as wealthy Jews, were exiled to Siberia, where many died. But with the arrival of the Nazi killing squads in July 1941, the scale of murder, as indicated in Map 18, exceeded anything previously known.

Following the initial killings, internment camps were set up throughout the province. At the camp in Edineti, after the initial slaughter, 70 to 100 people died every day in July and August 1941, most of starvation. Then, in September, the Jews of Bessarabia were forced out of the province in hundreds of death marches, some of which are indicated in Map 18. In all, more than 148,000 Bessarabian Jews perished in the ghettos and camps of Transnistria. During these marches, more than half of the victims died of exposure, disease, hunger, thirst and the savage brutality of the Romanian and German guards, who would often pick out a group of marchers at random, order them aside, and shoot them.