

Bukovina – Jewish Perspectives

An Oral History Project with German-speaking Jews in Israel, Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany

The historical Bukovina was known as an extremely multi-ethnic and multi-religious region until the Second World War. Nevertheless, the (German-speaking) public is often dominated by accounts that, on the one hand, are related to well-known literary figures (Paul Celan or Selma Merbaum-Eisinger). On the other hand, especially the “Landsmannschaft of the Buchenlanddeutsche (Bukovina-Germans)” published many memories of their own members. Jews thus rarely got a chance to speak. The research project therefore addresses those often “unheard Bukovinians” and enables further perspectives on the multi-ethnic (post-)history of the Bukovina.

Since 2018, about 140 interviews have been conducted in a large-scale interview project of the Bukovina Institute. Since existing networks, especially those of the “Landsmannschaft of the Buchenlanddeutsche (Bukovina-Germans)” were used to recruit interviewees, only a few stories from Jewish Bukovinians have been recorded so far – although Jews were mentioned in almost every interview. The current project of the Bukovina Institute therefore focuses on their accounts which will broaden the perspective(s) of the multi-ethnic communal life in Bukovina by a central component.

You were born or raised in Bukovina (today: Ukraine/Romania)? Your family originates from this region and your relatives have told you about life in the “old homeland”? For the archive of the Bukovina Institute, an affiliated institute of the University of Augsburg, we are now collecting the stories of (former) Jewish Bukovinians or their immediate descendants. We are interested in narratives of all kinds: stories about local life, about family relationships and childhood in the “old homeland”, about everyday life there, the professions of relatives and acquaintances and the communal life with other population groups. Of great importance are also the accounts about resettlement and deportation, flight, displacement, providing of a new home. The experience from numerous interviews, that were already conducted, shows: Even those who fear that they will be able to report only little or nothing at all often recall aspects in the interview that have never been recorded in this form before. Each account thus contributes to depict a multi-perspective picture of Bukovina and to preserve it for the future. Therefore: Help us - contact us!

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