

**Encyclopedia of the Jewish Communities**  
From their Foundation until after the WWII Holocaust

**ROMANIA**

Volume I – Moldavia  
(Pages 90 - 99)

**Galati**  
**(Yiddish - Galatz)**

Map Coordinates: 45° 27' North – 28° 03' East

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N.B. Kehillah will be used where reference is to the organized Jewish community. Kehillah is the name given to Jewish communal organizations in Eastern Europe. The role and authority of the Kehillah varied greatly, depending on location and historical period. At times a Kehillah would have quasi-governmental authority over both the Jewish community and its relationship with the Gentile community.

**Galati**

A port city by the Danube, Moldova region, Covurlui district, near the estuary of the rivers Siret and Prut, both running through the Carpati woods. The largest port along the Danube and the most important one for wood exports. The city was also famous in exporting grains and was a center for import for the wood, iron and fishery industries.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century the city's name was **Haliciut-Mic** and belonged to the Barlad Princedom.

### **Jewish Population**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Jews in General Population</b>
1803	72 (tax payers)	
1841	about 6,000-7,000	
1890	13,066	22.1
1899	13,992	21.3
1910	12,000	
1924	11,461	16.0
1930	19,912	20.0
1941	13,511	14.1
1942	12,946	
1947	13,000	

#### Until the End of WWI

#### The Beginning of the Jewish Settlement and its Development

The name Galati was first mentioned in Romanian documents from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The first Jews settled there towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Tombstones from the years 1590-1595 were found in the old cemetery. A second cemetery was established in 1629.

In the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was already a large Jewish settlement in Galati. The Jews were living in a quarter named 'The City Valley', but had to abandon it in 1770. They settled in a new quarter and developed it. The traders among them lived in the 'Jewish Road' and the craftsmen lived in separate roads according to their crafts: 'The Furriers Road', 'The Shoemakers Road', etc.

In 1744, a new cemetery was established instead of the previous one that was ruined.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Galati was the most important port in Moldova. It inhabited many Greeks and Bulgarians who were also traders and the competition between them and the Jews became anti-Semitic in nature. In 1797, a Romanian pastor gave shelter to 70 Jews and saved them from Greek rioters.

In the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the Turk reign, Galati came down in the world and regained its grandeur again right after the signing of the Adrianopole Pact (1829) and following its declaration as a “free port” (1834).

### The Organization of the Congregation

Until the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the main roles were in the hands of the burial society. In 1812, the congregation got organized and protocols were written of its committee meetings. The meat tax was also transferred to this committee. However all this encountered many hardships, inside and outside. Many associations established their own synagogues causing disunity. Each synagogue aspired to be on its own, brought its Rabbi and collected meat tax. Since the congregation’s budget was built almost solely on the meat tax, each new synagogue diminished this budget. The entities that were behind those new synagogues were not always religious ones but professional societies. The first synagogue was built in 1780 and also a ritual bathhouse. In 1826 the tailors became organized in a guild of their own, with 150 members, and established a synagogue. In 1846 the Chabad Hassids founded a synagogue and in 1847 – the orthodox Jews. In 1848 two synagogues – “Ohel” and “Edelstein” were founded. In 1860, the carters established a synagogue. In 1863 an advanced synagogue was founded with a choir and an organ. In 1892 the craftsmen founded their own synagogue, built by their charity society (organized in 1875 and numbered 180 members).

In 1845 the congregation founded a Jewish hospital instead of the “Hekdesh” (Shelter) from 1834. In Feb. 23, 1846, the congregation received a permit from prince Sturza to collect a regular tax from the import-export goods of the Jews, thus got better off and could hold its institutions. The “Hekdesh” was renovated and an old people home was built near the hospital with two rooms. After two years this permit was revoked and since then this institution was often closed and opened.

The congregation was dismantled several times because the authorities ignored it and for a few years all activities ceased. Only in 1859, an organized committee was formed that founded a modern school. However, in 1866, the committee’s activity ceased, mainly because of the dispute around the meat tax that was abolished and put back several times. Sometimes due to the local authority who wished to collect it and other times because the slaughterers and the butchers demanded the tax for themselves. In 1896 the situation deteriorated to a strike of the slaughterers and the butchers with the backing of the Mayor’s deputy. However, the Jewish community got organized and declared a boycott on the strikers and the school students – their activity froze since the cancellation of the tax – demonstrated against them. At last, after the mayor’s intervention, the strikers gave up and the meat tax went back to the hands of the congregation.

In the void formed in the congregation’s activity because of the many crisis situations, other organizations were established, for instance, in 1873, the chamber of “Bnei Brith” named after Franklin. In its foundation convention the American consul,

Benjamin Peixoto (from a Jewish origin) took part. As in other parts in Romania, the Bnei Brith chamber took an active part in all the community's affairs. The chamber's chairman was Yosef B. Brociner. He formed a special board for the hospital, the schools and the charity activities. This board was elected by representatives of the city's synagogues and was active for two years. The congregation's debts were paid in this period.

In 1895, the synagogues representatives and those from all the other Jewish organizations, elected the congregation's committee, numbering 15 members.

In 1897, the Galati congregation was well organized and even called for a convention of all the Romanian Jewish congregations in order to form one organization. In this convention, 49 representatives from 18 cities took part. Galati was chosen as the basis for the central board but this did not last. This same year, 81 representatives elected a new committee from different organizations and synagogues. However soon some people in the congregation began calling for general elections for the committee. Starting in 1904, the Zionists began their struggle to become the congregation's leaders and following their success, democratic systems were introduced.

In 1906, the congregation received a formal status of a communal entity.

### Education

In 1860, the congregation founded a school for boys but after two years it closed because of the orthodox Jews opposition. Following a fierce struggle inside the congregation, it reopened in 1865 but its existence was fragile; during the following years it often closed and opened anew and the number of students diminished. In 1872, it had 4 classes with 400 kids; in 1876 – 5 classes with 280; in 1886 it reopened as a "Talmud Torah" (religious school), which was a private initiative, and in 1890, 160 kids studied there. Near the school, a society for education was formed. In 1894, the congregation established a second school for boys, in order to accept the Jewish students who were expelled from the state schools. Still, 100 kids remained without schooling due to lack of place to study. That year, 525 kids studied in both schools and in 1896 their number rose to 773.

In 1898 the congregation founded a commerce school that became in 1919 a high school and was among the first schools that were granted full rights. Apart from the state's curriculum, its students learned also Hebrew and Jewish history. In the years before WWI, Christian students were also studying there, among them sons of priests.

The public felt the necessity for a school for girls and in 1895 the congregation decided to open one. However, due to budget shortage, it was postponed until 1899 and then founded by the "Maimonides" society that organized a fund raising for it. The school was named "Clara, Hirsh Baroness" after the baroness who donated most of the money. At first 160 girls studied there. The congregation also supervised this school. In 1901, the congregation founded a school for household studies with high

school classes. In 1925, the “WIZO” local branch founded a kindergarten where the language spoken was Hebrew.

### Institutions

One of the most important institutions of the congregation was the hospital, rebuilt in 1899. A pharmacy and a bathhouse operated near the hospital. During the first year 5800 people got there medical help, including Christian patients, for free. In 1926 the hospital was categorized as a “legal entity” managed by itself. Along the years additional pavilions were added until it became one of the largest hospitals in Moldova. The hospital was comprised of three main wards: internal, surgical and maternal and also clinics for radiation, physiotherapy and a laboratory.

The congregation’s orphanage sheltered kids from all over Moldova and the Shelter, founded in 1834, became in 1904 to a large and developed old people’s home. Also the city had two ritual bathhouses. In 1893 a soup kitchen was established that stayed open until 1895. Each day bread and tea were handed to the poor of every religion and origin. In the years 1895-1896, a society named “Clothing the Naked” distributed clothes to poor children. In 1896 a branch of Dorobantul was established that later became a branch of U.E.P, and was one of the more active branches, but with a tendency towards assimilation.

### Social and Economical Structure

The first Galati Jews who took part in the city’s political life were Jews from Dobrogea, who were naturalized there already in 1878. Among them were the Jewish lawyer Baruch Zosmer, who was active in the Galati court of law since 1912, and the Jewish Pharmacist, who was elected in 1913 as a delegate to the city’s council.

Galati Jews took part in the economic life of the city and took an important part in its import-export affairs. Jews and also some of the largest factories in the city established many trade agencies. Among them was a metal factory. They were also craftsmen. In 1905 there were in Galati 756 self-employed craftsmen, 322 of them were Jews; 963 helpers to artists, 344 of them Jews; 558 apprentices, 194 of them Jews.

### Persecution of Jews

Galati Jews were persecuted from when they first settled there. Every year, during the winter and in the beginning of the spring, many sailors from Greek ships stayed in the city, waiting for the Danube to thaw. Those sailors used to get wild and harass the Jews. They were parading a doll dressed with traditional Jewish clothes in the streets and mock it and at the same time harassing the Jews. This happened again and again every year at Easter’s eve. The Scottish missionaries A. Bonar and Robert McCheyn, who visited Galati in 1839, wrote about this “tradition.” In 1840 the rioting went so

far that the Moldovan ruler, Prince Sturza, ordered to act against the rioters (April 25 1840).

In 1821, during the days of the Greek uprising, 3000 Greeks broke into the city and with the local Greeks put it on fire. The synagogues were also burnt. The Jews took shelter in the Austrian consulate yard for a few days and then boarded a ship and transferred across the river Prut to Reni in Bessarabia. The Austrian consulate also rescued the Torah books saved from the synagogues. One Jew was killed during the riots and all Jewish stores and flats were looted. The refugees returned after quite was regained.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1836, Sturza ordered that Jews are allowed to deal only in banking, crafts and grocery stores. He also ordered that in the new market Jews will not live except for bankers and the bankers must be dressed in European clothes. This decree was the opposite of the one he issued two years before, saying that each trader is allowed to build a home in the commercial quarter.

The persecutions resumed in 1842; the synagogue's attendant hit Christian kids who shattered the windowpanes. As a result, the Greeks destroyed Jewish houses and only after the army intervened, the rioting stopped. In 1846 a Pogrom ran wild for two days. Synagogues were looted and Torah books desecrated. Houses and stores belonging to Jews were ruined and only after the foreign consuls intervened the situation got quite. In 1850 and 1853, the authorities stopped attempts of persecutions.

In 1859 a blood libel was staged. Several Jews were arrested one night with the accusation that they drew blood from a Greek child's arm for Passover. Several Jews were murdered, many beaten and their homes looted. Many Jewish families became poor and the big synagogue destroyed. The riots continued 3 days and ceased only after delegates from foreign countries intervened, especially the French one and also Baron Rothschild.

In 1867, a few Jews were expelled from the city with the pretext that they are "vagabonds". They were put on a boat in order to bring them to the Turkish shore. The Romanian soldiers brought them to a deserted and flooded island. The Turks saved and returned them to the Romanian shore. But the Romanians soldiers on the shore refused to accept them and pushed them into the water. Three of them drowned and the other six were jailed. A protest letter was sent to the Romanian government from the consuls of Austria, France, England, Italy, Prussia and Russia. The Romanian government blamed the Turks.

In October of the same year, the head of the police ordered to expel all the Jews from the rural areas of the district. In 1868 another Pogrom afflicted the city's Jews; Jewish homes and synagogues were destroyed and many Jews were wounded. The army and the police did not try to stop it. The looted goods were sold publicly.

In the years before WWI, the local branch of the “Culture League” was a center of anti-Semitism.

During WWI the congregation faced important tasks since part of the men were enlisted to the army and the foreigners were sent to camps. The congregation got aid from US Jews via the American embassy.

### Zionism

Since 1881, the Zionist movement was the center of the public life. In the summer of that year, Shmuel Pineles, who was the leader of the Zionists in Romania for many years, founded the group of “The Settlement of Eretz Israel”. The first conference of the above group that was held in Foscani in January 1882 chose Galati as the place of its central committee and indeed after WWI Galati became the center of the Zionist movement in Romania. In 1882, Galati was the first city where a youth Zionist association was established. Its Hebrew name was “National Society Olifant.” This society organized a local conference of 12 youth associations – professional and cultural ones – and all of them decided to unite in order to support immigration to Eretz Israel. The waiter’s association donated all of its funds for this cause. Two hundred families were registered for immigration.

In the beginning of 1883, a conference of the united Zionist youth in Romania was held. Several of the branches were strongly opposed to the central committee for “The Settlement of Erez Israel” and as a result, most the delegates left the conference and organized another one. In September of the same year, the 3<sup>rd</sup> conference for the settlement in Eretz Israel was convened and it was decided to hand over to Rothschild the management of the two settlements founded already in Eretz Israel by the Romanian Zionists: Zichron Yaakov and Rosh Pinah. Following this last conference, almost all the branches of “The Settlement in Eretz Israel” were closed, however, the central committee remained active in Galati for another whole year, and in the summer of 1884, 25 ploughs and 60 wagons were sent to the two settlements. In 1893, the Galati Jewish leaders founded the movement called “Chovevei Zion” (the lovers of Zion). In December 1894 its first conference took place in Galati with delegates from 14 cities. Galati was chosen as its central committee’s center.

In April 1897, just before the first Zionist congress in Bazel, another conference was held in Galati, and 19 different associations were represented – of craftsmen, mutual help and of the synagogues. In the spring of 1898, a national conference of “Chovevei Zion” was held in Galati with delegates from 18 cities, which decided to adopt the Bazel platform.

In the meanwhile, many local branches were established in Galati: in 1897 – “Bnei Zion” girls association and a branch of “Bnei Zion Kadima” (sons of Zion forward), that in 1899 numbered 400 members. This group published several Zionist pamphlets in Romanian, among them translations of the “Autoemancipation” written by Pinsker and “Aruch Bat Ami” (remedy my people’s daughter) by Dr. Rulf (1900). A debate had started on studying Hebrew as a living language in the schools. In June 1899, a

national Zionist conference took place in Galati with 60 delegates; “Chovevei Zion” movement became its Zionist Organization and Central Committee, and named “The Federal Committee,” stationed in Galati. In 1901, a new Zionist conference convened in Galati, with 67 delegates. In 1907, the tenth national Zionist conference took place there and in 1911 – the 13<sup>th</sup>. In 1913, an association of the high school pupils was established in Galati and was called Agaitz (A.G.A.E.Z). Similar associations were established all over the country. In 1915, a national Zionist consultation was held in Galati, where Dr. V. Jacobsohn, from the world Zionist organization took part.

### Press

Galati was an important center of the Jewish and Zionist press. From April until December 1882, “The Amigrant” appeared there, in Yiddish and German – the journal of the central committee of “The Settlement of Eretz Israel.” From August 1887 until March 1888, “The Jew from Galati” appeared. The newspaper Pamanteanul that earlier appeared in Foscani under the name Dreptuline (rights), was published in Galati from March 1897 until December of the same year. The newspaper stopped appearing when its editor, M. Botoscaneanu, was driven out of Romania due to his political activity. Between January to October 1904, a journal of the Zionist Federation appeared in Galati. Between September 1905 and January 1906 it was called “Kochav Zion” (the star of Zion). After April 1906, it was called “The Zionist,” which was moved later to Braila.

Other newspapers appeared in Galati in various occasions. In 1904, “Chanukah”, published by the Zionist circles “S. Pineles,” “Kadima,” and “Max Nordau,” appeared in Romanian, Yiddish and German. The Zionist Circle, “Montefiori,” published the newspapers “Purim” (1905) and “Pesach” (1905). The same year this Circle published a journal, “Theodore Hertzal,” where Hertzal’s letters to Pineles appeared.

An important event in the Jewish publishing was the appearance of the periodical, “Hatikva,” of the Zionist Federation (since May 1915 until 1919, except for the war years 1916-1918). This periodical that was a high level one, centered around it all the Jewish Circles and had a decisive influence on the cultural life of Romanian Jewry. One of the editors was Leon Gold (see below).

### Rabbis and Personage

In the middle of the fifties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Zvi Menachem Pineles arrived in Galati (born in Galicia in 1806, passed away in Galati in 1870). The author of, “The Torah Way” (Vienna, 1861), Rabbi Yaakov Margulies (1871-1962) presided in Galati from 1896 until his death. He was the son of Rabbi Avraham Margulies, who was also the Galati Rabbi between the years 1852 and 1896.

The poet, Nemteanau – Benjamin Deutch (1887-1919), was born in Galati. He published songs that became an asset of the Romanian literature and translated to Romanian Heine’s songs.

The painter, Reuven Rubin, was born in Galati in 1893. He immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1912. He was the first ambassador of the State of Israel to Romania (1948). Also born in Galati was Aba Bardicev (1918), who was one of the Eretz Israeli parachutists in WWII who died in action (1945). He was active in the youth Zionist movement of Galati and on his name a Kibbutz was founded – “Alonei Aba”.

### Between the two world wars

#### The Congregation's Activities

Soon after the war the congregation took upon itself all the activities involving with getting naturalized, following the Emancipation. In 1919, 1600 heads of families were granted citizenship thanks to the congregation's efforts that were concentrated in convincing those who were indifferent to this idea. The congregation's leaders went from house to house and persuaded the people. In 1923, 1700 people received their citizenship and also other heads of families and of 800 families from Bessarabia, who lived in Galati. The congregation allocated a special sum of money from its budget for this cause. Also, the congregation got a permit for settling 300 families of refugees from Ukraine in Galati.

In the first few years after the war Galati served as a transition place for the refugees from Ukraine. In 1920, the congregation modified the “Talmud Torah” school into a refugee shelter. Until the beginning of 1921, 11,000 refugees, who were survivors of the pogroms in Ukraine, passed through Galati on their way to Erez Israel. When in the beginning of 1921 the “Committee of Erez Israel” was founded, the congregation allocated a sum of money for the committee's activities; its secretary was the journalist, Haim Shorer, who later became the chief editor of the “Davar” newspaper.

In this period the organizational structure of the congregation had changed. In 1918, the Galati congregation was one of the first in Romania where its board was chosen in general and direct elections by its members.

In 1923, the congregation's board made efforts to concentrate all the independent institutes under its control. The schools committees, the hospital committee, the “Chevra Kadisha” (ritual burial) etc., were included. The “Chevra Kadisha” numbered at that time 60 members and the congregation decided to double this number to 120. On top of that, each member, who served one year in one of the above committees, became automatically also a member in the “Chevra Kadisha” and only in 1928 the congregation succeeded in transferring to its hands the income of the “Chevra Kadisha”.

In 1926, the hospital withdrew from the congregation's authority and became an independent institute.

The congregation allocated sums of money to support most of the Jewish institutes in the city, for instance, the Jewish Students Circle, the Soup Kitchens, the Old People

Home, and also the Immigration to Eretz Israel Committee. It also donated money to institutes not situated in Galati – The Hebrew Teachers Seminar in Chisinau and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

In the thirties, the Zionist delegates in Galati announced that a change must take place in the aid system in order to make it productive. This meant starting to educate and train the needy instead of handing out donations. The Zionist circles were against the influence of the Romanian political parties on the congregation. In the elections held in December 1935, the Zionist list got 1393 votes. The Jews, who were members of the Romanian parties, did not like this development and they managed to get from the religion ministry a cancellation of the elections and the authorities appointed a transitional committee.

### Institutions and Organizations

In 1923, several institutions and organizations were founded in the city: “Cultur Lige” (The Jewish Culture League) and “The Gibor” (The Hero) – a sports organization, a branch of the “Ort” organization. In 1924, an amateurish troupe started a small theatre. The troupe staged plays in Yiddish also outside of Galati.

In 1926, the cooperative credit bank was founded (Banca De Credit Marunt) with the help of the Joint. In 1928, Zionist Circles, especially radical ones, founded another such bank (Banca Noastra). It had 2,000 customers and served also the citizens of Braila.

When the British put restrictions on the immigrants to Eretz Israel and demanded a proof from each one that he had a certain amount of money, the Zionist bank, following the initiative of its manager Moshe Klein, gave the immigrants checks with no coverage so they could enter without delays.

Just before WWII there were 22 synagogues, one “Cheder” (religious school for small boys) with 50 kids, and a “Talmud Torah” with 20 kids. All of the schools operated within the congregation’s framework and “WIZO” operated a kindergarten.

### Education

About the activity of the Jewish schools at that period we can learn from the following table:

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Year	School No.1 for Boys	School No.2 for Boys	The Gymnasium
1928/29	221 kids	200 kids	303 kids
1929/30	226	224	296

Year	Girl's school
1899	180 girls
1916	320
1918	295
1921	410
1927/28	273

The Rabbi in those days was Ytzhak Yerucham Sapira, the author of “Pamphlet of Yitzhak’s Present” (Czernowitz).

### Social Structure

After WWI Jews were members of the local council. In 1928, Baruch Zosmar was the mayor’s deputy. Between 1929 and 1931, the municipality allocated altogether 2 million Lei (Romanian Currency) to Jewish Institutions. The Jewish deputy was in charge of the cultural, religious, and aid institutions. In the period between the two world wars the number of Jewish journalists increased and one of them served as the head of the press society of Galati. Several general newspapers were published in Galati in those years.

In June 1926, Drumuri Noua, a periodical of the revisionist movement in Romania, started to appear and afterwards was published in Bucharest. Its editor was L. Gold. Yehuda Ariel, who was born in Galati in 1892 and died in Tel Aviv in 1966, succeeded him. After the foundation of the state of Israel, he became the first economic attaché in the Israeli consulate in Romania.

### Zionism

After WWI, the Zionist management moved from Galati to Bucharest, however, Galati continued to be one of the most active places in Romania.

In 1923, a cultural society was founded there, “The Jewish Women,” that after a time joined with WIZO. The members of that society were active in all aspects of Zionist work, especially in fund raising. A branch of young WIZO held courses on the history about Jews and Zionism, Hebrew and Eretz Israel geography, and all parts of Zionist youths took part in, from “Beitar” (the revisionists) to “Hashomer Hatzair” (of the left wing). A central library was also established for all the young people and common courses were organized in order to bring together all the different youth movements.

Galati was one of most important centers of the “Hachshara” (training to become an Israeli). First troops started here by the pioneers from Ukraine on their way to Eretz Israel and the house in 9 Romana street was known for years as the center of the pioneers.

In 1930, after a pause of several years, the “Hachshara” started again by the “Hashomer Hatzair” that kept a permanent place for it in Galati.

### Persecution of the Jews

The leader of the local brunch of the liberal party, Orleanu, started to back anti-Semitism already by 1922 after he found out that the Jews would not vote for his party in the upcoming election. Gangs of thugs broke into an election gathering of the “Jews Born in Romania” organization in order to disperse it, but the Jews managed to throw them out of the place.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1922, after a Chanukah Ball that was organized by the “Maccabee” organization, the people coming out of the hall were welcomed with shouts and whistles of anti-Semitic demonstrators who gathered there. The police managed to scatter the rioters, but they regrouped several times during the night and went on demonstrating against the Jews. The next evening Christian high school students, who shattered windows of many Jewish homes, staged other demonstrations.

In January 1923, the district supervisor put pressure on the Jewish congregation’s representatives to cancel plays and balls scheduled in order to prevent anti-Semitic demonstrations. The congregation’s leaders did not surrender to this demand and the plays were shown. The thugs, who tried to cause disturbances, were driven away.

The first anti-Semitic party that was organized in Galati was the Cuza party. In the thirties several student groups in twenty dormitories got organized around the “Iron Guard”. Those groups were marching in official celebrations.

In 1935, the municipal council cancelled all the allocations given until then to the Jewish congregation’s institutions, such as the hospital, the schools, etc. In 1938, the lawyers association expelled all the Jewish lawyers. TL

### During the Holocaust

In September 1940, with the help of the Legioner’s government, fifty of the most prominent Jews were declared hostages and had to report each day to the police. On January 21<sup>st</sup>, when the pogrom raged in Bucharest, the Legioners planned to kill the local Jews, but their leader, the mayor, who had ties with many Jews, was opposed to it and talked them out of it.

All the discriminating laws that were legislated during that time were kept with precision: The physicians were obliged to write on their signs “Jewish Doctor” and were not allowed to treat Christian patients. Teachers and pupils were expelled from

state schools. Custom offices headed by Jews became idle since no Jews were allowed to enter the port. Jewish commerce nearly stopped and the grocers were forced to give up their stores. The congregation set up soup kitchens and aided the impoverished population with money and medical assistance. In June 1941, after the war started, the police gathered all the Jewish men from 18 and up, altogether 3,700, in the local movie theater for two days, and in the mornings all of them were forced to sweep the streets. On the third day they were moved to another place, 4 km out of the city, in the village of Filesti.

Soon after the pogrom in Iasi, in June 1941, a plot to massacre the city's Jews was thwarted. Lieutenant Porojani, the commander of the civil defense against air raids, came to see Rabbi I.M. Zalman in the camp where he was locked up and told him that he witnessed an incident where a German Major was almost shot in one of the city's streets and claimed that Jews were aiming at him. Rabbi Zalman told him that no Jews live on that street, and anyhow, all the Jewish men were in the camp. The Rabbi asked him to go straight away to the district's governor, Ghitescu, and tell him the whole story. Porojani indeed went to his place, where he also met the German Major, who asked the governor to grant his soldiers a 24 hours permit to kill the Jews. The governor told him that all the Jews were in the camp so his claim did not make sense. The German officer argued that one of the Jewish boys did it, so the governor ordered all the Jewish boys under the age of 15 to join the others in the camp and the blood shed was prevented.

In a circular from July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1941, the head of the district's police, colonel Dimitru Gotescu, announced that all the detained Jews were hostages and will be executed following any sign of a riot or sabotage, etc. Life in the camps was very hard because there were no hygienic facilities. The head of the congregation together with all the committee's members and the "sacred objects" (orthodox ones) became hostages. Jews aged 60 and over were forced to come to the police twice a day. The movement in the city was restricted. The Jews were treated like outcasts and were not allowed to have any ties with the regular population. Starting in July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1941, they were obliged to wear a yellow Star of David.

Jews from the following towns and villages were expelled to Galati: Beresti, Bujor, Draguseni, Pechea-Cudalibi, Poltesti and Independenta.

### Forced Labor

Forced labor was done inside the city as well as outside in the following places: Faurei, Roseti, Putna-Seaca, Poscani, Vadeni, Ramnicu-Sarat, Vadul-Rosca, Voinseti and Cotul-Lung. Two of the out companies suffered from very harsh conditions. Those who worked in Voinesti and in Cotul-Lung, diverted the course of the river Sirat and built barrages; they dwelled in tents and caves. Work was done in inhuman conditions, very little food and scarce clothing. All graduates of the Jewish high schools of the last few years worked in those places. The norm for each day was to dig up four cubic meters of earth, digging, piling, and moving it far away.

In Vadul-Rosca people were working in preparing gravel and the penalty for any delay was flogging. Because of the work conditions many defected in spite of the severe punishments if they were caught. Defection became especially regular when the Russians came closer. Several of Galati Jews were accused of being Communists and arrested in Targu-Jiu camp and others deported to Transnistria. Many Jews of Bessarabian origin, who lived in Galati, were transferred through the river Prut and executed.

### The Congregation's Activities

During all that time the congregation continued its activities: supporting the families of the workers and maintaining Jewish education. Studying went on in provisional buildings, since school buildings were confiscated already in the beginning of the Fascist regime. The congregation even established a professional school, well equipped. Some of that activity is depicted in the following Table:

Year	Number of Pupils in	
	Elementary	High Schools
1940	710	288
1941	698	485
1942	681	513
1943	596	556

The congregation gave aid to:

Year	Number of people
1940	280
1941	600-700
1942	1,200-1,300
1943	1,500-1,600

The number of the needy grew with the increase in number of discharged workers. In 1942, 634 of 1,118 Jewish craftsmen and workers were unemployed; out of 537 workshops and factories owners, 489 became poor; out of 113 with liberal professions, 78 lost their rights; out of 275 self-employed, 138 were jobless. Of all the Jewish assets, 1557 houses, 5 mills, 173 hectares of fertile land, 7 hectares of forests, 3 hectares of vineyards, one hectare of ponds and 25 ships, were confiscated.

Throughout all the time of the holocaust, the Zionist activity continued secretly in private homes and in synagogues.

Besides helping its members, the congregation gave a lot of help to immigrants and refugees; when Bessarabia was annexed to the USSR (in June 1940) Galati became one of the centers that functioned as a transition place for the Bessarabian natives from all over Romania on their way to the Bessarabian city Reni on the Danube. Among them Jews whose numbers grew towards the fall, following the rise of Antunescu to power and with the increase in persecution against them. The congregation took care of them with devotion and sheltered them in the synagogues and even in private homes.

In December, the Russian authorities sealed the border and the emigration stopped. They even sent back by ships to Romania part of the immigrants, but the border police took away all their documents and upon their arrival to Galati, the authorities persecuted them and would not allow them to return to their previous places. After some time, in the winter of 1941, at a temperature of 25 degrees below zero, the district's ruler decided to send the immigrants back in open freight-wagons. The head of the congregation agreed to this cruel decision that could cost many lives. But Circle of Zionist leaders intervened and influenced the ruler to cancel his decision and even got his permission to fire the congregation's head and to choose a new management. The immigrants stayed in Galati until the war ended and with the help of the congregation settled in the city, some remaining in Galati and most of them immigrating to Eretz Israel after the war.

The congregation was also obliged to take care of several hundreds of refugees from Poland and of orphans, who were forced to return from Transnistria towards the end of 1943. Some of them were sheltered in different families homes.

After the Armistice in August 1944, the Germans set on fire entire quarters and especially those of the Jews. They also burned the big synagogue, the modern prayer house, and the orthodox learning place of the craftsmen and the tailors.

After the war the congregation increased its activity; took care of the refugees and rehabilitated those who came back from the work camps.

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### **Sources**

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### **Bibliography**

Lavi, Theodor: *The Romanian Jews in Struggle for Survival*, Jerusalem, 1965, P. 27, 28, 29.

Kloisner, Israel: *Chibat Zion in Romania*, Jerusalem, 1958, p. 17, 26, etc.

**Image's Text:**

Page 4:

Lawyer Baruch Zosmer, a Zionist leader and the Mayor's deputy.

Page 5:

The visit of Nachum Sololov in Galati. First on the left: Heinrich Shein, after him Shmuel Pineles; to Sokolv's side Dr. Yehuda Vilensky, the delegate of "Keren Hayesod" in Romania.

Page 6:

A report of the hospital's committee, the schools committee and the welfare committees.

Page 7:

A congregation's bulletin from 1931 where the history of the congregation was written.

Page 8:

A report of the Galati consul reporting on a supposedly twice as many number of Jews in Galati from the number that appeared in the statistics of the consulate newspaper.

Page 9:

- The answer of Gustav Richter to a report, where he suggests performing searches for Jews in the streets lest they were not listed in the census. A letter from the consul to Richter with a suggestion to postpone the searches, since the police already detained many Jews.
- Another letter of the consul from Galati to the embassy in Bucharest that announces on the decision of the authorities to expel all the unemployed Jews to Beresti. On this letter the signature of Richter is evident.
- The German consul in Galati to the embassy in Bucharest about the information, which is transmitted secretly by the Jews about the content of the BBC broadcasts from London.

Page 10:

A report of the consul from Galati about the deportation of 150 Jews to Transnistria.