

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

**ROMANIA**

Volume I – Moldavia  
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**Iasi**

Map Coordinates: 47° 10' North – 27° 36' East

Author: Theodore Lavi, Ph.D.,  
Coordinator of Pinkas ha-Kehilot in Yad Vashem - Transnistria, Hargat

Project Coordinator  
Robert S. Sherins, M.D.

English translation researched and edited by:  
Robert S. Sherins, M.D.

Translation: Ziva Yavin, Ph.D.  
Rabbi Jack H Bloom, Ph.D.

Donation of the translation was made by  
Robert S. Sherins, M.D., Richard J. Sherins, M.D., and Beryle Solomon  
Buchman

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.

## IASI

In Jewish sources: Yash or Yassy. (Aramaic: In the place Yas, which sits on the Blahui River and the Caicianu River and on springs.) A county city in the Moldavia region, on the bank of the Bahlui River and close to the Prut River. A railway intersection connecting Chisinau, Cernauti, Galati, and Bucharest. From 1565, the capital of the Moldavian Princedom. During World War I, served as a provisional capital of Romania. An important cultural center.

### Jewish Population

Year	Number	% of Jews in the General Population
1803	2,420 (Heads of Households)	
1820	4,396 families	
1831	17,570	
1838	29,652	
1859	31,015	47.1
1899	39,441	50.8
1910	35,000	
1921	43,500	
1930	35,465	34.4
1941	33,135	29.6
1942	32,369	
1947	38,000	

### Until the End of World War I

The beginning of Jewish settlement and its development; the organization of the Kehillah; religious life; organizations and institutions; Zionist, national and socialist activity; cultural life; Iasi university- a nest of anti-Semitism.

## The Beginning of Jewish Settlement and Development

According to tradition, the first Jewish settlers arrived in Iasi during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The first person to register the history of Romanian Jewry was Iakov Psantir, who records that he found two early tombstones from the years 1467 and 1549. Contradicting the historian, Dr. M. A. HaLevi, claimed in a monograph that the oldest tombstone in the city was from 1648, but he acknowledged the fact that there were older cemeteries that were ruined with the passage of time.

When Iasi became the capital of Moldavia (1565), Jewish settlement started to develop rapidly. Strong commercial and political ties developed between Jewish merchants and bankers from Kushta and the Moldavian capital. In 1551, the Jew “Emanuel” was nominated by the Turkish sultan to be the ruler of Moldavia, however it is not clear whether he actually ruled. Several historians identify him with Aron Voda, who ruled in 1591-1595. In 1594, this ruler rebelled against the Turks, conducted a massacre against them, and killed 19 Jews from Iasi.

In the Responsa literature of Polish scholars from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Jewish settlement in Iasi as a stopover place for Polish merchants on their way to Bessarabia and the port at Galati. Several Moldavian princes used Jewish doctors, who also served political roles. The trade in wine and hard spirits at that time was almost solely in Jewish hands. Yoseph Shlomo Rofeh Dilmadigo, who visited Iasi in 1619-1620, found a large Jewish community headed by an important rabbi, the cabalist Rabbi Shlomo Ben Aroio.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Iasi served as a stopover for immigrants to Eretz Yisrael from central and eastern European countries. At the time of the draconian measures of Poland in 1648-1649 [Cossack Uprising led by Hetman Bogdan Chmielnicki (RSS)], some Jews escaped from Poland to Iasi and settled there. In the Responsa literature of Polish scholars from that time, it was recorded that the Jews of Iasi redeemed Jewish captives, who were brought to slave markets by the Tatars. However, Iasi Jews also suffered at the same time from persecution and pogroms; in 1650. The Cossacks burned Iasi and massacred Jews, Turks, and Armenians. In 1652, when the Moldavian prince Vasile Lupu was forced to marry off his daughter to Chmelnitzki's son, Timus, Cossacks, who came to the wedding, killed 60 Jews; and others were only able to save themselves by paying them enormous sums of money. In

1653, Vasile Lupu was forced to give up his rule and his son-in-law, Timus, came to his aid with an army of Cossacks. They tortured the Jews, jailed them in towers, and tormented them to extract more money from them. The Christian Cardinal Macarie from Antioch, who happened to be in Iasi, saved them from an even bigger massacre.

In 1726, Jews of Onitcani from Bessarabia, which was under the rule of Moldavia, were charged with a blood libel. Prince Mihai Racovita ordered four of the accused with their families to be brought to Iasi. The main accused, a Jew, Leiba, was brought to the front of a synagogue in suburb of the city and the ruler's torturers flogged him with whips for a full day trying to force him by extensive torture to stab his son and shed his blood. Meanwhile the mob conducted a pogrom on Jewish homes, burned their books, and destroyed their synagogues. Even the anti-Semitic historian, A. D. Xenopol, testified that what the Moldavian prince did was Satanic and that his aim was not to find the truth from the Jew, but to extort money from him. The Jewish guild sent a messenger to Kushta, who returned with a decree from the sultan to free the accused and to compensate them; the prince was ousted from his position and jailed in Kushta. The new prince, Constantin Mavrocordat, who ruled Iasi on three occasions, (1733-1735, 1741-1743, and 1748-1749), issued a decree banning the looting of the Jewish population, but also banned Jews from hiring Christian maids, who were under age 30. In 1741, this prince exempted Jews, who had come from Poland, from paying taxes, with the goal of increasing Jewish settlement in the city. As opposed to him, another prince, Ion Mavrocordat, 1743-1747, used to extort large sums from the Jews and even forced them to buy a certificate to bring a ritual slaughterer to their community.

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many Jews from Galicia and Bukovina settled in Iasi. The Jews lived in a suburb called the "kikeville", which stretched along the eastern valley of the main hill where the city was built. Many Jews lived in the German quarter. The rich ones lived in the main street and the poor in the quarter called "Tirgul Kokoloy". In 1799, the merchants' main street was destroyed in a fire and the Jews were forced to find other places to live. In 1782, the ruler, Alexandru Mavrocordat the First (1782-1785), expelled the Jews from the neighboring villages and they settled in Iasi.

The Jews of Iasi were exporters of wine to Poland and Wallachia. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews forged strong commercial ties with the

city Brody and many of Brody's Jews settled in Iasi and even established their own synagogue. Trade in grain, honey, cattle, wool and cheese was entirely in the hands of Jews. At the onset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews occupied a central role in all branches of trade. In 1843, the city's center was occupied mainly by Jewish merchants (compared to only 15 Christian merchants) and people started to complain about "Jews spreading to all the streets and neighborhoods." In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews began to serve as bankers and moneychangers, professions that were beforehand in the hands of the Turks and the Greeks alone. Jews also took an important part in heavy industry.

An important stratum of Jewish society were the Jewish craftsmen who were permanent residents of Iasi, and established their own associations. The earliest records of these craft associations that we have in our hands are those of the "tailors' association" from 1794 and that of the "hatters" from 1797. However, it is common knowledge that the associations were founded a long time before that. A notebook of the tailors from 1800 was preserved and also of the shoemakers from 1809. The regulations in several of the notebooks stated that the members were obliged to marry local girls. Jews were tailors, hatters, coppersmiths, watchmakers, blacksmiths, and tanners. Each craft association had its own synagogue; the tailors and the builders had four or five synagogues. Most of the craftsmen in Iasi at that time were Jewish, except for the metal workers, who were gypsies. There was perpetual friction between the craft unions of the Jews and those of the Christians; the latter wanted to restrict the activity of the Jews and put limits on them. In 1817, prince Scarlat Calimachi intervened and ruled in favor of the Jewish craftsmen.

In 1803 in Iasi, a libelous document was published under the name "Infruntarea Jidovilor" (protest against the Jews), written by Noeh Belfer, a convert who became a monk and changed his name to Neofit Jidovul. The libelous document, was published by the Moldavian Metropolitan, Yaakov Stamate, provoked the Christians to outbreaks against the Jews, but the new Metropolitan, Binyamin Costache, defended them and many found shelter in the church yard and protection from the crowd's rage. The Metropolitan also declared that the rioters would have to go over his dead body to harm the Jews.

During the Greek rebellion, in 1821, The Jews of Iasi suffered greatly. The Greeks had started an anti-Semitic movement two years before the riot,

When the rebellion broke out they adopted the slogan, “Rob and kill the Jews.” The Jewish leaders turned to the authorities requesting help, but the authorities were unable to provide any. At that time the Jews were living in the same quarter where the Turks had settled and when the Greeks assaulted the Turks and massacred them, several hundred Jews were also killed. The rebellions leader, Ipsilante, received a lot of money from the Jews for his promise not to harm them, but still did nothing for the Jews and did not punish the murderers. After the Turkish army conquered the Moldavian capital, the situation of the Jews did not improve and many of them were jailed and had to pay huge sums to free themselves.

In 1824-1825 and 1829, there were epidemics of plague and typhus in Iasi. With the pretext that the diseases are more dangerous in the quarters populated by the Jews, the Jews were evicted from the city to the surrounding hills. That night 32 children died from exposure to the cold weather. In 1831, there was an outbreak of cholera and again Jews were driven out by the Romanian authorities. Also in 1847 and 1848, plagues raged in the town and killed around 10,000 people; among them 3,000 Jews. The well-to-do Jews fled to Bukovina and other villages; the poor took shelter in tents outside the town.

During the time of prince Mihai Grigore Sturza (1834-1849), anti-Semitism and persecution resumed in Iasi. In 1835, this ruler appointed a commission to check the situation of the Jews and to deport those who were impoverished or behaved badly. According to the report of the consul of Prussia, K. A. Koch, seven eighths of Iasi Jews were ordered to leave. The heads of the Kehillah asked the banker, Michael Daniel, to intercede so that the edict would be cancelled, the quid pro quo being the cancellation of the debts the prince owed the banker. The Kehillah paid the prince’s debt and he dismissed the commission and cancelled the deportation edict. In 1839, two Scottish missionaries, Andrew A. Bonar and Robert McCheyne, visited Iasi. The two were eyewitnesses to the following; a gypsy falsely accused the Jews of staging a comic imitation of an Easter parade. The agitated Christian population killed one Jew and jailed another twelve who were sentenced to be hanged. Again, two Jewish bankers saved the accused by promising to forgive the ruler’s indebtedness.

In 1843, a Christian wet-nurse kidnapped a Jewish baby girl, brought her to the priest, who baptized her and placed her in a monastery. Since the parents were Prussian citizens, the Prussian consul protested this act. The

government decided to punish the priest, but the baby was not returned. Another chain of anti-Jewish persecutions and decrees started. The Prussian consul protested again, but to no avail. In 1848, a censorship was placed on Jewish books, newspapers, and pamphlets. From 1853, these publications could be sold only by Jewish book dealers with the pretext that “an end has to be put to the plots of the Jewish nation.” In 1860, several Romanian citizens complained to the minister and the historian, Mihi Kogalni-Ceanu, about the fact that a certain synagogue was located too close to a church. His response is worth remembering, “Let’s hope that all prayer houses will be under one roof and people will behave with each other like brothers.”

When in 1867 the prime minister, Bratianu, ordered the expulsion of the Jews from the villages, he came to Iasi to personally supervise the deportation. In his presence, searches were conducted in the streets for a number of days and Jews found without documents were arrested and without interrogation transferred to the far bank of the Danube. Manor owners in Iasi protested to prince Karol [German prince Carole Hohenzollern, became Romanian King Karl I, (RSS)] saying that those kinds of actions brought shame to the city and were a threat to individual freedom. The English and Austrian ambassadors also protested in Bucharest, and Napoleon III sent a letter concerning this matter to prince Karol. In an official response the government tried to justify the deportation as a “means of purging Iasi from all kinds of good-for nothings, no matter their religion.” Prince Karol himself came to Iasi to stop the persecution, but to no avail and the intervention of France and England did not bear fruit. Even after the Congress of Berlin (1878) where the Romanian government committed itself to “Emancipation,” government policy of persecution of Jews continued, especially in Iasi. Many of the city’s Jews, including veteran physicians, were fired from their posts. In 1874, the health inspector of Iasi wrote a report on the health and propagation of the Jewish population in Iasi and prophesied that by 1925 no Christians will remain in Iasi.

During the last twenty years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, persecution of Jews in Iasi worsened. When a Jew came to testify in a court, which was a nest of anti-Semites, the presiding judge asked that the windows be opened so that the bad odor would evaporate.

From the 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1882, a “Romanian Economics Congress” was convened in Iasi, in which members of parliament, senators, and reporters, attended. The “Congress” proposed a boycott of Jewish merchants

and banning Jews from studying in commercial schools. In 1884, another economic congress was held in Iasi, which was used as a stage for anti-Semitic incitement. That same year, an “Exhibit of Industry and Trade” took place in Iasi, but Jews were not allowed to participate. The Jewish newspaper, *Fraternitatea* (Fraternity), responded by calling upon Jews to boycott the exhibit, and it ended with a large deficit. The anti-Semites published a pamphlet called, “Iasi Enslaved,” in which they blamed the Jews for not cooperating with the Romanians, undermining the status of the noble city, and dirtying it. Once again many Jews were expelled from the villages surrounding the Iasi area, especially those close to the city. A “Commercial Club” was active in Iasi that in fact was an anti-Semitic organization. With the authorities connivance, the club closed 60 textile shops and impaired 136 antique shops, which were in the hands of Jews. Many families were left without the means to support themselves. Jews, who were caught on the street engaging in trade, were fined large sums of money; and when they were unable to pay the fine were arrested. Thus, an economic crisis ensued in city. It was clear that the judges demanded ransom from the Jews and were especially harsh with those who could not pay. When this scandal reached the press, only the middlemen were punished. At that time several Jewish merchants committed suicide.

In 1892, many Jewish craftsmen were driven from Iasi on the pretext that they were vagabonds, although they had been citizens of Iasi for a long time. However, in 1906, the merchant’s bureau issued a call to Christian merchants to learn a lesson from the “foreigners” about anything having to do with humility, hard work, frugality, reining in ones appetites and mutual assistance.

The statistics, which follow, highlight the role Jewish merchants and craftsmen played in the economic life of the city: in 1831 there were in Iasi 1879 Jewish craftsmen and merchants, 43% of all vocations; in 1846 there were 6,178 merchants and craftsmen – 73%; in 1860, 3,212 merchants and 3,721 craftsmen – 78%. In 1906, 3,048 as opposed to 2,180 Romanians and 1,125 foreigners and 3,404 merchants in contrast to 836 Christians. In 1908, the number of Jewish craftsmen reached 77% of the total. Amongst them, 1,461 tailors (compared with 56 Romanians), 164 seamstresses (only 3 Romanians), and 744 shoemakers (compared with 274 Romanians). In 20 branches of the crafts there were no Romanian workers at all.



Despite and perhaps because of the vital role the Jews of Iasi played in the economy of the city, the Romanian authorities made an effort to sabotage it. When towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the railroad was extended to Birlad, Vaslui, and Roman, which Iasi had served as their central city, the line was not connected to Iasi, but instead to Bucharest, the new capital. Since then, Iasi's greatness has diminished.

### The Organization of the Jewish Kehillah

Until 1834, the "Jewish Guild" (Breasla Jidovilor) founded in 1622 and recognized by the authorities, was the central institution of the Kehillah in Iasi. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the "Chevrah Kadishah" (the ritual burial society) was established, dealing among other things with care for the sick and the poor, supporting charitable institutions, and sometimes even got involved in synagogue affairs.

Three of the "parnasim"(selectmen) of the Kehillah and one "Hacham Bashi" [in Turkish it meant the most learned one, Among Sephardic Jews, the title "Hacham" came into use instead of "Rabbi" and in the areas ruled by the Ottoman Empire the sultan chose a Hacham Bashi i.e. chief Rabbi, who was given responsibility for Jewish religious affairs and reported to the sultan There were also clearly more local Hacham Bashis whose authority was more limited.] were selected by the Romanian born Jews to manage the guild, which represented the Jewish population to the authorities. The ruler confirmed the Hacham Bashi for life and the chief "parnas" (nicknamed in Hebrew-head of state) for a term of a few years. As time passed the leadership of the guild came to represent the whole Moldovan community and the Hacham Bashi served as the chief Rabbi of the Wallachian Jews. The income from the [kosher] meat tax covered their expenses: maintaining the prayer houses, the Talmud-Torah [religious-studies school], the shelter, and the cemetery. The money was also used to pay ransom and to help the Zionist settlement in Eretz Israel. Several tombstones of a few of parnasim of that time have been preserved with the words: "the chief leader of the country." From the names on the tombstones we learn that the role of parnas was a sinecure of a limited number of families.

Following the disintegration of the guild in 1834, and the elimination of the post of Hacham Bashi, the Jews of Iasi became organized according to their lands of origin: Austria, Russia, Prussia, and the like. Those communities

already had their own organizations, under the sponsorship of the consuls, with their own rabbinic leadership, slaughterers and butchers. The breakup was the source of much friction, functionally resulting in the termination of the Jewish Kehillah as a central organization.

## Religious Life

### a. Rabbis

The first Rabbi of the Kehillah of Iasi that we know by name was Rabbi Shlomo Ben Aroio, a Spanish kabbalist, who served in the rabbinate at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was also the Moldavian prince's physician. In his old age he immigrated to Eretz Israel. Another famous rabbi was Rabbi Nathan Neta Hanover (1660-1671), author of the books, *Yeven Metzulah* (Abyss of Despair)- Beginning in 1648, and continuing until the mid to late 1650s, Ukrainians led by Bogdan Chmelnitzki [Chmielnicki] waged a revolution against Polish rule. In every town they entered, however, not only did the Ukrainians attack the Poles, but also they massacred all the Jewish inhabitants. Tens -- perhaps hundreds -- of thousands of Jews were slaughtered in the most horribly cruel ways. *Abyss of Despair* is a first-hand account of this tragedy. Review by Mark Heckman-1998) And *Shaare Tziyon* (Zion's Gates). He was succeeded in the rabbinate of Iasi by Rabbi Ptachia, son of Rabbi David Lida (1705-1711), author of "Yad Kol Bo" who had fled there when Lvov [Lemberg] was sacked. He was also the head of a Yeshiva and carried the title *Av Bet Din* (Chief of the Rabbinic Court), and *Rosh Metivta* (Aramaic i.e. Rosh Yeshiva- Prinicipal/Rector of the School of Higher Jewish Education specializing in the study of Halachah-Jewish Religious law).

In 1719, the Turks nominated as "Hacham Bashi, (an inherited title) for the Romanian Countries" Rabbi Bezalel HaKohen, the son of Rabbi Naftali HaKohen, who had served the Kehillot of Ostrog, Posnan, and Frankfurt on the river Main. However, the Moldavian leader did not recognize him because the Jewish craftsmen had submitted complaints about him. His son, Rabbi Yitzhak (1743-1776), received from the Romanian authorities the title "Bashi Hacham" to all the Jewish guilds in the Country" and the Wallachian Kehillahs were also obliged to fall in line with this. In 1764, prince Constantin Voda gave him the right to charge a payment for engagements, marriages, and divorces, and to collect set donations from every head of family instead of income derived from the meat tax, which led to

disagreements between him and the craftsmen. During that time, the religious movement of Yaacov Frank began spreading in Iasi, and the Hacham Bashi asked the Pesha [Turkish Sultan] to ban the Frankists from entering Moldavia.

After the passing of Rabbi Yitzhak a disagreement broke out about the succession, which lasted 13 years. Finally, Rabbi Naftali, the son of Rabbi Yitzhak, was reconfirmed and after him Rabbi Yeshayahu (1809), who was the last to fill this role. In 1834, both post and title were abolished in one fell stroke.

During the years of the disagreement, the city's rabbinate included several well-known rabbis: Rabbi Zalmina HaKohen, who had a synagogue named after him; Rabbi Yoske, son of Rabbi Leibush Halevi Horovitz from Woloczysk, who was the pioneer of Hassidism in Moldavia.

One of the great Hassidim in Iasi was Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apt, born in 1755, passed away in 1825, known as the Apter Rav, author of the books "Ohev Israel" (One Who Loves the Jewish People), Zhitomir (1863) and "Torat Emet" (The Torah of Truth, Lvov (1854). To this day stories are told about him in Iasi. One story tells that when he arrived in Iasi for the first time, he wrote an acronym for its name. [In Hebrew Iasi is Yod Aleph Samech. The acronym he wrote for Iasi "Sof Eretz Yisrael" – in reverse – and when he left Iasi he wrote in proper order – "Yoshveha Anshei Sodom." The first means the very end of the land of Israel and the second – "Its inhabitants are the people of Sodom.]

Another great Hassid was Rabbi Yosef HaKohen Zwolower (d. 1828), author of the book, "Darkhei Haemunah" (Paths of Faith), published in Iasi in 1857; a synagogue was also named after him in the city. Rabbi Yitzhak Moshe, the pupil of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi (d. 1861) was responsible for spreading the Hassidic Torah of Chabad in Iasi.

Following the abolition of the post of Hacham Bashi, disputes about rabbinic appointments split the community. From 1837 until 1853, the rabbi of Iasi was Rabbi Yosef, son of Rabbi Menachem Landau, who wrote a book of Responsa entitled, "Birkat Yosef" (the Blessing of Joseph), Lvov 1869. During his era, Iasi became a center of Talmudic study. .

During the same period, Rabbi Aharon M. Taubes from Lvov served in the rabbinate of Iasi (1837-1850). Author of a book of Responsa, “Toafot Re'em” (Oryx Strength), and a book of addenda to the work of the Maharsha (Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Edels) who wrote one of the most incisive and keenly analytical commentaries on the Talmud, Rashi and Tosafot (courtesy OU.ORG) entitled, “Karnei Re'em” (Oryx Horns)[a biblical metaphor for greatness]. Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke Taubes (1852-1865) followed him in the rabbinate and wrote the books: “Sefer Chayei Olam” (The Book of Eternal Life); “Sefer Milchamot Adonay” (The Book of the Wars of God); “Sefer Orchat Mishpat” (The Book of Ways of Justice); “Sefer Asis Rimonim” (The Book of Pomegranate Juice) [The pomegranate is a metaphor for intellectual fecundity (jhb)]; and others. His brother, Rabbi Yaacov Taubes, son in-law of the “Admor (abbreviation of Adoneynu, moreynu verabeynu - Our master, teacher and rabbi- used to describe those who were the revered leaders of Hassidic groups of Rusla, served as rabbi on “Red Bridge” street (“Rota Brika” – Jewish Quarter, 1868-1890). Rabbi Shmuel’s son, Rabbi Uri Shraga Fievel Taubes, served as rabbi after his death. Both were also chief judges of the rabbinic court of Iasi. Rabbi Uri Shraga, who served as rabbi for over 40 years, published a book of Responsa entitled, “Ori veYishi” (My light and my Savior), (Lvov 1886). His innovations and those of his father and grandfather were included in the Talmud published in Vilna.

From 1866 until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the status of the rabbinate in Iasi declined mainly because of the frequent disputes among its rabbis. The head of the militants in favor of traditional Judaism was Rabbi Yeshayahu Shor (1850-1879), chief Rabbi of Iasi and the nation’s rabbi, The editors of the Hebrew weekly, “Korot Haitim” (The Times Happenings) took as their cause removing him [from office]. This rabbi wrote a controversial pamphlet against the “Admor” from Sadagura and several books, one of them, “Sefer Klil Tiferet” (a book of wonders), and a kabbalistic commentary on the Pentateuch.

One of the Chabad Hassidim, who served as a rabbi in Iasi, was Rabbi Berl Rabinovici-Birlad (d. 1914), who fought fiercely against the oath “Mora Yudaica.”

The first of the modern rabbis in Iasi was Antuan Levi from Alsace (1867-1871). Dr. I. Niemirower served between 1896 and 1911, and after World War I, became the Chief Rabbi of Romania. He wrote many books, among them one on the history of the Kehillah and the rabbinate of Iasi and did

research about Hassidic history and Jewish philosophy. His sermons were published in German in the book, “Zichron Neum” (Speeches to Remember). He was also active in the Zionist movement and in education, was a popular lecturer, and headed up the local office of “Bnei Brit”.

## *B. Synagogues*

The oldest synagogue in Iasi was built in the “Tirgul Kokoloy” quarter (1657 to 1682) on a lot where a monastery had previously stood. In 1762, the synagogue was rebuilt according to the model of synagogues in Poland.

The synagogue named for Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel from Opta was built according to tradition in 1770 and was renovated in 1862. In 1865, a prayer house named “Beit Yaakov,” intended for the well to do, was built. In 1910, it was renovated, and in 1935, expanded so that everyone could pray there. Many synagogues were named after the city’s rabbis or after “Tzadikim” (leaders of Hassidic groups), who had Hassidic followers in the city. (Zwolower, Rabbi Shake, Rabbi Tversky, Stefanshter Kloise, Rabbi Rabinovici, Bohorsher Kloise, Rabbi Toibas, The rabbi from Kalarashi, Rabbi Reines, the rabbi from Eer’l). A line of prayer houses belonged to the various crafts groups: hatters, tailors (three), carpenters, barrel makers, tanners, shoemakers, butchers, musicians (two), stone cutters, (three) cart owners, bagel sellers, barmen, rags traders, wood cutters, and painters.

## Educational system

In 1840, there were 12 “Heders” (elementary religious schools) in Iasi, with 653 children, apart from small “Heders” in private homes. Well-to-do Jews invited modern teachers from abroad, especially from Austria, to tutor their sons at home.

The Moldavia government encouraged the Jews to establish modern schools and even supported them. In 1840, prince Mihil Sturza agreed to not increase the municipal tax, so that the Jews would be able to keep the hospital open and to establish a school. However, the Kehillah was slow in building the school and in 1851, prince Gregoria Ghika appointed a committee to work at establishing Jewish elementary schools to the standards of the Romanian schools.

In autumn 1852, with private initiative, the first school opened. It was one-half official and had 20 students. The headmaster was B. Schwarzfeld, a well-known enlightened figure. Hebrew, German, and Romanian were taught and the teacher for Romanian was a Christian. The rabbis and Hassidic circles were opposed to the school and preached against it in the synagogues; and Rabbi Yeshayahu Shor even declared that B. Schwarzfeld was a “baptizer” and it was forbidden to circumcise his sons. The school closed in 1857.

In 1854, in Iasi, a Jewish school for girls was founded, also private, for the daughters of the well to do and in 1858, the school received government recognition.

In May 1858, the education minister called upon the Jewish Kehillot to open modern schools for boys and girls, and commercial schools on the model of the general schools, and to close the “Heders.” He also required that these schools be under the supervision of his ministry, once their form was established following agreement reached with the leaders of the Kehillah. The prince endorsed the minister’s proposal. However, under pressure from ultra Orthodox Circles, the leadership of the Kehillah did not fulfill the proposal and bribed the responsible clerks to delay its implementation. In 1859, the Prime Minister, Mihai Kogalniceanu, summoned several of the Kehillah’s leaders to discuss with them how to instill in the Jews the aspiration for a modern culture. As a result, the Kehillah decided to establish (in 1860) three elementary schools. A special committee, authorized by the education ministry, received its instructions and acting on its behalf, submitted a curriculum and a budget proposal. The authorities promised to allow freedom for teaching religion and to help raise the status of the rabbinate, and demanded that they educate the youth in accordance with good citizenship and cooperation. The slogan was: “The Education must be Romanian.” The Prime Minister took part in the opening ceremony of the first school in the suburb of Tirlul Kokoloy; and in his speech he thanked the Kehillah on his own behalf and on the prince’s behalf and advocated that Jews and Romanians develop closer relationships. Two additional schools were opened and 900 children registered, but 400 were rejected because of lack of adequate space. Most children were educated gratis and also received clothes and books.

In 1863, these schools closed in keeping with the new policy of the government, which precluded intervention in the affairs of the Kehillah. In

keeping with this policy, the meat tax was cancelled, and the Kehillah was left without financial means; but in 1864, the tax was reinstated and the schools reopened. In 1866, the religious minister, C. A. Rosetti, was reinstated as chief of Iasii County with the proviso that the traditional schools be closed and that the government schools be opened to the Jews. In 1867, 352 children were still studying in the three Kehillah schools; but in a short time those schools closed.

After all attempts to establish modern schools in the spirit of assimilation failed, the Kehillah started to establish “enlightened Heders.” By 1856, the weekly, “Korot Haitim” (History of the Times), called upon the Kehillah to establish a modern “Talmud Torah,” where general studies will be integrated with Jewish education. However, only in 1876, was such a school opened in the “Red Bridge” quarter (“Rota Brika”). In 1908, a special building was constructed for the school, with 250 students. In 1872, a school for girls was established by “Ihud N'shei Yisrael” “Organization of Jewish Women” (established in 1867 and supported after World War I by JCA (Jewish Colonization Association) and the Joint Distribution Committee. In 1877, one of the older schools was reopened, and in 1880, 200 students studied there. Apart from the Kehillah, a youth movement named, “Junimia,” also supported the school.

Only a few Jewish students studied in the government-sponsored schools, which were pervaded with anti-semitism. The Jewish students were beaten for their refusal to bow down in front of icons or to cross themselves, and sometimes were seated in separate benches. The teachers instigated the Christian students against them and the study books were filled with anti-Semitic topics. In 1893, the Jews were expelled from the government-sponsored schools and in response to this, a mass protest gathered in the city. Dr. H. Tiktin, a lecturer at the University, initiated a struggle to establish a new school. A committee was selected, which managed to find permanent donors, and in 1894, two schools with 583 pupils opened.

In 1899, a commercial school was founded with the support of JCA. In 1906, a Charity Association opened a girl’s school called “Kochav” (star), and during the years following, the school offered a course for tailoring, underwear sewing, and embroidery with adjacent workshops. During that year the “Bnai Brith” bureau founded a girl’s school named after Dr. Ed. Stern. In 1910, there were 5,000 students including both boys and girls in the Kehillah schools,

The expulsion of Jewish students from the government schools continued, especially from the high schools; in 1910, not a single Jewish student was accepted to a high school. During World War I, the Jewish School buildings were confiscated.

## Organizations and Institutions

The most important Jewish institution in Iasi was the Jewish hospital. At first, it was a “Hekdesh” (almshouse - asylum for the indigent sick and itinerant mendicants. In Yiddish, it became a metaphor for a disorderly, dirty place.) founded in 1728); in 1772 it became a hospital. During the years 1840 – 1874, the hospital received a yearly grant of 350 gold coins from prince Mihail Sturza. in addition to an exemption from tax “for the benefit of the hospital and other matters that benefit the Jewish nation.” After 1851, the hospital became an official institution, but only in 1900 was it recognized as a legal entity.

In 1834, when the trade unions were abolished, as well as the post of the Hacham Bashi, (see above) the management of the hospital became the representative of Iasi’s Jewry. At first, the management was chosen by the Moldavian ruler, but later was chosen by the Jews of Iasi. The hospital’s expenses were paid mainly from the meat tax and when the tax was cancelled, the budget became inadequate. A. C. Cuza, the deputy mayor, initiated the restriction of Jewish slaughterers from entering the slaughterhouse (1891), and even ordered guards placed at the city’s entrance, so that the Jews could not bring in kosher meat from outside the city limits. Jews were also banned from slaughtering poultry and the intervention of the Interior Ministry did not help. In Cuza’s newspaper, “A New Era,” he complained about the fact that the Christian population had to pay meat tax in order to the benefit of the Jewish hospital and suggested reading the anti-Semitic book by the veterinarian, George Jocu, opposing the municipal slaughterhouse and against the Kehillah of Iasi. By the end of the year, the Jewish hospital had to give up the meat tax and from then was funded by bequests and donations. In 1894, the hospital comprised 60 beds in its internal medicine unit and 30 beds in its surgical unit. Adjacent to the hospital, a clinic functioned, evaluating about 100 patients per day, amounting to about 21 to 22 thousand patients per year. In the hospital, there was a special maternity building for the poor that were built in 1911 by the



“Women of Israel” society (founded in 1878), which treated around 400-500 women per year. The hospital also treated Christian patients.

Caption at bottom of photo on p.147 Assurance from 1714 from the prince of Moldova, Nicolai Marakordas, affirming the Kehillah’s ownership of the land, on which The Great Synagogue had been built in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Caption at bottom of photo on p.151. A letter to Benjamin Schwarzfeld from the committee of the Jewish school, requesting guidelines for the teaching of Hebrew (1892) (General archives of Jewish history).

The Craftsmen’s Union (Fraterna Pacurari) established a surgical clinic in 1911 and in 1915, founded the “Children’s Hospital named after Dr. L. Ghelerter.

In 1890, three craftsmen established an old people’s home. In 1892, a building was donated for it, and in 1907, the building was expanded and renovated. In 1911, it housed 30 old people. In 1818, the Neuschatz orphanage was founded by the philanthropist, after whom it was named. It was housed in his home and paid for by a bequest from his inheritance. The orphans learned a profession and the best among them were sent to a commercial school in Vienna. At first, there were 12 orphans in the institution; and afterwards their number reached 25.

Caption below photo on p.152

Report from 1879 about the activities of the committee of the hospital, which also filled many Kehillah roles.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Jewish population of Iasi was impoverished due to the severe economic crisis in the country, the “Bnai Brith” office established a soup kitchen with the help of “the Alliance Israelite Universelle. During the first year it provided 93,000 meals. In 1911, a restaurant was opened for the school children, named after Amalia and Yitzhak Ghetzler, in a special building erected by these philanthropists. A second building was donated by the couple in order to pay the restaurant’s expenses and was managed by the “Bnai Brith” office. Besides the school children, poor adults also ate there. Thus, there were several restaurants in Iasi managed by different committees.

In 1901, the society for mutual help was established, “Caritas Humanitas,” that functioned with 1,000 members until World War II. Its aim was to aid its members with medicine, to help them when they became ill and to take care of widows. A building of its own was built from the society’s income.

### Zionist Activity

Already in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pre-Zionist circles began to be active in Iasi. In 1860, the physician, Dr. Karpel Lippe, from Galicia settled there and until he left the city, in 1911, he headed cultural organizations and published many studies and books, polemical articles versus anti-Semites, books on Judaism, and publicity on behalf of Eretz Yisrael. In 1866, the association of “Dorshey Zion” was founded, whose purpose was to establish a Hebrew library for books and journals.

In 1878, the association “Ohaley Shem” was founded by a group of “maskilim”(enlightened Jewish intellectuals), among them: M. Braunstein-Mibasan, Dr. Lippe, B. Schwartzfeld and N. Frenkel. Its aim was to improve Hebrew language and culture and to spread Jewish studies among Romanian Jewry. The association sponsored public lectures that had a great impact. Its activity was renewed in 1879 by Dr. I. Niemirower and lasted until 1898.

In those days, the poet, Naftali Herz Imber, was a resident of Iasi. In 1878, he wrote the well-known song “Hatikvah,” whose melody was influenced by Romanian folk music.

In 1878, Shimon Berman came to Iasi, the author of, “Masaot Shimon” (Shimon’s Journeys), wherein he suggested settling Eretz Yisrael by working the land. At the end of 1880, Eliezer Rokeach arrived in Iasi from Safed. He was the founder of the society, “Yishuv Eretz Israel” (Settling Eretz Israel).

In February 1882, the first committee for the settlement of Eretz Yisrael was founded, chosen by 3,000 people, and Dr. Lippe was chosen as chairman. In April 1882, the second national conference of the pre-Zionist movement was convened in Iasi with delegates from 28 locations. Sir Laurence Oliphant, who was visiting Romania at the time, took part in the conference, which concerned of Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael. Later, Dr. Lippe founded a society named, “Doresh Letzion,” aiming to spread news about Eretz Yisrael and its products. Household utensils made from olive tree wood arrived from

Jerusalem, and mezuzahs, lamps, oil, olives, figs, and oranges; These were to prove that the Jews settled in Eretz Yisrael made a living by the work of their own hands. The society had 400 members and lasted until 1888.

Caption on 153 top The Seal of the “Doraysh Tzion (Seekers of Zion) Society. [From the book of Dr. Y. Klauzner-Chibat Tziyon b' Romania].

After Herzl's appearance, the Zionist movement in Iasi became invigorated. Dr. Lippe served as chairperson at the opening session of the First World Zionist Congress in Basel (1897). In 1899, five Zionist associations were active in Iasi: “Mevaseret Zion,” “Tikvat Zion,” “Nocham Zion,” “Ezrat Zion,” and “B'not Zion.” In 1900, other Zionist societies were added: “Max Nordau,” “Shivat Zion,” “Dr. Gaster,” “Dr. Nemirover,” and others. In 1910, all the societies merged into a single Zionist organization. During that year, a circle of “Poaley Zion” was founded, but aroused a great deal of turmoil.

Second Caption on that page. The Seal of the “Shalom Yerushalayim Society.” [From the book of Dr. Y. Klauzner-Chibat Tziyon be Romania

In 1906, under Zionist influence, something similar to a popular Jewish university, “Toinby Hall,” was established, which lasted 10 years. Besides Iasi's intellectuals, such as Dr. Nemirover, Dr. Nacht, A.L. Zisu, Jacob Groper, M. Rabinovici, M. Weisman (Amir), and I. Botoschanski, the school had famous foreigners; lecture there, such as, Bernard Lazar, Professor Boris Shatz, Professor Franz Oppenheimer, Nachum Sokolov, and Shalom Aleichem, who read his stories. It also had courses on the History of the Jewish people Hebrew, and general culture. The institution also served as a meeting place for the older “maskilim”, ”(enlightened Jewish intellectuals, who believed in the updating and renewal of Jewish culture) with the younger generation of “maskilim” writers and Zionist activists. Every Saturday evening, lectures and evenings of readings were held and Jews from all strata in Iasi waited for them impatiently.

### National and Socialist Activity

A branch of the movement, “The Union of Native Jews” (U.E.P), founded before World War I, was active in Iasi. During the time of the German occupation of Western Romania (1917/18), when the government and the parliament moved to Iasi, that branch placed on it responsibility for the

situation of the Jews throughout all of Romania. In 1917, its members sent a memo to the legislators requesting the granting equal rights to Romanian Jews. The memo was transferred to the Prime Minister, Yonel Bratianu, who forbade its being printed or publicized, although he promised to help those Jews, who took part in the war.

As an answer to anti-Semitic propaganda in Iasi that claimed that Romanian Jews were not loyal to the country, the Union of Romanian Jews published a declaration of solidarity with the national aspirations of Romania. Many times they brought to the attention of the authorities the persecution of Jews in Moldavian cities, and even approached King Ferdinand, who promised to solve the Jewish problem in a positive manner. Due to the branches efforts, several Jews, who participated in the war, were granted civil rights.

When the special peace treaty with Germany was signed (1918), and both the government and Parliament remained in Iasi, that branch served as mediator between the government and the central committee of the Union in Bucharest. In November of that year, after the signing of the armistice, Yonel Bratianu regained the reins of authority. Before he went to the peace conference in Paris, he invited delegates of the Union of Romanian Jews and suggested they sign a declaration that affirmed that Romanian Jews were loyal to the government, so that the problem of equal right for the Jews would not be placed on the conference's agenda. However, the delegates refused to accede to his request and Bratianu responded angrily saying that rights would be given to the Jews as he saw fit.

In 1893, a Jewish socialist association was founded in Iasi named, "Or" (Light), and was comprised mostly of "maskilim" (enlightened Jewish intellectuals, who believed in the updating and renewal of Jewish culture). At first, they operated within the framework of the Social-Democratic Party, but they did not agree with the official stand of the party as to the Jewish problem, and they demanded an active fight for equal rights for the Jews. Several non-Jewish socialist activists joined the struggle. After a time, the group was expelled from the party with the pretext that it acted on behalf of rights for the Jewish bourgeoisie. The debate intensified, and in the socialist gatherings in Iasi, members of the association "OR" (Lumina) were abused with anti-Semitic nicknames. The formal socialist journal, Lumea Noua (New World), maintained an anti-Semitic tone in its debate with members of "Or."

Groups of socialist Jews gathered all over Moldavia and joined the central Association in Iasi. In 1895, the Association published a journal in Romanian, called "Or," which appeared until 1897, and in 1896, published a weekly in Yiddish, "Hameorer" (Der Wecker) (The Awakening). That same year, the Association submitted a memorandum about the Jewish problem to the Socialist International Convention, held in London, describing the fight for equal rights and stressed the opposition of the Romanian Social Democratic Party to that demand.

## Cultural Life

Iasi served as an important center of Hebrew printing and Jewish journalism. Already at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hebrew books were brought to Iasi from printing houses in Chernauti (Chernowitz) and distributed from there to all the Moldavian and Wallachian settlements. In 1832, 68 Jewish leaders turned to the authorities, requesting approval for founding a Hebrew printing-house in the city. A year later, the printing house was built and was able to print a wall calendar for the Jewish year 5594 and several booklets, but within a short time, it was boycotted as a result of opposition by the importers of Hebrew books. Only in 1842-1843, was a list of Hebrew books printed in Iasi, the first ones in all Romania: The Book of Psalms in Hebrew with a Yiddish translation; "Selichot" (penitential prayers) with a Yiddish translation; "Shaarey Zion" (Gates of Zion) by Rabbi Neta Hanover with a Yiddish translation; and others.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, calendars were printed regularly by Hirsh Goldner. In his printing house, founded in 1856, studies were published in Romanian, among them, studies conducted at the local university. In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the books of Dr. Karl Lippe were printed there in German: "Symptome der antisemitischen Geisteskrankheit" (1887); "Das Evangelium Mathaei vor dem Forum der Bibel und des Thalmud" (1889); and "Sammlung von Reden und Vortragen."

The first Yiddish journal in Romania was published in Iasi, "Korot Haitim" (History of the Times), which appeared twice weekly for a long time, although not continuously; from October 1855 until February 1871. The editors are not known. The aim of this biweekly was to strive for the modernization of Jewish life and it recognized as having quite an impact. The journal also printed a lot of news about the life of the Jewish Kehillah in

Iasi.

In 1859, the Jewish-Romanian newspaper, *Gazeta Romano-Evrieasca*, started to appear, edited by Marco Feldman-Campeanu, in Yiddish and Romanian. The newspaper waged a battle for equal rights and called for the creation of modern schools. It ceased publication after 11 issues due to opposition from ultra-orthodox groups. In 1872, a number of issues of the newspaper, “*Timpul*” (The Time), appeared in Romanian and Hebrew, edited by the Hebrew teacher, M. Horvitz. This newspaper was severely attacked by the anti-Semite, Cezar Boliac, who submitted an inquiry to the government about permission being granted to the Jews to print using Hebrew letters. The appearance of “*The Time*” ceased, and during that same year there was published in Iasi the first newspaper in Romanian, “*Vocea Aparatorului*” (Voice of Defense), Its editors were Marcu Feldman, followed by Marcu Rosenfeld, Director of the Jewish schools in Iasi. The newspaper’s slogan was, “No rights without responsibilities, and no responsibilities without rights.” However, that newspaper was also fiercely attacked and did not last more than a year.

Other newspapers appearing in Iasi were: “*Revista Israelita*” (the Israel i.e. Jewish Journal, May 31, 1874 to January 1, 1875) edited by Elias Schwartzfeld; five issues of a socialist newspaper, “*Lumina*” (Light, 1887) edited by Dr. Stefan Stanca); thirty issues in Yiddish of the journal “*Der Folks Frind*” (People’s Friend)(1888) edited by M. Braunstein; “*Propasirea*” (Progress, 1889-1891) edited by Max Kaufman, whose aim was dealing with the Kehillah’s affairs and spread the word about Jewish life in Romania. That newspaper also fought against assimilation. Among its editors were Dr. K. Lippe and Wilhelm Schwartzfeld.

Caption on 154—

Title page of a Book of Psalms Published in Iasi (1842-1843)

Caption on 155 top — Yiddish Newspaper which appeared at the end of the 19th century.

Caption on 155 bottom right-

Title page of a book of “*Selichot*”(Penitential Prayers) printed in Iasi in 1842

Caption on 155-bottom left

Title page of the book “*Sha’arei Tziyon*” (Gates of Zion) by Rabbi Nathan Neta Hanover

Following Hertzl's appearance, another paper, "Rasaritul" (The East, June 18, 1899 – March 1901) was published in Iasi. The editors were some of the most famous of the Jewish writers in Romania: Dr. Nemirover, Horia Carp, the poets, Enric Furtuna, A. Axelrod, and others. The newspaper supported the idea of settling on the island of Cyprus, the initiative of Davis Trietsch; and many Jews in Romania were sympathetic to this idea. The editors also published an annual publication named, "Rasaritul" (1899 and 1901).

During the time of the emigration by foot (1900), ("Fusgeyers") who walked from Romania to the border and from there sought transport to the European ports, the émigrés published occasional pamphlets, such as "Drumetii" (The "Fusgeyers" (Foot Walkers), "Departure from Romania)" or "Lev Echad"("One Heart")") the name of the wanderer's organization.

A group of writers and young "maskilim"(see above), who fought against "Toinby Hall" and for Yiddish literature, published a "monthly" in Yiddish by the name, Licht ("Or"(Light) – 1914). The members of the group were: Y. Groper, Botosanski, E. Waldman, M. Rabinovici, M. Friedman, and A.L. Zisu. Among the artists, who worked for the "monthly," was the famous painter, Rubin (Reuven). The group held literary festivals, which echoed throughout all the Moldavian towns; one of these was dedicated to the death of I. L. Peretz. And in 1915, a special issue was dedicated to this writer. The monthly, "haOr," was the first Yiddish newspaper which excelled with a high literary level, and despite having only four issues published, it had a profound influence on Romanian Jewry.

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Caption on p.156—

Public Announcement of the death of Y.L.Peretz done by Yaakov Groper in Yiddish and Romanian. [General Archives of the Jewish People]

Caption on 157 – Avraham Goldfaden

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Iasi was also famous for Yiddish theatre. Avraham Goldfaden staged his plays for the first time and laid the foundation of Yiddish theatre. He arrived in Iasi in 1876; and his first plays were presented during Hol Hamoed of Sukkot (the middle days of the festival) 5637 in the restaurant garden of the bartender, Mark, a restaurant garden that became famous earlier, due to the appearances of the "Singers of Broder." The audiences were mainly

common-folk as the upper class Jews disparaged this theater. During the rainy season, Goldfaden went on tour with his company to Bucharest and more far-flung locations, Botosani, Braila and Galati. In September 1877, a stage was built for the theatre in the “Green Tree” restaurant garden of Iasi, which became the cradle of Yiddish theatre. There they presented, “Brinzela Cossack” (Offenbach’s operetta) and the “Enchantress.” In the absence of Jewish actors, Goldfaden put together his presentations with the crew of people he had available; unemployed craftsmen, apprentices, and cantors. Later on, professional actors from Russia joined his theatre. Goldfaden was the groups chief, wrote the plays, composed the music, and stage director, all in one. After some time, the company split in two and a new theater was established, the “Tivoli Theater,” where the plays of I. Lateiner (b. Iasi in 1853) who wrote 75 plays were presented, and historical operettas by N. Horowitz, who arrived in Iasi from Galicia. The mainstay of the company was the talented actor, Izidor Ashkenazi, who eventually became famous throughout Romania.

Iasi also served as a center for Jewish scholars and writers, who published books and studies in Hebrew. The most important one was Moshe ben Zecharia HaCohen (passed away in 1799), the author of “Ohel Moshe” (Moses’ Tent).

Binyamin Schwartzfeld (1822-1896) founded the first Jewish school in the city (1853, see above), and was also was active in the economic field as a bank manager (1850) and as founder of the first insurance company in Moldavia. He translated into Hebrew the poems of Schiller, Goethe, and Lessing, published articles in the Hebrew Viennese journal, “Kochavey Itzhak”(Isaac’s Stars) (starting in 1846), and wrote a study about Hebrew grammar. In his opinion only equal rights would enable Romanian Jews to advance; and his polemics on this matter with Peretz Smolenskin were printed as special additions in the newspapers, “Haivri” (The Hebrew), and “Hamagid” (The Preacher).

B. Schwartzfeld had three sons and all three became famous in the area of Jewish Historiography in Romania. His first-born son, Elias Schwartzfeld (1855-1915), wrote a string of studies about the history of the Jews in Romania; his second son, Wilhelm Schwartzfeld (1856-1894), became famous as a researcher in the field of Hebrew linguistics and published several works about Hebrew grammar, Jewish education in Iasi, and Jewish researchers and writers in Iasi; the third son, Mozes Schwartzfeld (1857-



1943), was also known as a historian and a reporter.

The poet, Wolf Ehrenkrantz (1826-18830), whose nom de plume was Welvel Zbarazer published a book of Hebrew poems called “Hazon Lamoed,” (A Vision for the Time) and two folk books, “Kav Hayashar” (The Straight Line) and “Kinot L'Tishah B'av” (Lamentations for the Ninth of Av)(all in 1858), and more.

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Caption on p.157

Title Page of the Poems by the Poet Zbarazer (1858)

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Mozes Waldberg published a book in two volumes in Hebrew called, “This is the Way of the Torah” (a second edition appeared in Iasi in 1868), as a polemical response to the book, “The Torah’s Way,” by Hirsh Mendl Pineles of Galatz. )

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Caption on p.158 at top

Title Page Poems by the Yiddish Poet Wolf Zbarazer

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M.S. Goldbaum (1836-1915) published in 1873 a drama in verse called “Yedidia Haissi”.

N. Frenkel published studies in Hebrew newspapers and translated Don Quixote into Hebrew.

The historian, I. B. Brociner (b. in Iasi in 1845 and d. in Bucharest in 1918), wrote and published several of his works in Iasi.

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Caption on p.158 right bottom.

The writer, M. Goldbaum, creator of the drama “Yedidia Haissi”.

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Dr. Stefan Stanca, editor of “Or,” became known for his study about “The Socialist Environment as a Pathological Cause” (1891). Later on, he became a famous leader of the Socialist movement.

The poet, S. Lazar (b. 1892), published a book of poems about Jewish topics called “Harpa de Arama” (A Copper Organ).

The poet, Dr. A. Steuerman (1896-1918), among other things became

famous for his book, “Spini” (The Reapers, 1915). He translated into Romanian the writings of Queen Elizabeth, known by her nom de Plume, Carmen Sylva. He was a regular reporter for the general Romanian newspapers and even edited Jewish newspapers. As a consequence of the persecutions during World War 1, Steuerman committed suicide.

The poet, B. Fundoianu (1898-1944), son of M. Schwartzfeld’s sister, published a book of criticism devoted to French literature (1921) and a book of poems, “Privelisti,” (1930). Later on, he settled in Paris, where he was known by the name, Binyamin Fondane, for his study of Esthetics. He wrote a number of poems in French about the Holocaust. After the German occupation of Paris, he was expelled to Drancy and perished in Birkenau on October 2, 1944.

### Iasi University as a Nest of anti-Semitism

By the middle of the 19th century, the university in Iasi served as a center of anti-Semitism. Professors preached from their podiums hatred of Jews. Several of them were especially prominent in their hostility: S. Barnutiu (1896-1864), a professor in the law faculty; Vasile Conta (1846-1884), professor of civil law and a philosopher, who was elected to the Parliament and gave a harsh talk against the Berlin Congress’ decision to grant the Jews equal rights; and Nicolae Ionescu, professor of general history, whose lectures described the Jewish religion as degraded and unethical. Opposed to them, Professor Titu Maiorescu protested to the Parliament against the Iasi university professors preaching hatred of the Jews.

In 1881, the leading figure of Romanian anti-Semitism at that time, Nicu Ceaur Aslan, was chosen in Iasi as a representative to the Parliament. On June 4th of that year, he proposed a parliamentary inquiry which demanded taking action against the “invasion” of Russian Jews, who had fled their country due to pogroms. A well-known journalist, Gheorghe Panu, opposed Aslan in a string of articles in the newspapers.

In 1898, a student’s organization was established in Iasi called, “Shichrur” (Freedom), that preached hatred of Jews and was in favor of boycotting them economically and organized anti-Semitic gatherings in Iasi and other cities. This propaganda bore fruit within a year. On May 16, 1899, pogroms raged in Iasi and the newspaper, “Universul,” wrote: “From the time Iasi was founded no such horrible scenes were witnessed.” Several days before the

riots, the students spread inciting pamphlets summoning the Christian population to a large public gathering, including delegates from far-flung cities. Among them were well-known agitators from Focșani, such as: Tita Pavelescu, a delegate of the Anti-Semitic league of Birlad; the editor of the anti-Semitic newspaper of Bucharest; and anti-Semitic agitators from Iasi, such as, Lascar Tarabuta. The speakers called for exterminating the Jews and destroying their institutions. After the speeches, the crowds demonstrated in the streets, led by boys who gathered stones and bricks. Hundreds of people joined them armed with sticks and whips; among them soldiers and policemen. Jewish stores on the main streets were looted and destroyed. After that, they broke into private homes, beating, and looting. Children were thrown out from windows. Policemen, gendarmes, and civilians, who tried to intervene, were also beaten.

In the Jewish quarter, “The Red Bridge,” the rioters confronted thousands of Jews, who were ready to defend themselves, so the attackers were distanced from there with force. In other sections, battles broke out between the Jews and the rioters. Sometimes the Jews were not satisfied with self-defense but would actively pursue the rioters.

Looting continued throughout the entire night. Several synagogues were destroyed and Christian houses also were damaged, though they were marked with national flags and crosses. The riot subsided only when the authorities brought in the army from Birlad and Vaslui. “Half of Iasi was destroyed,” wrote the newspaper, “Egalitatea” (Equality). A group of 100 Romanian students published declarations of non-identification with the anti-Semites.

On March 11, 1900, 73 rioters were accused of being provocateurs; including a few Jews. The rioter’s defense lawyer was A. K. Kuza, who claimed that the Jews started the events by throwing stones and pots at the demonstrators from their balconies. Several rioters were sentenced to very short terms of imprisonment and only one of the Jews, who was accused of being a provocateur, was sentenced to three months in jail. .

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the university became the center of activity of: A. K. Kuza, Professor of Economics; and joining him were N. Iorga, Professor of History; and Sumuleanu, Professor of Chemistry. The latter, who worked as manager of the National Institute of Chemistry, used to come to Jewish taverns ostensibly for supervision purposes and pour out

the contents of the barrels, without checking them. When the bartenders complained about his actions (1908), Sumuleanu sued them for libel; and Professor Iorga published in his newspaper a list of 88 bartenders accusing them of poisoning the drinks. The bartenders were punished and this encouraged the students to stage additional anti-Semitic demonstrations.

That same year, the struggle about “The Jewish Oath” in matters requiring an oath before the civil authorities the medieval Jew did not employ the same formula as the Christian or Muslim. The reason is obvious: the state was Christian or Muslim, and no Jew could or would swear after the Christian or Muslim manner. In a Christian land this would have meant recognition of Jesus or the Trinity. Such an oath would not have been binding on the Jew and hence was never imposed. For the convenience of the Jew, therefore, an oath "according to the Jewish custom" was instituted.

The manner of administering the oath varied in different localities. In spite of the emancipation of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the oath, "according to the Jewish custom," persisted in France till 1846, in Prussia till 1869, in Romania till 1912. Jacob Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook, 315-1791*, (New York: JPS, 1938), 49-50.

Rabbi Dr. Nemirover was fined for his refusal to use it. In 1911, the appellate court in Iasi ruled that the oath was illegal, malicious and degrading; but the city's judges still attempted to use it.

In September 1909, a convention of students gathered in Iasi, and anti-Semitic propaganda was the lead item on the agenda. The students demanded that the national theaters should ban the play, “Menashe,” which was written by Roneti Roman.

In 1911, the Romanian reporter, Emil Socor, published a book, which proved that the main research publication of A. K. Kuza for which he had been appointed to be a professor was plagiarized. Kuza sued him, but the reporter was acquitted. The trial was exploited for anti-Semitic propaganda with Kuza claiming that it was a “blood libel” staged by the Jews. Again, the riot atmosphere engulfed the city. The students distributed inciting pamphlets and demonstrated in the streets. The police warned the Jews to stay away from the streets through which the demonstrators passed. In the Jewish quarter, the demonstrators met strong opposition and were repulsed forcefully. As a result, the police shut the Jewish stores and accused them of

incitement. The poet, Steuerman, who also proved that Kuza plagiarized his poetic works from others, was caught and beaten in the street. Several of the local journalists demanded a boycott of the Jewish merchants and craftsmen. In the regulations of the hospital, “St. Spiridion,” a clause was added that Jewish medical students were prohibited from working there as physicians.

During that year, in the pervasive anti-Semitic atmosphere, no Jewish student, not even the best one, was able to matriculate at a Romanian high school. Romanian students also managed to banish from the national theatre the talented Jewish actress, Francesca Rozan. As a result, the Jews boycotted the theatre that until then had published ads written in Yiddish. Many Romanian students resigned from the “Students’ Center” as a protest.

With the outbreak of the Romanian-Bulgarian war (1913), the army refused to accept Jewish volunteers and the “Cultural League” of Iorga rose up at the instigation of Kuza against giving citizenship to Jews, who had served in the army.

During World War I, Jews from Iasi grew poorer and poorer, until 75% of them needed aid from the Kehillah. During the time of the plagues, which raged during the last four months of 1917, 1,200 Jews perished.

### Between Two World Wars

The Organization of the Kehillah; The Zionist Movement; Cultural Life; Persecution of the Jews

The Organization of the Kehillah After World War I, the Kehillah reorganized itself. During the war, several Jewish institutions were destroyed: the school(s), the hospital, and the old peoples’ home. The Jews of Iasi faced severe welfare problems. During the summer of 1919, a few maskilim and leaders of institutions tried to renew the activity of the Jewish institutions and summoned their representatives, including the synagogues’ lay officials. They elected a provisional council, which drafted the Kehillah’s regulations. On November 9<sup>th</sup> of the same year, the first Jewish leaders of the Kehillah were chosen.

In 1927, a new committee was elected and the ministry of religion approved the Kehillah’s regulations. That same year, the Kehillah received formal

approval in keeping with the new laws pertaining to religion. Three years later, elections were held with candidates chosen from a unified list representing all parts of the community. A representative body headed the Kehillah, composed of committees reporting to it for education, culture economic, social problems, and religious affairs, In 1937, the budget of the Kehillah was 6 million Lei, but this sum was not sufficient for all their needs. The activities of the Kehillah's leaders were made difficult by the opposition of other institutions, which continued guarding their independence.

During the period between the two World Wars and during World War II, the rabbi who served in Iasi was Dr. Yoseph Safran. Other rabbis worth mentioning were: Rabbi Shalom, son of Rabbi Israel Gutman (b. 1867), the author of the books, "Drishat Ha'ari"(The Lion's Request) and "Tiferet Beit Levi;" (Pride of the House of Levi) Rabbi Shmuel Schwemer (1909-1959), who published Torah periodicals and many books (passed away in Israel, in 1956); and Rabbi Menachem Gutman (now in Israel), whose book, "Drashot Shem Tov," (Good Name Sermons) appeared in Iasi after the Holocaust.

In 1939, there were 112 Houses of Prayer in Iasi.

During that time, the number of pupils in the Jewish schools lessened because the government schools had opened their gates to Jewish children. In 1922, a seminar opened in Iasi, where the language of instruction was Hebrew, in order to prepare Hebrew teachers, but this institution was closed after a year by the authorities.

In 1939, the Kehillah of Iasi maintained a kindergarten, 7 schools for boys, 3 of them elementary schools and 4 were Talmud Torahs, a Yeshiva (Beit Aharon) and 4 schools for girls, one of them a professional school (of "ORT" with 150 pupils). In total there were 2,250 boys and girls. The Kehillah provided a fifth of the schools' budget (one million Lei) and the rest the schools' committees (organized in 1939) raised.

In 1924, with the assistance of the Joint (Distribution Committee) the children's hospital (founded in the years 1915-1916) with 50 beds renewed its activities. The Kehillah also made a yearly allocation to the hospital. In 1928, there was founded in the "Tirgul Kokoloy" quarter a society of craftsmen called "Ahavat Ha'adam" (Love of Mankind). In 1929, in the same section a clinic was established for the needy. The municipality made a

plot of land available for this purpose and construction was completed in 1938.

The Jewish hospital expanded at that time patients flooded in from the entire area and even from Bessarabia. During the years 1932-1934, 6,985 patients were hospitalized and 2,063 surgical procedures took place. In its adjacent clinic, 72,462 medical treatments were conducted, 6,368 radiological tests, and 4,319 medical examinations. In 1937, there were 130 beds in the hospital, in addition to 32 beds for the disabled in another small building, and another small building for people with contagious diseases.

The old people's home also expanded and in 1921, new buildings were added. The dedication ceremony was graced by the presence of Queen Maria and Prince Nikolai. The Ministry of Labor and Welfare formally recognized the excellence of this institution. When a fire broke out in the building in 1929, the first donation for its reconstruction came from Queen, Maria in the sum of 50,000 Lei. In 1935, the building was reconstructed with places for 150 old people, and included a synagogue, an infirmary, reading rooms, a bathhouse and more. Also established in Iasi was a home for war orphans by a Woman's Committee (organized in 1920). The old municipality building was purchased by local means, and with the help of the JOINT (Distribution Committee). It housed 95 orphans. Following dispute among the managers of the orphanage, the institution was turned over to the supervision of the Kehillah.

In 1922, an overnight shelter for impoverished transients and for local poor was established. After some time, an infirmary and a soup kitchen were added. Jewish physicians worked in the infirmary without recompense and during the years 1926-1936, 8,885 people were treated, including 851 Christians. At that time, 7,277 needy patients were hospitalized, including 835 Christians. A society called, "Hachnasat Kalah" (Helping the Bride), was also established and supported by the generosity of the couple Getzler. From 1922 through 1937, it helped make possible the marriages of 347 orphaned-brides.

In 1924, the JOINT (Distribution Committee) established a cooperative bank for workers and the craftsmen, which played an important role in the economic life of Iasi Jews. In 1943, it had 3,000 members. During that year the Children's Hospital was founded by Dr. L. Gelerter, which was built by donations from Romanian born American Jews.

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Caption on bottom of photo on p.160

Dr. L. Gelerter (Founder of the Hospital that bears his name).

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## The Zionist Movement

After World War I and under the influence of the Balfour Declaration, the Zionist movement in Iasi expanded and strengthened. Iasi Jews donated large sums of money to the development of Eretz Yisrael. The Jewish banker, M. Wachtel, built a rest home for workers on the Carmel, (Haifa, Israel) on the Ahuzat (The land first owned by Ephraim Catz my first cousin once removed, photo of groundbreaking can be included here if you wish It includes Catz his wife, Sir Herbert Samuel and others. - JHB) Sir Herbert Samuel. Yoseph Getzler built a spacious school in the same area.

The Women's Zionist Organization (WIZO) supported in Iasi a nursery day-care center where the language of instruction was Hebrew, and its members did a lot for Keren Hayesod (founded 1920 as Palestine Foundation Fund-today-United Israel Appeal) and Keren Kayemet leYisrael (Jewish National Fund). In 1919, the sport society, "Macabi," was established and beside it an orchestra of wind instruments (started in 1925).

In 1922, the Zionist organization in Iasi, renewed publication of the newspaper, "Rasaritul" (The East), but it did not last long.

In 1924, a center for "hachsharah"(training for eventual settling in Eretz Yisrael) was founded in Iasi in accordance with the decision of the local Zionist organization leaders and in collaboration with the leaders of the "haChalutz" (The Pioneer) of Bessarabia. The Jewish hospital allocated for this center an area of 60-70 hectares of its land. With the initiative of the "emissary Barpal" from Eretz Israel, a "Society of Friends of haChalutz" was established, and with the help of donations from the Kehillah, the hospital, and the JOINT, as well as the aid of the Zionist Organization in Bucharest, the buildings required for the "hachsharah" farms were constructed. Cattle were obtained, fruit trees were planted, and fields were readied for the cultivation of vegetables. During the next decade over 700 young men and women worked on the farm; and when their training was complete, immigrated to Eretz Israel.



In 1925, a Zionist students' organization by the name, "Hashmoniah," (Hasmonean—a member of the maccabees) was founded in Iasi. The group established a library (1936) with 1,500 books in Hebrew and in Yiddish. The number of readers reached 350 and lessons in Hebrew and Hebrew literature took place there. Within three years the number of books grew to 3,000. The girl's branch of "Hashmoniah" operated a restaurant for 200 school children.

In 1932, those from Bessarabia founded the society, "Ahuzah" (landholding—having to do with the hope of obtaining land in Eretz Yisrael.), which held lectures on literary topics, organized "Hanukah" and "Purim" parties, distributed kindling to the poor, and provided scholarships for Jewish students, who studied in the Conservatory. This society also established a large library.

In 1936, the Zionist Organization of Iasi renewed the activities of "Toynbi Hall," which became once again the center of Jewish cultural life in the city.

### Cultural Life

The historian, M. A. haLevi, beginning in 1926 published in Iasi a journal called "Sinai," dedicated to studying the history of Romanian Jewry. After a time, the place of the journal's appearance was Bucharest. In 1928, a book "The History of Jews," by Jack Pineles appeared, which contained a chapter dedicated to Romanian Jewry.

Between 1932-1940, the journal of the local Jewish party appeared, the weekly "Tribuna Evreiasca" (The Hebrew Tribune) [the dictionary gives the origin of Tribune as a dais or platform from which an assembly is addressed], which had a great impact on Moldavia. After awhile, it added editions in Yiddish and in Hebrew. The journal's staff also published two yearly editions in the years 1938 and 1939, where the preeminent of the Jews of Romania participated. The weekly had a circulation of between 10 and 12 thousand.

Dr. H. Solomovitz, (Solomovici) one of the Kehillah's leaders, a physician, by profession published in Iasi two books in Romanian: "The Problem of the Jewish Nation" (1924) and "Ways of Solving the Jewish Problem" (1928). He was murdered in Iasi during the riots of 1941.

The poet, G. Spina (b. 1896), who also worked as a journalist, became famous in a booklet where he exposed the well-known novelist Ionel Teodoreanu, as an anti-Semite. After World War II, he fought vigorously for punishing those responsible for the Iasi riots.

The “Green Tree” garden became famous on the eve of World War I and after it, when well-known actors and actresses began to arrive in Iasi: Clara Jounq, Joseph Kessler, Baratov, Molly Picon, and famous companies, the Vilna Company, the Yiddish art theatre from Bucharest under the direction of Yaakov Shternberg.

### Persecution of Jews

After World War I, anti-Semitic activity at Iasi University intensified, this time with the support of the authorities. Students started to travel to all corners of the land on special trains without paying, on the pretext that they would speak against Communism. In fact, they were busy distributing anti-Semitic literature and awakening in all Moldavian cities hatred toward the Jews. Participants in this were students of the Institute of Military Medicine, despite being forbidden to take part in any political activity.

In 1922, riots broke out in Iasi, in which not only students took part but also Russian refugees from the army of generals Denikin and Wranghel. Jewish students were expelled by force from the university and the dormitories. For instance, one night, 40 female Jewish students were forced out of their dormitory and only after the professors intervened, did they receive a 48-hour extension. During the riots, the printing house of H. Goldner was destroyed. At the same time there were found there a number of important manuscripts of Romanian professors; and Professor Yorga himself wrote an article protesting against its destruction. Several Romanian newspaper-publishing houses were also destroyed, since among their editors were Jews. The students disturbed performances of the Yiddish theatre and did not allow any show written by a Jew or any Jewish actor to go onstage in the government theater.

As a result of the riots the number of Jewish students in Iasi diminished by half. At the end of 1922, dormitories were built for 120 students, male and female, and a restaurant for 360 students. The students together with the Jewish population organized a self-defense force. The Workers Union

followed that example. In December of that year, when the riots reached their peak, the Jewish storeowners closed their stores in protest.

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Caption on p. 164

Burial of Torah Scrolls Desecrated in the Riots of 1922.

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In August of that year, the Interior Ministry decided to establish in Iasi a subdivision of the police, who were to monitor Jews throughout the country, on the pretext that Jews were breeding grounds for Bolshevism, which was introduced by Jews from Bessarabia and Ukraine; however, this subdivision was dismantled quickly in the wake of protests of the newspapers and the Jewish leadership

In early 1923, riots broke out anew. On March 4<sup>th</sup> of that year, the “League of National Christian Defense was founded, headed by Cuza and with: the participation of Professor Sumuleanu, General Tarnowsky, Zelea Codreanu and his son Cornel. A month later, the students broke into the university led by Cordreanu and became entrenched there. Their slogan was, “A battle against giving citizenship to Jews.” In August 1923, in spite of opposition by the authorities, a students’ conference was organized, led by Professor Cuza, which demanded the introduction of a “Numerus Nulus” against the Jews. Afterwards, students demonstrated in the city, shattering windows of Jewish homes and beating Jews in the streets. Towards the end of the year, the rector closed the university for two weeks and King Ferdinand declared in his speech that these riots were bad for Romania.

That same year, the Dean of the medical faculty, Dr. Bacaloglu, decided that Jewish students were prohibited from dissecting the bodies of Christians. Cornel Cordreanu threatened that if the Jews did not bring bodies of their own to the dissecting tables, he will insure that Jewish bodies will be there. However, other faculty professors forced the dean of the medical faculty to resign. Among those calling for his resignation was Dr. Constantin. Parhon, who following World War II became the first president of the Peoples Republic of Romania. In 1924, Professor Parhon offered a proposal, accepted by a committee of professors, that when there were no Jewish bodies available, Jewish students would be allowed to dissect Christians. But the senate did not approve this decision. As a result, Jewish students failed their exams, especially those of Professor Sumuleanu, who did not allow any Jewish student to pass exams in his department. Forty of them, who failed in

medicine tried to transfer to Bucharest, but the committee of professors refused to accept them. Later, when Jewish students attempted bringing in Jewish cadavers from Bessarabia, they were accused of trading with bodies.

When the police attempted to end the constant uproar, Cordreanu killed the chief of the police of Iasi (October 25, 1925) and he thus became the national hero of the students and the anti-Semites. In a trial conducted in Turnu-Severin, the murderer was acquitted.

At the beginning of 1925, the Minister of the Interior ordered the elimination of the Christian Students' Union after they proposed an anti-Semitic program. Nevertheless, the riots continued. On several streets near the dormitories, Jews were not allowed to pass. During summer that year, the Jewish merchants gathered and decided to close their shops until the authorities stopped the riots.

In September 1925, several more anti-Semitic groups joined the "League of National-Christian Defense." Among them were "The National-Christian Action" and "The National Fascism." The riots continued into 1926. Professor Sumuleanu himself beat Jewish students, who dared to attend his lectures. Persecution of Jews spread to the Law and Pharmaceutical Faculties and even to the hospitals. In December of that year, students and hooligans attempted to storm the Tirgul Kokoloy quarter, but the Jews resisted forcefully and turned back the attack.

In 1927, "The Legion of the Archangel Michael" in Romania was founded by Cornel Codreanu; from it sprouted the "Iron Guard" in 1930, the most radical anti-Semitic party. Its members were nicknamed "Legionnaires." In 1928, the students destroyed the synagogue on Pacurari Street. The authorities compensated the Jews for the damage. In 1929, a "Numerous Clausus" already existed in the University of Iasi, since most of the examiners providing entrance exams were anti-Semites.

As a result of the continuous persecution, the economic state of the Jews in Iasi worsened. In 1931, a Jewish member of the Municipal Council requested aid for unemployed Jews and even for the shopkeepers, who did not have enough to buy bread. In the Jewish quarter, soup kitchens had to be opened; in the Socola quarter, 400 families were given meals.

In 1933, the Minister of the Interior, Alex Vaida Voevod, in a secretly circulated memorandum to the Iasi manufacturers, requested them to choose their administrators in accordance with ethnic criteria.

In 1934, a few Jewish students complained to the court about Professor Sumuleanu support of the anti-Semites. As a result, they were sent to a military court and tried as organizers of a Jewish plot against their Christian associates. Two of them were sentenced to 2 weeks imprisonment, 3 – to one month, and 4, who were missing for the trial, were sentenced to one and a half years in prison, besides heavy monetary fines. A year later, 4 Jewish students were once more fined for denouncing Professor Sumuleanu.

In the summer of 1935, in Iasi the parties of Goga and Cuza merged into a “National-Christian Party” with an anti-Semitic agenda. Following this union, a festive sermon was held in Iasi’s Cathedral with the participation of the Metropolitan of Moldavia. In 1936, the anti-Semitic students pressured the Metropolitan to evict the Jews, who rented apartments and stores in the church building. Indeed, the Jews had to evacuate their apartments. In the elections of the Students’ Union that took place that same year, anti-Semitic students won 6 of the 16 seats in the leadership of the Union. On June 27, 1937, a Congress of the Cultural League was held in Iasi, with Professor Yorga presiding. On the agenda was the issue: “Romanization of the city.”

When the Goga-Cuza party rose to power (December 1937), and Professor Cuza was chosen to be the Deputy Prime Minister, his former students, the lawyers in Iasi, honored him by intensifying their persecution of Jews. The vice-president of the Bar Association in Iasi, the writer Yonel Theodoreanu, instigated their decision to expel Jews from the association and not to retain the services of any Jewish lawyer for the next 10 years. Immediately, (the Jewish) lawyers were forbidden entrance to the courts. Although the decision was cancelled by the highest appellate court as being illegal, it remained in force practically because Christian lawyers attacked every Jewish lawyer, who dared cross the threshold of a court.

Even after the fall of the Goga-Cuza government, in Iasi the law, which mandated examining the citizenship of Jews, remained in force and was enacted with arbitrary harshness. The authorities’ administrators found all sorts of reasons to extort money from Jews in return for documents, which proved their citizenship. Spell check 7/4

TL

Richard-My Yiddish is not good enough to translate. Where there are no bold italics does not mean there are no problems. I.e. my guess is that The Upturned Light should be the Overturned Light—but again, can't say for sure.

The Central Zionist Archive, A 133 (1/2).

The General Archive for the History of the Israel, RM 93,RM 94,RM95, RM96, RM97, RM98.

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## The Holocaust

Persecution during the Time of the “Iron Guard”: The First Days of the War: The Massacre: The Death Railway Wagons: The Kehillah’s Activities: After the War.

Persecution during the Time of the “Iron Guard”:

With the ascent of Antonescu to power, the government formally declared that Iasi was “a city of the Legionnaires Movement.” In the wake of this announcement, a festive parade was held in the presence of King Michael, General Antonescu, ministers and representatives of German and Italian youth. The day before the celebration, members of the “Iron Guard” broke into Jewish homes on the streets where the parade passed, arrested Jews, despoiled and looted their homes under the pretext that they were searching for weapons.

During the following months, persecution intensified until General Antonescu himself, in a government meeting of October 11, 1940, instructed the Minister of the Interior to pay attention to the problem. The government directed that an investigation be conducted, and a commissar by the name of Vizitiu was dismissed, although he continued to act freely. The “Legionnaires,” led by their commander, Ilie Vlad Sturza, the Minister of the Interior’s son, ruled in Iasi without interference, and did not obey any order.

This was the procedure: Jews were brought in groups or one by one to the police station, where they were accused of pasting Communist posters or possessing them, or of transporting red cloth for making red flags. These harsh events were initiated and carried out by the self same commissar Vizitiu. With the use of severe torture, those arrested were forced to confess to crimes they did not commit, and even to implicate acquaintances and

relatives. On the basis of forced documents, the courts sentenced the accused a variety of punishments. Also, groups of pupils and youths were sentenced to prison or detention camps.

Ongoing searches were conducted at the homes of prominent well-to do Jews and the money discovered was confiscated. The deputy chairman of the Kehillah, S. Cristian, was accused of bribery in to save a Communist Jewish woman. The Ashkenazi rabbi was accused of striking and drawing blood from a Christian boy in the synagogue. Two Jewish merchants under torture were forced to sign a document that they had initiated sabotage; a group of Legionnaires confiscated 4.5 million Lei from them..

The earthquake, of November 1940, destabilized several buildings in the city. The Legionnaires claimed that two of the oldest and most beautiful synagogues, the Jurist Synagogue and the Upholsterer's synagogue in the Rapa Galebena quarter, were also unstable and constituted a predictable public danger. The synagogues were located in the vicinity of the "Iron Guard's" "Green House". The demolition order was issued by the mayor, Dr. Poliacu, himself a member of the "Iron Guard." The headmaster of the "National Gymnasium" showed up with his students to execute the destruction. The Torahs were desecrated. Holy utensils and the building's paraphernalia were divided among the perpetrators as payment for their work.

The State's establishment on one hand and the parallel organizations created by the Legionnaires on the other, competed with each other as to their harshness in carrying out anti-Semitic decrees, whether official or not. Primary among those preaching hatred toward the Jews, were priests, many of whom were members of the Legionnaire's movement, and most of the Christian residents absorbed their doctrine.

In spite of the harsh terror, the Jews fought for their lives. In the Socola neighborhood, where the Jewish carters homes were, several groups of Legionnaires were beaten back after attempting to riot. When the Legionnaire's commander in Iasi ordered the Jews to open their stores on Yom Kippur, informing them that keeping the stores closed would be considered sabotage, the Jews of Iasi did not obey and did not open their stores. The Kehillah's leaders were not terrified of submitting complaints about the "Legionnaires" and instigated a government investigation. Nevertheless persecution did not cease, but negotiations began with the



“Iron Guard.” The Kehillah was compelled to bribe and continue bribing their leaders with large sums of money to save the lives of those under arrest. In addition, the Kehillah was obliged to pay six million Lei in monthly payments to the “Iron Guard.” The final payment was due at the end of January 1941, - thus, the assumption by several of the Kehillah’s leaders, makes sense, that it was the lust of the Legionnaires to get the remainder of the money, that saved the Jewish population of Iasi from large scale killing, since in January 1941, a pogrom was raging in Bucharest.

According to the law of October 14, 1940, Jewish teachers and students were expelled from government schools. The Kehillah was obliged to act quickly in order to take care of thousands of children, who were left without education. Thanks to the vigorous efforts of the head of the education department, the Zionist engineer, Ghejel Buchman, parallel classes were opened in the existing elementary schools and two high schools were founded, one for boys (with 400 students) and another for girls (with 300 students), as well as a commercial school for boys (with 200 students). Buildings were rented and repaired. Jewish teachers, who had been expelled from the government schools, were invited. Added to them were Jewish academics, who were not allowed to work in their professions; and Jewish professors and lecturers, who were expelled from the university. Many classes were also opened in synagogues.

Jewish studies were added to the official curriculum: religion, Jewish history, and the Hebrew language. High school graduates and students, who had been expelled from the universities, were provided with courses of a very high academic level, especially in medicine.

“The Struggle for acquiring the Stores and Homes of the Kikes”(Yehodonim?) – as the robbery of Jewish property was labeled by the Minister of the Interior – started in Iasi, as in other cities, with boycotting Jewish stores. Legionnaire guards prevented shoppers from entering Jewish stores, and posters were glued to their windows labeled, “A Kike Store.” Pamphlets were distributed calling on Christians to not buy from Jews.

Threatened and tortured in the cellars of the police or in the cellars of groups of Legionnaires the Jews of Iasi were forced to “sell” their plants and enterprises to the Legionnaire’s central “office” at very low prices, which they never received. One of them operated from a church on Stefan cel Mare street (Stephen the Great) and another from Rapa Galbena. Daily, Jews from

all strata of the population were brought in and tortured cruelly. Besides selling their plants, they were forced to sign that it was “with good will,” that they were donating large sums of money to “The Legionnaire’s Aid;” and they further extracted from their mouths declarations that they were Communists.

In September 1940, the Legionnaires took over the “Chalutz” farm and expelled the chalutzim (pioneers), who tried to defend themselves with their hoes. Many of them were arrested and tortured. All livestock and agricultural equipment was stolen.

The economic situation of many Jews was totally ruined and the Kehillah had to take care of them. During the winter months of 1940 - 1941, the Kehillah distributed free of charge more than one hundred boxcars of firewood and daily more than 12,000 portions of food at the soup kitchens.

Even following the Legionnaires removal from government (end of January 1941), all attempts to return Jewish enterprises to their rightful owners failed and they remained in the hands of the thieves. Anti-Semitic tension did not disappear. The new police chief, Leahu, he who created this atmosphere, received from the Kehillah a monthly salary, in order to soften his stance. Police under his command behaved as he did.

In March 1941, Antonescu publicly decreed the deportation from the country of all Jews in possession of a Nansen passport [Nansen passports were internationally recognized identity cards first issued by the League of Nations to stateless refugees. Invented in 1922 by Fridtjof Nansen, in 1942, they were honored by governments in 52 countries. Approximately 450,000 Nansen passports were issued, helping hundreds of thousands of stateless people to immigrate to a country that would have them (<http://www.wikipedia.org/> - RSS] and refugees from Poland, totaling about a thousand people, including prominent long-time manufacturing enterprise owners, were deported. After much exertion Antonescu cancelled the expulsion decree, but Iasi police continued for a long time to threaten Polish Jews.

When preparations for war against The Soviet Union began, units of the German army arrived in Iasi, among them a group of the “Todt” organization, which was housed in buildings that belonged to Jewish institutions. In March 1941, the high command of the security service sent

the Iasi police a letter (No. 18087) requesting their paying attention to the fact that “the Jews are in a tense situation due to the presence of German armed forces.” In a second letter (No. 13,584) that same month, the police were alerted to pay attention to the organizing of companies of young Jews, which “in the event of a Russian nighttime air raid, would signal the Russians with the aid of lights and flares, towards points of strategic importance.” In May 1941, a secret report of the local command in Iasi (No. 17657) ascertained that “the Jews are blood enemies of the Germans and look forward to the defeat of both the Germans and the Romanians. If a war breaks out against The Soviet Union, and the Russians win some interim victories, the Jews will be a danger to our country and to Germany, since in such a circumstance – the Jews will conduct hostile actions and be friendly to the enemy.”

Thus, a pre-riot atmosphere was created. The authorities began with oppressive actions. Beginning in June, the Security Service declared that many Jews of the leadership of the Kehillah and of the well-to-do were suspected of Communism. They were arrested and transferred to the Targu-Jiu concentration camp. Among them were journalists and other intellectuals and also the long-time Zionist, Jacob Hirschensohn, who was in his time a delegate to the first Zionist Congress in Basel. He committed suicide a year later, unable bear the hard life in the camp.

Anti-Semitic activities accelerated rapidly. The orders came from General Antonescu himself. On June 19, 1941, he ordered the closure of all the coffee houses of the “Jewish communists throughout Moldavia and to identify all “kikes,”(Yehudonim) “Communist’ agents and their supporters,” in order “to do with them as I’ll order, when the time comes.”

In the wake of Antonescu’s order to evict the Jews from the villages and small towns, more than four thousand were transferred by foot or ox cart to Iasi under the supervision of military police. Their possessions were stolen and they arrived without anything; and the Kehillah was required to house and feed them.

During that period, Antonescu founded a “Special Intelligence Service,” in order to prepare propaganda justifying action against Jews. A special branch of this service dealt with spreading rumors. For instance, Iasi police told its high command on June 22, 1941 that it had learned from a German source that “in case of armed conflict between Romania and The Soviet Union, the

Jews would attempt to create an atmosphere of panic in the large centers and especially near the front, including Iasi, and would take over the main institutions.”

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Caption on letters p.166. -- Letters from the Municipality of Iasi to the Commander of the Army, The Minister of the Interior and to Radu Laka; Requesting authorization to destroy the homes of 3000 Jews, asserting that they had been damaged in the earthquake of 1940, and the expulsion of all the occupants to Transnistria.

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On the eve of the breakout of the war against The Soviet Union, Iasi looked like a front line city. The streets were jammed with German and Romanian army units. Cannons and tanks crossed the city on their way to the nearby border. The main buildings were seized for headquarters. On the buildings confiscated by the Germans, flags bearing the swastika fluttered, threatening the lives of the Jews.

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Caption on document on p.? It is the document that is overwritten.

Report of the Supervisor of the “Center of the Jews” about the destruction of the Old Cemetery

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The 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the German army including the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Brigades of the Romanian infantry, commanded by the German general, Hans von Salmuth, camped, in the city.

The first days of the war did not bring the victories expected by the German army. During June 22-28, the Russians withstood all attacks and only on the 29<sup>th</sup> were the Romanian armies able to cross the river Prut. The Prut front was 15 km away from the city. This failure caused panic in Iasi and it intensified after Russian bombardment had caused significant damage to the city.

At that time, the personnel of the Romanian Special Intelligence Service appeared in Iasi, among them a German major, Stransky, who served as communication officer between the German legation and the secret service of the German army, and between them and the special service of the Romanians. Stransky was a relative of Ribbentrop. He was joined by the

Romanian Colonel, Ionescu Micandru, head of the office of communication with the German army. They were immediately in touch with the military commander in the area of the 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the Romanian army and gave him orders. Following the first Russian air raid (June 24, 1941), a rumor spread in the city that the Jews signaled the enemy with light bulbs on their chimneys and red blankets on their windows, directing them to important strategic locations. The Jews were also accused of giving shelter to Russian paratroopers.

Although only one man was injured in this air raid, Iasi Christians became quite anxious, accused the Jews, and attacked them in several neighborhoods. The Kehillah appealed time after time to the Romanian authorities, to the police, to the security service, to the court, to the military headquarters, and to the regional police, to alert them to the atmosphere of extreme unrest in the city. The response was that nothing bad would happen to them.

Following a second air raid on June 26, which damaged important targets servicing the command of a large military unit – the telephone exchange, the school where the German army was quartered, with about 600 people killed - the heads of the Kehillah were summoned to police headquarters and told that the Russian pilots were young Jews from Iasi and that Iasi Jews had been signaling the enemy. The Kehillah's leaders were ordered to gather, within 48 hours, from the Jews all lamps, binoculars, photography and cinema equipment. Although there were many Jewish casualties (38 dead, about 150 wounded and over 100 Jewish homes damaged) and though it was impossible to imagine that the Jews collaborated with the enemy – the Kehillah was threatened with severe retaliation. The walls were covered with instigating posters such as: “Romanians! Every Jew killed eliminates communism. The time of revenge has come!”

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Caption below letter on p.167

A letter from the city council to Radu Laka, requesting that he give instructions to the Kehillah of Iasi, to turned over all synagogues for use as public Romanian institutions, for use as housing for Romanian refugees from neighborhoods damaged by bombing.

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A unit of armed Legionnaires was concentrated in the Pacurari quarter and incited Christians against Jews. In the windows of Christian homes there began to appear crosses and icons, on the walls and fences large crosses and inscriptions: "Christians live here. No Kikes (Yehudonim) in the courtyard." Many prominent and intellectual Romanians left the city. The incitement bore fruit. The first victims fell. A sergeant from the 13<sup>th</sup> cavalry regiment, Mircea Manoliu, Legionnaire par excellence, caught three Jews, one of whom had been injured in the Russian bombing, falsely accused them of flying rockets, with tracers, brought them to the barracks and later to regiment headquarters. Upon interrogation, they were found not guilty and freed, but meanwhile, curfew time had arrived; no Jews were allowed on the streets, so the sergeant was ordered to accompany them home. But, he walked them to the drill field and shot them there. One died, the second was injured and the third escaped. The next day, the same sergeant murdered five more Jews, forced labor, sent to remove bombs from the courtyard of the 13th Regiment

### The Massacre

It was no accident that Iasi was chosen to be the first place to massacre Jews. For decades, hatred of Jews was continually nurtured, and a murderous atmosphere prevailed. Here the Germans could count on the Romanians cooperating with them against the Jews.

On Sabbath morning, June 28<sup>th</sup>, the same Magnolia, joined by groups of soldiers from his regiment, began to search Jewish homes in the Tatarasi-Ciurchi quarter, for broadcasting equipment. On the way, he was joined by a German unit located in the quarter and all of them, together with soldiers of the 22<sup>nd</sup> artillery regiment, continued to search and plunder, and by the way, killed several Jewish bartenders.

Units of military police were sent to the city's police stations. These later stood out as the most destructive and murderous. The police officers of Iasi were ordered not to interfere with army affairs and to enforce this their revolvers were confiscated. Many Jewish intellectuals were arrested as Communists or fellow travelers of the Communists and jailed in police cellars.

That evening, following a false alarm resulting from two rockets from a German plane – as was proven later – shooting began throughout the city, lasting the whole night.

Romanian and German soldiers checked and robbed Jewish homes through the entire night on the pretext that the shooting came from those homes. Jews were tortured and some were killed.

An objective investigation conducted by General Emanoil Leoveanu (see below), immediately following the riots, it became clear that there was no one killed or wounded among the guards, who were shot, and no indication of their being attacked. He concluded that “the false attack was conducted with mock arms and not by Jews.”

With daybreak, the German and Romanian guards, joined by loads of citizens, specially drafted from rabble in the outlying areas, began removing Jews from their homes and shelters and forced them to march with hands up to police headquarters. Many were shot in their homes or against the walls of their homes. Many were murdered savagely on the way to the police by soldiers or by civilians, who stood at roadside, using for this, stones, whips, and iron bars.

The German, Dr. Franz Babinger, at the time a professor at Iasi University and today professor at Munich College, declared in testimony at the Stuttgart court on April 4, 1957 that he witnessed a German infantry unit of General von Salmuth’s army, under the command of a major, that shot at Jews in the yard of the palatial court building located in the city’s center. Every home was checked and every Jewish man was removed, including the sick and disabled. While that was happening, German vehicles cruised the streets, broadcasting dance music from loudspeakers.

By 9 a.m., the police courtyard was filled with thousands of Jews, including the leaders of the Kehillah. They requested that the Kehillah’s chairman be allowed to attend and be interviewed by the committee already convened. Upon entering, he saw seated next to the Romanian civil and military authorities, several German officers participating in the meeting. When he protested the arrests, torture, and the killing of Jews in the streets – he was told that it was the Jews’ fault, because they signaled the enemy and shot at German soldiers. The Kehillah’s chairman declared that all the Kehillah’s

leaders would be responsible, if it turned out that there was any basis whatever to these accusations.

At 11 o'clock before noon, the committee, comprised of four police commissars led by a captain, began to "select" among those arrested, and about two hundred men were freed, each receiving a card stamped with the word, "Free." That misled many hidden Jews, who showed up at the police to get such cards. Soon enough, the "selection" stopped and from one in the afternoon – more groups of arrested Jews were brought to the police – among them also those with the "Free" cards. The Germans took over the entire police building and prevented the Jews from getting out. The arrested had to pass through two rows of German and Romanian soldiers, who were beating them cruelly. Many were murdered or badly injured.

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Caption on p. 168

The note with the stamp "Free" distributed to Jews at the beginning of the pogrom. [The Yivo Collection. New York]

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At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, a siren sounded and at that moment shooting began from headquarters, surrounding houses, roofs, windows and balconies, using guns, revolvers and machine guns, into the masses of Jews located in the police courtyard. Thousands of Jews were killed. Whoever tried to escape by jumping over the fence, was chased and shot. The army surrounded the yard and nobody could save his life. The shooters were Germans and Romanians: soldiers, policemen, armed civilians, with Germans in the forefront. By evening, only 2,500 of the detained survived, and Romanian General, Gh. Staverscu, the commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> Division, ordered them deported from the city. Acceding to his request, German units were also separated from the police.

Jews, who were not arrested by the police, were caught by the soldiers and the civilian mob. They were brought to other police stations and from there to headquarters in order to deport them from the city.

The Jews living in the Nicolina-Socola quarter, called by the Jews (the "Red Bridge" quarter) were lucky. The residents of this neighborhood were known for their bravery and the thugs did not dare enter, until the afternoon, after many of Iasi's Jews had been murdered. At gunpoint, thousands of Jews,



men, women and children, were evicted from their homes, arranged in rows and led to the bank of the river Bahlui, to be murdered there. The minute they lay upon the ground waiting for the gunfire to start, the chief of police, Colonel Kirilovici appeared and ordered them freed.

### The Death Trains

That same evening, 2,500 Jews, many of them wounded, were led to the train station. Upon approaching the station, the Jews were ordered to lie on the ground face down and not move. Whoever raised his head was immediately shot. At midnight they were led one by one to the station, where a freight train with 50 wagons was parked. With the use of bayonets, all were pushed into 35 of the wagons; sometimes 150 people were placed into one wagon, four times more than capacity. The wounded, who had difficulty climbing into the wagon, were murdered.

At first light on June 30<sup>th</sup>, a second column of 1,900 Jews arrived at the station. Some had been in the police cellar at the time of the massacre and others were gathered from all corners of the city and brought directly to the station. They were packed into 18 wagons, in spite the fact that there were 30 wagons available.

The wagons doors of both trains were locked and the windows sealed with boards. The first train with 2,430 people departed Iasi during the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> with the aim of arriving at Targu-Frumos. But, rather than stopping there, the train shuttled back and forth for almost an entire day, between Targu-Frumos and Pascani, Lespezi and Roman, until it stopped in Targu-Frumos on the evening of June 30<sup>th</sup>. During their entire stay on the train, they did not get one drop of water; many expired from thirst, others suffocated to death, and some-- lost their minds.

In Targu-Frumos, the Romanian commander of the local garrison and his German colleague were against letting people off the train. Still, 200 Jews came out of 4 wagons and were brought to the little town's synagogue. But, the authorities did not provide them food. All of them were beaten and robbed by Romanian and German soldiers. The remainder of the Jews were left on the train. The next day, July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Jews, who stayed in the synagogue, were returned to the train, after 654 bodies had been removed. The judge, A. Trianfad, was given supervision of the train, and by his orders, the train set off in the direction of Calarasi. On the way, the train stopped at

some stations in order to get rid of the bodies of those who had died from suffocation and lack of water; 327 bodies were removed in Mircesti, and 300 in Sabaoni.

On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the train arrived at Roman and stopped on a rail spur 200 meters from the station. Present in the station were Mrs. Viorica Agarici, chairwoman of the local “Red Cross,” and Colonel Graur, commander of the local guard. Hearing the cries from the wagons, the two of them approached the train, and in spite of the opposition of Judge Triandaf, broke the lead locks of the doors and ordered the military unit serving in the station, to bring buckets of water to the people in the wagons. Mrs. Agarici sent a message to the city’s Kehillah leaders asking them to gather foodstuffs and clothes. In a short while, the needed provisions and required supplies were brought and the Kehillah representatives distributed them in the train station, in the presence of Mrs. Agarici and Colonel Graur. This was done in spite of the opposition of Deputy Mayor, N. C. Pipa, and members of the “Red Cross” committee.

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Caption on p.169

Bodies of the Pogrom Dead Lying in the Streets

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Mrs. Agarici directed the removal of the bodies of those who died during the 8 km distance between Sabaoni and Roman, 55 corpses, and after that she ordered the whitewashing of the inner walls of the wagons and sending the survivors to the bathhouse of the sanitary unit stationed near the train station. After several hours, Mrs. Agarici was dismissed from her post as chairwoman of the local “Red Cross” – a result of pressure from other members of the committee and the Deputy Mayor of the city.

The train continued its journey to Calarasi. Thanks to the treatment the deported received in Roman, the numbers of deaths on the train lessened. In Maraseti, 10 bodies were removed and in Calarasi – 25.

The train arrived at Calarasi on the afternoon of July 6<sup>th</sup>, after a journey of 6 days and 7 nights. Out of 2,430 Jews, who boarded the train in Iasi, 1,411 perished on the way; many of the survivors were near death. The remaining, numbering 1,021 were housed in the courtyard of an army regiment and received help from the local Kehillah (viz’ Calarasi) and from the United

Communities in Bucharest. Despite the treatment, 31 additional people died. On August 30, 1941, 980 survivors were returned to Iasi.

The second train left in the direction of Podul-Iloaiei under similar conditions. A distance of 20 km took 8 hours. In the wagons it was so suffocating (150 people in a wagon) that in that short distance, 1,194 perished.

The famous Italian writer, Malaparte, who by happenstance there with the Italian consul Sartori, describes:

“The dead fled the train, falling down in masses – making dull banging sounds, like concrete statues...soldiers climbed into the railway cars and started to throw bodies out one after another. There were a hundred and seventy-nine – all suffocated; their heads swollen and their faces bluish...flies swarmed angrily around them. The number of dead, lining the embankment reached 2000. 2000 dead bodies lying in the sun is a large number – too large. A live baby, a couple months old was pressed between his mother’s knees, He fainted, but was still breathing. One of his arms broken.”

Mobs of gypsies and peasants swooped down on the dead stripping them of their clothes and even extracted their gold teeth from their mouths. Malaparte added:

“Sartori tried to protest, but the rabbi put his hand on his arm. ‘There is nothing to be done,’ he said, ‘this is the custom,’ and added in a whisper, with a sad smile, ‘they will come tomorrow to sell us the clothes stolen from the dead and we will have to buy them. What else can we do?’”

About 700 Jews, who survived, were housed in Jewish homes in Podul-Iloaiei.

In Iasi itself the killing continued; about 50 additional people were murdered. The arrests also continued and the arrested were sent to clean the city of the remnants of the killing. After the dead were gathered in piles, the streets and the police courtyard were washed clean of blood. The city’s sanitation service spent the entire day loading the dead onto garbage trucks and transferring them to the cemetery and other unknown places, and

handing them over to groups of people, mostly Jews, to bury them in mass graves; some of which had been prepared in advance. (In the Jewish cemetery, following of the authorities, two deep pits were dug. The digging was completed on June 26<sup>th</sup>.) Into these pits, people, who had not breathed their last, were thrown.

The general manager of the State Security Service, Emanoil Leoveanu, conducted an inquiry immediately following the massacre, and on July 1<sup>st</sup> stated in a report to Marshal Antonescu, that the Jewish population was innocent and was a victim of a German plot with collaboration by the Legionnaires. Wanting to ascertain for sure if the Germans were truthful about 20 of their soldiers having been wounded in attacks by the Jews, he asked to visit the wounded in the hospital. But, the Germans did not honor his request. Not only that, but when they saw that he was about to expose the truth, the German command high made him leave Iasi three hours after he arrived there. In contrast, General Antonescu published an official announcement, on July 1, 1941, accusing the Jewish-Communist population of being in contact with Soviet spies and agents, who had been parachuted in. He also announced that 500 Communist Jews had been shot in Iasi, having been caught shooting live ammunition at German and Romanian soldiers from their homes.

In another official announcement on behalf of the Prime Minister's office published the following day, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, it was said that for each German or Romanian soldier, fifty Communist Jews would be executed.

In German documents, there are two versions of the massacre in Iasi. In a report dated June 30, major, G. Rank, the 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment Commander, declared that in Iasi, German soldiers were shot at and as a result the High Commander ordered the immediate transfer to the city of military police in order to maintain security there. To this end, the third unit of the 633<sup>rd</sup> Regiment commanded by a captain was dispatched, Contradicting this, another report from the general headquarter of the gendarmerie, of July 12<sup>th</sup> told that Iasi Jews tried to rebel, and being armed, constituted a threat to the German front; 2,000-2,500 Germans – it was written in that report – were killed by the Jews. After the war the German denied both reports and in the first reparations trial, conducted in Stuttgart in 1957, the German court declared that none of the German authorities had anything to do with that massacre.

Captions for portraits on p.171

Overall Caption - Personalities who perished in the pogrom.

Top right- The Engineer G.Buchman, Director of the Education Department of the Kehillah.

Middle top - Dr Cazac Averbuch , Famous Physician, yet active in public Jewish Life.

Left top - I.Getzler, Famous Philanthropist.

Bottom right - Haim Gelber, Leader of the Religious Zionists.

Center bottom - Dr. H. Solomovici (born 1870) served for a time as chairman of the Kehillah of Iasi wrote research papers in medicine and in the field of National Jewish Affairs.

Bottom left - The author Carol Drimer (b.1906, began writing in Hebrew in "Hatzephirah", published articles in Romanian about Hebrew literature, Jewish tradition etc. and several articles pertaining to the history of the Jews of Iasi.

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It is impossible to estimate the exact number of massacred victims in Iasi. When the Kehillah attempted to compile a list of those killed, the authorities forbade it and even ordered the destruction the lists that had already been done. The accepted estimate was twelve hundred dead. The charge sheet of the High Court of Appeals placed the number at ten thousand. The Romanian Institute of Statistics set the same number.

Among the murdered there were Jews belonging to all classes and all professions: wealthy industrialists and small craftsmen, wholesalers and retailers, lawyers, teachers, physicians, engineers, leaders of the Zionist movement, leaders of the Kehillah, university students and elementary school pupils. All the Jews of Iasi drank of the same poisoned cup. Among the famous dignitaries, who died on the day of death, it is worth remembering Dr. Herman Solomovici, writer of research studies about the Jewish people; the engineer, Getzel Buchman; head of the education department; the Zionist leader, Dr. Cazac Averbuch; the intellectual, Haim Ghelber; and his only son, the writer, Carol Drimer, who published many research studies about Judaism; the lawyer, Herz Gherner, general secretary of the Kehillah, Reichenbach; chairman of the burial society, Dr. Avraham

Rosen; the cantor BenZion Abramovici; and others. Among the major figures in education killed were: the headmaster of the boys high school, Professor Koenig and his son; the headmaster of the commercial high school, Manas; a French language teacher Faier and his brother, a German language teacher; and the chemistry lecturer at the university, Puiu Gheler. Fifty-three pupils from the upper classes of the two high schools and sixteen mentors also perished.

### The Kehillah's Activities

The results of the massacre in Iasi were extremely severe. Most Jewish families lost at least one member and in virtually all cases, those murdered were the family provider. In many homes women and children remained alone and with nothing. The Kehillah was in a state of chaos. The files destroyed, the leaders had a hard time reorganizing the lists of those in need. Nonetheless, since most of the families needed immediate help, the surviving leaders got action underway. Some of the Kehillah leaders went out to search for donors among the Jews who were in hiding. In a short time aid was set up for the needy of Iasi, and for the survivors of the death wagons in Calarasi.

Order in the city was not restored. The city was divided into two areas, one with the Germans in charge, and the other with the Romanians. This situation – as mentioned in the report of General Leoveanu – led to the continuation of the searches, and incidents on the German side, and further executions. Twenty of the survivors were arrested, three of them rabbis, and held as hostages responsible for any and all acts by Jews. After that, a term was set for hostages, who were exchanged monthly.

In November 1941, the city's power station was destroyed by sabotage with the Jews being blamed. The hostage's fate was settled, Besides them other Jews, doing forced labor in the power station, and Jews living in the surrounding houses were arrested. Thanks to the efforts and intervention of the Kehillah leaders, the executions were postponed. Meanwhile, it became clear, from the authorities' investigation that the saboteurs were Legionnaires, who worked as clerks and workers in the power station.

Around that time, several hundred Jews deported from Balti, their city by the army were brought to Iasi by foot, naked, starved, and sick, A few later, they continued to a camp in Giurgiu. During the days they camped in Iasi, the

Kehillah provided food, clothes, and medical treatment. Thirty-eight of them were hospitalized at the Jewish hospital. The Kehillah leaders succeeded through bribery, to free these sick people and they alone remained alive. All the other deportees were returned after a time from Giurgiu to Balti, where they were shot.

Meanwhile, there were changes in the Romanian High Command and the new commanders were also eager to demonstrate their anti-Semitic zealotry. On August 6, 1941, General D. Carlaont, who had replaced Colonel Lupu as military commander of Iasi, ordered the evacuation, within three days, of the Jewish population from all the neighborhoods between Cacaia brook, Rapa street, Muzelor street, Conta street, Pacurari street, Scoalei street, Tomacosta street and Iasi-Munteni road. According to the orders, the Jews could take with them only valuables and the most necessary personal items and leave all the rest. Whoever would be found there afterwards would be considered a spy and the sentence was death. The deportees had to crowd into the neighborhood, where they were permitted to live, and all of them, men, women and children, were ordered to prominently attach on the left side of their garment, above the heart, a yellow star on a black background, made of cloth, 7 cm in diameter,

This mark, which the Jews of Iasi wore for 5-6 months, brought in its wake a new wave of persecution against them. Daily, police agents arrested old and young and even 3-4 year old children, for not wearing the yellow mark even while they were in their own courtyards, or for the mark not being big enough. Thus, the movement of Iasi's Jews was restricted in time and place, and entrance to certain neighborhoods was totally prohibited.

On August 1, 1941, a new law was promulgated requiring Jews to do forced labor in the framework of the military and all men ages 18-55 were drafted to work. A few worked within the boundaries of the city, in public institutions, in sanitation services, in workshops and army warehouses, and in loading and unloading wire and building materials. Some were put at the disposal of the Germans in Iasi to build work in their warehouses. However, 4000 of the city's Jews were organized in work units and sent throughout the country.

With the withdrawal of the German-Romanian army in the spring of 1944, and when the front got closer to Iasi, the Jews were employed with digging trenches in Stanca-Roznovanu and along the Prut River. Altogether, 168

such work units were organized in Iasi. The work was backbreaking. The workers did not get adequate food and clothes, were beaten and degraded. Many perished and many others were disabled for life. One forced labor unit of Iasi Jews worked in Predeal, paving a road to the villa of the tyrant Antonescu. Even this despot could not bear seeing the Jews working in winter half-naked and sent an order to the Kehillah in Iasi to supply them with warm clothes. The Kehillah organized a workshop for making clothes and collected donations of clothes and underwear.

Many Jews in Iasi were arrested and sentenced to death or deportation to Transnistria with their families accused of deserting the forced labor units or being absent one day or even several hours. The belongings of both these types of accused were confiscated. Jews accused of Communism were also sentenced to deportation, as well as those who requested transfer to Bessarabia, after its annexation by the Soviet Russia. The Kehillah's leadership tried to save them from death or deportation by appealing to the Metropolitan Irineu from Moldavia. However, success was beyond their grasp, since the one responsible for executing this edict was Hugo Schwob, a general of German origin. Only after using all kinds of deception, such as concealment, hospitalization for surgery, destroying the deportation decrees and the files in the archive, the Kehillah succeeded in saving some of the condemned from deportation. Very few of those deported remained alive.

The Kehillah's efforts prevented the enlisting of women and children 15-18 years of age to do forced labor. In 1943-1944, in Iasi's court about 2,500 Jews were brought to trial accused of violating the race rules or other regulations against the Jews. They were brought to court arrested, chained and sentenced in a quick military trial. The Kehillah organized a special legal service that took care of trials for those without means or for Jews, who arrived in Iasi from other places, paid large fines for those who could not afford to do so and took care of their families.

The Kehillah also housed 4,000 people, who were expelled to the city from the villages in Iasi County, took care of those evicted from the neighborhoods, the families of the dead, and the families of those who were drafted for forced labor. As long as it had any means at all, the Kehillah established soup kitchens and extended financial assistance to twenty thousand people.



In April 1942, 1,500 Jews were deported from Podul Iloaiei and brought to Iasi. They were forced to abandon all their belongings and took with them only what they could carry in their hands or in small carts. They were housed in synagogues and in local Jewish homes, sometimes 25-30 in a room. The Kehillah was forced to take care of their needs and even opened a special school for the children of those deported.

Towards Passover of 1942, (the Kehillah) secretly managed to obtain flour to bake matzoth from a warehouse designated for the Germans, and even distributed 80 tons of potatoes to the city's Jews. Thus, the Jews of Iasi were able to properly celebrate the holiday.

When the mass extermination of Jews began in Poland, many Jews managed to escape to Romania through Bukovina. Some were shot at the border; others were caught and sent to Transnistria through Iasi. When the Kehillah leadership found out that groups of Jews from Poland were waiting at the train station to be sent to Transnistria, they managed to get in touch with them, in spite of the absolute prohibition on it, and gave them food, clothes, and money.

The worsening economic condition of Iasi Jews in those days is clear from the following facts from 1942; out of 3,114 craftsmen and workers, 2,210 were out of work; out of 1,392 bureaucrats, 974 lost their positions; out of 1,146 owners of small businesses and manufacturing, plants 902 enterprises were confiscated; out of 205 members of the free professions, 90 were stripped of their right to work; out of 231 with independent occupations, 143 were left with no work. In the years 1940-1941, 3,972 buildings were confiscated from Jews in Iasi County, 2,239 hectares of forests, 314 hectares of vineyards, 2 hectares of lakes, 1,515 hectares of cropland, 18 mills and several factories. Forty synagogues were also looted.

In April 1941, there were 37,472 Jews in all of Iasi County. Of that number, 33,135 lived in the city of Iasi, 1,618 in Targu-Frumos, and 1,265 in villages. In 1942, having added those deported from villages in the vicinity, there were in Targu-Frumos 1,637 Jews, Not one Jew remained in the villages.

In spite of everything, the Kehillah continued to maintain a cultural life. In place of the leadership of the Kehillah's department of education, who had been murdered on the day of massacre, there were now Dr. Marcu Bercovici,

the lawyer Mitelman, and Dr. Grunberg-Moldovan. The latter organized a series of professional courses: electrical technology, mechanics, tinsmithing, carpentry, tailoring, and dental technology. Four to five hundred pupils studied in these courses,

The elementary and high schools, which had been founded with great effort during the time of the Legionnaires, were confiscated. However, education continued in them (the schools) some in synagogues (several classes were conducted simultaneously in different corners of the synagogue); some in the Jewish student's dormitory; and some in the "Talmud Torah" building in Tirgu-Kokoloy. Instead of the teachers and headmasters, who had been killed, others came forth. The budgets of the two high schools were covered by tuition and the remainder was used to cover the budget of the commercial school and the elementary schools, most of whose pupils were poor. At the end of the school year, students from the other cities of Moldavia, whose home studies had centered around Jewish subjects, especially Hebrew language and the history of the Jewish people, also participated in the examinations. The educational work in those schools, together with Shabbat and Holiday get-togethers, lectures etc., lifted the spirit of Iasi Jews during those very difficult days.

In the spring of 1941, a Yiddish Primer was published "underground," titled "Unzer Shprach" (Our Language). Its author was the writer, Eliezer Frenckel, a teacher of Yiddish in the "ORT" school. The place and date of its publication was disguised by "Warsaw, 1932."

The two Jewish hospitals in Iasi fulfilled an important role in those days. The Jewish hospital, which had been evicted from its building and crowded into the maternity ward, had to replenish the equipment that was confiscated together with the former building. The managers of the hospital remained extremely active, continuing to hospitalize maternity cases, the sick with tuberculosis, and all other illnesses, even though the "Jewish Center" took for itself half of their income that came from the burial society. The hospital, named for Ghelerter, was not confiscated, but struggled for its existence, so that sick people and orphans (2-5 years old), whose parents had been murdered during the days of the massacre, could be hospitalized there. The Kehillah could only offer minimal support.. The orphanage also housed children, whose parents had been murdered. The financial aid to it was minimal, and the little ones suffered greatly.

Caption on p. 174 right below 1932

Title Page of the Primer “Unzer Shprach” by Eliezer Frenckel, which appeared “underground” during the period of the Holocaust

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In December 1943, when the deportees from Dorohoi region were returned from Transnistria, the Iasi Kehillah was the first to provide aid to the returnees.

In the spring of 1943, Marshal Antonescu visited Iasi and dismissed the mayor, General Ionescu, on the grounds that his actions for raising the status of the capital of Moldavia were not moving rapidly enough. In his stead, he appointed his protégé, Constantin Ifrim, a long time anti-Semite, and follower of Cuza. Although the German and the Romanian armies were retreating and the outcome of the war was already clear, the new mayor continued to act against the Jews. His first target was the 400-year old cemetery in the Ciurchi quarter, extending over a large plot with 27,000 graves, including the graves of rabbis, scholars and writers, and tombstones with historic and artistic value. Claiming that the land had to be divided for poor Christians, and build dwellings there, the mayor got a permit from Marshal Antonescu to destroy the cemetery and dig up the graves. He immediately organized Christian youth groups, who started to destroy the cemetery wall. A fierce struggle began between the Kehillah – with the help of Jewish leaders from Bucharest – and the mayor. After great effort, the Jewish leaders succeeded in getting a decree to stop the demolition, but the mayor did not obey any decree from higher authorities and even intensified the demolitions by drafting additional workers. The tombstones were transferred to the municipality’s warehouses and the remains of the skeletons were taken out and arranged in heaps within the cemetery. The Kehillah held an emergency meeting, whose participants included the rabbis of Falticeni, Stefanesti, Botosani, Lapusna and Calarasi, all of Iasi rabbis headed by, Dr. Yoseph Safran, A day of mourning and fasting was announced for all Iasi Jews. Thanks to the intervention of the Moldavian Metropolitan, it was agreed that only Jews would perform the evacuation of bones from the graves. The Kehillah was permitted to employ for that task 100 Jews, from those who had been drafted for forced labor. Those Jews, together with the above-mentioned rabbis, surrounded the cemetery and following tradition, prayed, and chanted psalms. Thousands of Iasi Jews joined the entourage, arriving to take leave of the deceased. Several rabbis

recited “Kaddish” near each grave, which had been opened; the bones were boxed and transferred for burial in the second Jewish cemetery (Pacurar). Within 68 days, the land of the cemetery was turned into a pasture. The Christians, to whom the mayor promised building lots, refused to accept the land because of their fear of the dead. The mayor was satisfied with desecration itself, and even received a good deal of money from the Kehillah for granting permission for the transfer to the new cemetery of several tombstones of historic value.

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Caption on photo on left side of p.174

A pigpen built with the tombstones taken from the Jewish cemetery following its desecration

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In the autumn of that year, the mayor demanded permission to destroy 1,472 buildings, where about 3,000 Jews dwelled, on the grounds that those buildings became unstable after the earthquake of 1940; and were about to crumble. He suggested that the evicted Jews be sent to Transnistria, to the villages Ovidiopol, Berdicev, and Jitomir. Since that suggestion was opposed, he suggested that the “Jewish Center” be forced to build cabins for the evicted. It seems that this proposal did not materialize, because the front was getting closer to the city (January 1944). Even in February, he suggested the transfer all Jewish prayer houses to municipal ownership, in order to turn them over to institutions of public importance and to destroy the synagogues that were unstable from the earthquake and give the land to Christians. His instruction was only partly fulfilled, but following the Romanian armies retreat through and departure from Iasi, the mayor turned the synagogues into stables for his horses.

In the spring of 1944, the front came closer to Iasi, which became a large hub for army units, and the life of the Jews was in constant danger. The Russians were on the bank of the river Prut. The Christian population began to leave the city in droves, The Jews could not move at all because they were prohibited from traveling without a special permit. Even so, several thousand Jews with means, risking their very lives, managed to flee to Bucharest, But, the masses of Iasi Jews stayed in cellars and shelters, fearful of Germans, thugs, and deserters, who robbed and looted, and the air raids of the Russians, which intensified. More than half Jewish homes in the city were destroyed in the bombings and many were killed. Getting food became

a life-threatening act and prices were exorbitant. The Kehillah distributed several million lei that arrived from the Bucharest help-committee to the needy.

Despite their difficult situation, Iasi Jews continued to support their brethren in other communities. When (in March 1944) the first deportees to Transnistria began their return to Romania, poor and destitute, The Kehillah of Iasi sent a delegation on its own to Tighina on the banks of the Dniester in Bessarabia. These delegates brought with them financial aid in the sum of 2 million lei. Also, the Kehillah of Iasi took under its wing a significant portion of the orphans who had returned from Transnistria and took care of their rehabilitation.

A number of hours after the Russians breakthrough on the front, Red Army units entered Iasi. Street to street fighting continued. Jews hid in cellars, armed with sticks and axes and decided to fight the retreating German and Romanian soldiers to the death. On August 21, 1944, all of Iasi was in Russian hands. After some time, some of Iasi Jews, who had fled to other places, returned, but many of them settled in their new locations. In contrast, the deportees from the villages and small towns settled in Iasi, as well as refugees from other places.

#### After the War

The first act of Iasi's Jews was building a monument to the memory of the thousands of hallowed martyrs. In June 1947, a memorial was dedicated in the garden across the street from the Jewish hospital, with the inscription in Hebrew and Romanian: "To our hallowed ones, who fell from bullets, suffocation, hunger, and thirst. Our people will never forget them." On the other side a citation from The Book of Lamentations 1:12-13, Look about and see; Is there any agony like mine...From above He sent a fire down into my bones. (NJPS)

In the spring of 1947, the Romanian Parliament defined the massacre in Iasi as a "war crime."

That same year, the Jewish woman, Lucia Taler, who lost her all family in the massacre, committed suicide. In the letter she sent to the press, she explained her act by the fact that all the murderers walk freely in the streets of Iasi and that she preferred to die rather than to see them daily.

On June 26, 1948, the Romanian courts sentenced 50 of those responsible for the massacre to a variety of punishments, from 5 years in prison to hard labor for the rest of their lives. That maximum punishment was imposed on General Stawarsco, Colonel Constantin Lupu, Colonel D. Captaru, and the county's ruler and legionnaire, Mirca Manuliu.

In the framework of the project dedicated to perpetuating the Kehillahs, undertaken by Israeli schools, The Kehillah of Iasi was adopted in 1965 by the school, "Netzach Israel," in Kiriat Malachi."

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#### Titles of Photos:

- Page 143 - An announcement on behalf of the region’s head in 1866 about one day detainment of the initiators of an anti-Semitic committee in Iasi.
- Page 144 - Cover of the Notebook of Hevra Kadisha (burial society).
- Page 145 (right corner) - Cover of the renewed notebook (from 1823) of Hevra Kadisha, after the previous one got burned in a fire at 1821.
- Page 145 (left corner below) - An announcement on behalf of the Iasi municipality from 1864 with a list of those who have a right to vote to choose the management of the community (files of the general archive of the history of Israel).
- Page 147 - A document from 1714 on behalf of the Moldavian Prince, Nicolie Mavrocodat, approving the ownership of the community on the lot of the big synagogue built in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- Page 148 –
- Synagogues:

“Neushatz” synagogue

The synagogue of the common people

The synagogue in the “Red Bridge” Quarter

The synagogue in Targu-Kokoly Suburb



- Page 149

The elementary school “Jonimia No. 1”

The school "Jonimia No. 2" on the name of Moritz and Betty Wachtal

Synagogue “HaKochav” on the name of David Hertzberg

The elementary school for girls of the Jewish Women Society

- Page 151 - A letter to Benjamin Swartzfeld from the committee of the Jewish school asking him to draw lines for the Hebrew curriculum (1892). (files from the general archive of the history of Israel).
- Page 152 top left - A soup kitchen for the pupils of the school “Ghetzler.”
- Page 152 right bottom - A report from 1879 on the activities of the hospital committee that filled community tasks.
- Page 153 - Seal of “Doresh Zion” society [from Dr. I. Kloisner’s book: Chibat Zion in Romania] Seal of the “Shlom Yerushalaim” society [from Dr. I. Kloisner’s book: Chibat Zion in Romania].
- Page 166 - letters from Iasi municipality to the military commander, to the interior ministry and to Radu Laka, asking permission to destroy homes of 3,000 Jews on the grounds that they were damaged in the earthquake of 1940, and to expel all the dwellers to Transnistria.
- Page 167 right corner - A report from the inspector of the “Jewish Center” about destroying the old cemetery.
- Page 167 left bottom - A letter from the municipal council to Radu Laka demanding from him to give an instruction to the Iasi community to give up all the synagogues for Romanian public institutions in order to house Romanian refugees in them from the quarters that got damaged in the shelling.
- Page 168 - The note with the seal “Free” that was distributed to the Jews in the beginning of the Pogrom. (collection of Yeva, new York).
- Page 169 - Corpses of the Pogrom victims lying in the streets.
- Page 171:

I. Ghetzler  
A well-known philanthropist

Dr. Kazac-Aurbach  
A famous physician who  
was also active in the  
Jewish public life

The engineer  
N. Buchman  
The education  
department  
manager of the  
community

The writer Carl Drumer  
(born in 1905). Started  
to write in Hebrew in  
“HaTzfira”. Published  
articles in Romanian on  
the Hebrew literature,  
the Jewish tradition and  
several articles on the  
history of Iasi Jews

Dr. V. Solomovici  
(born in 1870). The  
chairman of the community  
of Iasi for a short time.  
Wrote studies in the  
area of medicine and  
the Jewish nationalistic  
policy

Haim Gelber  
leader of the  
religious  
Zionists

- Page 174 right - Cover of the alphabetical index “Unzer Shprach” by the writer, Eliezer Frenckel, that appeared underground in the Holocaust.
- Page 174 left bottom - A pigsty built from tombstones taken from the Jewish cemetery after they were desecrated.