

THE FOUNDING OF JEWISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN MOLDOVA AFTER THE UNION OF THE PRINCIPALITIES

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Abstract. *At the middle of the 19th century, there were significant Jewish communities in all the boroughs and towns of Moldova. The largest one, counting around 31,000 Jews, was found in Iași. In 1860, the elites of the Jewish community from Iași, benefitting from the support of the local and national authorities, founded a Jewish – Romanian school. Having gained the parents' trust, a new central Jewish school was founded in Iași in the following two years, along with a dogmatic school in Târgul Cucului suburb, and two more public schools in Podul Lung and Păcurari suburbs. The money for the maintenance of schools and the teachers' salaries came from a tax introduced on kosher meat, gabelă or tacsie, of 4 parale per oca. As a result of the misunderstandings between the Jewish School Committee and the Jewish Hospital Administrative Council and the introduction, on the 3rd of July, 1862, of the veto in the decision-making process within the Jewish communities, the tax on kosher meat was eliminated. Therefore, the source of income for the hospital and the Jewish schools as well as for other charity acts disappeared, and soon, all the Jewish schools from Iași stopped functioning. Following the numerous memoirs sent to the Government of the United Principalities by the Jewish community, the Romanian School Committee of Iași managed to mediate the conflict between the two Jewish institutions. As a consequence, the gabela was reintroduced, thus ensuring the material support for the Jewish Schools of Iași which reopened on the 1st of December, 1864.*

The existence of the Jewish schools in the capital of Moldova stimulated the founding of other similar institutions in Galați (May 1860), Botoșani (after 1860), in Bacău (in November 1864), in Mihăileni, Dorohoi County (1865) and Cahul.

The founding of the Jewish Schools in the aforementioned towns was faced with difficulties generated by the mentalities of the time, the material shortages, the bureaucracy and the cumbersome legislation. Despite these difficulties, the Jewish public schools continued to function in the following years. Along these schools, there were also numerous confessional schools in almost all the towns inhabited by Jews.

The Jewish public schools of Iași and the other Moldavian towns and boroughs were part of the sustained policy of modernization of the Romanian society. These were the circumstances which provided the Jewish minority the proper conditions for the gradual development of an intellectual elite which brought a significant contribution to the Romanian science and culture.

Keywords: Jewish community, Jewish School Committee, the Jewish Hospital Administrative Council from Iași, Târgul Cucului, Păcurari, Bacău, Galați, Botoșani, Dorohoi, Târgul Mihăileni, the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction.

The historical conditions of the 18th century made it possible for the Jewish refugees from Russia and Poland to settle down in Moldova. Their entry path and settlement areas are bordered by the big cemeteries of Cernăuți, Siret, Mihăileni, Dorohoi, Botoșani, Fălticeni, Iași, Bacău, Buhuși, Bârlad, Tecuci, Galați. Favourable

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circumstances, such as the abolishment of the Ottoman monopoly over the Moldavian trade, which began in 1774 and was formally finalized through the Peace of Adrianopol (1829), caused, among other things, an increase in the Jewish population in the old towns near Iași (Hârlău, Tg. Frumos), or the appearance of new settlements – Podu Iloaiei (1818), Bivolari (1834), Sculeni – inhabited by a mainly Jewish population.² The census of 1831, 1838 and 1859 indicated the presence of a large Jewish population in Iași, counting 17,570, 29,052 and 31,015 people of Mosaic religion respectively.

Hard-working, diligent and inquisitive, the Jewish refugees from Russia and Poland integrated in the new society, facing the often harsh realities caused by the mentalities of the Christian population, which lacked for its most part the enlightenment brought about by education. Despite all that, the historian of the Jewish community of Iași, I. Kara, objectively noted that “the analysis of the historical data from that period of time – 1831 – 1869 – leads us to the conclusion that the situation of the Jews in Iași is more favourable than the situation of the Jews in Galicia”³. In order to integrate more easily, some of them converted to Christianity. **The register for the baptized converted from other religions from 1819 -1832** records a number of 433 conversions, not all of them among the Jews, which represented an insignificant number for the Jewish population of Iași at that time. The overwhelming majority of the Jews preserved their faith which enabled them to survive along the centuries and against all the odds, wherever they were.

At the middle of the 19th century, there was a significant Jewish community in Iași. There were some compact areas in Târgul Cucului, with a Synagogue and Confessional School, and also in Podul Roș, Păcurari and Podul Lung. From a report sent by some English missionaries from the capital of Moldova, we find out that “here live more Jews than in Pesta and Constantinople...The streets are full of Jews. All the businesses of the city are in their hands. They control almost the entire trade of the town and the country”⁴.

1. The founding of Jewish public schools in Iași

In order to deal with the daily hardships, the Jews of Iași grouped together, electing some people in charge of their community as early as 1849. The historian I. Kara notes that “Beginning with March 1855, it was decided that the elections for the community committee should include 23 leaders of the economic guilds, joined by 22 prominent members of the community, appointed by the local authorities, once every two years, and the administrators were appointed by royal decision”⁵. As we are going to see in what follows, the life of the Jewish community of Iași had its share of

² I. Kara, **Contribuții la istoria obștii evreilor din Iași**, Ed. Hasefer, București, 1997, p.29.

³ **Ibidem**, p. 31

⁴ Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, **Convertire și integrare religioasă în Moldova la începutul epocii modern**, Iași, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, 2004, p. 353, 346, 348.

⁵ I. Kara, **op. cit.**, p.32

internal convulsions. Its leaders, aware of the importance of education, did their best to found public schools that would accept students from the lower strata of the community, who could not afford to educate their children in private, confessional schools. Their effort was not an easy one. The difficulties they encountered generated from: 1. The mentalities of the time, also present within the community which was not open to education; 2. The material hardships, the administrative bureaucracy, the intricate legislation.

Mihail Kogălniceanu, one of the promoters of the “gradual” emancipation of Jews, considered the school and the army as the main institutions for the integration of Jews into the Romanian society⁶, and constantly supported the founding of some Jewish public schools in Iași. On May 6th, 1860, Archimandrite Melchisedec Ștefănescu became the interim minister of Cults and Public Instruction after the resignation of the former minister, and persuaded the Jewish community of Iași “to found special Jewish schools with the help of some members of its intelligentsia”⁷. These first Jewish public schools were inaugurated in the summer of 1860 in Tg. Cucului suburb in the presence of Minister M. Kogălniceanu, who was cheered by the audience⁸. Supporting the idea of the integration of Jews in the society in which they lived, M. Kogălniceanu rejects the request of “the Jewish community of Iași to accept German as the official language in the Jewish public schools, considering that the education process should be done in Romanian”⁹.

The founding of the Jewish public schools in Iași at the aforementioned date is also confirmed by a memoir of the Jewish-Romanian School Committee from Iași addressed to the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction (MCPI) on the 8th of July 1863 which stated that “In July 1860 we opened our school in the presence of Government representatives. Under the guidance and with the help of these officials we founded the first school whose duty will be to introduce, besides Hebrew, the language of the Country among the members of our confession... in order to remove the Jews from the separate position they have been in so far and to make them become sons of Romania, useful citizens of their country”¹⁰. For the same purpose, another memoir of the same Jewish-Romanian School Committee, dated July, 3rd, 1863, evoked the efforts made by the Jewish Community “who brought a Religion and Hebrew teacher from Prussia” and “also accepted experienced Romanian

⁶ D. Vitcu, *Statistica școlilor Israelite din Iași la 1867*, în “*Studia et Acta Historiae Iudaeorum Romaniae (SAHIR)*”, III, Ed. Hasefer, p. 177

⁷ *The Central Historical National Archives, The Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction (CHNA, MCPI)*, File 207/1863, p. 42 v-43.

⁸ The Central Committee of the Jews Union, *Cuza Vodă și Mihail Kogălniceanu în chestia evreiască*, București, 1911, p. 44 apud, D. Vitcu, *op. cit.*, p. 178

⁹ D. Vitcu, *op. cit.*, p. 177; Idem, *Emanciparea evreilor români în gândirea și practica politică kogălniceniană*, in *SAHIR*, II, Ed. Hasefer, București, 1997, p. 130-131.

¹⁰ *CHNA. MCPI*, File 207/1863, p. 38 f.

teachers acknowledged by the Government, and entrusted these learned and dignified men with the training and the education of our children”¹¹.

Alexandru Odobescu, minister of Cults and Public Instruction, following a visit to Moldova in July, 1863, in an address to the Minister of Internal Affairs, synthesized the conjoint efforts of the Moldavian Government and the Jewish Community of Iași, noting that “across the Milcov river there is a significant Jewish population, who settled here some time ago or in recent years, and who is entirely uneducated and ignorant. Faced with this situation, the Government of Iași made it their duty, especially beginning with 1859, to force the Jewish population to overcome this situation, by imposing gentle yet compulsory regulations. Thus, in 1860 they set up Jewish schools and ensured the Jewish population that every Romanian government, regardless of its political orientation, will defend and support these schools”¹².

The Jewish public school, inaugurated in July 1860, managed to gain the parents’ trust and soon, “young people from all over the city flocked to be accepted here”. Consequently, within the next two years, more Jewish-Romanian public schools were founded. In 1862, there was in Iași a Central School; a dogmatic school in Târgul Cucului suburb and two more public schools in Podu Lung and Păcurari suburbs¹³.

The founding of Jewish-Romanian schools in the Moldavian capital in the summer of 1860 provided a good example for the Jewish community from Moldova. Over the next years, public schools are set up in Dorohoi, Botoșani, Piatra Neamț, Tg. Neamț, Bacău, Galați, Bolgrad, Cahul, Ismail, Mihăileni, etc. The legislation in the field – both from 1861 and the modern one from 1864 – allowed the founding of public, state, communal but also confessional schools, all of them under the control of the state, which meant that the state authorized both the school and the teaching staff. There were quite a few cases of entrepreneurial Jews who opened so-called schools without the required legal authorization and who fled the city as soon as they collected the fees from the students¹⁴.

2.1 Galați. There are documents which confirm the existence of a Jewish school in July 1860, with classes of Jewish and Romanian. For the Romanian class, **The semestrial register of the 1st grade primary pupils from the Jewish school of**

¹¹ Memoir presented by the Jewish-Romanian School Committee of Iași, Addressed to The Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, CHNA, MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 38 v.

¹² The Central Historical National Archives, The Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction (CHNA, MCPI), File 207/1863, p. 42 v – 43.

¹³ CHNA, MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 38 - 39.

¹⁴ The case of Chaim Nusbaum and his concubine, Sara Craiterblit, who opened between 1860 and 1862 a succession of private boarding schools for girls in Iași on “Podul Vechi Street”, then in “Podu Roș”. After they collected the fees, they moved these schools to other towns in Moldova, Botoșani and Fălticeni, where they were found in November, 21st, 1863, according to an address of the Police of Iași, CHNA, MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 91-92 and 100.

Galați with the semestrial and exam grades, between May 1st and July 12th, 1860 has three sections, with 31, 16 and 14 students respectively¹⁵ (**Appendix no. 1**). For the Jewish class, **The register** consists of three “classes”: the 1st, with 23 pupils, having H. Piezenik and M. Odessev as teachers; the 2nd, with 20 students and S. Grüner and M. Odessev as teachers, and the 3rd, with 21 pupils, having D. Piorcowski and M. Odessev as teachers.¹⁶ As the pupils from all these classes began school on May, 1st, 1860, we can assume that the so-called “classes” are actually sections, similar to the ones mentioned in the **The register of the 1st class of Romanian (Appendix no. 2)**. For the Israeli class, there are records of the **Subjects Curriculum**, different for the languages in which they were taught: Romanian, Israeli and German¹⁷. (**Appendix no. 3**).

The public instruction law of 1864 stipulated, among others, the compulsory and free primary education, along with pre-school preparatory classes for the students aged between five and seven¹⁸. The Jewish community of Galați, where Jewish-Romanian schools functioned, as we have just seen, requested the MCPI on 15th November, 1865, to urge “inspector Anton Velini to provide care and support for the Jewish schools in this town in order to ensure their progress”¹⁹. At the same time, the Jewish community of Galați requested the MCPI “to allow the preparatory school to teach religion for the boys aged up to seven, who will thus be prepared for the primary school”²⁰. The minister, caught by surprise, sent the request made by the Jewish Community of Galați to the Permanent Board of Public Instruction, asking them “in the light of such a request and considering the necessity of such schools, to come up with a plan and a project for the setting up of boarding schools, most needed by the Jewish community”²¹. The Permanent Board of Public Instruction was made up of prominent figures in the field of education, like Aaron Florian, Papiu Laurian, V. Alexandrescu – Urechia and Titu Maiorescu. They answered the minister’s request by granting the Jews of Galați permission to set up prep schools, in fact kindergardens, according to article 409 of the law of instruction, while also asking the Jewish community of Galați and Iași “to put forward a project for the founding of the schools in question, after which the Council should discuss and present a final solution to this problem”²². Although the minister informed the Jewish community of Galați on 19th, November, that “until there is a definite project for setting up such schools, the community is free to set up Jewish schools for the children up to the age of eight on

¹⁵ CHNA. MCPI, File 125/1860, p. 55 – 58.

¹⁶ CHNA. MCPI, File 125/1860, p. 51 – 54.

¹⁷ CHNA. MCPI, File 125/1860, p. 59.

¹⁸ Ilie Popescu – Teiușan, **Contribuții la studiul legislației școlare românești. Legea instrucțiunii publice din 1864**, București, 1963.

¹⁹ CHNA. MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 310

²⁰ CHNA. MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 299 f-v.

²¹ CHNA. MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 307

²² CHNA. MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 309

condition that they respect article 409 of the law of instruction”²³, it seems that the local authorities hindered the Jews of Galați from putting their legitimate request into practice. This is proven by another request sent by the Jewish community on 8th December, 1865 asking the Ministry “to urge the school inspector of Galați to allow and even to support the setting up of the boarding schools you kindly granted us permission for”²⁴.

2.2 In Bacău, as the county school inspector for the MCPI C. Platon announced, “a Jewish-Romanian public schools opened using personal funds” at the beginning of November 1864. Religion was taught after the Bible printed in Austria, with explanations in German, which “made the most progressive Jews to want the Bible printed in Romania and translated into Romanian...some want this translation in Hebrew characters, and the radical ones want it in Romanian characters”²⁵. The minister of instruction at that time, Nicolae Crețulescu (from 19th July, 1864 till 26th January, 1865²⁶) announced that “the proposal to translate the Bible using Romanian characters will be put forward to the Jewish Administrative Council of Iași in order to be taken into consideration”²⁷, which happened on 5th December, 1865. The Administrative Council agreed with this idea, but duly noticed that “we respectfully want to draw attention to the difficulties of such an endeavour, as the first prerequisite of a translator is the perfect knowledge of both languages, and, for the translation of such a work like the Bible, it is also imperative for the translator to be a good and serious man, similar to those who did the translation into French, German, Spanish, Italian, otherwise the work will be imperfect, which no one desires”²⁸.

2.3 The town of Botoșani had a numerous Jewish community, strong and wealthy. The information appeared in a report written by the prefect of Botoșani when ruler Alecsandru Ioan Cuza visited this county on 22nd, 23rd and 24th April, 1863. At the border of the town of Botoșani, adorned with a beautiful arch of triumph, the ruler was greeted by an impressive number of citizens, led by the bishop, administrators and the priests dressed in their liturgical cloaks “and a bit further away, according to the document, was the Jewish nation in a new rich silk tent with the law tablets”²⁹. On this occasion, the Jewish community of Botoșani handed the ruler a memoir signed by over 250 people stating that: “With the occasion of Your Highness visit to this town, the subscribed Jewish citizens, full of respect and devotion to the Country, come before You to humbly bring You their homage and to express our

²³ **Ibidem**

²⁴ **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p. 315

²⁵ **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p.203

²⁶ Stelian Neagoe, **Istoria guvernelor României de la începuturi, 1859 până în zilele noastre**, București, Editura Machiaveli, p. 37.

²⁷ **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p. 203

²⁸ **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p. 250 f-v.

²⁹ Ion I. Solcanu, **Deplasările domnitorului Alecsandru Ioan I-ii în Principatele Unite**, în “Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A. D. Xenopol”, Iași, (AII – Iași), XL VI, 2009, p.104.

deep gratitude for the administration of prefect Theodor Buzdugan³⁰. When reporting to his minister of internal affairs about the ruler's visit to Botoșani county, prefect Buzdugan informed him that "on the second day, April 23rd, His Majesty received all the social classes...the Armenian and the Jewish nations as well, addressing words of fatherly comfort to all of them"³¹.

"The big and wealthy Jewish community of this town" (Botoșani) was also evoked by the school inspector of Botoșani and Dorohoi counties, I. V. Adrian, in one of his reports to the minister of Cults and Public Instruction³².

In the years following 1865, there were many schools for the Jewish pupils, which did not respect though the "conditions stipulated by the Jewish school regulations approved by the Government"³³. For this reason, the school inspector for Botoșani and Dorohoi counties, I. V. Adrian, was forced to order their closure, which took place after a significant delay, as the same school inspector complained to his minister. "It's been years since I've been giving persistent orders ... for the closure of Jewish schools", reported inspector I. V. Adrian on 20th January, 1865, and continued suggesting the complicity of the local authorities: "I do not know, nor do I want to get to the real reason why those orders were not followed, but now, with the help of the local administration, the Jewish schools from Botoșani are closed", ending with the request for another order to be issued "asking the Prefect not to allow their re-opening under any circumstances"³⁴. As this decision was not respected by the Jewish school committee, with the silent agreement of the local authorities, the inspector complained again to the minister, on 19th May, 1865, that "for reasons unknown to me, the administration closed, then re-opened these schools at their will, so the Jews are not concerned about setting up regulated schools for teaching and learning Romanian"³⁵. The inspector ended his report stating that this pressure has to be maintained on the Jewish communities "of all the towns in these two counties (Dorohoi and Botoșani, n.ns.), forcing them to set up compulsory schools beginning with the next school year". However, on 27th October, 1865, the mayor of Botoșani, Cănanău, informed the minister of Cults that "so far we have not been able to organize the Romanian-Jewish school as requested" and sent to the minister the request of the Jewish community of Botoșani to open the schools, of course, without respecting the legal norms, "until we manage to finish the final preparations for the school we started building in August and is now erected"³⁶.

2.4 From Mihăileni, Dorohoi County, the head of the Jewish community, Beriș Zaharia, sent a telegramme to ruler Alecsandru Ioan Cuza on 31st August, 1865,

³⁰ **Ibidem**

³¹ **CHNA, The Ministry of Internal Affairs, Administrative**, File 170/1863, p. 25 f-v and 51 f-v.

³² Report no. 44/20. I. 1865, **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p. 258.

³³ **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p. 259.

³⁴ **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p. 258.

³⁵ **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p. 257.

³⁶ **CHNA. MCPI**, File 207/1863, p. 313.

asking him “to allow the children older than four to study religion”³⁷ until the Jewish schools are finally opened. The minister advised the Jewish community to send their children to public schools and “to include in the classes of Orthodox religion lessons of Mosaic religion taught by people who possess such knowledge”³⁸.

2.5 The Jewish community of **Cahul** requested a postponement in the setting up of schools according to the new laws of public instruction. The minister replied that “if the material resources are not enough to set up schools, then the children should pursue their education in public schools, and for religion they would have a class taught by the rabbi or his delegate”³⁹. This specific affirmation, along with the existence of numerous confessional schools prove clearly the religious tolerance that the Governments of that time provided for the Jews, according to the principle stated by the Paris Convention (1858).

It is interesting that the Christian - Orthodox population did not share the same concern for prep schools (in fact catechism schools) that the Jewish communities from Moldova had. On the contrary, the urban and rural Christians were equally reluctant to sending their children to schools. This is due to several factors. Firstly, the children were used in various practical activities: the Christian children in domestic - agricultural activities, while the Jewish children in courier – trading activities (“Every morning, wrote one English missionary present in Iași, groups of boys, carrying heavy parcels, filled with various merchandise, are sent on errands all across the town”⁴⁰); secondly, parents feared that once the children were literate in writing and reading, as well as numeracy, they would be called up to serve in the army, sometimes while they were still in school (facts recorded in documents for the Christian students); and thirdly, the church servants were against schooling, as they feared it would provide to the educated children access to reading and interpreting the Bible, which would decrease the authority of the servants of the Christian or Mosaic altars. The same English missionary from Iași even noted that “the rabbi threatened to make the interdiction regarding schools public”⁴¹.

3. The closure and reopening of the Jewish public schools of Iași

Returning to the Jewish-Romanian public schools of Iași, documents record a year and a half interruption in their functioning. How did it come to that? The approval to be set up was granted by a school committee which was no longer recognized by the community, but which still controlled the incomes that ensured their and the Jewish hospital functioning. Various sources from that period reveal what the sources of these incomes were and how substantial they were. For the Jewish

³⁷ CHNA. MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 308.

³⁸ CHNA. MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 261.

³⁹ CHNA. MCPI, File 207/1863, p. 264 f-v.

⁴⁰ Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

⁴¹ Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

community of Iași and the other boroughs and towns from Moldova, the state approved the introduction of a tax, called **gabelă** or **tacsie**⁴², on kosher meat and chicken, of 4 parale per oca (parale = traditional currency equal to the hundredth part of an old leu; oca, from Turkish, okka = traditional measure equal to about one kilo, tr. note)⁴³. Within the community of Iași, this tax added up, according to the documents of the Jewish Administrative Council, to around 12,000 gold coins per year, 3600 of which was given to schools. The exchange rate for a gold coin was 32-31 lei in Iași, so we can assume that schools received an income of around 384,000 lei per year⁴⁴. The teaching staff salaries were different according to the grades they taught: it ranged from 1000 lei for the 2nd and 3rd grade teachers to 4500 lei/year for the 4th grade teachers. The Jewish and Mosaic religion inspectors got 7500 lei/year, decreasing to 6000 lei/year from the autumn of 1864. The three Jewish schools from Iași had 10-12 teachers of Hebrew and other ten teachers of Romanian, working and being paid for half the teaching norm⁴⁵.

The collection of “gabela – tacsia” on kosher meat was concessioned, and the incomes were under the control of the 1860 School Committee, which had been recommended by the Jewish Hospital Administrative Council, but **not chosen!** Between these two institutions of the Jewish communities there were frequent disagreements, also fuelled by the feeling of marginalisation that a great part of the community experienced when it came to decision-making, even if this process was a democratic one. A decision of the United Principalities government, published on 3rd July, 1862, introduced the veto in the decision-making process within the Jewish communities. The poor members of the Jewish community used this right to object to the collection of “gabela” on kosher meat. As a result, the source of income for the hospital and the Jewish schools as well as for other charity acts disappeared as the saved funds gradually diminished. The Jewish-Romanian school committee was no longer able to support the schools due to lack of money. The local and central authorities of the state - The School Inspection Committee of Iași, The Ministry of Instruction, The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the President of the Council of

⁴² The organic regulations stipulated the removal of “gabela” on kosher meat, but the state treasury, which lacked an adequate tax system, did not manage to supervise the Jews, and decided to use the “tacsie” as a method to tax the Jews’ incomes. Thus, the community and the treasury agreed on a global sum that was added to the budget of the community. The historian I. Kara reports that in Podul Iloaiei, the “gabela” was administered by a different person every year. In 1859, it was administered by Copil Dulberger, and reached 27,500 lei, see I. Kara, **Obștea evreiască din Podu Iloaiei. File din istoria unui “ștetl” moldovenesc**, București, Ed. Hasefer, 1990, p. 17.

⁴³ In 1851, in Podu Iloaiei, the “tacsia” for each oca of beef was 20 parale, I. Kara, **Obștea evreiască din Podu Iloaiei. File din istoria unui “ștetl” moldovenesc**, București, Ed. Hasefer, 1990, p. 17.

⁴⁴ This data is presented by the administrators of the community of Iași, M. L. Wechsler, J. Goldenthal, in **The statutes of the religious Jewish community of Iași**, sent to the School Inspection Committee on 9th of December, 1863, **CHNA. MCIP**, File 207/1863, p. 112 and the next.

⁴⁵ **CHNA. MCIP**, File 207/1863, p. 189-189 bis; 304 f-v.

Ministers, i.e. M. Kogălniceanu and even the ruler Alecsandru Ioan Cuza⁴⁶ - are flooded with memoirs sent by the conflicting sides, containing real or invented arguments. The Government asked **The School Inspection Committee** of Iași to find a solution that would put an end to the conflict between the two committees that represented the Jewish citizens of Iași. Consequently, on 3rd October, 1863, the minister of Instruction was informed by Titu Maiorescu, V. Alecsandru – Urechia and others that “the existence of Jewish schools is not possible without the modification of the right for veto granted to each member of the Jewish community by the Government, because this regulation published on 3rd July, 1862, which declared the minority vote equally potent as the majority vote, made it impossible for the schools to gather sufficient funds, as most Jews are against these schools in which Romanian is taught, disregarding the traditional methods”⁴⁷.

All these memoirs, together with the two sent on 6th May, 1863 addressed to ruler Alecsandru Ioan Cuza, determined the Government to have a debate on 25th October, 1863 and to issue a **Journal (Decision)**, which stipulated that “the minister of Cults and Public Instruction, in agreement with the Minister of Internal Affairs will take all the necessary steps to ensure the re-opening of the Jewish-Romanian schools, as they were in 1860”⁴⁸. As a result, MCPI appoints the School Committee of Iași, made up of V. Alexandrescu-Urechia, George Mârzescu, Ion Pangratti, to look into the disagreements between the two sections of the Jewish community of Iași and to report on them, while also suggesting “a way in which an agreement could be reached between them”⁴⁹. The investigation of the conflict and the mediation process take place in December 1863 and the beginning of the following year and on 17th January 1864, the School Committee of Iași sent the MCPI a Report containing suggestions for solving the dissensions between the Jewish School Committee and the Jewish Hospital Administrative Council. Spreading on several pages, the Report showed that the real origin of the conflict resided in “the disagreements between the poor Jews and the leading members of the community, the bankers”, and concluded that “The Administrative Council refused to support the schools or any other institutions under the control of the community leaders, especially under the control of the current members of the Jewish School Committee, claiming that they would harm the

⁴⁶ On May, 6th, 1863, ruler Alcesandru Ioan Cuza received two memoirs, one from the Jewish community, signed by over 100 people, and another sent by J. Rothenberg, prominent member of the Jewish community of Iași. The first memoir states: “In 1860 the Govenrment managed to set up some schools, which were supported by the income collected from the “tacsia” on meat. Due to the intrigues of some ..enemies of progress and culture, the “tacsia” was abolished and this caused the downfall of schools”. The ruler sends both memoirs “to be debated”, obviously, by the ministers! **CHNA. MCIP**, File 207/1863, p. 59 f-v.

⁴⁷ **CHNA. MCIP**, File 207/1863, p. 83 f-v.

⁴⁸ **CHNA. MCIP**, File 207/1863, p. 85-86.

⁴⁹ MCIP address of 24th November, 1863, **CHNA. MCIP**, File 207/1863, p. 90.

budgets of the schools, and, above all, would support a process of Germanisation of the young Jews, thus distancing the schools from their initial purpose”⁵⁰.

The School Inspection Committee concluded that until the Community adopted other statutes, the conflict could be stopped only by adopting the following measures: 1. The dissolution of the Jewish school committee and the supervision of the Jewish-Romanian schools by the Romanian School Inspection Committee of Iași; 2. For the subjects involving religion, a special inspector will be selected from the Jewish community; 3. A budget will be established for the Jewish schools “in accordance with the budgets allocated for the Romanian schools, and the Community will have to establish some taxes that would cover the expenses required by schools and, 4. The funds will be administered by the Administrative Council of the community”⁵¹. All these conditions were important, but the third one represented the key to the opening of schools, as it stipulated the reintroduction of the “gabala (tacsia)” on kosher meat which would have to be paid by the entire community.

On 6th June, 1864, the Prime-Minister, and the minister of Internal Affairs, M. Kogălniceanu, informed the minister of Cults and Public Instruction, Dimitrie Bolintineanu, that “I subscribe to all the measures suggested by the School Committee of Iași on 17th of January and the orders you will give so that they come into effect, and I have urged the prefect of Iași to put into practice the request of the Administrative Council to reintroduce the “gabala” in order to cover the expenses in accordance with the budget that is to be established by the Romanian School Inspection Committee of Iași”⁵². Following the agreement between the two ministries, The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Cults, on 26th of August, 1864, the Romanian School Inspection Committee of Iași was summoned by MCPI, in order to avoid future disagreements between the representative Jewish institutions – The school Committee and the Administrative Council of the Community – to “take the necessary measures in order for the Jewish-Romanian schools of Iași to be reopened on 1st September”⁵³. On 2nd of November, 1864, The Administrative Council of the Jewish Community of Iași requested that they should have the right to establish the budget and name an inspector of Hebrew and Mosaic Religion, request granted by the MCPI on condition that the person they recommend “should be chosen from among Western European rabbis, not Polish ones”⁵⁴. As no such rabbi could be found, on 12th of December, 1864, MCPI suggested “Doctor Landsberg, recommended by the Jewish Administrative Council”⁵⁵.

Another impediment in the reopening of the Jewish-Romanian schools of Iași was caused by the delay in establishing the budget for the school year 1864/1865,

⁵⁰ CHNA. MCIP, File 207/1863, p. 106 f-v and 107 f.

⁵¹ CHNA. MCIP, File 207/1863, p. 106 f-v, and 107 f.

⁵² CHNA. MCIP, File 207/1863, p. 109 f-v.

⁵³ CHNA. MCIP, File 207/1863, p. 165.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 170 f.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 173, 179 and 183.

which was due to the fact that the archive and the school furniture were in the possession of the Jewish school committee which had resigned. All these problems were finally solved by the end of November 1864 and on 1st of December, 1864, administrators **Daniel, Goldenthal, Tzullhman and Inspector Landsbergb** sent a telegramme to the minister of Cults and Public Instruction, informing him that “The Jewish - Romanian schools, thanks to your kind support, have reopened today. We want and hope that these schools, reorganized according to the national principle and benefitting from the support of the government, will prosper to everyone’s contentment.”⁵⁶

The difficult, yet promising start of the Jewish public schools of Iași, and not only, was to be continued in the following years. As proof we have the statistics of the Jewish public and confessional schools of Iași, compiled by inspector Mihai Vintilescu, on 19th of April, 1868, at the request of Mayor Teodor Tăutu. He recorded the existence of two Jewish public schools, branches⁵⁷, one on Păcurari Street, with 50 students, another on Podul Lung Street, with 150 students. These schools functioned according to the schedule of the public schools, and lessons were taught in the students’ mother tongue and Romanian⁵⁸. Besides these Jewish public schools, inspector Vintilescu recorded other 147 Jewish confessional “schools”, with approximately 2700 students, out of whom only 289 studied according to a curriculum similar to the one in public schools. Besides this shortcoming, most Jewish confessional schools lacked well trained teachers, for which reason Vintilescu considered that “in order for these schools to be accepted, even if only on religious grounds, they must be reorganized and the teachers must possess at least some of the knowledge taught in prep schools... in the spirit of the law of public instruction”⁵⁹. It is obvious that the local authority wanted to ensure a good quality of education in these confessional schools.

Beyond these shortcomings related to confessional schools, the Jewish public schools of Iași and other boroughs from Moldova marked the debut of some public institutions of education which were part of the sustained policy of modernization of the Romanian society, a process which, as we have seen so far, involved the Jewish minority helped substantially by the local and central authorities of the united Romanian principalities. These were the circumstances which provided the Jewish minority the proper conditions for the gradual development of an intellectual elite, with outstanding personalities, who brought a significant contribution to the Romanian science and culture. For this reason, we will always be grateful to them.

⁵⁶ **Ibidem**, p. 201.

⁵⁷ This remark in inspector’s Vasilescu report suggests the existence of a Central Jewish public school, mentioned in the documents we quoted in this paper.

⁵⁸ D. Vitcu, **Statistica școlilor israelite...**, p. 182-183

⁵⁹ **Ibidem**, p. 181.