

Encyclopedia of the Jewish Communities
From their Founding until after the WWII Holocaust

ROMANIA

Volume I – Moldavia
(Pages 225 - 226)

Frumusica

Map Coordinates: 47° 57' North – 28° 07' East

Author: Theodore Lavi, Ph.D.,
Coordinator of Pinkas ha-Kehilot in Yad Washem - 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 Kehillah and its relationship with the Gentile community.

Frumusica

A village in Moldavia, county of Botosani, on the main rail line between Iasi and Botosani (city) 14 kilometers from Harlau and 32 kilometers from the capital city (Botosani) of the County.

Jewish Population

Year	Number	% of Jews in General Population
1832	82	
1838	47 (families)	
1910	596 people	
1930	634	66.4
1941	614	55.4
1947	200	

Before the outbreak of World War 11

The village was founded during the first quarter of the 19th century, during the days of Prince Ionita Sturza, 1822-1828. In 1832 the village had 82 Jews compared to 7 Christians. In 1839 the count was 10 Jewish merchants and craftsmen compared to 5 Christians.

The owner of the manor, Alecu Mavrocordat was dissatisfied with the village's development and on the eighth of October 1844, formulated a new agreement with the Jewish merchants. He furnished them several lots for building a synagogue, a ritual bath, and a cemetery, and at no cost, lumber for building. He also undertook obtaining a permit from the prince allowing them to be recognized as permanent residents, since there were already 80 Jewish families there. Indeed, the prince signed a permit on October 14, 1845 and asked the princes, who would be his successors, to vow that they would not change his words, since it was for the public good. The permit specified exactly the amount of tax due and the merchants were obliged to build warehouses and stores in order to hasten the village's development. In spite of all that, the county's ruler ordered the expulsion of the Jews in 1894. It seems that this did not take place, since in that same year a branch of "Chibat Zion," named "Kadima" with 100 members, was active in Frumusica. Frumusica's Zionists even chose a delegate to the third Zionist Congress in Basel.

During the days of the peasants' rebellion in 1907, peasants burst into the village having been incited by the elementary school teachers. The Jews were frightened and 200 of them fled to Harlau. The county's official quieted down the rebels and the incident concluded without severe consequences. The Jews returned to their homes.

In 1910, the Jews of Frumusica included: 44 merchants, 21 tailors, 20 shoemakers, 3 blacksmiths, 4 carpenters, and 25 of other occupations. That year 128 pupils attended the Kehillah's school.

"Rabbi Avraham Shachter (Schechter) (1853-1918) served the Kehillah as its Rabbi for over 30 years. He was an outstanding Talmudic scholar and authored several works of Talmudic scholarship which were subsequently published by his son, Rabbi Jacob Shachter, among these being MACHAZEH AVRAHAM (The vision of Abraham) and DOVEV SIFTEI YESHAYNIM (Stirring the lips of those that sleep. (Jerusalem 5717) It is quite extraordinary how this man who was the Rabbi of a tiny community in an obscure Romanian village achieved his level of Talmudical learning.

The above title translation and what follows is from private correspondence of the translator (JHB) with Israel Shachter of Ra'anana, Israel grandson of Avraham Shachter.

Rabbi Jacob Shachter (1886-1971) was born and grew up in Frumusica where his father served as his teacher imparting to him an intense level of Jewish scholarship. Rabbi Jacob Shachter remained in his parent's home until his marriage in 1910. After several years in the home of his wife's parents in the village of Beresti he received Semichah (Rabbinical Ordination) from some of the outstanding Rabbis of the time. In 1913 he received his first Rabbinical appointment as Rabbi of the "Eizenhandler" Synagogue in Galatz where he remained until 1920 when he was invited by the community of Jews of Romanian origin in Manchester, England to become their Rabbi. In 1926 he was invited by the Jewish community in Northern Ireland to become their Rabbi, in succession to Rabbi Isaac Herzog who had moved to the larger community in Dublin before being appointed Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land. Rabbi Shachter remained in this position until his retirement in 1953 whereafter he settled in Jerusalem where he died in 1971, Rabbi Shachter was recognized as an eminent scholar and public figure, particularly active in the Zionist movement. He was the author of various works of scholarship both in Hebrew and in English and also collaborated in the Soncino English translation of the Talmud (he translated the tractate Sanhedrin)." A book of his -- The Students Guide to the Talmud-- which has been out of print for over 40 years has just been republished in the (United) States.

Between the Two World Wars there were 2 synagogues in Frumusica: one for merchants and one for craftsmen. There was also an elementary school and next to it a public library. In the village, “Dror Habonim”, a branch of the Zionist youth movement, was active.

In 1929, the manor upon which Frumusica was founded changed hands. The new owner demanded that the authorities expel the Jews from his land since the permit, now expired, was no longer in force. The Jews appealed to the high court and asked, supported by the agrarian reform promulgated following WWI, to make them the owners of the land they occupied. The dispute lasted a long time without any decision being reached.

Until the Goga-Cuza government came to power in 1937, relationships between Jews and Christians were quite satisfactory. During the riots that broke out in the area’s villages several months later, Jews found refuge in Frumusica. After that government fell, they returned to their former places.

In 1932, the Kehillah was granted formal legal status.

During the Holocaust

During the first half-year of the Antonescu regime, when the terror of the “Green Shirts” spread and encompassed the whole country, there were no members of the “Iron Guard” in Frumusica. However, gangs of that same organization arrived from nearby, detained many Jews in the cellar of the municipality’s council building where they were tortured. Several of Frumusica’s Christians joined the rioters, led by the former mayor – Nicolaie Mosneguta. Thanks to the intervention of the chief of the local gendarmerie, Ion Purcaru and the locale’s official physician, the Jews were freed from their imprisonment.

The head of the “Iron Guard” from Harlau continued with his actions and confiscated stores and apartments of well-off Jews. In January 1941, after the Antonescu government distanced the “Iron Guard”, the Jews stores and dwellings were returned to them, but not before the “Green Shirt” people had emptied them of all their goods and possessions.

In May 1941, German soldiers arrived in Frumusica and settled in dwellings that belonged to Jews. Ten of the Kehillah's leaders were sent as hostages to Botosani, where they were detained in the synagogue, together with the leadership of other neighboring Kehillot.

At the same time, the Jews of Stefanesti, who had been expelled from their village, arrived in Frumusica. The Commander of the local gendarmerie warned the local Jews that they could expect to be expelled and suggested they should sell their property while there was still time. After war with the USSR broke out in June 1941, an order was received that the Jews were to be evacuated from the place in one day. The Jews rented 350 wagons, loaded them with their belongings and the caravan then headed in the direction of Botosani. Local peasants attacked the caravan and tried to rob it, but the chief of the local gendarmerie, who accompanied the caravan with other gendarmes, confronted them and succeeded in preventing the looting. He also foiled the wagon owners from hurting the Jews to whom they had rented their carts.

Several Jews, both younger and older, were suspected of being Communists were sent to a political detainment camp in Targu-Jiu.

Several of Frumusica's Jews sent to do hard labor did not survive.

After the war only a third of the Jews returned to Frumusica. Their dwellings and the Kehillah's buildings were found in ruins.

During the persecution some of the locals especially the manor owner, Grigoriu, excelled in helping the Jews. In return, the Jews helped him when the communist regime confiscated all of his property.

TL

The General Archive of the History of the Jewish People RM 160.
Yad Vashem Archive 0—11/18—1 (108).
M. Karp Archive VI, 15.

Bibliography:

Kloisner, Israel: "Chibat Zion in Romania," Jerusalem, 1958, pp. 271, 276.

