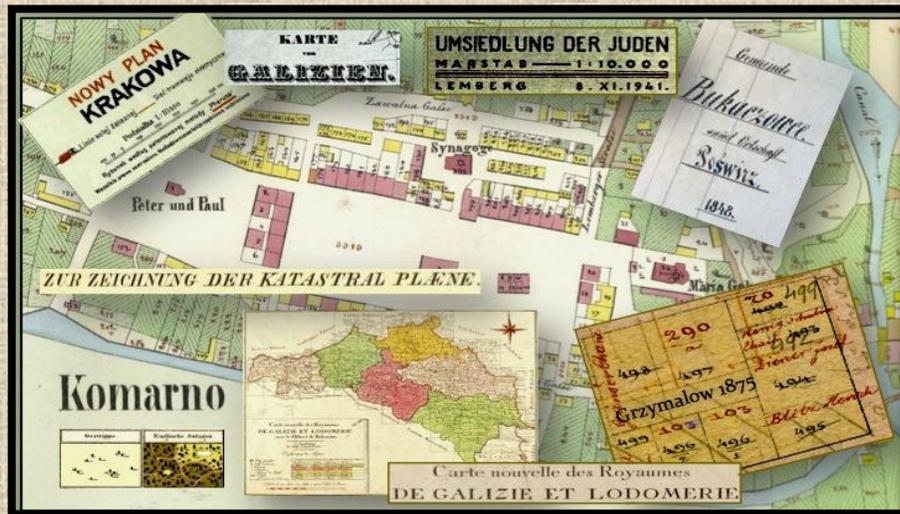


# THE GALITZIANER

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# Brody's Memorial Books

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**TWO DECADES AFTER** the end of the Second World War that had brought Jewish Brody to a brutal end, the Israeli scholar and native of Brody, Dov Sadan, stated, "It would be difficult to find a Jew—not only from that region but also from Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, and a good part of Germany—for whom 'Brody' could be mentioned who would not recall or associate at least something with this name." Brody, in today's Ukraine, is indeed well-known as a Jewish place through novels, family histories, pictures, and surnames that all relate to the town's name.

The fourth article in this series compares Polish, Ukrainian, and Jewish memory books that were produced over the last 30 years in order to preserve the city's legacy. In the case of Brody, we are lucky—each ethno-confessional community that formerly lived in town published a book with memoirs and historical descriptions. And yet, comparing them, one might get the feeling that their authors wrote about totally different cities.

## Polish Memory

The most neutral of all memorial books are the Polish ones, published by Zbigniew Kościów. The first one, *Brody: Commemoration of a Kresy Town*, is a short, but fairly scholarly history of the city including some pictures; whereas the second one,

*Brody Motifs*, corresponds better to the genre of a memorial book. The latter unites several abridgements of Brody-related texts or recollections written by different authors, as well as short biographies of famous Brodyers, and some photographs of the contemporary city. Published in 1993 and in 1995, both books exemplify the increased public and academic interest in the former *kresy*, interwar Poland's eastern territories. The *kresy*'s rural areas were mostly inhabited by Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Lithuanians, whereas Poles and Jews dominated the region's cities. As the Soviet Union annexed these lands in 1939, special preoccupation with these territories were not opportune in the communist era. Only after 1989 did supposedly lost memories of the *kresy* re-emerge.



*The border crossing east of Brody between two empires, where Austro-Hungary and Russia met*

Both Polish memorial books on Brody focus on the Polish population, though only to a certain degree. They include Ukrainians and especially Jews within the historical narrative. Among the 18 biographies presented, 15 are about Poles (three of them about women), three are about Jews, and two single ones are about a Ukrainian and an Armenian. Nonetheless, the book seems to pay little attention to these people's ethno-confessional affiliation. He describes the expan-

sion of Polish patriotic clubs and education, as well as Polish refugees of the 1863 uprising in Russia, but long sections of these books deal with Brody's economic history and urban development. The selection of the printed illustrations, of which an entire half is nationally not attributable, also indicates that Kościów conceives of Brody as a city with a multidimensional past. Interestingly, the Polish memorial books put little emphasis on the Second World War, which distinguishes them from their Ukrainian and Jewish equivalents.



Market square in Brody

## Ukrainian Memory

Even though two Ukrainian memorial books bear the same name, *Brody and District*, their original background is different. The first one was published in 1988 by the Ukrainian diaspora in Toronto. The editors' explicit intention was to rectify the lies of the "occupier," that is the Soviet Union, about former Ukrainian national life in the region. The book exclusively focuses on the memory of Ukrainian emigrants and has the idea of the nation at its heart. It does not deal with other ethno-confessional groups explicitly, although Poles and Jews appear from time to time when interethnic relations are addressed. In general, *Brody and District* characterizes the Ukrainian-

Polish relationship as more conflicting than the Ukrainian-Jewish one.

The other *Brody and District* memorial book was published in 1998 in Brody and, thus, it represents more or less the current Ukrainian narrative on the spot. It continues in large part the narratives of the above mentioned Toronto memorial book, however, it is slightly more moderate in its nationalist verve and tries to include the local situation created by the political and economic circumstances of newly independent Ukraine.

Most interesting is the 150 page long chapter entitled "The Brody District during the National Liberation Struggle for the Liberty of Ukraine." On the one hand, this section deals with the national struggle for the survival of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic in 1918 and 1919. On the other hand, it addresses the Second World War, if in a rather contradictory manner. Some eulogize the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) and the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army), some try to justify why they entered the SS "Halychyna" (a Ukrainian SS squad collaborating closely with the Nazis), but there is also mention of Ukrainians displaced to Germany for forced labor, detention in concentration camps, and mass executions of Jews. Whereas the Soviet period is largely omitted, the last 120 pages are dedicated to contemporary Brody.

Compared to its Canadian predecessor, the Ukrainian memorial book published in 1998 is more moderate in its nationalist outlook. Certainly, this edition also clearly follows a Ukrainian narrative and concentrates on Ukrainian actors. For example, in the section on famous people from the region, we find no Poles or Jews. However, there is a wider range of opinions of what is part of the Ukrainian memory. This can go as far as in the case where a contributor calls

for a renovation of the synagogue, which he reckons is an integral part of Brody's heritage.

## Jewish Memory

Jewish memory of Brody appears in several memorial books published after 1945, with particular emphasis on and intent to remember the Jewish victims of the Second World War. Argentinian associations of Galician Jewish immigrants published three different memorial books in 1945, 1961, and 1968 in Yiddish, dedicated to their former home region under Austrian and Polish rule. Besides essays on Galicia in general, there are several articles on Galician *shtetls* and cities, amongst others on Brody.



*The interior of an "Old" Synagogue of Brody*

The Brody-related contributions deal with quite different topics, including the Broder Singer Berl Margulies, the disputatious Orthodox *Maggid* Shlomo Kluger, and a rather satirical description of how Brody lost its free trade privilege. The most instructive essay is written in the 1961 Galician *yizkor* book by Dov Sadan, a native of Brody, who later became the first professor of Yiddish studies at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. As cited in the opening quotation of this article, Sadan states that Brody's contribution to Eastern European Jewish intellectual and cultural history can hardly be overestimated.

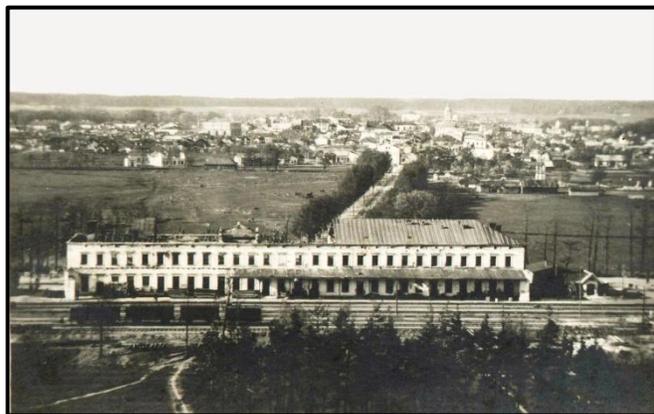
Only after four decades of preparation was a memorial book dedicated exclusively to the city of Brody published in Israel in 1994. In contrast to the earlier *yizker bikher* written in Yiddish, this book, *An Eternal Light—Brody in Memoriam*, is in Hebrew, including an abridged version translated into English. As is characteristic for memorial books after 1945, more than the half of it is dedicated to the Second World War, including testimonies, poems, and registers of the victims of the Holocaust. Some recollections, however, reach back to the interwar period.

The time span before 1918 is covered by the first two chapters that deal with the history and culture of Brody's Jewish community. Here, excerpts of Nathan Gelber's scholarly work on Jewish Brody and Zionism in Galicia are prominently included. These chapters briefly mention Brody's commercial importance, but their main attention is on the religious, cultural, and political ties with East European Jewry. These two sections deal with important rabbis, the *Haskalah*, Jewish Orthodoxy, the Broder Singers, Jewish education, and Brody as a place of refuge and emigration, as well as with the Zionist movement in the city.

*Eternal Light* presents Brody as an almost exclusively Jewish city. Certainly, more than two

thirds of the population were Jews until the Second World War; nonetheless, other ethno-confessional groups were present in town as well, and they were dominant in the city's environs. Poles are mentioned rather indirectly, for example, where the book deals with the struggle between pro-German and pro-Polish orientated Jews at the end of the nineteenth century. Ukrainians do not appear at all before the interwar period. As a rule, this memorial book treats Poles with more sympathy than Ukrainians.

Looking at these Brody-related publications, all memorial books published during the last 30 years clearly follow ethno-confessional narratives. Yet, the discourses within a particular national narrative change over time and with changing political circumstances. Only in rare cases, do they characterize other national groups in an explicitly negative way. Most often, they simply ignore the others and evoke among the reader the feeling that these memorial books deal



*Brody train station in the aftermath of damage suffered during the World War I*

with totally different cities. Only the Polish ones concede more space to the other nationalities. All memory books have an emphasis on the early modern period to prove the indigenous character of their respective ethno-confessional group, on the interwar period, and on the Second World War. The focus on the years between 1939 and 1945 results not only from the temporal closeness

of these gory times but also from the desire to assert authority over the interpretation of what really happened in this period. What Shimon Redlich stated for Brzeżany (today Berežany in Ukrainian), another formerly Galician city, is also true for Brody, “The complex and tragic past of the Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians and their conviction of exclusive victimhood resulted, mostly, in separate self-centered memories.”

## Final Thoughts

This series of four articles has traced Brody's position in the mental maps of East European Jewry. I argue that the perception of Brody is often not so much linked to particular historical facts. Instead, its history-laden memories—multi-layered, having many facets and often being subjective—profoundly influenced the remaining picture of this city's past.

The picture comprises grand physical places in the city itself like the Great Synagogue or the Jewish cemetery. Apart from these, pictures and old postcards, as well as different sorts of texts are important elements of a collective memory of Brody. These images and memorial books receive special attention once a specific ethnic community has been eradicated from the actual urban space. Like in so many other towns in Eastern Europe after 1945, Brody's Jews and Poles—to some extent also Ukrainians—transferred their hometown onto the mental maps of a wider diaspora. Detached from Brody's former multicultural reality, the memorial discourse often follows an aggravated national pattern and mostly excludes the others from the historical narrative.

When Jews from the West started to travel through the former communist countries after 1989, they were often looking for Jewish places in order to “discover” their own national, religious or secular Jewish identity. Interestingly, even

those who would hardly ever visit a synagogue or a cemetery at home identify with religious sites of memory. Accordingly, Jewish tourists coming to Brody today pay little attention to non-religious but de facto Jewish places like the building of Brody's former chamber of commerce or the city's former German language high school. Even though the chamber was dominated by the city's wealthy Jewish merchants, and the high school's largest ethno-confessional group were Jews, tourists would mostly identify the ruins of Brody's Great Synagogue and the abandoned cemetery as Jewish places.

Brody successfully found its way onto the mental maps of East European Jewry. The city embraces a bundle of different traits of memory, including its historical importance in the cultural, economic and intellectual life of the world of Ashkenazim as well as its tragic disappearance resulting from the Second World War. Dov Sadan, hence, rightly states that Brody has a telling name. Crucial to the region's history in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Brody even today cannot be dismissed from the virtual memory of the vanished East European Jewry.

**Editor's note:** *Earlier installments in the series included: Brody Always on My Mind (September 2016); Brody: Physical Places of Memory (December 2016); and Brody: Image Telling the Story (March 2017). Past issues of the journal are accessible via the Members Portal on Gesher Galicia's website.*

*This article was originally published by Börries Kuzmany as "Brody Always on My Mind: the Mental Mapping of a Jewish City," East European Jewish Affairs 2013, 43:162–189. Reprinted with permission.*

*The author's new book, Brody: A Galician Border City in the Long Nineteenth Century, has been recently published. For more information see:*

<http://www.brill.com/products/book/brody-galician-border-city-long-nineteenth-century>

## FACES of GALICIA



*Ettel Molet (b. Brody, 1850–d. Paris, France, 1929). She was a daughter of Salamon Joel Westreich and Gische Feldmann. Ettel lived at 358 Sinagogengasse, Brody, Galicia. Courtesy of Ben Solomowitz, Gesher Galicia member.*

We invite you to submit old photographs or drawings of Jewish inhabitants of Galicia to be featured in the **FACES of GALICIA** series. This may include pictures of your family members or photographs of unknown persons.

Contact us at: [editor@geshergalicia.org](mailto:editor@geshergalicia.org)