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Between Austrian Liberalism and Polish Federalism

A comparison of the formation of new cultural and political identities among the Jewish population of Lviv and Brody in the second half of the 19th century.

(abstract)

16th World Congress of Jewish Studies

Hebrew University in Jerusalem

July 28 - August 1, 2013

After the formation of the Galician autonomy in 1867, as a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire the Jews were beginning to feel the tensions between Vienna that was losing its cultural and political influence and the Poles who quickly became the region's dominant political power. Not only did the latter become economic partners, the Jewish youth found Polish culture with the then-dominant Romanticism more appealing than the moralistic doctrine of Haskalah. Gradually, a shift of language and cultural identity – from German to Polish – occurred.

These shifts reflect not only the political process, but a much deeper transformation among the Polish population: breaking with Haskalah, conflict of generations, the secularization of the Jewish youth, the quality and quantity of the Polish environment, etc. Two cities in Galicia demonstrate two different models of search for both cultural and ideological orientations. While Lviv quickly caught the mood of Polish romanticism and nationalism, Brody remained committed to the principles of Haskalah and liberalism. A thorough comparison of these two cities reveals the breadth of the spectrum of the so called new modern identities and analyzes the factors that influenced their formation among the urban Jewish population of Brody and Lviv in the second half of the 19th century.