ATTACHMENT #25

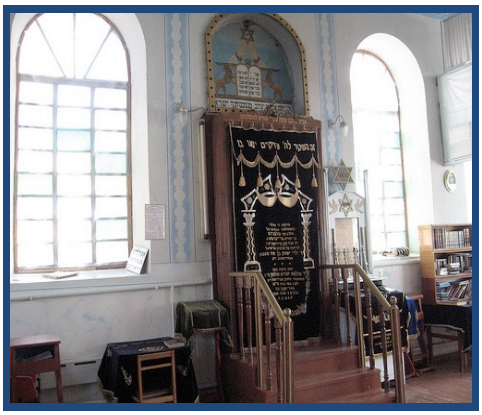
BERDYCHIV

Discussed in conversations of Jack Thompson and Wendy Davaris & Bobbie Bass.

BERDYCHIV

Wolf (or Velvel) and Jenny (or Cherna) Bass lived, and Barney Bass was born, in the great Jewish-Russian city of Berdychiv after they were married, obviously before departing Fastov for America. It was almost certainly the hometown of Wolf, already well into middle age when he married the more than 20 years younger Cherna Radov (Radovskaia), then living in Makarov or Ekaterinoslav.

Berdychiv was legendary as a Jewish community. Jews made up 80% of the city's population of, by 1900, almost 60,000. Located in what is now northern Ukraine, Berdychiv had the second largest Jewish population of any city in Russia, boasting an unheard of nearly 50% literacy rate within the community. It had 80 synagogues.

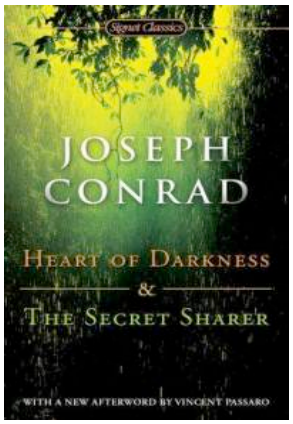


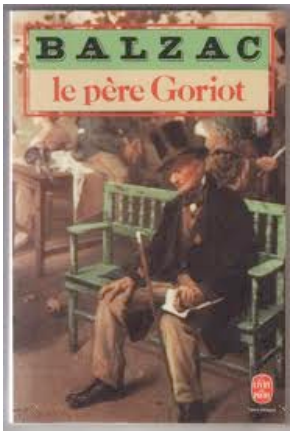
Berdychiv Synagogues

Memorial to the Jews of Berdychiv

However, by the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Century, part of the city's commerce had moved into the port city of Odessa, with an exodus of banking firms, and the town experienced a temporary decline. W.W.I. and the Soviet Army brought in their wake first the Kiev Pogrom of 1919 and then the massive destruction of homes and buildings from artillery fire by advancing Soviet troops. The Soviets closed the synagogues but, interestingly, ordered the business of the judicial courts conducted in Yiddish. After the Germans occupied the city in 1941, Berdychiv was turned into a ghetto, and then an extermination center, with all 39,000 Jews murdered.

In its heyday, Berdychiv enjoyed something of a famed literary history. Joseph Conrad (born Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, a Pole), was born there and the great Yiddish writer, Sholem Aleichem (born Solomon Naumovich Rabinovich) spent time there. Honoré de Balzac traveled to Berdychiv to be with his mistress, leaving France for the Russian city once his mistress became his wife. Balzac wrote: *The place is thoroughly Jewish. Jews are everywhere.* The city itself has variously been governed by Mongols, Lithuanians, Poles, Crimean Tatars, Russians and now Ukrainians. For centuries, local control was in the hands of Polish dukes, the Radziwill family, which included Princess Lee Bouvier Radziwill, President John F. Kennedy's sister-in-law. The Radziwills established market fairs ten times a year that served as the basis for a prosperous local economy, fairs that came to be dominated by Jewish merchants. About 20% of the goods sold was in jewelry, Wolf's (and likely his family's) trade. In fact, the city's main thoroughfare was named for the jewelry business, Gold Street. The Jews of Berdychiv were more widely famed for their role in the alcohol trade and for the quality of their cantors.

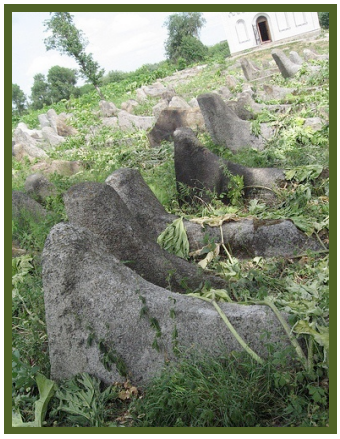




Works of 3 transformational Berdychiv Writers – Conrad, Aleichem, Balzac – none of whom wrote in Russian or Ukrainian.

Berdychiv and the Hnylopyat River

The city is on shores of the Hnylopyat River (*Hnyl* is Russian for putrid). It is about 90 miles north of Kiev, 250 miles from Odessa, and today has 88,000 residents. *Lonely Planet* rates the number one sight in Berdychiv to be the neglected, overgrown, largely Hasidic, but, in eclectic ways, remarkable Jewish cemetery. That cemetery contains painted graves and ones shaped like feet.



The Jewish cemetery in Berdychiv showing neglect, green and white painted graves, and graves in the shape of feet, so that when the Messiah arrives, it will be easier to arise and walk to salvation.

Berdychiv Fair held 10 times annually attracting people from throughout Russia.