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The Share of Jews in the Oil Industry in Drohobycz and Boryslaw

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Abstract

In the second half of the 19th Century, oil and gas had been discovered in Boryslaw and its surrounding area in Galicia. The village had quickly evolved into one of the world's major producers of oil and gasoline. Boryslaw's neighboring town of Drohobycz became its commercial and financial hub. According to many direct and indirect sources, it is evident that Jews played a major role in scouting, developing and commercialization of that oil industry.

After peak activity in the early 20th century, the production of oil and participation of Jews significantly decreased during 1918-1939. The Russian occupation of that territory during 1939-1941 under the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, once again increased that activity and the profile of Jewish participation. The skills and expertise acquired by Jews who were working under the Soviets would have a significant impact on the characteristics of their attempts of survival during the Holocaust years of 1941-1944.