

## Conclusions

In his article entitled “Living among the Ghosts of Others: Urban Postmemory in Eastern Europe,” Uilleam Blacker observes that in most writing about places with resettled populations, the present-day residents are deprived of a voice by those who left that place or were expelled. Poles write about “their” Lwów, with little concern for the Ukrainians who live in today’s Lviv, and Jews remember the shtetls they left behind, rarely considering that Poles and Ukrainians have settled in those places. Blacker, however, argues that postmemory is also necessarily connected to the present-day inhabitants of those places, who have access to the traumatic experiences of the vanished Others through various media; thus, any serious attempt to study the urban postmemory of East-Central Europe must “confront the memory of the other, and *others’ memories*.”<sup>357</sup> This study of local memory in Krzyż and Zhovkva arose from similar foundations: the memories and experiences of the people who have disappeared from a given society – Holocaust survivors, deportees and resettled persons – are important, but from the viewpoint of those specific communities, the memories and experiences of the people who took their place are more important. This book tries to give those people a voice and to accompany them in the reconstruction of the time when they made their new homes their own; this process was also often inseparable from the earlier loss of the old home and the associated trauma. It is for this reason that the greater part of the book is not overly theoretical, and the work as a whole does not offer any theoretical constructs. Now, in providing a concluding synthesis, I would like to attempt such a theorization by distinguishing the different types of social memory in places of mass population transfer.

I identify two axes along which memory can be understood: private/public memory on the one hand, and front- and back-stage memory on the other. Private memory is the sphere of remembrance that is cultivated exclusively in the family and in informal groups, having no influence on questions of public commemoration – not because such influence is impossible, but rather because no need is felt. Public memory, however, extends beyond the sphere of informal social contacts, demanding to be represented in the public sphere; it strives to

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357 Uilleam Blacker, “Living among the Ghosts of Others: Urban Postmemory in Eastern Europe,” in: *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, ed. Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind and Julie Fedor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 173–178, original emphasis.

**Tab. 1:** Types of Memory

Sphere of Memory	Type of Memory	
	Krzyż	Zhovkva
Resettlement	Private, Back-stage	Private, Back-stage
Absent Others	Public, Back-stage	Public, Back-stage
Heroic Canon	Semi-public, Back-stage	Public, Front-stage

be represented in public above all. Front-stage memories are aspects of memory that are essential to the construction of group identity – in this case, of the local community. Correspondingly, back-stage memory refers to aspects of social memory that are of secondary importance, which have no such group-forming function and do not aspire to front-stage status.

This typological scheme makes it possible to clearly present my overall findings, as summarized in the Tab. 1.

## Memories of Resettlement

The biggest surprise in all of the analysis I carried out was that memories of the resettlement process and all related experiences – the process of adaptation to the new place and new surroundings, the drama of yearning for the old home, and the sense of being uprooted – remained in the realm of private, back-stage memory in both towns. These memories were cultivated only between specific groups of individuals who were resettled; these groups made little effort to share their recollections with other types of migrants. No claims have been made on public commemoration and the memory of resettlement is absent from public symbolic space. Furthermore, the resettled people themselves appeared to feel no negative emotions towards this status of their memory; they saw no reason to change matters. The testimonies of the oldest respondents often contained bitterness and resentment towards the erstwhile powers that were responsible for the act of resettlement, but never towards the present-day authorities who chose not to commemorate that history. Resettlement, then, does not make communities of memory, despite it appearing to have the potential to do so. Because memories of resettlement are confined to the private sphere, they are not a source of conflict and do not divide local communities – nor do they serve as building blocks for group identity.

Why is this the case? One of the most obvious explanations is that the experiences of resettlers were varied, and thus the different groups could not construct a single coherent narrative for “external” use by other members of the

community. The experience of a settler from the overpopulated central region of Mazovia had little in common with that of someone from the pre-war eastern provinces, even if both had abandoned their old homes forever and were similarly forced to become accustomed to a “post-German” landscape. Considering that resettler memories were far from aligned, resettlement as a singular phenomenon was hardly communicable to those who did not experience it at all. Besides the divergence of memories between different resettled peoples, another issue is the inheritance of prejudices against specific groups of residents. These prejudices remain sufficiently strong to this day to effectively prevent mutual understanding and coordinated action. Despite the fact that both a Ukrainian deported from Poland and a Muscovite Russian sent to work in Galicia experienced a form of forced migration, they would hardly be expected to share a joint identity based on this common factor. Resettlement is thus too general a category to serve effectively as a foundation for a feeling of commonality. On the other hand, the very specific and concrete elements of resettlement that make it possible to distinguish groups such as the easterners in both Krzyż and Zhovkva are too particular and potentially antagonizing, because they contain the power to arouse the demons of mutual recrimination.

A second factor is the status of resettlement in communist times. Although it was not officially recognized and did not enter public memory, the symbolic legacy of resettlement was suppressed to an incomparably smaller extent than memories of the nationalist resistance in Ukraine. In Poland, commemoration and discussion in public space was possible (e.g. in churches or in cemeteries). In Ukraine, there was no threat of deportation to the camps if one revealed that one had been resettled, unlike if one had fought for the UPA. Likewise, being a resettler did not pose such obstacles to social advancement as belonging to other “undesirable” groups. Perhaps this memory was of a passive nature because the experience itself had been passive; being deported against one’s will was hardly comparable to actively and consciously taking part in underground conspiracy. Thus, in comparison with other previously repressed memory groups, the resettlers rather lacked the motivation, decisiveness or determination to advance their memories to the front-stage, unlike the former UPA fighters in Zhovkva.

## Memories of Absent Others

In both communities, memories of absent Others belong to public memory, but they are undoubtedly confined to the back-stage realm. Although both in Zhovkva and in Krzyż, the Poles, Jews and Germans have come to be commemorated in some form, and their historical presence is used as an element of the

town's image, these memories do not in any way constitute the group identities of residents. The question, then, is: is this a particularity of these specific communities, or are memories of Others incapable of playing such a role in general? Perhaps they even ought not to, because the resulting identity would be a negative one? An arguably more important feature than the direct building of identities is for memories of Others not to be eradicated, for those memories not to fade imperceptibly into oblivion; this, however, is what is happening in both Krzyż and Zhovkva. The scale and character of this process, however, are different in the two towns. In both places, it is not the entirety of memory about Others that is disappearing, but only the most painful and difficult aspects – above all, the ways in which the absent Others disappeared from Krzyż and Zhovkva. This form of erasure is a typical instance of *anamnesis*:<sup>358</sup> memory that is troublesome and buried, but which continues to return. The more painful it is, the more intensively it returns, along with a consciousness that today's residents and their predecessors did play a role in those people's disappearance – whether an indirect role as a passive observer, or a direct one as a perpetrator acting more or less voluntarily. Holocaust memory has a specific status, because unlike memories of the deportation of the Germans or the Poles, the residents of Zhovkva were not even witnesses – they could only have learned of it through hearsay. The absence of social memory in this particular case could perhaps be explained by the lack of an essential ingredient: autobiographical memory. However, this argument is weakened by the strength of memories about other victims whose fate was only spoken about, but not directly experienced – for example, the Ukrainian prisoners killed by the NKVD in 1941. Thus, besides first-hand experience, social memory is reliant on recognition of historical events as having happened to one's "own" people. The mechanisms of group memory are ruthless: Ukrainian victims of the NKVD are remembered because they are an extension of the Self, whereas the Holocaust of the Jews and the disappearance of Zhovkva's Poles are forgotten, because they remain Other.

The Others are also forgotten in Krzyż, but in a different way and in a different atmosphere to Zhovkva. The process of forgetting here seems to have more in common with natural features of memory in general, and less to do with a heritage of guilt that is yet to be worked through. Looking at the broader context: the Germanness of Krzyż is a much lesser problem for today's residents than the Polishness or Jewishness of Zhovkva. Everyone in Krzyż is aware that the town used to be a German one and that Poles did not live there in the past, but this

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358 Bernard-Donals, *Forgetful Memory*.

knowledge does not arouse any heated disputes or hasty justifications of one's right to live there or to belong to the locality. In Zhovkva, the memory of the Polishness of the town is still touched by unhealed injuries and lingering claims of guilt. The tone in which people in Krzyż spoke of Germans and German heritage was incomparably calmer than the manner in which people discussed the Poles in Zhovkva. Importantly, a greater acceptance of the historical presence of Others also seems to correlate with a greater readiness to commemorate the injuries with which they are associated – including injuries inflicted on them by members of one's own group.

### Memories of Heroes

Only the heroic canon in Zhovkva showed features of both public and front-stage memory. Without a doubt, the town's identity after 1991 has been constructed on a recalibration of this canon, and this process has been carried out in public. There is no such memory in Krzyż – memories of the Soviets as anti-heroes are confined to the back-stage realm and are “semi-public” at best. In the terms employed by Charles Maier in relation to memories of communism and Nazism, memory in Krzyż is “cold,” not “hot.”<sup>359</sup> Perhaps in the near future these events will stop pertaining to the sphere of memory at all, becoming just history. Such a development would have significant consequences. In Zhovkva, there are two distinguishable memory groups that are very clearly defined and extremely antagonistic to each other, which are built on different approaches to the heroic canon; their boundaries cut across generations, and among young people they also cut across family backgrounds (which is evidence of their extraordinary power). There are no analogous divisions in Krzyż. One could perhaps posit that distinct groups exist in Krzyż in relation to the memories of resettlement, but such an observation would only apply to the first generation and they would be groups of people who shared similar experiences, rather than communities of memory *per se*. They would also be lacking an important constituent feature of memory groups: a desire to act as a group and to declare their interests in public.

The existence of memory groups directly affects the outbreak of conflicts of memory – or, to borrow Nijakowski's term, conflicts over symbolic domains. In Zhovkva there is a conflict of varying intensity between the post-Soviet memory

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359 Charles S. Maier, “Hot Memory... Cold Memory: On the Political Half-Life of Fascist and Communist Memory,” *Transit: Europäische Revue*, Vol. 22 (2002), <http://www.iwm.at/transit/transit-online/hot-memory-cold-memory-on-the-political-half-life-of-fascist-and-communist-memory/>, last accessed 13.12.2018.

group and the patriotic memory group. Importantly, Zhovkva's local authorities are an active participant in the dispute, working to further the cause of the patriotic group. The situation is very different in Krzyż: because there are no memory groups, there are no significant symbolic conflicts within the society. The only conflictual event in recent years was the issue of the destruction of the German cemetery; this, however, was a disagreement between active and more sensitive residents with an interest in history on the one hand, and the passive and rather indifferent town authorities on the other. Despite the small scale of this dispute, one consequence of the event was strengthening of social bonds and local identity: it served as a reminder of the Others who had previously lived in Krzyż in a milder way than the simmering *anamnesis* of Zhovkva, provoking discussions. It did not antagonize the community from within, because it was not an effect of internal divisions, but rather of misjudged actions by the authorities. The conflict raging in Zhovkva, in contrast, has no such bond-forming potential; whilst it does lead to discussions of local history and identity, these are largely futile because the distance between the mutually hostile camps makes it difficult to carry out an actual dialogue. The heroic canon in Zhovkva not only fails to build community, it even damages it, causing ever-deeper divisions.

### **Between Memory and Forgetting**

In addition to the vanished Others, the experience of resettlement is also being relegated to the sphere of forgetting, although for completely different reasons. This memory has a private and back-stage character in both Krzyż and Zhovkva. This is a process that damages local identity, because it is a form of memory that is essentially free of the potential for conflict, and it is thus in a certain sense safe. Under different circumstances – perhaps even in another community nearby? – it could possibly serve as the foundation for a shared local memory, which would be hugely significant for people who have been cut off from their roots. The private nature of this memory, the lack of consolidation in symbolic space, and the reluctance to commemorate resettlement in public have resulted in a blurring of these memories among the younger generations; they have become cut off from their specific historical context. This is especially visible in families of migrants from the pre-war eastern provinces in Krzyż. Many members of the youngest generation remember the Eastern Borderlands as a timeless mythological space, a vague “back then” with no connection to any specific time or place. In their memories, the political context of the loss of those lands – and therefore of their grandparents' old homelands – has become erased; only fragments of everyday life remain, such as the tough labor of the village or anecdotes told by former

neighbors. In all certainty, their children, in turn, will not even remember these details, because the frames of autobiographical experience in which they functioned will have disappeared.

The weakening of memories of resettlement in subsequent generations is, in my interpretation, related to a broader change in the nature of how memory is passed on within the family. On the one hand, the existing literature points to a huge rise in interest in family history after the fall of communism, a democratization of such interests, and a higher value being attached to family histories.<sup>360</sup> On the other hand, the increasing distance between generations – in particular, the substantial weakening of the authority that was once granted automatically to older people – and the decline in multi-generational families living under one roof have resulted in family pasts becoming less tangible and attractive for the youngest generation. The generation that grew up after the fall of communism in Poland and Ukraine is living faster and less calmly than the previous generation; its members are less likely to be brought up by their grandparents, and less frequently consider them to be personal authority figures to whom one would want to listen. This unwillingness to listen to elders also has deeper roots: children and grandchildren often hide away from family memory because of the sheer power of dramatic historical events – they do not wish to be touched by the trauma that affected their elders. One respondent in Krzyż was discussing how her family was drawn into the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, when she stated: “You know, the things we went through, I don’t even want to... My children sometimes didn’t even want to hear it when I tried to tell them about it. ‘Mummy, don’t say such awful things, we’re scared’” (K35Af). On the other side of unhealed traumas are the silent parents and grandparents, who consciously cut themselves off from their wartime suffering, with scars too deep to speak about them openly.<sup>361</sup> The blocking of memories in this instance is of a completely different nature to the forgetting of the Holocaust or of the deportation of the Germans, but it is much more complete.

A final reason why families were silent about resettlement is distrust and fear: in a totalitarian state, people were afraid to talk. In Krzyż this was not a factor,

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360 Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, *Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2008).

361 Henry Greenspan has written about the complexity of family memory in relationship to traumatic experiences (his study concerns Holocaust survivors): people both want to share their traumatic pasts with their children and to protect them against these difficult memories, see: Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History* (Westport, CT–London: Praeger, 1998), p. 56.

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but in Zhovkva it often had a significant effect on family memory and broader family relations. Parents did not tell their children about resettlement because they were afraid of possible negative consequences; the children, in turn, did not believe their parents once they had eventually plucked up the courage to speak; on both sides, communication was paralyzed by fear. In such circumstances it was difficult to pass down family memories in a free and coherent manner; the consequences are still visible to this day, to a much greater extent in Zhovkva than in Krzyż.

Of course, it is not only memory of resettlement that is weakening in subsequent generations. This is also true of memories of Others and – perhaps to a lesser extent – of heroes and anti-heroes. The younger the respondents, the less detail they remember in, and the less emotion they adorn their accounts with – thus, these memories are retreating further back-stage. With some exceptions, young people in Krzyż and Zhovkva remember the vanished Others with little vividness, depriving them of subjectivity; those Others are becoming more formulaic – i.e. little more than figures from history textbooks – as well as more distant. A similar process is underway in relation to the main anti-heroes in Krzyż, the Soviets; the younger the respondents, the more they find it difficult to harbor negative feelings against the former occupiers. The situation in Zhovkva is somewhat different because of the political potential inherent in the symbol conflict over the heroic canon; yet here as well, the younger generations' memories of heroes (and traitors) are weakening. However, it appears that the manner in which non-memory is advancing differs between the various subjects. Resettlement is forgotten in private, as a result of the faulty operation of family memory and its substitution by other, external forms of memory. Memories of Others and collective heroes, on the other hand, are on the wane for a range of reasons related to group identity, rather than individual concerns. Nonetheless, an overall pattern does hold for all of these processes of forgetting: the less experience people have of trauma, the fewer (painful) memories they have.

## Memories of the Past and Collective Identity

What, then, is the relationship between the historical particularity of both towns and the local identities of their residents? How does the past affect the ways in which residents collectively define their ties to the locality, and how does it affect the town's image as it is presented to outsiders? Are history and social memory in Zhovkva and Krzyż constituent ingredients of a local identity, or do they hinder its construction? Or perhaps they play no role at all? Generally speaking, the building of identity – both individual and collective – is seemingly impossible

without some invocation of tradition and a sense of continuity, because identity is precisely the consciousness of being contiguous with a previous self. This also applies to Krzyż and Zhovkva, although the status of history in the construction of a local identity is not immediately obvious.

In Krzyż, the two most important components of local identity are a regional allegiance to Wielkopolska and the railroad. The residents of Krzyż identify with Wielkopolska: the center in relation to which they situate themselves on the periphery is Poznań, the regional capital of Wielkopolska and a historically Polish city, and not Piła or Szczecin, towns that used to be German. Local folklore is replete with jokes and sayings about Poznań and Poznanians, and local culinary customs bear the hallmarks of the city's influence. Most young people move to Poznań to begin their university studies, and many who return to live in their native town after graduation commute to Poznań for work. Thus, on the one hand this allegiance is a pragmatic and practical regionalism that stems from ease of transportation and a need to be connected to a large city. On the other hand, Krzyż's link with Wielkopolska is to a great extent imagined, in the sense coined by Benedict Anderson, a classic in the nationalities studies,<sup>362</sup> and despite appearances is intimately related to identity. Krzyż was in a way symbolically absorbed by the regional identity of Wielkopolska after the war; or rather, the town's identity seamlessly merged with the identity of Wielkopolska. The rich, abundant heritage of Wielkopolska was and continues to be much more attractive than the vague identity of the "Recovered Territories," which is associated with poverty, a landscape dotted with former collective farms, and uncertainty of people's fates. One respondent whose family was originally from Wielkopolska captured this idea poignantly: "The pull was always towards Wielkopolska, no doubt about that, we never identified as... I even remember that some people used to call Piła 'Karguland',<sup>363</sup> because it was almost exclusively resettlers who lived there" (K40Cm). The pre-war location of Krzyż on the German-Polish border made it easier for post-war residents to claim a Poznanian identity; since it was on the border, it was "almost" Polish, so it was not too big a step to treat it as if it had really been a Polish town. Krzyż's identification with Poznań was also facilitated by the presence of people from Wielkopolska, and especially Poznań,

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362 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

363 Kargul is the name of one of the characters in the aforementioned film *All Friends Here*, a migrant from the pre-war East. In slang, "Kargul" is a synonym for a backward eastern resettler.

among its new post-war residents; although they were not especially numerous, they tended to fill important roles within the community.

Interestingly, it appears there is no temptation to historicize the links between Krzyż and Wielkopolska; besides some activities that have been superficially internalized by the community, such as the singing of nineteenth-century patriotic anthems with an anti-Prussian bent during ceremonies, the town's self-identification with Wielkopolska primarily concerns the present day. Symptomatically, the most prominent articulation of the town's connection to Wielkopolska in recent years was not a monument or plaque, but a successful campaign to have Krzyż assigned to Wielkopolska Voivodeship, rather than Lubuskie Voivodeship, during the administrative boundary reforms of 1999.

The railroad, on the other hand, is a symbol that undoubtedly provides a sense of continuity. On the one hand, the town's identity as a rail junction has a practical dimension, determining its structures of work and family traditions (this influence is declining as a result of infrastructural dimensions, but it remains important nonetheless). In the words of one respondent: "Krzyż is like a family of rail workers. In Silesia, great grandfathers and grandfathers were all miners, and it's similar in Krzyż. In Krzyż granddads were railwaymen, and their sons and grandsons will be too... It's all about the railroad" (K16Am). On the other hand, the appeal to the railroad as a constitutive element of local identity since time immemorial naturally leads one to accept the town's German history. The Germans who founded the town and built the station become a positive force of development, expiated somewhat from their wartime crimes; they became "ours." At the same time, for the section of residents who would find it difficult to build their town's identity on its past Germanness, the railway can act as a safe, neutral and euphemistic substitute for this German heritage. A belief that Germanness is a partial or additional constituent of Krzyż's identity (but never the main one) was especially visible in interviews with the youngest generation. Many of them stated enthusiastically that they were from Kreuz, that they collected old German postcards, and that they were engaged in the rediscovery of the town's German past. This "thin" association with Germanness, devoid of any wartime trauma or guilt, is thus imperceptibly becoming part of the spectrum of local identity.

Zhovkva's identity also contains appeals to history, in a much more direct way than that of Krzyż. These appeals go in three directions. First, local identity is very visibly based on pre-modern times and the traditions of the age of the town's founders. The residents of Zhovkva are proud of the town's 300-year history, the architectural heritage and the historical figures associated with those traditions. The Ukrainians hold pride of place, but the earlier period of history

is treated with a great tolerance for representatives of other nationalities, in part through a light Ukrainianization – Żółkiewski and Sobieski are “forgiven” their Polishness because of their connections to Zhovkva.<sup>364</sup> A second element that anchors Zhovkva’s identity in the past is the myth of multiculturalism, a “golden age” in its history, which presents the town as a place where various religious and ethnic groups lived in harmony. Many respondents held an idealistic image of Zhovkva and spoke of its pre-war past in these terms, even when they had personally experienced interethnic conflicts. The third direction is the activity of UPA and the post-war anti-communist resistance, understood as part of a tradition of Ukrainian martyrdom and anti-Soviet sentiment.

Unlike in Krzyż, the local identity of Zhovkva is based predominantly on the past, rather than the present. The neglected and run-down town is a typical post-Soviet provincial landscape, so it is hardly surprising that people prefer to appeal to the bright past rather than exhibit the undistinguished present. Likewise, links with Lviv – to draw an analogy with the relationship between Krzyż and Poznań – are a source of frustration because of Zhovkva’s dependent position, rather than a wellspring of security and pride. Thus, Zhovkva’s local identity may even be overloaded with references to the past, especially considering that much of that memory is selective.

In both Krzyż and Zhovkva, the contemporary construction of identity is burdened with a similar bundle of negative inheritances: a post-war rupture in cultural continuity, indoctrination and the ideological dictates of the communist era, and the opening up of new possibilities after the fall of state socialism. In both cases, the reconstruction of the town’s identity was a huge challenge – both immediately after the war and following the fall of communism. Both the weight of the post-war abyss and the fear of the unknown after 1989/1991 made it necessary to seek new ways of laying roots. The identities of both towns therefore remain the expressions of a natural need for belonging, realized in different ways. The building of Krzyż’s local identity is based on having access to the regional identity of Wielkopolska and through the accenting of the town’s links to the railway, as well as also, after 1989, through a tentative appeal to the town’s German heritage. In Zhovkva, continuity is established through a sense

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364 This trend is characteristic of western Ukraine more generally. On the “Ukrainianization” or “multiculturalization” of the Polish past in Lviv, see: Eleonora Narvselius, “Polishness as Site of Memory and Arena for Construction of a Multicultural Heritage in Lviv,” in: *Whose Memory? Which Future? Remembering Ethnic Cleansing and Lost Cultural Diversity in Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe*, ed. Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), pp. 73–109.

of being connected to Ukrainians who lived there in the past; the majority of today's residents identify with their "own" ethnic group while largely forgetting other ethnic groups who lived there previously.

Thus, what defines memory and local identity in Krzyż and Zhovkva is a state of suspension between two poles: on the one hand, a clear need to belong and inscribe oneself into a greater whole, and on the other hand, shallowness of these searches and superficiality of the imagined connections. This is why resettlement could not become a constitutive element of the two towns' new identities – an appeal to a past not shared would have been an unnecessary one, with no potential to build commonality. This balancing act is accompanied by a forgetting of the parts of the past that are inconvenient for the imagined bonds of community. I would even suggest that in Zhovkva, a forgetting of unhealed traumas is dominant, whereas in Krzyż the non-memory is less traumatized and has more in common with natural dampening of emotions linked to specific experiences. As a consequence, Zhovkva is mired in feverous self-justification through memory, while in Krzyż there is calmness and focus on the present, accompanied by openness to the town's historical heritage. I would surmise that it is easier to live with such memories in Krzyż than in Zhovkva.