



About “Jewish Things” Jewish Property in Eastern Galicia During World War II¹

Anna Wylegata



Introduction

The Holocaust in Europe is analogous to the physical disappearance of six million Jews — but it was more. It created a painful vacuum on the level of economic, social, and cultural relations, as well as the necessity of managing millions of items that had constituted the victims’ personal belongings before the war. Zuzanna Ginczanka, a Polish poet of Jewish origin who was betrayed during the war by a person who wanted to acquire her small estate, wrote:

Non omnis moriar — my proud estate,
of table linen fields and wardrobes staunch
like fortresses, with precious bedclothes, sheets,
bright dresses — all remain behind me now.
And as I did not leave here any heir
You, Chomin’s wife, the snitch’s daring wife,
Volksdeutcher’s mother, swift informant, please
Allow your hand to dig up Jewish things.
May they serve you and yours, and not some strangers.
“My dear ones” — it’s no song, nor empty name.
I do remember you, and when the Schupo came,

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You did remember me. Reminded them of me.
 So let my friends all sit with goblets raised
 To toast my memory and their own wealth,
 their drapes and kilims, candlesticks and bowls.
 And may they drink all night, till break of dawn,
 And then begin to search for jewels and gold
 In mattresses and sofas, quilts and rugs.
 Oh, and what quick work they'll make of it
 Thick clumps of horsehair, sea grass stuffing, clouds
 of cushions torn and puffs of eiderdown
 Will coat their hands and turn their arms to wings
 My blood will bind these fibers with fresh down,
 And thus transform these winged ones to angels.²

These "Jewish things" — beds, linens, and cushions — are the subject of this text.

Historical Context and Sources

An analysis of the problem of Jewish property in Eastern Galicia requires a closer look at the historical context. The Holocaust in the Galicia District, which was joined with the Generalgouvernement in 1941, and consisted of the pre-war Polish voivodeships (with minor alterations) of Lwów (Lviv), Tarnopol (Ternopil), and Stanisławów (Ivano-Frankivsk), was conducted differently than in territories occupied by the Germans in 1939.³

There were no death camps for Jews from the Generalgouvernement in areas that are now part of Ukraine. The fate of the Jews from those lands is aptly described by the title of a book by Patrick Desbois,

2 Zuzanna Ginczanka, *Non omnis moriar*, translated by Aniela Pramik and Geoffrey Cebula, <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/arttykul/2151-to-i-owo-portret-ze-szmal-cownikiem-w-tle.html>.

3 In this article we use the name Lwów when referring to the city in prewar or war-time, and Lviv when referring to it in contemporary times. Titles of sources have not been changed [ed.]; See Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997). A complex approach to the issue of the Holocaust in Ukraine can be found in the collaborative work of Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower, eds., *The Shoah in Ukraine. History, Testimony and Memorialization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

a French Catholic priest who has travelled around Eastern Europe for many years searching for mass Jewish graves; it is called *The Holocaust by Bullets*.⁴ Some of the Eastern Galician Jews died of hunger or were murdered by Germans directly in ghettos; others perished in numerous labor camps; and many of them were deported to the extermination camp in Belżec. However, a considerable number of Eastern Galician Jews were killed in the course of mass executions that took place in full sight, and often with the cooperation of the local population. The acquisition of Jewish property was a powerful incentive for them, and later a means of gratification for the participation in the murder of their Jewish neighbors.

The handling of Jewish belongings was also different.⁵ First, in contrast to the territories occupied by the Germans in 1939, all Eastern Galician businesses, work places, land, etc. — both Jewish and Christian — had already been nationalized by the Soviets. In practice, this meant that at the time the Germans entered Eastern Galicia, a "Jewish" bakery was at best only managed by a Jew and had not belonged to a Jew for nearly two years. The same was true for Jewish hospitals, orphanages, and schools. Under German occupation a slow process of re-privatization began (excluding any large estates, which remained in German hands), but in many cases it remained unfinished until 1944. Of course, owners who were considered Jewish by the Germans were excluded from this process. Estates that had belonged to Jews were taken over by Germans and subsequently redistributed among the local "Aryan" population.

On the one hand, this meant that the Soviets had already done part of the technical "work" involved in expropriating the Jews, thereby inadvertently aiding the Germans; on the other hand, the result was that very few locals in Eastern Galicia denounced Jews in order to take over their workshops, which was a more widespread practice in the rest of the Generalgouvernement. The Soviet regime also influenced Polish-Jewish relations as a whole, as it fostered antisemitic attitudes among

4 Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

5 For specifics about the theft of Jewish property in areas that were incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939–1941, see Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews: The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 191–213.

Poles. Thus, this impacted, too, on the issue of expropriation. As Evgenii Rozenblat has justly noted, this hostility probably originated from the fact that the Soviet version of "equality" considerably worsened the social and economic standing of Poles (in comparison to the inter-war period) while slightly improving the situation of ethnic Jews.⁶

Second, Eastern Galician Jews were generally far less wealthy than Jews from Western Europe, and thus their dispossession was not as significant to the economy of the Third Reich. Simply put, excluding the rich bourgeoisie from the larger cities, the stolen items were comprised more of furs and quilts rather than bank accounts or precious objects.

Third, probably due to the short period of German rule in the East, the expropriation was more haphazard than systemic, with significant regional differences within the district. In comparison to Poland and Western Europe, there were more beneficiaries among the Germans. Confiscated Jewish properties in Eastern Galicia were managed by the Distrikabteilung Treuhand, established in August 1941 in Lwów. Grundstücks Treuhand was responsible for the estates.⁷ However, the dispossession of Jewish estates was carried out by the Wehrmacht, the SS, the police, and, in smaller localities, first and foremost by the local civilian administration, which had a great deal of political power.⁸

Fourth, the entire process took place at a quicker pace than in the Generalgouvernement. Individual steps proceeded faster, often emulating models that had already been tested in the Generalgouvernement and Warthegau in 1939–1941.

In this article I would like to focus on the example of pre-war Eastern Malopolska (Lesser Poland; or Eastern Galicia), which is now Ukrainian Galicia, in order to illustrate what happened to Jewish property during the war in that area. Although the issue of the economic dimension of the Holocaust has recently attracted the attention of researchers, Eastern Galicia seems to be a region that has not been sufficiently explored.⁹ I will concentrate on private belongings, including

6 Evgenii S. Rozenblat, "Contact Zones' in Interethnic Relations — The Case of Western Belarus, 1939–1941," in Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth A. Cole, and Kai Struve, eds., *Shared History, Divided Memory: Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939–1941* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007), pp. 201–221.

7 Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 124. I would like to thank Dieter Pohl for his detailed explanation of this issue.

8 I would like to thank Martin Dean for his remarks on this issue.

9 The fullest account on the dispossession of Jewish property in all of occupied Eu-

real estate, articles in homes, and personal items, in small towns, former *shtetls*, and villages.¹⁰

My sources include personal documents of Jews and Christians (Poles and Ukrainians). The source material can be divided into three types of documents. The largest group consists of written accounts, journals, and diaries, both those created during and after the war, as well as memoirs written later, some of which were published in book form. For the purposes of this article, I conducted research into collections of Jewish testimonies archived in Yad Vashem, the Ghetto Fighters' House, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. The Polish accounts come from the collection of the KARTA Center Foundation, which has been documenting the fates of Polish citizens in the former Eastern Borderlands (the Eastern Archive collection) since the 1980s, as well as the National Library in Warsaw, the Jagiellonian Library, and the Ossolineum Library. The search for Ukrainian accounts included the Department of Manuscripts of the Stefanyk Library in Lviv and numerous publications of the Ukrainian diaspora (mostly available online in electronic form at www.diasporiana.org.ua).

The second category of sources includes collections of oral history interviews gathered over the past twenty-five years. The most important ones are the Visual History Archive created by Steven Spielberg and the Yahad-in Unum.¹¹ Other collections included the KARTA Center Archive of Oral History (Warsaw, Poland) and the Archive of the Institute of Historical Research (Lviv, Ukraine), among others.

rope can be found in Dean, *Robbing the Jews*; and Martin Dean, et al., eds., *Robbery and Restitution: The Conflict over Jewish Property in Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007). For more about the situation in the Generalgouvernement, see Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą 2014).

10 For a definition of the *shtetl*, see Yehuda Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 3.

11 The Spielberg Archive is a collection of over 52,000 video interviews with Holocaust survivors recorded in the 1990s; the Yahad-in Unum includes several hundred video interviews with East Europeans, primarily Ukrainians and Belorussians, recorded by the team of Patrick Desbois, who has been searching for unmarked mass graves of Holocaust victims for over ten years. While the Spielberg Archive contains names of those who gave the testimonies, the interviews collected by Patrick Desbois were purposely recorded anonymously, and so the names are not mentioned in this article either.

The third source is approximately 100 interviews recorded in Eastern Galicia by the author and her colleagues between 2007 and 2015 for various research projects.

The choice of personal documents as a primary source is deliberate. I wanted not only to reconstruct the fate of Jewish property, but also to show the subjective experience of the events by the protagonists, which is possible first and foremost by means of personal accounts. Furthermore, I believe that personal testimonies as historical sources are "no more flawed" than state documents. In research on the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia, they are the only source that allows for a reconstruction of the facts and an in-depth analysis of the research areas that are inaccessible when using only archival sources.¹²

Of course, this choice has its consequences. Personal documents can be more subjective than official ones, and testimonies written many years after the events described require particular scrutiny. This is also true for interviews recorded today, in which an additional influencing factor is the interaction between the witness and the interviewer. Nevertheless, after reading hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of testimonies for the purpose of this article, I can say that it does not appear that accounts created during or immediately after the war contain substantial factual differences in comparison to those written many years later. There may be differences in style and emotions, or in the ratio of general information and judgments to direct descriptions of one's experiences.¹³ In my view, a much larger problem is the small number of written Ukrainian testimonies on the subject. Existing Ukrainian accounts come mainly from people in large cities, which is not the focus of this paper, and those that concern smaller communities are centered around the fate of the Ukrainian national group.¹⁴ I will attempt,

12 For more on this subject, see Omer Bartov, "Wartime Lies and Other Testimonies: Jewish-Christian Relations in Buczac, 1939–1944," *East European Politics and Societies*, 25.3 (2011), pp. 486–511.

13 My observations are confirmed by Christopher Browning in his analysis of the testimonies from Starachowice; see Christopher R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 47. Another example is the accounts of Baruch Milch: the one recorded during and immediately after the war is almost identical to the version written years later in Israel.

14 An interesting analysis of this problem was presented with the example of accounts gathered in 1947, by the Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural and Education Centre in Winnipeg by John-Paul Himka; see John-Paul Himka, "Ukrainian Memories of

therefore, to compensate for the small proportion of Ukrainian memoirs in the source material by a wider use of Ukrainian interviews.

"When the Beast Awakens"¹⁵

On the Brutality and Violence of the Beginning

In many communities the German occupation of Eastern Galicia began with pogroms.¹⁶ The initiators were Germans or Ukrainian nationalists, but the perpetrators were always members of the local population. Ukrainians are mentioned the most often in Jewish and Polish sources ("We realized that most of them who were going, not so much Poles, I would say they were Ukrainians, [they] came from all over the vicinities, came to our town, started to beat and to break the doors, and they really came to steal").¹⁷ However, it is frequently emphasized that the people who participated in the atrocities came from outside the community; peasants from neighboring villages arrived to rob the Jews after hearing about the pogrom. Czesław Krzyżanowski, who was a teenager at the time of the war, described the pogrom in Brzeżany (Berezhany) in the following way:

The police is made up of Ukrainian youths, and for them the Germans prepare a bloody Jewish Monday. The peasants come

the Holocaust: The Destruction of the Jews as reflected in Memoirs Collected in 1947," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue canadienne des slavistes*, vol. LIV, nos. 3–4 (2012), pp. 427–442.

- 15 "When the beast awakens...Experiences in times of the German occupation, June 1941 to August 1944" is the title of a wartime diary written by Adela Hilzenrat, a Jewish woman from Drohobycz. The memoir is now in the collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG 2011.287.1.
- 16 The largest and most brutal pogroms took place in Lwów, Złoczów, and Tarnopol, but researchers have noted pogrom-like events in several dozen Eastern Galician towns. See John-Paul Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue canadienne des slavistes* 53.2–3 – 4 (2011), pp. 209–243; Marko Carynnyk, "Zolochiv movchyt," *Krytyka*, no. 10 (2005), pp. 14–17; Kai Struve, "Rites of Violence? The Pogroms of Summer 1941," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 24 (2011); Dieter Pohl, "Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Western Ukraine – A Research Agenda," in Barkan, Cole, and Struve, eds., *Shared History, Divided Memory*, pp. 305–314; Witold Mędykowski, *W cieniu gigantów. Pogromy Żydów w 1941 roku w byłej sowieckiej strefie okupacyjnej. Kontekst historyczny, społeczny i kulturowy* (Warsaw: ISPPAN, 2012).
- 17 Testimony of Jack Jadget, Visual History Archive (VHA), interview no. 29276, Bóbrka (Bibrka).

in wagons, or on foot from the neighboring villages. They carry pitchforks, poles and bars, which have been used for ages as weapons by the peasantry. They beat and kill Jews in the streets; they break into houses. They rob. Christian families hang holy pictures on the doors of their houses to save themselves... [The Germans] allow the peasants to carry away some of the stolen property.¹⁸

The peasants who came to rob Jewish estates are also mentioned by Father Józef Anczarski, a Catholic priest who spent the war in a village in the Tarnopol (Ternopil) voivodeship. On July 26, 1941, he wrote in his diary that Jewish property was "ransacked" on the previous night, after a few local Jews were taken away to some unknown location by the Ukrainian militia.¹⁹ Mikhail Mostovyi, a Jew from Niemirów (Nemyriv), recalls that his former neighbors, Ukrainians, first set out to plunder the empty houses of Jews who evacuated with the Soviets, but soon moved on also to pillage the homes of the people who stayed.²⁰

For the majority of witnesses, the aspect that they most remembered was the violence that accompanied the pogroms. In the first days of the occupation, Jews were not only robbed but also beaten, humiliated, and killed. The Jews who survived remember hiding in the homes of their Christian friends or in their own cellars; one such situation is recalled by Yevheniia Bohner from Złoczów (Zolochiv).²¹ Nevertheless, it is important to note that no pogrom was organized for the sake of violence itself; these events were always accompanied by robbery. Sometimes the locals plundered in a "civilized" manner, without using force — perhaps lacking the courage to do so. An inhabitant of Zborów (Zboriv), Sabina Schweid, recalls a Ukrainian teenager who broke into the apartment in which she and her mother were hiding. He froze, disoriented, with a bag in his hand, not knowing what to do. The women

18 Czesław Krzyżanowski, *Zapiskane na mojej skórze. Krótki życiorys jakich jest tysiące w naszym kraju*, Archiwum Wschodnie (AW) II/1792/J, p. 13.

19 Ks. Józef Anczarski, *Kronikarskie zapisy z lat cierpień, grozy, zbrodni i ludobójstwa narodu, 1939–1946*, AW II/1224/2K, p. 162.

20 Mikhail Mostovyi, "Rasstrelianaia iunast," in Boris Zabarko, *Zhizn' i smert' v epokhu Kholokosta* (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2007), p. 346.

21 Yevheniia Bohner, "Moho bat'ka rozstrilaly u grudni 1942 roku..." in Boris Zabarko, *Zhizn' i smert' v epokhu Kholokosta* (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2007), pp. 166–167.

"gave" him some valuable items, thus avoiding more brutal treatment.²² However, their case was an exception to a wider rule.

Robberies during the first days of the occupation were almost always coupled with violence; its senselessness is emphasized by many authors of memoirs. Based on the sources it is difficult to ascertain whether the pogroms were caused by a desire to plunder or by simple hatred; perhaps in various places these two motives occurred in tandem. What is certain, however, is that there were no pogroms without plundering, and when they happened, the rampaging crowds often destroyed more than they robbed. The pogroms of 1941 were committed by crazed mobs who often favored destruction over plunder. This is perfectly illustrated by the description of events that took place in Przemyślany (Peremyshliany):

A throng of peasants gathered around the fire [of the synagogue] with their sacks, ready to plunder: a mass of devoted Christians, their children and the Germans who recorded the overwhelming sight on film. The wind carried sparks from one building to another, the fire crackled and soared into the sky mercilessly, and the bones of the first victims crunched. An enthused mob of shrieking peasants, just like locusts, pounced on everything that belonged to the Jews. They plundered, stole, and in some incredible ecstasy they destroyed within ten minutes what has sometimes survived the generations.²³

From the very beginning, the robbery of Jewish property was also conducted by the Germans. The first German thieves were soldiers of the Wehrmacht; they rampaged through Eastern Galician villages and towns, emboldened by their easy victory. These first soldierly acts of theft usually occurred without any physical violence, as threats and screams proved effective enough against the petrified and disoriented Jews. Dorothy Finger from Chodorów (Khodoriv) remembered her first contact with a German soldier: the man entered her family home and threatened to kill her if he was not given their gold.²⁴ Cecilia

22 Sabina Schweid, *Consider Me Lucky: Childhood and Youth During the Holocaust in Zborow* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011), pp. 112–113.

23 Wendy Lower, *The Diary of Samuel Golfard and the Holocaust in Galicia* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2011), p. 42.

24 Testimony of Dorothy Finger, VHA, interview no. 40055, Chodorów.

Pearlstein from Bóbrka recalls a soldier whom she managed to startle enough to leave her parents' house:

There was a German there....He was in uniform, it was my first sight...He was stuffing silver goblets from our cabinet into the valise, and he said: *du verfluchte judische bestie*, and kicked me with his boot, and left. He must have been embarrassed. But I might have been killed. And I will never forget this *du verfluchte judische bestie*. Never. It rings in my ears, I see the valise, I see him barely stuffing the silver goblet in.²⁵

While the Germans stole primarily jewels and other valuable items from the cities, in villages they simply took whatever was available. They were thorough. Henry Friedman, born in Suchowola (Sukhovolia), near Brody, remembers that his parents' estate was completely plundered.²⁶ The soldiers were often directed to Jewish homes by servile neighbors:

[Into our house] burst several soldiers, followed by a few local Ukrainians. *Ach! Das sind die Juden! Jude* — talking to my father — *wo hast du Gold, Brillanten?* My father remains silent. We open the wardrobes for them. They search, burrow, they tear the house apart. They take all the sugar, rice, cocoa and two bags of flour.²⁷

The Germans regularly returned to several plundered houses, as long as anything worth taking still remained. This was the case in Kulików (Kulykiv): "Every few days there came a couple of Gestapo officers and made their rounds. They broke into peoples' homes, took what they could and of course beat everyone up."²⁸

Robberies similar to those described above also took place during subsequent anti-Jewish operations — those that were aimed at deporting a specific number of Jewish inhabitants (to a labor, concentration, or death camp), and then during liquidations. Everything transpired

25 Testimony of Cecilia Pearlstein, VHA, interview no. 41193, Bóbrka.

26 Henry Friedman, *I'm No Hero: Journeys of a Holocaust Survivor* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 14.

27 Testimony of Fania Laufer, Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (AŻIH), 302/227, Laufer Fania, p. 12.

28 Testimony of Dr. Grosbard, YIVO Archives (YIVO), RG 104, Series III, Folder No. 124, p. 2.

according to a tested scenario from previous operations at a particular location. First the Germans — and in some cases Germans aided by local units of the Ukrainian police²⁹ — threw out the Jews from their homes and took them to the train station (or some other gathering point), or killed them on the spot. Then the local Christian (both the Polish and Ukrainian) population plundered the abandoned buildings. Of course, both the Germans and their Ukrainian helpers had already begun pillaging during the raids. Zelda Machlewich-Hinenberg from Rawa Ruska (Rava Rus'ka) recalls listening in on the thieves' conversations:

I'm under my bed, I see their shoes and one of them says: Somewhere here there are many Jews and they are rich, there's money on the table, take it, here's some fine fabric, hurry up, before the Germans come. They search the closet, then I can hear Germans shouting from downstairs, the Ukrainians say they didn't find anything and leave.³⁰

On the other hand, Vasyľ Yashyn, from the Stanisławów (Ivano-Frankivsk) region, noted in his memoirs that when the Gestapo organized a raid in Delatyn (Deliatyn) on September 1, 1942, a separate group dealt with taking valuables from Jewish homes and storing them in special warehouses.³¹

The majority of testimonies, however, speak about robberies taking place after the raids. In Skole, the local population entered abandoned Jewish houses as soon as the Germans disappeared from sight and took everything they could.³² A large number of accounts also depict the scale of the destruction that accompanied robberies after liquidations; descriptions of what the Jews who returned from hiding

29 For more about Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust, see, for example, Gabriel N. Finder and Alexander V. Prusin, "Collaboration in Eastern Galicia: The Ukrainian Police and the Holocaust," *East European Jewish Affairs*, 34.2 (2004), pp. 95–118; Per Anders Rudling, *The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths* (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2011).

30 Zelda Mechlewich-Hinenberg (Oksana Panasiuk), *Chcę żyć!*, YIVO, RG 104, Series III, Folder No. 200, p. 8.

31 Yashyn, *Pid brunatnym chobotom. Nimetska okupacia Stanyslavivshchyny v Druhii Svitovii Viini, 1941–1944* (Toronto, 1989), p. 196.

32 Aaron Wilf, *The Blood-Soaked Saga of Skole: The Diary of Aaron Wilf*, translated by Raphael Posner (privately published, 1994), p. 37.

found in their homes are almost identical to the scenes of the pogroms from the summer of 1941. Gustav Engel from Trembowla (Terembov-la) noted in his journal:

It is hard to imagine the view we saw upon entering the apartment, and it is even more difficult to describe. The front gate to the awning was wide open, the glass panes were shattered; the second door to our and the neighboring apartment were in a similar state, and most of the windows were broken. Inside, the beds were overturned, linens, underwear, dresses and all manner of items from the wardrobes, chests and suitcases were lying on the floor, mixed with plates, glass, porcelain and foodstuffs, i.e., flour, grains, salt, etc. The crowning of this act of destruction was the spilling of the chicken soup I had cooked the day before, several glasses of sour milk and the breaking of a dozen eggs.³³

German Plunder of Jewish Property: State-organized Apparatus and Individual Greed

After the initial outburst of violence, the subsequent plunder of Jewish property occurred in a more calm, methodical, and effective manner. The German machine designed for dispossessing the Jews accelerated into full gear, while the Christian populace eagerly took advantage of their Jewish neighbors' situation in order to enrich themselves. From an economic perspective, the decidedly greatest impact was caused by German confiscations and "contributions,"³⁴ which began almost as soon as the Nazis entered Eastern Galicia.

At first the Germans demanded primarily money and valuables, often at the threat to the lives of specific, previously selected individuals, who were either prominent members of the community or representatives of the Judenrat. This happened, for example, in Żółkiew (Zhovkva), where the Germans demanded a ransom in gold from the

33 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Maria Gunsberg and Gustav Engel collection, Ass. Number 1997.A.0079, p. 32.

34 The division of German institutional robbery into "contributions" and "confiscations" appears often in Jewish sources. "Contributions" were demands for specific amounts of money, made especially at the beginning of the occupation, and often took the form of blackmail and hostage-taking. They were paid by the entire community. Confiscations took place later and pertained to specific material goods (e.g., furs, jewelry, radio receivers, etc.).

Jews in the first days after entering the town.³⁵ The sum was "half a million rubles, 50 kg of silver and 5 kg of gold. The time of delivery is 48 hours. The hostage is Dr. Wachs, who has been arrested."³⁶ In nearby Kulików the newly appointed commandant levied a contribution on the Jewish community in the sum of 250,000 zloty, threatening to shoot two Jewish teenagers.³⁷ In November 1941, Obertyn was visited by representatives of the regional authorities; they demanded contributions in the form of "gold, silver, foreign currency and furs," and took five Judenrat members as hostages until payment. After receiving the ransom they left, but ordered the indexing of all Jewish property. They continued their visits throughout the autumn, until they had depleted all the resources of the Jewish community.³⁸

The task of collecting the contributions was assigned to the Judenräte, which had been created by the Germans for this and other purposes. The testimonies sometimes feature complaints about Judenrat members who spared their own families at the expense of other Jews,³⁹ but the dominant opinion is that these councils attempted to protect the Jewish population against German aggression. As time went on and the Jews became poorer, meeting German demands required increased effort. This is described very well by Markus Wilbach from Obertyn:

From that time on [August 1941], Germans from the Gródek Police came systematically once or twice every week demanding various contributions from the Judenrat, in the form of fabric for men's clothing, x length of fabric for women's clothing, x kilograms of hard and soft leather, x meters of yard goods for underwear, x bedsheets — linen, etc. At another time the Germans demanded veal, chickens and geese, etc. The Judenrat collected money for this purpose from wealthier Jews and bought the items from local Jews, paying them in cash, for as long as these things "yard goods, leather" were available from Jews. It must be

35 Testimony of Clara Kramer, VHA, interview no. 37123, Żółkiew.

36 Józef Rozenberg, *Moje przeżycia i wspomnienia w latach 1939–1945*, Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), O.33/666, p. 4.

37 Testimony of Dr. Grossbard, p. 1.

38 Testimony of Markus Wilbach, ŻIH 302/105, p. 29.

39 See, for example, the very critical opinion about the activities of the Judenrat in Thuste in the journal of Baruch Milch; Baruch Milch, *Testament* (Warsaw: Ośrodek KARTA, 2001).

mentioned that Jews had closed their stores already during the time of the Bolsheviks, and had mostly sold all their merchandise, with only very small amounts left hidden in various places. Thus, their supplies quickly ran out, especially since the local authorities followed the example set by the Germans, i.e., the Ukrainian municipal authorities and the local Ukrainian police every few days had their own caprices and they also had to be paid forced tributes in the form of clothes, furs, and the like.⁴⁰

As can be seen, with time the Germans become satisfied with less costly demands: when the money and valuables ran out, they found uses for everyday items and food. Antoni Dereniowski from Narajów (Naraiiv), from the Brzeżany region, recalls that almost every day, "Nazis from Brzeżany" came to the local Judenrat and demanded "money, chocolate and vodka," which were always delivered to them on time by the Jewish police.⁴¹

Sometimes the Germans engaged in group robberies and extortion without involving the Judenrats: on September 1, 1941, in Stryj (Stryi), groups of randomly selected Jews were taken from their homes and brought to the police courtyard, where the Germans subjected them to physical abuse. "Whoever had some gold dollars, gold, diamonds or Leica cameras was able to escape that hell. The others were taken to Holobutiv and shot."⁴²

It appears that, in time, the boundaries between state-sanctioned contributions, confiscations practiced by the German authorities, and simple individual robberies motivated by greed became blurred. In his journal Baruch Milch described the situation in Tłuste (Tovste) in the following way:

Every now and again a few men from the Gestapo came to our town in an infamous black car, as if they came to bring death itself, and used various excuses to arrest a Jew, search a house, sometimes they beat someone up or killed them. And at the end of it all, they made huge requests at the Judenrat for various items, such as leather for shoes, shirts, bath soaps and perfume for their whores — claiming that it would be a tragedy for the town if they

40 Testimony of Markus Wilbach, pp. 27–28.

41 Testimony of Antoni Dereniowski, AW II/1267/2K, p. 6.

42 Anonymous testimony, YIVO A, RG 104, Series III, Folder No. 35, p. 1.

didn't get it in a few days. These visits happened every few days, others came with demands and to impose order: the Gestapo, the Schutzpolizei, the Sonderdienst, Kripo-men, even the *Land-skommissar* and *Kreishauptmann* themselves. Every German who came to our town for whatever purpose did whatever he liked, and whatever he wanted the Jews had to give him.⁴³

The essence of German robbery in Eastern Galicia and probably to a lesser extent in all of Eastern Europe is accurately portrayed by an entry in an anonymous journal from Podhajce (Pidhaitsi):

In this Nazi system the Jews slowly became providers of everything they owned, and sometimes went hungry only to appease and diminish the anger of some German. It was a standard system of extortion, with a trace of German mentality and culture. Each German, regardless of his standing in the military or civilian hierarchy, went to the Judenrat as soon as he came to town, and the council was supposed to give him everything he needed. The Judenrat sent its militia out to town to collect whatever the Jews had just to get rid of the German. Sometimes, when it was impossible to find what the Germans wanted, everyone was afraid because they would visit Jewish homes themselves and take whatever they fancied.... The Jews understood that everything that they had and everything that surrounded them no longer belonged to them, but to the Germans. They could come at any moment and take everything. People understood that years of Jewish labor were confiscated in one stroke, that they were no longer the masters of their homes and their appliances.⁴⁴

Germans regularly demanded the confiscation of specific types of property. For example, at the very beginning in Podhajce, these included radios, bicycles, and livestock in the countryside; then it was furniture to equip police outposts;⁴⁵ in the winter of 1941, furs and fur coats were confiscated all throughout Eastern Galicia,⁴⁶ most likely because

43 Milch, *Testament*, p. 116.

44 Dziennik nieznanego przekazany przez dr Redlicha, YVA O.33/1373, pp. 39–40, 54.

45 Ibid., p. 52. Almost an identical model of confiscation transpired in Żółkiew; see testimony of Clara Kramer.

46 Rozenberg, *Moje przeżycia i wspomnienia*, p. 5.

of the need to supply German soldiers on the Soviet front with winter clothing. Alicia Appleman-Jurman from Buczacz (Buchach), who worked in a brigade of Jewish workers used by Germans for cleaning, one day observed that her father's nightstand was now in a police station.⁴⁷

Some of the items were confiscated by Ukrainians. For example, in Radycz (Radych), near Turka, all cattle still belonging to Jewish farmers was handed over to Ukrainian peasants, with "German blessings."⁴⁸ Large land estates, along with a large number of smaller peasants' farms that had been nationalized during the Soviet occupation and had been transformed into kolkhozes, now came under the possession of the German Treuhandverwaltung, as did Jewish and non-Jewish businesses that had also been nationalized by the Soviets.⁴⁹ Some Jewish estates — for example, public buildings belonging to Jewish municipalities, or privately owned stores and workshops that had become part of Soviet cooperatives and artels after 1939 — were handed over to Poles and Ukrainians by the Germans. Vasyl' Yashyn complains in his postwar memoirs that, although the ghetto in Delatyn was liquidated in February 1943, the local Ukrainian community was "long unable to use these areas, for example by utilizing the Jewish hospital, which was given to the municipality union [*soyuz hromad*]. A great number of bodies were buried improperly in the ghetto, which caused a contamination in the water."⁵⁰ After arriving in Sokal in 1943, Zelda Mechlewich-Hinenberg observed that, "Jewish shops are in the hands of Catholics."⁵¹

Despite the fact that the German economy relied primarily on state-organized robbery even in Eastern Galicia, the testimonies focus on acts of theft committed by individual Germans. The Germans, including representatives of the police mechanism of repression, as well as state officials who came from the Reich, behaved like petty warlords in Eastern Galicia, feeling that they were free to do anything. They took the best apartments, evicting their Jewish owners without

47 Alicia Appleman-Jurman, *Alicia. My Story* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 21.

48 Allen Brayer, *Hiding in Death's Shadow: How I Survived The Holocaust* (New York, Lincoln, Shanghai: iUniverse, Inc., 2005), p. 30.

49 Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir* (New York: Shengold, 2006), p.180.

50 Yashyn, *Pid brunatnym chobotom*, p. 197.

51 Mechlewich-Hinenberg, *Chcę żyć!*, p. 14.

remorse. Ivan Makukh recalls that the economic reporter in Tłumacz (Tlumach), Mischl, lived very comfortably in the large house of Inslicht the Jew.⁵² Gustav Engel from Trembowla notes in his journal:

In the second half of September [1941], a new German dignitary by the name of Gaukler came to our town, and in short order he managed to rob most of the Jewish citizens, being extraordinarily cruel about it. One of his first victims was a Judenrat member, Dr. Stern. He came to Stern's apartment and announced that he was taking the apartment for himself, and that Stern and his family were to leave it immediately....He prowled like this for several weeks, accumulating in his apartment various goods stolen from the Jews.⁵³

The Germans also took attractive and luxurious everyday items as their booty, including furniture. Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum bitterly recalls:

A young woman who had worked for us and now served as a maid to a German named Kramer recognized our furniture in his apartment. I occasionally encountered Kramer, who was considered to be one of the "decent" Germans and who always addressed me as "Herr Tennenbaum". I sometimes wondered what his reaction would be if I were to ask him: *How do you like my beds? Are the mattresses comfortable? Is the reception of my radio satisfactory? What does the other side say?*⁵⁴

The Germans continued to rob until the very end of the Jewish community's existence, and even after its complete destruction (which will be discussed below). When they fled back to the Reich in 1944, they also attempted to take their loot with them. Cyla Faust, who was hiding in Żółkiew under the name Stefania Lachowska, was forced to help her employer in evacuating his spoils:

He was packing and collecting the things to take them to his "*Heimat*". I looked at this with dismay, because these items were Jewish and even a satin pillow on which a Torah used to lay was among his belongings. Think about the amount of work, of Jewish labor,

52 Ivan Makukh, *Na narodnii sluzhbi* (Detroit: Ukrainka Vilna Hromada Ameryky, 1958), p. 508.

53 Gunsberg and Engel collection, p. 10.

54 Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir*, p. 192.

the tragedy and bestial robbery that were associated with these things. I suffered by watching this, but I was helpless, as in many other moments. I did passively what I was told — I packed.⁵⁵

In large part, however, German plundering was methodical and regular. The Holocaust was rooted in racist beliefs, but its secondary objective was support of the German war economy. The Third Reich's officials' perception of the Holocaust as an economic undertaking is apparent in the so-called "Katzmann report," a report about "Operation Reinhardt" in Eastern Galicia written by Fritz Katzmann, the commander of the SS and German police in the district. Katzmann claims that, apart from "furniture, fabrics and other goods," 25,580 kg. of copper coins, 53,190 kg. of nickel coins, 97,581 kg. of gold coins, 82,600 kg. of silver necklaces, 6,640 kg. of gold necklaces, and 432,780 kg. of broken silver were confiscated from the victims of the Holocaust.⁵⁶ The report also mentions 11,730 kg. of gold teeth and fillings.⁵⁷

"Anything that Would Buy Me Life": Jewish Property in the Hands of Christians

The Germans were not the only ones interested in taking economic advantage of the Holocaust. Local Poles and Ukrainians also profited. Of course, Germans and locals robbed in different ways. The Germans had a state apparatus of repression working for them; their technical and legal capabilities were far superior; and they had the dubious honor of being the first to access any Jewish property. Hence, on the one hand, the locals were limited to "scraps," taking only the things they were allowed to take, or items that the Germans did not want for themselves; on the other hand, the neighbors were more efficient at pilaging, because they knew more about the local situation.

Cases of obvious theft committed by former neighbors were common. But it was equally, if not more, common that Jewish property was transferred into the hands of Poles and Ukrainians voluntarily or as a gesture of goodwill. The boundary here was very thin, and it was often crossed inadvertently. Especially at the beginning of the German

55 Testimony of Cyla Fast (Stefania Lachowska), YVA, O.31/634, p. 10.

56 Lower, *The Diary of Samuel Golfard*, p. 105.

57 Martin Winstone, *Generalne Gubernatorstwo. Mroczne serce Europy Hitlera* (Poznań: Rebis, 2015), p. 239.

occupation, many Jews, predicting economic repressions, but not fully aware of the Germans' intent, gave their property to Christian friends and neighbors for safekeeping, in order to avoid having their possessions confiscated. Ephraim Sten from Złoczów, who kept a diary as a teenager, noted that, after his uncle was arrested in one of the first raids, his family gave their apartment to a Polish acquaintance in the hope that in this way they could prevent it from falling into German hands.⁵⁸ Trusted Christians were also given other valuables — clothes, jewels, bedclothes, furniture.⁵⁹ The plan was to reclaim them after the war was over, but many Jews attempted to collect earlier, while still in hiding.

Samuel Tennenbaum recalls that the furs and precious items entrusted to Stefa, a young Ukrainian girl who had worked in his factory in Złoczów before the war, were successively sold by her for cash that the owners could use to buy food as the occupation drew on.⁶⁰ Not everyone was so lucky: Moty Stromer from Kamionka Strumiłowa (Kamianka Buz'ka) wrote in his journal about the fate of the estate handed over to a Christian friend, Anton Shtofelov:

Not one item was ever returned. Not one bottle of liquor ever found its way back — he kept everything. I saw his youngest daughter wearing our clothes. Everyone in Jagonia knows he used our clothing. He let the police, the best-known murderers and bandits — and some famous SS men — get drunk on our liquors.⁶¹

Baruch Milch remembers a Jewish woman he knew that entrusted all her possessions to a friend who was a woodsman. However, while she was still in hiding, she came to him asking for a supply of clothes and food and only received, "twenty spools of thread and one shirt." She

58 Ephraim F. Sten, *1111 Days in My Life Plus Four* (Takoma, MD: Dryad Press, 2006), p. 31.

59 On the subject of Jewish property handed over to Christians for safekeeping, see Barbara Engelking, "Czarna godzina. Rzeczy żydowskie oddane na przechowanie Polakom," in Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą 2014), pp. 387–437.

60 Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir*, p. 196.

61 Moty Stromer, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Person* (New York, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), pp. 56–57.

was also told not to return, because there was nothing else left.⁶² Other owners of items given away for safekeeping were unable to use them, or did not live to see a time when that would be possible. A few days before the liquidation of the ghetto, Gienia Lajner from Żółkiew wrote to her brother asking him to collect all the valuables she had given "to Olga" when the war was over.⁶³ Baruch Milch from Podhajce received a similar letter from his family.⁶⁴ From the other side, in non-Jewish sources, it is possible to find mentions of Jews wanting to give the authors their possessions for safekeeping, with the latter refusing due to the risks involved and the moral reservations about handling the property of others.⁶⁵

Apart from handing property over to trusted persons, it was common to see sales of various items, or, more frequently, the barter of goods in exchange for food.⁶⁶ As a result of the hunger that stalked the cities, and particularly the ghettos, the price of food was very high. Simon Strassler writes about buying a kilogram of bread for one dollar during his stay in Złoczów, a princely sum at that time.⁶⁷ In the winter of 1942, the best fur in the villages around Obertyn was worth only half a meter of wheat;⁶⁸ similar prices are noted by a diarist from Brzeżany.⁶⁹ Highly-prized items from before the war lost their value, while food commanded astronomical prices.

Baruch Milch wrote candidly that the market was shaped by crime and murder — because all Jewish toddlers were killed, baby carriages were cheap, as were pianos and record players, since they came from the houses of the (mainly Jewish) intelligentsia, officers' boots left behind by the murdered Polish officers could be bought for a bargain...⁷⁰

62 Milch, *Testament*, p. 230.

63 Jerzy Czarnecki, *My Life as an "Aryan". From Velyki Mosty through Zhovkva to Stralsund* (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre Publishers, 2007), pp. 97–99.

64 Milch, *Testament*, p. 145.

65 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 766, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0216, Chodorów. It was far more common to see Jews asking to hide someone (usually a child) in exchange for their estate, with the authors (or their parents) refusing.

66 Making a living from selling items taken from the ghetto is described by Barbara Engelking, *Czarna godzina*, pp. 391–392.

67 *Pamiętnik Szymona Strasslera, Ghetto Fighters' Archives (GFA)*, 3707 Złoczów, p. 62.

68 Testimony of Markus Wilbach, p. 30.

69 *Dziennik nieznanego*, p. 69.

70 Milch, *Testament*, p. 237.

Many testimonies, both Jewish and Polish, describe the greed of the peasants who swarmed to claim Jewish furniture and beddings, ruthlessly exploiting the predicament of the Jews starving in ghettos. Father Józef Anczarski made the following entry on October 28, 1942:

The Jews in Buczacz, and in other towns, are selling everything in mass quantities, especially furniture. Such goods sell for next to nothing. In the previous weeks we have been witnesses of a great migration of Jewish furniture to the countryside. The peasant speculates and greedily rushes to acquire Jewish things. Wardrobe after wardrobe goes to Dobropole, other furniture as well. Half the villages must be equipped with Jewish furniture by now.⁷¹

An identical situation is described by his mother, living in Złoczów:

The Jews are selling everything they have because they are supposed to be taken to the ghetto on December 1st [1942]...Our neighbor bought herself a closet, two beds for her daughter and herself, everything according to the newest fashion and pretty. She traded this for 30 kg of white beans, 20 kg of millet, some money. She got these things almost for free...People are fearfully carting furniture bought from Jews during the night, because buying from Jews is forbidden.⁷²

The nature of the peasant-Jewish transactions during the German occupation must be viewed in the broader context of the economy in the Generalgouvernement.⁷³ The countryside — Polish, Ukrainian, and mixed — was in a far better situation in terms of the availability of food than for city dwellers. Yet the Jews had fewer possibilities, in all regards, to save themselves from hunger than did Christians.

It should be noted that Poles and Ukrainians from Eastern Galician towns, unable to survive on the rations distributed by Germans, also went to the countryside to get their food. It is thanks to these barter trades that the inhabitants of cities — Jews, Poles, Ukrainians — had any chance of survival. Due to the tremendous demand for food and

71 Anczarski, *Kronikarskie zapisy*, p. 216.

72 Ibid., pp. 220–221.

73 For more on this subject, see Martin Winstone, *Generalne Gubernatorstwo*, pp. 166–167; Kazimierz Wyka, "Excluded Economy," in Janine R. Wedel, ed., *The Unplanned Society: Poland During and After Communism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 33.

the equally large supply of industrial goods, the value of the latter simply dropped. Thus, it is difficult to call every transaction that did not correspond to pre-war rates dishonest. However, it is also difficult to deny that the situation created the temptation to exploit the people with the weakest standing in the occupational hierarchy — i.e., the Jews. The greed and ruthlessness of peasants is described with bitterness in many accounts:

The peasants bought everything for cheap, taking advantage of the situation of the Jewish community... At a time when the world was burning, when people lost their old views on life and were drawn into a sea of their own blood, it was then that one could observe an interesting picture of economic life in our lands. One part of the population, benefiting from the harsh position of inescapable poverty of the second part, which has shared with them the same lands for hundreds of years, dressed from head to toe, filled their houses with various goods, acquired for next to nothing, without care for the sounds of nearby battles.⁷⁴

A thin line separated unfair trade from extortion and fraud, often underpinned by jarring cynicism. Sabina Schweid from Zborów remembers how her family was trading household items for food with a Ukrainian peasant after the Germans came. The woman was always treated to a cup of tea from a porcelain teapot belonging to the family. One day she said that she wanted to take the teapot in exchange for the food — after all, they would all be killed, and it would be a shame to lose the teapot.⁷⁵

Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum noted a similar situation:

A Mrs. Jasinska, owner of a Polish bakery, knew exactly the stock of my wife's dresses and hats and sent word that she needed the "blue dress with the flower design" or the "red hat" for which she was willing to exchange so many loaves of bread. My wife dealt calmly with these demands, but I was furious. However, the bread was tasty, since the bakery's customers were mainly Germans.⁷⁶

A different type of fraud was committed by Christians who delivered

74 *Dziennik nieznajomego*, pp. 33–34.

75 Schweid, *Consider Me Lucky*, p. 123.

76 Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir*, p. 190.

food to the Jews who remained in hiding. Moty Stromer, who was hiding in Lwów in the summer of 1941, received packages of food from his mother in Kamionka Strumiłowa. The bread delivered by the messenger was regularly substituted by inferior quality loaves, and one day the man said that he had been robbed after having kept the package for himself.⁷⁷

There were also cases when helpless Jews were openly robbed. Mina Deutsch, a physician hiding in Mielnica Podolska (Mel'nytsia Podil's'ka), in the Tarnopol region, recalls a Polish woodsman who sent the German police after her and her companions, because he wanted to take the two pieces of fabric they had.⁷⁸ Dorothy Finger states in her testimony that when her family was fleeing from the ghetto in Chodorów to the ghetto in Rohatyń, there were Ukrainians waiting for them in every village demanding a "ransom."⁷⁹

Nothing Can Be Wasted: On the Second Life of Jewish Suits and Eiderdowns

The Germans' methodical approach to plunder did not allow anything to go to waste. After the "de-Jewing" of every town, special care was taken to exploit fully the victims' estates. Using the word "estate" seems an overstatement in this case, since, at this stage of the Holocaust, most of the things that were left were only personal belongings — clothes, jewelry (if any was still retained), gold teeth and fillings (if they can be called personal items). The looting of these types of items, which in reality were the closest objects to a person's body, actually began with the "jumpers" — those Jews who jumped from the trains headed to Bełżec. Even if a few of them managed to escape, they were often set upon by the locals, who waited along the tracks for the opportunity to strip them of their clothes and shoes: "Jumpers who were killed or injured, and who could not be hidden or taken away, were robbed, unfortunately, by the local Aryan population, the local hyenas, prowling the area around the tracks where hundreds of Jews lay."⁸⁰

77 Stromer, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Person*, p. 61.

78 Mina Doich, *Istoriia Miny. Spohady likaria pro Holokost* (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2011), pp. 46–51.

79 Testimony of Dorothy Finger, VHA, interview no. 40055.

80 Testimony of Józef Lesław Drecki, AW II/1272/2K, p. 22.

Only on rare occasions were the Jews helped rather than killed:

In April 1942 the first transports to Bełżec appeared...There were cases of destroying the carts. Most of these unfortunates died from the bullets of the Gestapo, or [the] severely wounded awaited death at the hands of the Ukrainian militia or Ukrainian population, which killed them in cold blood to rob them....An exception was the Polish village of Kościejów. These people not only helped by bringing clothes and food, but also sent out word to the committee in Kulików for the injured to be taken away, or if they were only lightly injured they took them to Kulików themselves.⁸¹

The Germans began collecting the clothes of murdered Jews in 1942, when liquidations in Eastern Galician ghettos became more frequent. At first victims were shot in their clothes, and their corpses were stripped of any garments that could be of value. In Przemyślany there was a special unit to deal with this; they collected everything in one pile and moved on. During later liquidations the Jews had to strip naked before the execution and deposit their clothes, wedding bands, and other valuables on separate piles.⁸² As a Ukrainian witness from Chodorów recalled, the Jews "went into the pits stark naked."⁸³

In Tłuste, as Baruch Milch writes, the confiscation of the valuables belonging to victims standing over their graves was overseen by "Jewish elders."⁸⁴ The clothes were then brought back from the places of mass execution, usually located outside of town, and deposited at police stations, the Gestapo, or special warehouses.⁸⁵ The most valuable clothes were sent to the Reich, where they were supposed to serve the Germans.⁸⁶ Others were given to local *Volksdeutsche*, a fact that can be indirectly deduced from the memoirs of a Pole from Dolina (Dolyna), in the Stanisławów region, who wrote about his friends who had not signed the Volkslist during the war:

I also looked with admiration at Jurek Weiner, Staszek Gross and

81 Testimony of Dr. Grossbard, pp. 4–5.

82 *Świadectwo...*, YIVO, RG 104, Series III, Folder No. 196, pp. 2–3.

83 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 768, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0218, Chodorów.

84 Milch, *Testament*, p. 164.

85 Testimony of Samuel Eisen, YIVO, Series I, Folder No. 56.

86 Lower, *The Diary of Samuel Gelfard*, p. 91.

Irka Stemler, whose names clearly pointed at their origins, and despite this they categorically refused entry into the "great German family". They weren't tempted by clothes or trinkets taken from the Jews, increased rations of margarine, marmalade or cigarettes.⁸⁷

There were also cases in which Jewish clothes were sold. However, as a Ukrainian diarist notes when describing the slaughter of the Jews in Wiśniowiec (Vyshnivets), these items hung in Ukrainian cooperative stores for weeks, and no one wanted to buy them.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, it appears that most locals did not have such reservations. The majority of testimonies mention that the witnesses to the Holocaust — not to mention the collaborators — eagerly took advantage of everything that came their way. The biggest profits were made by those who took a direct part in the mass executions: Józef Rozenberg from Żółkiew recalls the local undertaker, who exhibited "extraordinary cruelty" during the liquidation of 1943, by knocking out gold teeth from the mouths of corpses.⁸⁹ A Polish peasant by the name of Warszawski, who helped hide Moty Stromer near Kamionka Strumiłowa, returned from town one day on a bloody wagon loaded with blood-soaked hats. The Germans forced him to cart the bodies of murdered Jews to the site of their mass graves and gave him the victims' hats as payment.⁹⁰ Samuel Tennenbaum recalls:

Bodies [of the murdered Jews] were thrown into the ditch and some people were buried alive. Ukrainian policemen piled dirt on the bodies. Villagers witnessed the gruesome sight; some brought home clothing taken from the victims. "Our" Hryc [the Ukrainian peasant who was hiding the author] also brought home a sack of clothing — some with blood-stains on it.⁹¹

The clothes and items found on the Jews in hiding places were treated in the same way:

That night Mykhailo [a Ukrainian forester hiding the author]

87 August Januszewski, *Lata pogardy — czasem nadziei*, AW II/1301/2K, p. 25.

88 Mykhailo Podvorniak, *Viter z Volyni* (Rivne: Instytut doslidiv Volyni, 2009), p. 153.

89 Rozenberg, *Moje przeżycia i wspomnienia*, p. 11.

90 Stromer, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Person*, p. 45.

91 Tennenbaum, *Złoczow Memoir*, p. 233.

came in and told us that in the Botivla forests they had found a bunker with 31 Jews. 14 of them were shot to death and another 17 were sent to Skole. The Ukrainians took their most valuable possessions and gave the forestry workers the less valuable stuff as a reward for their help in discovering the fugitives.⁹²

After the atrocities were over, the mass-execution sites were plundered by the locals.⁹³ Mentions of such behavior are rather rare; however, the ones that do exist are from various towns and appear in the testimonies of non-Jews, which suggests that it was a common practice. A Ukrainian witness from Chodorów recalls that, shortly after the execution of the local Jews, golden teeth “appeared” in his neighbor’s house — they were probably pulled from the victims’ bodies.⁹⁴ A citizen of Gródek (Horodok), currently in the Lviv *oblast*, speaks openly about the locals searching the shooting sites for valuables.⁹⁵ A Ukrainian from Borowe (Borove) near Mosty Wielkie (Velyki Mosty) states:

People rushed to uncover the ditch....They went to the place where they were stripped and searched for golden items, rings, someone said they found gold watches. I never went there, never searched. Nobody looked after the site, until the forest claimed it all.⁹⁶

Ghettos were also plundered after their inhabitants had been murdered. In most towns the procedure appeared to be the same: first the ghetto was combed for valuables by the Germans, and then the locals began their own searches. In the summer of 1942, the remaining Jews from Budzanów (Budzaniv) were taken to a ghetto in Trembowla, while their belongings passed to the “meticulous care of the Gestapo, who took the more valuable items for the Germans. The Gestapo gave the rest of the items to local Ukrainian notables in the police and administration.”⁹⁷

92 Wilf, *The Diary of Aaron Wilf*, p. 53.

93 The variant of this process that took place in the Polish part of the Generalgouvernement is described by Jan T. Gross and Helena Gross-Grudzińska, *Golden Harvest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

94 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 768.

95 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 731, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0181, Gródek.

96 USHMM, oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 14, RG-50 .589*0028, Mosty Wielkie.

97 Wojciech Pleszczak, *Ludzie jednej polskiej wsi Podola*, AW II/1906, p. 121.

Ghettos in Eastern Galicia were plundered thoroughly, leaving them in a state of ruin, according to the majority of witnesses:

Immediately after the round-up [in the summer of 1942], hundreds of Poles and Ukrainians rushed to the city [Mielnica Podolska] with horses and wagons. They removed everything that remained after the Jews were taken, including doors, windows and everything that could be moved. The Jewish part of town was turned to ruin.⁹⁸

[After the deportation of the Jews from Obertyn to the ghetto in Kołomyja on April 4, 1942, the Ukrainians] immediately grabbed all the furniture, swept the cellars and bunkers, tore down houses looking for and pillaging whatever remained, and then distributed among themselves Jewish fields, cattle, horses, dead stock, seeds, craftsman's tools, workshops, etc.... They moved into Jewish houses, and no one turned their nose on Jewish property, the rich, the poor, the intelligentsia or the uneducated.⁹⁹

Individual abandoned houses outside of the ghetto were also plundered. Szymon Turkel, hiding in a village near Kopyczyńce (Kopychyntsi) in 1943, saw peasants with stuffed bags returning from such nightly sojourns on numerous occasions.¹⁰⁰ The ghettos were also combed for gold, and stoves were taken apart to that end,¹⁰¹ but tales of alleged findings should be seen as part of the general myth about Jewish wealth, or as manifestations of simple jealousy. A Ukrainian woman from Bóbrka recalls that when the Soviets entered the town and ordered the deconstruction of the ghetto, "people found gold there, and lots of it! And now they've built houses for it."¹⁰²

Ghettos and Jewish houses were treated by locals as warehouses of sorts, in the sense that things could be taken from them as the need arose. A man from Bóbrka claims that children went to the ghetto in

98 Doich, *Istoriia Miny*, pp. 46–47.

99 Testimony of Markus Wilbach, p. 39.

100 Testimony of Szymon Turkel, YVA O.33/722, no pagination.

101 An interview conducted in Zhovkva (Żółkiew) in 2008, with a man, b. 1928; interview from the author's archive. All interviews from the author's archive were conducted anonymously as part of a sociological research project; thus, the interviewees' names are not cited.

102 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 732, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0182, Bóbrka.

droves: "Kids went there, boys, everyone was looking for something, someone brought a harmonica, another one found a plate. You could find anything, people just went there and took what they liked."¹⁰³

Czesław Krzyżanowski describes how he went to the ghetto in Brzeżany during the cold winter of 1943, to get firewood:

Firewood is a big problem. You can't go to the woods anymore, like I used to do during the Red occupation. There's Banderovtsy with scythes or rifles hiding in the woods. The firewood is right here, just within reach. The last Jews were taken from the ghetto and shot at the Jewish cemetery. They left behind the ruins of an entire quarter, with floors, floorboards, and *tzitzit* [sic], small boxes to wear on the forehead, with quotations from the Torah on parchment.... I was not interested in these, my whole attention was fixed on the floorboards. Easy to take, you didn't have to chop them up.¹⁰⁴

His testimony is rather unique, since hardly anyone admitted to personally looting a ghetto. The majority of locals claimed that the plundering, looting, and stealing was done by people on the margins of society, social degenerates, members of other ethnic groups, stupid kids, and, finally, "marauders"¹⁰⁵ — in other words, not "us":

Folks, or the so-called *lumpenproletariat*, rushed there. They rushed to claim apartments, furniture.... They were who they were. I would never even enter such a building, if only for the fear of getting caught. Normal people stayed clear of such things.¹⁰⁶

Such a symbolic exclusion of perpetrators who committed a morally deplorable act from one's social group (the externalization of guilt, to use Aleida Assmann's term¹⁰⁷) allows one to talk about the issue without feeling guilty. Sometimes direct declarations were made that, while such acts generally happened, the interviewee did not take part in

103 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 733, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0183, Bóbrka.

104 Krzyżanowski, *Zapiskane na mojej skórze*, p. 18. Krzyżanowski was describing tefillin (phylacteries), not tzitzit.

105 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 727, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0177, Gródek.

106 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 768.

107 See Aleida Assmann, "Pięć strategii wypierania ze świadomości," in Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, ed., *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka* (Warsaw: Universitas, 2009), pp. 333–350.

them, despite the opportunity and the fact that the objective situation of real poverty would have justified such behavior. A woman born in 1929, in Rawa Ruska related, "The neighbor says [to my mother]: come with me to the ghetto, your children are walking around naked. And mum says: let he who took the life take everything else, and we'll get by somehow."¹⁰⁸

Similar narrative strategies appear in relation to auctions organized by German authorities after the liquidation of ghettos, when the locals could buy any items of value left by the Jews — beddings, linen, dishes, furniture — at attractive prices: "They sold the furniture afterwards, and the better pieces were taken by the Germans. We didn't buy them, we weren't like that..."¹⁰⁹

What remained in the ghettos after the mass pillage could also be used. Jewish houses were taken apart and sold by the local authorities to peasants from neighboring villages as building materials; this took place, for example, in Bukaczowce (Bukachivtsi).¹¹⁰ The prices were not high: Father Józef Anczarski wrote about the sale of buildings in Złoczów for "next to nothing"; Aaron Wilf noted a price equivalent to ten packets of cigarettes.¹¹¹ In June 1943, the latter heard about the tearing down of his own house:

I cannot calm down. Mykhailo was in Skole yesterday and he saw that my house which housed the Judenrat, has been boarded up. Many other houses in the neighborhood have been dismantled after they were sold for a pittance by the local municipal council.¹¹²

Sometimes the local peasants were unable to wait and took the buildings apart during the night, without waiting for a "legal" opportunity to buy them.¹¹³ Over time the ones that remained were occupied by Ukrainians arriving from the countryside.¹¹⁴ When the Ukrainians

108 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 432, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0037, Rawa Ruska.

109 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 735, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0185, Bóbrka.

110 Zenovii Postolan, *Spohady moho zhyttia* (Dubno-Lviv-Lutsk: Dzherelo, 2010), p. 10.

111 Anczarski, *Kronikarskie zapiski*, p. 223; Wilf, *The Diary of Aaron Wilf*, p. 72.

112 Wilf, *The Diary of Aaron Wilf*, p. 75.

113 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 723, USHMM, RG-50 .589*0173, Szczerec (Shchyrets).

114 Interview conducted with a woman, b. 1925, in Zhovkva in 2013; from the author's archive.

who had been deported from Poland in 1944–1946 arrived in towns with Jewish houses, they were assigned homes in these buildings.¹¹⁵

People came from there [Poland] and settled here, Ukrainians settled in these Jewish houses.... When they came, the house was still standing — so they took it. Our neighbor here, she's also from Poland, she'd go anywhere just to have a place of her own.¹¹⁶

In the Aftermath — Postscript

After the end of the German occupation, the majority of Jews returned to their hometowns; in most cases only to discover that their relatives were dead and their estates were gone.¹¹⁷ Shortly after their return they often met the people to whom they had entrusted their belongings for safekeeping at the beginning of the occupation. On a street in Buczacz, Alicia Appleman-Jurman saw a Pole dressed in a fur coat belonging to her friend.¹¹⁸ Aaron Wilf recognized his wife's dress being worn by the wife of the teacher Topolnicki, with whom he had left much of his property. Only a moment earlier the teacher had claimed that everything had been destroyed in a fire.¹¹⁹ Former neighbors proved to be more or less honest. Some gave back the items they had willingly stored, happy

115 For more about the resettlement of Ukrainians from Poland to the USSR, see Orest Subtelny, "Expulsion, Resettlement, Civil Strife: The Fate of Poland's Ukrainians, 1944–1947," in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, eds., *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), pp. 155–172.

116 Interview conducted with a woman, b. 1930, in Brzozdowce (Berezditsi) in 2013; from the author's archive.

117 For more about the situation of Jews in Eastern Galicia after it was liberated by the Red Army, see Natalia Aleksion, "Returning from the land of the dead: Jews in Eastern Galicia in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, 2 (246) (2013), pp. 257–271. Postwar animosity toward Jews returning to their homes was not unique to Eastern Galicia or Ukraine. A similar situation in central Ukraine is described in Mordechai Altshuler, "Antisemitism in Ukraine Toward the End of the Second World War," in *The Jews in Eastern Europe*, 3 (22) (1993), pp. 40–81; for countries in Western Europe, see Dienke Hondius, *Return. Holocaust Survivors and Dutch Anti-Semitism* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2003). A comparative analysis of the situation of Jewish survivors returning to their hometowns in Poland and Slovakia can be found in Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence: Jewish Survivors in Poland and Slovakia, 1944–48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

118 Appleman-Jurman, *Alicia*, p. 191.

119 Wilf, *The Diary of Aaron Wilf*, p. 131.

that their owners had managed to survive. Martin Sohn from Gliniany (Hlyniany) was warmly received by his Ukrainian neighbors, and they returned his clothes to him.¹²⁰ Dorothy Finger from Chodorów easily retrieved the items that had been deposited by her parents with a local teacher.¹²¹

In some cases, however, a threat to alert the authorities was necessary.¹²² In other situations only a part of the entrusted belongings was returned — those that proved less valuable to the people who had kept them. Sabina Schweid, who returned to Zborów after Eastern Galicia was liberated by the Red Army, recalls:

The next morning, we walked to the house of our Polish acquaintances — a woman with whom Mother had deposited some of our belongings, the family photos and handicrafts that she and Grandma Ruchaleh had made. As we entered her house, we felt our visit was causing embarrassment. Everyone fell silent. This did not put Mother out in the least; she had planned the encounter on the way to Zborow. She only really wanted the photos. She spoke quickly: *I know the Russians looted everything, but is it possible that you managed to save the photos?* she asked. The tension eased right away: *Yes, Mrs. Fuchs, I picked the pictures out of debris and managed to save the handicrafts, too,* the Polish woman answered, *Take them all as souvenirs.*¹²³

Not everyone returning to their home town was so lucky.¹²⁴ Dorothy Finger, who was also chiefly concerned with family photographs deposited with her neighbor, if only to be able to remember the faces of all her murdered relatives, heard: "You were supposed to be dead, you were supposed to be killed, we burned it."¹²⁵ Samuel Tennenbaum's

120 Testimony of Martin Sohn, VHA, interview no. 18607, Gliniany.

121 Testimony of Dorothy Finger, VHA, interview no. 40055.

122 Rozenberg, *Moje przeżycia i wspomnienia*, p. 11.

123 Schweid, *Consider Me Lucky*, p. 19.

124 In her analysis of the process of returning items deposited by Jews for safekeeping, Barbara Engelking points out that although sources (both private and state documents) contain more information about the refusal to return belongings, this does not necessarily mean that this was the dominant response; it is possible that the refusal to return entrusted property was better remembered by the witnesses (and more frequently reported to the authorities) as an exception to the norm; Engelking, *Czarna godzina*, pp. 414–415.

125 Testimony of Dorothy Finger, VHA, interview no. 40055.

trusted associate from Złoczów looked down at the ground and announced that Tennenbaum's silver had been stolen. Another person recalls:

Mrs. Kawowa, with whom we had left our linens and some clothing, said she had sold everything to get food for her children since she was sure that we were all dead. Stefa said that the prevailing opinion in the factory had been that we were alive somewhere in the West, probably in Warsaw, but at least Mrs. Kawowa showed up to explain, unlike others who simply disappeared.¹²⁶

Some Poles and Ukrainians did not struggle to produce an excuse and openly refused to return items that had been deposited with them, or which they had acquired in some other way. Markus Sauerhaft, born in Mikołajów (Mykolaiv) near Bóbrka as Mordechai Dreier, recalls that his family attempted to regain their home after the war, but it was already occupied by Ukrainians who simply told them that they were the owners now.¹²⁷ The family of Haskell Frostig (b. 1936) from Mosty Wielkie went to a Ukrainian peasant, who was supposed to have hidden the boy and had also received several valuable items, in order to ask for their return. The man denied everything and claimed that he bought the valuables with his own money.¹²⁸

Those who did not want to return the Jewish estates (or sometimes "estates"), but were afraid that they would be reported to the authorities, turned to violence. Topolnicki, the teacher whose wife was wearing the dress recognized by Aaron Wilf in Skole, responded to the latter's demands by threatening Wilf with a knife, claiming that it was not yet certain that he survived the war.¹²⁹ Bertha Reich's family from Mościska (Mostyska) wanted to regain their home in addition to a goose-fattening house and slaughterhouse that they had owned before the war, but they gave up, fearing for their lives:

My father went to our town, where we used to live, to our house, and some of the good friends, the Polish, said: *Don't come here any more, because they will...they wanna...kill you.* Because some

126 Tennenbaum, *Zoloczow Memoir*, pp. 274–277.

127 Testimony of Markus Sauerhaft, VHA, interview no. 39970, Mikołajów near Bóbrka.

128 Testimony of Haskell Frostig, VHA, interview no. 36389, Mosty Wielkie.

129 Wilf, *The Diary of Aaron Wilf*, p. 132.

of the people they weren't nice, because they were afraid that we will take revenge. So he says: You stay where you are and don't come around, even when we maybe could return some of the things, maybe the food....¹³⁰

Jews who demanded the return of their property — be it valuables, furniture, houses, or pillows — died in many Eastern Galician towns, although nowhere was the scale of violence against the Jews larger than in the Polish part of the Generalgouvernement. There regular pogroms took place after the war (the reasons for which were far more complex than the desire to protect one's material status quo).¹³¹ But it also cannot be denied that, shortly after the liberation of Eastern Galicia by the Soviets, Jews were killed in Żółkiew,¹³² Mielnica Podolska,¹³³ Podhajce, Brzeżany, and Tłuste.¹³⁴

In the face of real or anticipated danger, many Jews decided not to pursue the rights to their property. Sharon Kopyt, born in Pohorylce (Pohoriltsi) near Przemyślany as Sabina Schreiber, did not return home after the liberation because she was afraid that her Ukrainian neighbors who had taken everything would kill her.¹³⁵ Faced with their new reality, many survivors found dealing with issues of property to be too difficult, or suddenly surprisingly insignificant. Such a situation is represented by the testimony of Klara Bielec from Jaworów (Yavoriv), who was twenty-eight years old at the time of the liberation:

When it comes to furniture, ours, the dining room table, was at the mayor's lover's. The mayor was a local Ukrainian, called Baczyński. There was a nice chest of drawers, everything was there....I went to see the prosecutor about that chest of drawers, because there was a prosecutor, I told him about the situation, and he said that I could file a case, and that she would have to

130 Testimony of Bertha Reich, VHA, interview no. 2284, Mościska.

131 Anna Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2000); Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). For more about postwar pogroms in Central Ukraine, see Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War. The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

132 Gerszon Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich* (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1946), p. 98.

133 Doich, *Istoriia Miny*, p. 85.

134 Aleksium, "Returning from the land," p. 269.

135 Testimony of Sharon Kopyt, VHA, interview no. 42261, Przemyślany.

return it. But then I thought: and what am I going to do with it, where...?¹³⁶

It is notable that the subject of Jews reclaiming (or not reclaiming) their belongings almost never appears in sources authored by non-Jews. Perhaps the reason for this is that the process (or the lack thereof) could be overlooked, in contrast to the mass executions and the plundering of ghettos. Refusals to hand over furniture or pillows probably took place quietly. One of the few people who devoted some attention to this problem was Father Józef Anczarski. Already in the first year of German occupation, this unusually astute observer of everyday life predicted that the necessity of returning stolen (not only Jewish) property could possibly become a very important factor in shaping the postwar social reality of Eastern Galicia.

The local Ukrainians have recently thrown out all the Jews [from Dobropole near Brzeżany] and robbed all their property. Today, two Jews with children returned. The village elders are in trouble. They start worrying: will they have to answer for the injustice done to the Jews? There is also a second problem. If the Jews return, at least part of their stolen belongings will have to be returned by the robbers. That's bad. Plundering is sweet and sweet are the times when one can plunder. Let these times never end. Let there always be someone that can be robbed: the Polish colonialist, the Bolshevik or the Jew. Their eyes glare with the greed of wolves.¹³⁷

Although he could not have predicted that he would live to see the aftermath of the war in a place far removed from Eastern Galicia, his forecasts proved essentially correct.

Conclusions, or Why It Was Not Only About Property

Anczarski's words could really serve as a conclusion in their own right. The wartime fate of Jewish property is important not only from the perspective of economic history. According to Raul Hilberg's classic analysis, expropriation was one of the unavoidable steps on the road

136 Testimony of Klara Bielec, VHA, interview no. 28897, Jaworów.

137 Anczarski, *Kronikarskie zapiski*, p. 173.

to mass and industrial-scale killing. As we can see, along with selection, isolation, deportation, and extermination, expropriation made genocide possible: it was not a simple by-product of the Holocaust, but rather a necessary measure that made the Holocaust realizable, and an integral part of the entire process. In fact, in the categories of economic history as such, the transfer of "small" Jewish belongings from one person to another, or even from one person to a larger organization, such as the Third Reich, was not that relevant. The true significance of these changes in the structure of property can be found elsewhere.

First, one's property — next to "good" looks, the level of assimilation, and lucky coincidence — often proved to be a matter of life or death for Jews in the war. The person who was able to keep a part of his/her estate long enough, to deposit it with people worthy of his/her trust, and who could access it while remaining in hiding, had higher chances for survival.¹³⁸ Second, the other side of the coin was that, although the possession of material wealth made survival easier, it was equally common for it to be the reason for which Jews were denounced or even murdered. This motivation reveals the horrifying significance of some postwar murders, and ranks them among the most shocking events. Aaron Wilf accurately summed up the role that money played in his Christian friends' willingness to help him:

Out of hundreds of Christian friends, with whom I had had business relations and to many of whom I had paid in advance for goods and thus enabled them to buy fields and build houses, only three from time to time gave me some corn or potatoes which I shared with my brother. These three Christians did not owe me anything, whereas the others wanted to see me dead so that they would not have to repay the money they owed to me before the war.¹³⁹

138 This is mentioned in Karolina Panz's and Małgorzata Melchior's case studies concerning the Polish part of the Generalgouvernement. See Karolina Panz, "Singerowie mieli sklep.... Historia jednej rodziny i jej mienia," in Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950* (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą, 2014), pp. 299–336; Małgorzata Melchior, "Rzeczy i ludzie. Historia jednej rodziny i jej mienia," in Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą, 2014), pp. 337–438.

139 Wilf, *The Diary of Aaron Wilf*, p. 31.

Third, attitudes toward "Jewish things" constituted a litmus test for the condition of Jewish-Polish and Jewish-Ukrainian relations both during and after the war, and spoke volumes about human nature itself. The latter was subjected to temptation over and over again, for the time of war did not foster heroism or altruism; on the contrary, it brought about gradual demoralization, the uprooting of the previous value system, and the destruction of social bonds. These were manifested most visibly on the material level. Acts that were unthinkable before the war, such as theft or murder, became an element of everyday life, and were justified with increasing frequency.¹⁴⁰ The appropriation of Jewish belongings served as one of the most effective methods that the Germans used to mobilize the local population at all stages of the Holocaust: during the 1941 pogroms; during various anti-Jewish actions in the ghettos; and, finally, after Eastern Galicia was formally proclaimed "*Judenfrei*"; that is, when the remaining Jews were hunted down and turned over to the Germans.¹⁴¹

It is clear that Jews were killed and betrayed by their neighbors not only because of their money — although money was a very important factor (conversely, the same can be said about the process of saving Jews). Jewish testimonies suggest that the "betrayal" by their Christian neighbors, including their designs on Jewish property, caused far more pain than analogous behavior on the part of the Germans. One might risk saying that nobody expected the Germans to act any differently, but they did expect more from Poles and Ukrainians. The fact that Poles and Ukrainians appear so frequently in Jewish testimonies in the role of perpetrators and that they are judged so harshly need not imply that they were really "worse" than the Germans. It does say a great deal about the tremendous disappointment that the Jews felt toward their neighbors.¹⁴²

The most shocking testimonies are the ones that show that the results of wartime changes in mentality and morality are still felt today. One of the anonymous Holocaust witnesses recorded in Eastern

140 See Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–1956* (New York: Doubleday, 2012), pp. 13–14, 135; Jan Tomasz Gross, "Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe," *East European Politics and Societies*, 3:198 (1989), pp. 201–202.

141 Gross, *Fear*.

142 For more about this subject, see Browning, *Collected Memories*, p. 43.

Galicia by Patrick Desbois's team said, looking straight at the camera, that when he was carting Jewish belongings to an empty synagogue in Bóbrka on German orders in 1942, he was young and stupid. Today he would have kept more for himself.¹⁴³

143 Oral history interview with Yahad-In Unum interviewee 735.