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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Holocaust Studies: A Ukrainian Focus is an international peer-reviewed annual academic journal of the “Tkuma” Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies, founded in 2002.

The journal covers the phenomenon of the Holocaust as well as other genocides which took place in the 20th century. It focuses primarily on Ukrainian issues and attempts to put them into large context of the world and European history.

This project seeks to promote the development of Ukrainian historiography of the Holocaust, to make it a part of the historical narrative and to encourage an academic dialogue between Ukrainian and foreign researchers, by publishing the following materials:

- original research papers;
- translations of foreign academic texts which are important for Ukrainian Holocaust studies;
- commented sources;
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- overviews of the most up-to-date academic events.

The Journal publishes materials in Ukrainian, Russian and English. Since 2017, all articles have been accompanied by extended summaries in English.

The editors invite Ukrainian and foreign researchers to collaborate and to submit their papers focusing on:

- theoretical, methodological and synthesis studies on the Holocaust;
- comparative Holocaust studies in Ukraine and other countries of the Former Soviet Union, Eastern and Central Europe; comparative analysis of specific historical and civilizational aspects of the Holocaust and other genocides;
- case studies on various Holocaust episodes in Ukraine;
- regional and local Holocaust studies in Nazi-occupied Ukraine;
- researches on the role of the Jewish factor in cultural and historical process preceding or following the Holocaust;
- source studies and historiographical reviews;
- studies on the global memory and perception of the Holocaust in Ukraine and Eastern Europe.

The journal is distributed among the most significant academic, educational, and cultural institutions in Ukraine and worldwide. It is sent to more than 100 academic libraries and institutions in Europe, USA, Canada, and Israel. The PDF-version is available at the TKUMA Institute web-site: <http://tkuma.dp.ua> the same as at the web-site of the Journal: <http://hsuf-journal.com.ua>.



Photo 5. *The Weispapirs*, 1960
(Source: Макарова, Могилевский, and Эдельштейн, Собибор, 153)



Photo 6. During the filming of the Soviet-Dutch documentary "Revolt in Sobibor," 1988, Arkadii Weispapir with his wife Fania, in the background
(Source: Макарова, Могилевский, and Эдельштейн, Собибор, 181)

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THE ROLE OF JEWISH PROPERTY IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE HOLOCAUST IN VOLYN-PODILLYA GENERAL DISTRICT: THE FOCUS OF THE LOCAL NON-JEWISH POPULATION¹

The process of the appropriation of Jewish property by non-Jewish population during the Holocaust has aroused a considerable interest in the academic literature. However, academic studies have not properly considered the role of local population in the appropriation of the Holocaust victims' property in comparison with the Nazi invaders. In fact, the role of many non-Jewish residents can no longer be regarded as mere bystanders, because their actions concerning the appropriation of Jewish property influenced the dynamics of the Holocaust at the local level.

Victims' property and the mercantile component in general formed a kind of motivational background for civilians' cooperation with the Nazis when both sides realized the importance of interaction based on pragmatic mercantilism.

Mercantile reasons motivated local population and the anti-Semitic component could play only a minor role. The thirst for profit mobilized the worst human instincts. The prospect of seizing Jewish property had a corrupting effect on most of the non-Jewish population, and many supported the occupation in terms of their own economic interests. Despite the fact that people who acquired Jewish property were of different backgrounds, gender, and age, they all had experience of close pre-war social relationships with victims.

The results of this research indicate a much greater role of civilians, local non-Jewish residents in plundering and acquisition of Holocaust victims' property than it was previously stated in the academic literature.

This research considers the appropriation of Jewish property by locals and neighbours based on the example of Volyn-Podillya General District of Reichkommissariat Ukraine, but the results of the study are also important for

¹ This article was made possible thanks to a scholarship from the Yahad-In Unum grant project (Paris, France) in 2018. Special thanks to Patrick Desbois, President of the Yahad-In Unum Association; Patrice Bensimon, Michał Chojak, Director of the Yahad-In Unum Research Center; Andrej Umansky, Member of the Board of Yahad-In Unum (Paris); Andriy Usach, Ph.D. student at the Ukrainian Catholic University (Lviv, Ukraine).

general understanding of the Holocaust events in Ukraine and occupied eastern territories during World War II.

Keywords: Holocaust, Jewish property, Volyn-Podillya General District, local non-Jewish population.

Jan Tomasz Gross's² works, where he described the Eastern European context of the Holocaust with the participation of local non-Jewish residents – “neighbors” in Europe, launched a discussion on the relationship between Jews and non-Jews during the Catastrophe. The intellectual debate has given impetus to rethinking civilians' role and responsibility during the Holocaust.

The material component has always been a companion of genocide. During the Holocaust, as Aron Shneer notes, the German occupation opened up new opportunities for non-Jews to fulfill their material and administrative ambitions.³ During this time, many people not only saw but also used the opportunity for their own material enrichment due to the victims' misfortune. In this context, we should agree with Adam Jones, who notes that genocide offers an unprecedented opportunity to “correct” economic imbalances through the seizure of victims' wealth and property.⁴ The lust for property and the prospect of taking over Jewish belongings are some of the Holocaust defining features. That's why historians emphasize that the Holocaust cannot be fully understood until it is perceived as the largest murderous theft campaign in modern history.⁵

Appropriation of Jewish property by non-Jewish residents during the Catastrophe gained considerable scale. It is evidenced by the emergence of specific terminology “nazhydytysia,” i.e., make money on Jewish property.⁶ It was pretty exemplary because the robbers were severely punished (even executed), as officially, such property belonged to the state.

The study aims to analyze the role of the local non-Jewish population and civilians in the acquisition, appropriation, theft, and looting of Jewish

² Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jan T. Gross, and Irena Grudzińska Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³ Арон Шнеер, “За убийство евреев никакой ответственности...: Портрет коллаборациониста,” in *Холокост на территории СССР: материалы XIX Междунар. конф. по иудаике*, v. 1, iss. 40, ed. Илья Альтман, Аркадий Зельцер, and Арон Шнеер (Москва: Сефер, 2012), 61.

⁴ Адам Джонс, *Геноциды: Вступ до глобальної історії* (Київ: Дух і літера, 2019), 457.

⁵ Джонс, *Геноциды*, 414.

⁶ Жанна Ковба, *Людяність у безодні пекла. Поведінка місцевого населення Східної Галичини в роки “остаточного розв'язання єврейського питання”* (Київ: Дух і літера, 2009), 251.

property during the Holocaust in the Volyn-Podillya General District.⁷ Analyzing this regional-administrative entity is relevant because, during the German occupation, the main institutions of the Reichkommissariat Ukraine were located here. Rivne was the center of the RKU: the headquarters of the quartermaster's office and economic management of the Army Group South, the headquarters of the Wehrmacht rear chief in Ukraine, the Central Issuing Bank of Ukraine, German Supreme Court, etc. In 1943, the region ranked first in Reichkommissariat by area and second by population. The Jewish community in the region's major cities accounted for 60–80% of the total population.

According to Yitzhak Arad, the German army, the SS, the military and civilian administration, and the non-Jewish population competed in acquiring Jewish property.⁸ This study will ignore the role of official authorities and collaborationist structures in this process while focusing exclusively on ways of appropriating Jewish property by the civilian population.

The novelty of this research is that based on a broad source base, which is being introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time (primarily from the oral history collections of the Yahad-In Unum in France and the video source from the Institute for Visual History and Education of the Shoah Foundation of the University of Southern California in the United States), the issue of acquisition of Jewish property by civilians, neighbors of the victims is revealed. After all, in Ukraine, the topic is on the periphery of research or is revealed in fragments. Most of the works focus on the main culprits of the Catastrophe – the National Socialist regime and the occupation administration. But in the end, primarily, the Third Reich won in the material context of the Holocaust.

⁷ Volyn-Podillya General District is an administrative-territorial unit of the Reichkommissariat Ukraine, formed from the territories of the former Rivne, Volyn, Kamianets-Podilsky, partly Ternopil and Vinnytsia regions of the Ukrainian SSR and the southern part of the former Brest and Pinsk regions of the Belarus SSR. At first it was divided into 27 districts, later into 25 districts (gebits). In terms of area in 1943 (80 507,99 km²), ranked first in the Reichkommissariat Ukraine, and second by population. The ethnic composition was dominated by Ukrainians (3 million 500 th. – 75%), 460 th. Of Poles (10,9%), 330 th of Jews (7,8%), 280 th. Of Belarusians (6,6%), 330 th. of Russians (7,8%), 3 th. of Germans (0,07%). In the west, the district bordered with the Galicia district and the Lublin district, northwest – with the district Bialystok, north – with the General District Belarus of the Reichkommissariat Ostland, east – with the Zhytomyr General District, south – with Bukovina Governorate, southeast – with the Transnistria Governorate. The general commissioner of the district was Obergruppenführer Heinrich Schoene of Königsberg. From October 1942, the duties of the General Commissioner of Volyn-Podillya were performed by the General Commissioner of Zhytomyr, the head of the district administration Kurt Klem. Initially, the Commissioner-General's residence was Brest-Litovsk, and later Lutsk. The district ceased to exist on February 5, 1944.

⁸ Ицхак Арад, “Разграбление еврейской собственности на оккупированных территориях Советского Союза,” *Проблемы Холокоста: научный журнал* 1 (2002): 5.

Historiography and Research Sources

The most important works dedicated to this topic belong to foreign historiography. Its specificity lies in intertwining the Holocaust material side and the relationship between Jews and non-Jews, neighbors' behavior towards the Catastrophe victims. In particular, in the above and other works⁹ by Jan Tomasz Gross, Jan Grabowski,¹⁰ the behavior of Jewish neighbors is analyzed through the prism of economic factors on Polish examples. In particular, examining the behavior of Polish peasants, local "Aryans," Jan Grabowski argues that they were primarily responsible for the dire situation of Jews and highlights the need to rethink the traditional division of Raul Hilberg into three groups: victims, perpetrators, observers. These categories have become too vague to analyze behavior, especially when it comes to observers.¹¹

Martin Dean analyzed the mechanism of looting Jews in Western and Eastern Europe. He noted that the most valuable items were sent from the East to Berlin, while less valuable items remained on the ground to support the local administration.¹² The researcher emphasized that the exploitation of Jewish resources in the Soviet Union became an important element of the Holocaust in the East.¹³ Highlighting the role of local collaboration in Eastern Europe, where without the German occupation, there would be no Holocaust, but also without the help of local authorities, the killing of Jews would not have reached such proportions, Martin Dean emphasizes that manifestations of local civilian initiative during the Holocaust indicate that we can't put all the blame on the Germans.¹⁴ In other words, it is the responsibility of the local factor to participate in helping the Nazi criminal practices, but not to organize them, which is the responsibility of the German

⁹ Jan T. Gross, "Opportunistic Killings and Plunder of Jews by Their Neighbors – a Norm or an Exception in German Occupied Europe?," in *Lessons and Legacies XII: New Directions in Holocaust Research and Education*, eds. Wendy Lower, and Lauren Faulkner Rossi (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 3–30.

¹⁰ Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews. Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

¹¹ Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 172.

¹² Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews: The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008), 437.

¹³ Martin Dean, "Jewish property seized in the occupied Soviet Union in 1941–1942: The Records of the Reichshauptkasse Beutestelle," *Holocaust and Genocide studies* 1, iss. 14 (2000): 83–101, <http://hgs.oxfordjournals.org/content/14/1/83>.

¹⁴ Martin Dean, "Local Collaboration in the Holocaust in Eastern Europe," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 120–140.

occupation administration. The same conclusion that the "Aryanization" of Jewish property played a significant (sometimes crucial) role in supporting many social groups in the implementation of the Holocaust in Western Europe is expressed in research by Frank Bajohr,¹⁵ Gerald Feldman and Wolfgang Seibel.¹⁶

Yitzhak Arad investigated the looting and confiscation of Jewish property in the USSR. Along with looting by German officials, the researcher emphasizes the role of local police and non-Jews in this process. In some cases, Jewish property could be a reward for their cooperation.¹⁷ Other Western¹⁸ and Ukrainian researchers¹⁹ have considered the process of looting property in various fields, but they mainly analyze the robbery of Jews by the occupation administration. A few works highlighting civilians' role in the looting of Jews include the research by Volodymyr Zilinskyi, who demonstrated this phenomenon at the micro level in Sambir,²⁰ Zhanna Kovba, who analyzed the behavior of the local population of Eastern Galicia during the Holocaust.²¹ In addition, Anna Wylegala investigated the robbery of Jewish property in the region. Recalling the conditions in which the Jews of Eastern Galicia and Western Volyn lived in 1939–1941 during the Soviet occupation, the researcher analyzes the nationalization of Jewish property. Thus, by the time the Nazis came, there were already cases when Jews were deprived of their property.²² However, these works cover the Galicia district, not the region under study.

¹⁵ Frank Bajohr, "Aryanisation" in *Hamburg: The Economic Exclusion of Jews and the Confiscation of Their Property in Nazi Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).

¹⁶ Gerald Feldman, and Wolfgang Seibel, *Networks of Persecution: Business, Bureaucracy, and the Organization of the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

¹⁷ Yitzhak Arad, "Plunder of Jewish Property in the Nazi-Occupied Areas of the Soviet Union," *Yad Vashem Studies* 29 (2001): 109–48; Аррад, "Разграбление еврейской собственности," 5–39.

¹⁸ Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996); Avi Beker, *The Plunder of Jewish Property During the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

¹⁹ Михайло Куницький, "Соціально-правовий статус місцевого населення Райхскомісаріату «Україна» (1941–1944 рр.)" (Автореф. дис. докт. іст. наук, Переяслав-Хмельницький, 2014); Олексій Гончаренко, "Позбавлення єврейського населення власності в період нацистської окупації Київщини," *Часопис української історії: зб. наук. ст.* 5 (2006): 116–121.

²⁰ Володимир Зілінський, "Пограбування єврейського майна у м. Самборі під час нацистської окупації: аналіз явища на макрорівні," *Голокост і сучасність* 13 (2015): 109–23.

²¹ Ковба, *Людяність у безодні пекла*, 296.

²² Anna Wylegala, "About «Jewish Things.» Jewish Property in Eastern Galicia During World War II," *Yad Vashem Studies* 44 (2) (2016): 83–120.

In Ukrainian historiography, in the geographical areas of Volyn, the topic is covered by the research of Petro Dolhanov, Andrii Usach, and Roman Mykhalchuk. Based on three towns in Western Volyn (Dubrovysia, Korets, Kostopol), Petro Dolhanov showed the role of non-Jews in the robbery of Holocaust victims. The author notes that such actions served to “legitimize” the genocide among the local population and encourage collaboration.²³ Considering the role of local Holocaust perpetrators in non-Jewish oral evidence, Andrii Usach pointed to the massive looting of Jews during the Holocaust. The researcher identified the desire of people to enrich themselves with Jewish property as perhaps the most common motive for the participation of the local population in the Holocaust.²⁴

Roman Mykhalchuk analyzed the issue of Jewish property on the example of Rivne region,²⁵ appropriation of Jewish property by government officials and civilians on the example of the Kostopil Town Council,²⁶ and contributions as a form of deprivation of Jewish property in the Volyn-Podillya General District.²⁷ The article on the rescue of Mizoch Jews, based on the Shoah Foundation victims’ video testimonies, analyzes the ways of their survival, particularly the economic factor.²⁸ It has been established that material property was an important factor for Jews during hiding. The behavior of the rescuers towards the victims was not always altruistic because some of them helped Jews while the latter had material resources. Some neighbors also

²³ Петро Долганов, “Бенефіціари Голокосту: роль «сусідів» у пограбуванні євреїв Волині в період нацистської окупації,” *Місто: історія, культура, суспільство* 9 (2) (2020): 83.

²⁴ Андрій Усач, “«То не німці...»: місцеві винуватці Голокосту у неєврейських усноісторичних свідченнях,” in *Слухати, чути, розуміти: усна історія України XX–XXI століть*, ed. Гелінада Грінченко (Київ: ТОВ “Арт-книга”, 2021), 155.

²⁵ Роман Михальчук, “Власність євреїв Рівненщини під час нацистської окупації (1941–1944 рр.),” *Наукові праці історичного ф-ту Запорізького нац. ун-ту* 36 (2013): 169–173; Роман Михальчук, and Вікторія Зиль, “Економічний аспект Голокосту (на прикладі Рівненщини),” *Наука, освіта, суспільство очима молодих: матеріали XI Міжнародної науково-практичної конференції студентів та молодих науковців* (Рівне, 2018): 258–260.

²⁶ Роман Михальчук, “Продаж майна жертв Голокосту в Костопільській міській управі,” *Актуальні проблеми вітчизняної та всесвітньої історії: наук. записки РДГУ* 30 (2018): 209–214.

²⁷ Роман Михальчук, “Контрибуції як форма позбавлення власності євреїв в генеральній окрузі «Волинь-Поділля»,” *Голокост в Україні: академічний, комеморативний та освітній аспекти. матеріали Всеукраїнської науково-практичної конференції, присвяченої 75-м роковинам трагедії Бабиного Яру* (2016): 71–75.

²⁸ Роман Михальчук, “Порятунок євреїв в Мізочі під час Голокосту у свідченнях жертв: відеоджерела Інституту візуальної історії та освіти фонду Шоа університету Південної Каліфорнії в США,” *Пам’ять нетлінна: Голокост на теренах нашого краю. Науковий збірник “Велика Волинь”* 62 (2021): 226–238.

organized hunts for Holocaust victims to get rich, seize their property, and get a reward by handing them over to the occupation authorities.²⁹

The role of locals in Nazi forced practices, including involvement in appropriating Holocaust victims’ property, is described in a book by Father Patrick Desbois. Oral testimonies gathered by the Yahad-In Unum team revealed information about the participation and, in some cases, the guilt of local observers during the Holocaust, including those in the Volyn-Podillya area.³⁰ Desbois singles out a special category of civilians identified during his oral history project, which was forced to do dirty work (digging and burying graves, searching corpses, sorting things, clothes of the dead people, etc.). During these types of work, these people sometimes had the opportunity to seize the victim’s property, and in some cases, the occupiers allowed them to do it as a reward for doing dirty work. One of our previous articles analyzed the situation of the civilian population and the specifics of the work it was forced to do on the example of the Volyn-Podillya General District.³¹

The sources used in the study allow us to investigate the problem from the point of view of different groups: victims, executioners, and non-Jews – witnesses of the events.

Memoirs of Holocaust victims (Jews) and witnesses (non-Jews) are presented by video collections of the Institute for Visual History and Education of the Shoah Foundation of the University of Southern California in the USA,³² Yahad-In Unum video collection,³³ and a collection of audio testimonies by Holocaust eyewitnesses in Mizoch village, Rivne oblast, interviewed by the author in 2016.³⁴

²⁹ Михальчук, “Порятунок євреїв в Мізочі,” 226–238.

³⁰ Patrick Desbois, *In Broad Daylight: The Secret Procedures behind the Holocaust by Bullets* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2018).

³¹ Roman Mykhalchuk, “«Small death jobs»: the role of forced civilian persons in the Nazi plans of the Holocaust in the General District of Volyn-Podillia (on the materials of Yahad-In Unum),” *East European Historical Bulletin* 15 (2020): 157–165.

³² The video collection contains more than 52,000 testimonies of Holocaust survivors and victims of Nazism, as well as Roma, homosexuals and Jehovah’s Witnesses interviewed in 56 countries. Created by the project of American film director Steven Spielberg in 1994.

³³ The video collection contains about 7.4 thousand eyewitness accounts of mass killings of Jews and Roma during World War II in 8 countries (Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Romania, Ukraine, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and is constantly being updated. “Yahad-In Unum” (meaning “together”), founded in 2004 in France by the Catholic priest Father Patrick Desbois, identified more than 2.4 thousand places of mass shootings.

³⁴ In 2016, the author conducted a survey on the Holocaust in the village of Mizoch (Rivne region) of about two and a half dozen respondents – local non-Jews (seven of them were used in this article). See more: Роман Михальчук, “Нові свідчення про Голокост в Мізочі (за результатами усноісторичного

Oral testimonies are used because official German and Soviet documents cannot fully cover the process of theft of Jewish property by civilians. These sources contain information about the contribution, robbery, nationalization, and appropriation of Jewish property by the German administration and the police. At the same time, the facts of looting by civilians are noted extremely rarely. Instead, the stories of victims and witnesses are the sources where such acts are most fully covered. That is why oral history is so crucial in the proposed research.

However, oral testimonies are subjective sources with specific characteristics that require a critical approach. The human experience is presented in primary (retention) or secondary (reproduction) memories. In the study, it is essential to determine their reliability through comparison and cross-analysis. The method of cross-analysis assumes that quotes from interviews and the information contained in them need to be “linked” with data from other sources.³⁵

Given that the main events of the Catastrophe in the researched area took place in 1942, the average age of a witness in the Yahad-In Unum video collection (mostly childhood memories) was 15 years. However, in general, the age ranged from 9 to 31 years. The situation is similar to the testimony from the Institute for Visual History and Education of the Shoah Foundation of the University of Southern California. As for the gender component, in the Yahad-In Unum video collection, witnesses are presented almost on a parity basis with a slight predominance of men – 53% and 47%. In the collection of the Institute for Visual History and Education of the Shoah Foundation of the University of Southern California, on the contrary, women are more represented with 61,5%, and only 38,5% were men.

Witnesses' age and psychological characteristics should be considered when analyzing oral narratives. After all, at the time of the Tragedy, some people could have been 6 years old, and others could have been 15 or 30 years old. Age could affect a person's perception of situations, evaluative judgments, and reflections. It could also affect the reliability of the information in the interview. Given the complexity of the topic of violence, historical credibility can be leveled by eyewitness accounts as a result of psychological trauma. In particular, during the interviews, the narrators desired to distance themselves from the horrific events. In such cases, it seems like they

проекту у липні–серпні 2016 р.),” *Актуальні проблеми вітчизняної та всесвітньої історії: наук. записки РДГУ* 29 (2017): 265–274.

³⁵ Гелінада Грінченко, Ірина Реброва, and Ірина Романова, “Усна історія в пострадянських дослідницьких практиках (на прикладі сучасних Білорусії, Росії та України),” *Український історичний журнал* 4 (2012): 180.

wanted to say, “it’s not us,” “we were not involved,” “we did not do it,” and “if someone did it, it was others.”³⁶ Careful analysis of such testimony may serve as a basis for drawing other conclusions than the facts stated by witnesses.³⁷

One of the advantages of video testimony is the ability to visually analyze the narrator's behavior, which sometimes speaks more eloquently than words. The content of these oral history collections allows us to talk about their powerful potential for Holocaust research, as they provide exclusive information you cannot find in other official sources.³⁸ In particular, on the example of Yahad-In Unum videos, eyewitness testimonies consist of 3 conditional groups: 1) testimonies of indirect witnesses who did not see the murder but heard about it from the stories of others; 2) testimonies of direct witnesses who were present during the murder; 3) testimonies of “small death jobs” – people who were forced to work at the scene of the murder.³⁹ Evidence of the latter category is the most valuable because these people not only saw but also participated in the process.⁴⁰

German documents published by Oleksandr Kruhlov on the murder of Rivne Jews in Sosonki in November 1941 provide an opportunity to see the Holocaust through the eyes of the perpetrators.⁴¹ The informa-

³⁶ For example, the following words could be an attempt to justify yourself: “our village did not go [to buy Jewish property], but those from the outskirts did” (see: Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 126B).

³⁷ For example, one witness said that after the liquidation of the ghetto in Domachev, the Germans allowed them to take clothes from the ghetto, but “no one took anything – they were afraid.” However, in another episode of the interview, she told how she went to the ghetto with her mother and took some things for herself (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 135B). In the testimony of an eyewitness from Sernyky, it was indicated that there were few people who bought the clothes of the murdered Jews, those from neighboring villages came to buy. And in another part of the interview, the witness claimed that they sold things to “our people” (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 544U).

³⁸ For example, during the oral history survey, Father Patrick Desbois revealed the role of witnesses from the category of forced laborers among the local population in the implementation of the Holocaust plans – “small death jobs.” He calls these people the “invisible group” that made up one of the main discoveries of the Yahad-In Unum project (Patrick Desbois, “The witnesses of Ukraine or evidence from the ground: the research of Yahad-In Unum,” *The Holocaust in Ukraine: New Sources and Perspectives* (2013): 96.

³⁹ Патрік Дебуа, *Хранитель спогадів. Кривавими слідами Голокосту* (Київ: Дух і Літера, 2011), 101–102.

⁴⁰ The process of mass murder required the involvement of a significant number of civilians, who were requisitioned for forced labor – the performance of auxiliary functions during the implementation of the Holocaust. Father Patrick Desbois identified more than 20 types of “small death jobs” workers. In particular, among them were: diggers (grave diggers), transporters, carriers of bodies, clothes sorters, clothes sellers, grave cleaners, etc. (Desbois, “The witnesses of Ukraine,” 96–97).

⁴¹ Александр Круглов, “Уничтожение евреев в г. Ровно в начале ноября 1941 года в свете немецких документов,” *Голокост і сучасність* 11 (2012): 104–165.

tion available testifies not only to the “solution of the Jewish question” by representatives of various German formations and the police but also to the participation of local civilians in the appropriation of property at the execution site. The liquidation and looting of the Mizoch ghetto are described by an unknown OUN member in his diary, where he reflected on those events.⁴² In particular, his description of the looting by locals after the fire in the Mizoch ghetto praises the liquidation of Jews. Women also played an important role in the robbery, “Women are sweating, carrying a bunch of different Jewish things on their shoulders.”⁴³

The regional Ukrainian archives and the archives of the Security Service of Ukraine (archival and criminal cases against convicts) have information about the robbery of Jews by police and civilians. For example, a police officer confessed to robbing Jewish apartments and handing over the looted property to his wife.⁴⁴ Another example is a seamstress from a Rivne workshop who had contacts with the German occupiers and had the opportunity to rob the apartments of Rivne Jews together with her husband.⁴⁵ The woman was sentenced to death.

The facts of the robbery are revealed in the memoirs of Jews, in particular, Varvara Barats from Rivne,⁴⁶ Oleksandr Levin from Rokytno,⁴⁷ Michael Diment from Svyniukhy.⁴⁸ This group of sources includes Memorial Books (Rivne,⁴⁹ Mizoch⁵⁰). The presence of such diverse sources, to some extent, allows research.

Bundesarchiv (hereinafter – BArch), f. B 162, ref. 04229, 04231, p. 4, 6.

⁴² State archive of Rivne region (hereinafter – SARR), f. P. 30, op. 2, ref. 83. Diary of an unknown member of the OUN, a resident of Derman, about the extermination of the Jews of Mizoch and the uprising in the local ghetto, 40 pages.

⁴³ SARR, f. P. 30, op. 2, ref. 83, p. 11 rev.

⁴⁴ Archive of the Office of the Security Service of Ukraine in the Rivne region (hereinafter – AO SSU RR), f. 4, ref. 2656, p. 19–20.

⁴⁵ AO SSU RR, f. 4, ref. 10424, p. 23–23 rev.

⁴⁶ Варвара Барац, *Бегство от судьбы. Воспоминание о геноциде евреев на Украине во время Второй мировой войны* (Москва: Арт-Бизнес-Центр, 1993).

⁴⁷ Александр Левин, “Негаснущие свечи Холокоста,” in *Жизнь и смерть в эпоху Холокоста: свидетельства и документы*, б. 2, ed. Борис Забарко (Киев, 2007), 288–289.

⁴⁸ Майкл Дімент, *Самотній вигнанець. Щоденник про Свинюхи та гетто в Локачах* (Київ: УЦВІГ, 2016).

⁴⁹ “The Holocaust (Меморіальна книга Рівного),” accessed on July 21, 2021, <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rovno/rov514.html#Page529%20-%20Дата%20доступу>.

⁵⁰ “Меморіальна книга Мізоча,” accessed on July 21, 2021, <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizochu.html>.

Practices of Acquiring Jewish Property

The acquisition of Jewish property by non-Jews took place through a combination of formal and informal practices and methods. They can also be classified as quasi-legal (sanctioned and regulated by the occupying power) and illegal. Authorized and sanctioned practices were limited to buying/selling, and transferring property by government institutions and public organizations to the poorest locals free of charge. Many of them took the opportunity to improve their financial conditions. At the same time, the government’s official permission for non-Jewish residents to own the property of those killed seemed to be mutual cooperation. People who bought such things knew that they belonged to the murdered Jews. Thus, it seemed like a passive agreement to legitimize the government’s actions against the victims of the Holocaust. The author of the study analyzed the official practices of acquisition (purchase) of property of Holocaust victims on the example of Kostopil Town Council (modern Rivne oblast).⁵¹ Therefore, this article will focus on informal and semi-formal practices of appropriating Jewish property by locals.

Informal practices implied taking possession of material values without coordinating actions with the authorities. Sometimes this process took place with the consent of the Jews (barter), but more often without it. Sometimes circumstances were difficult to establish. In some cases, it was up to the authorities to decide whether or not to allow non-Jewish residents to seize the victims’ property. The readiness of the latter to cooperate played an important role here. Often, residents’ loyalty to the authorities helped them resolve the issue of taking Jewish property or significantly increased the chances of getting it.

Appropriation of Jewish Property in the First Days of the Occupation

One of the first opportunities to take advantage of the helpless Jews and rob them appeared in the first days of the occupation and during the pogroms.⁵² Historians note that the pogroms in Ukraine and Belarus between

⁵¹ Михальчук, “Продаж майна жертв Голокосту,” 209–214.

⁵² In particular, see: Witold Mędykowski, *W cieniugigantów: Pogromy 1941 roku w byłej sowieckiej strefie okupacyjnej: kontekst historyczny, społeczny i kulturowy* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2012); Andrzej Zbikowski, “Local Anti-Jewish pogroms in the Occupied Territories of Eastern Poland, June–July 1941,” in *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: studies and sources on the destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-occupied Territories of the USSR. 1941–1945*, ed. Lucian Dobroszycki, and Jeffrey Gurock (NY; London: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 173–179; Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941–1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990); Wendy Lower, “Pogroms, mob violence and genocide in western Ukraine, summer 1941: varied histories, explanations and comparisons,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 13 (3) (2011): 217–246; Александр Круглов, “Погромы в восточной Галиции лета 1941 года:

the retreat of the Red Army and the Nazi occupation were more directed against Jewish property than against the Jews themselves.⁵³ Such actions were accompanied not only by beatings, rapes, robberies, but also by murders. According to researcher Karel Berkhoff, the Jews of Western Volyn suffered much violence from the local population.⁵⁴ According to Shmuel Spector, Jews were robbed in at least 27 towns and villages in the region. Jared McBride's research expands the number of such settlements to 42.⁵⁵ And David Cesarani notes that the pogroms in Volyn took lives of about 500 Jewish men and women.⁵⁶

Residents of the region not only robbed Jews but also reported them to the Germans, pointing to the houses where they lived (for example in Klevan⁵⁷). The process of looting Jewish property could have occurred during a brief power vacuum when the Soviets had already left the cities, but the German administration had not yet established control over them. For example, the Nazi occupation of Kamin-Kashirska took place on June 28, 1941, but on June 26, 1941, when Soviet authorities left the city, many villagers from neighboring villages looted Jewish shops and killed two Jews during the pogrom.⁵⁸ The initiative in the pogroms after the German occupation could have been triggered by both the new government and the locals, and often these were complementary things.⁵⁹ The former saw such actions as a way of gradually solving the "Jewish question," and the locals saw it as a way of looting. Especially many pogroms in the settlements of Volyn-Podillya General District were recorded in July 1941.⁶⁰ In addition, the establish-

організатори, учасники, масштаби і наслідки," *Проблеми історії Голокосту* 5 (2010): 56–73; Карел Беркгоф, *Жива розпачу: життя і смерть в Україні під нацистською владою* (Київ: Критика, 2011).

⁵³ Dean, "Local Collaboration," 125.

⁵⁴ Беркгоф, *Жива розпачу*, 66.

⁵⁵ Jared Graham McBride, "«A Sea of Blood and Tears»: Ethnic Diversity and Mass Violence in Nazi-Occupied Volhynia, Ukraine, 1941–1944" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2014), 128.

⁵⁶ David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 374.

⁵⁷ Wendy Lower, "Anti-jewish violence in Western Ukraine, summer 1941: varied histories and explanations," *The Holocaust in Ukraine: New Sources and Perspectives* (2013): 148.

⁵⁸ Martin Dean, ed., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945: Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, v. 2 (Washington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 1376.

⁵⁹ For example, Ukrainians took part in the pogrom in Korca, and Germans and Ukrainians took part in the pogrom in Dubno (Zbikowski, "Local Anti-Jewish pogroms," 177).

⁶⁰ For example, in Kremenets on July 3, 1941, when the Germans occupied the city, Ukrainians killed 130 Jews during a pogrom, and their shops were looted. In Lanivtsi, after the occupation of the city

ment of the occupying power was often accompanied by the destruction and looting of Jewish buildings, businesses, and shops. Locals sometimes joined such actions.⁶¹ In this context, Martin Dean points out that the local population's spontaneous reactions after the Germans' arrival, the motives of individuals, and the importance of Jewish property in gaining support for anti-Jewish measures strengthen our understanding of the genocide dynamics. It is important to remember that the Holocaust required not only central plans but also real people at the local level.⁶²

Looting Ghettos and Jewish Homes

Locals' acquisition of Jewish property peaked when Jews were forcibly relocated to the ghetto and when they left the ghetto buildings during the "final solution of the Jewish question." Locals and government officials occupied some Jewish houses, and the rest were looted and destroyed.

One example of looting Jewish buildings is illustrated by the post-war criminal case, which highlights civilians' role in robbing Jews in Rivne. The case is rare because usually, in such sources, the defendants are collaborators from the Ukrainian police, etc., and not civilians. Thus, on May 25, 1944, Lusia Hornyk was sentenced to death, and on September 2, 1944, she was executed. The indictment states that in 1941 the woman, together with the German invaders, robbed Soviet citizens and helped German punitive authorities arrest Communists, Komsomol members, and Soviet prisoners of war in Rivne.⁶³ During the German occupation, Lusia Hornyk worked in a sewing workshop and had the opportunity to rob the Jews of Rivne. Among the things she appropriated were several armchairs and 2 sewing machines. Her husband took a gold watch, a bracelet, a gold ring, and a bed after the shooting of the Jews in Rivne. Witness M. Dovhan also claimed that the defendant said that she and her husband found gold with US dollars

on July 3, 1941, during a pogrom with rape organized by Ukrainian anti-Semites, 60 Jews were killed and Jewish houses were looted. In Ratno, at the beginning of the occupation, there was a looting of Jewish property by local Ukrainians from the villages, during which one Jew was killed. On July 6, 1941, local Ukrainian peasants in Ratno organized a pogrom with mass robberies and murders. After the occupation of Shumsk by Wehrmacht units on July 2, local Ukrainians looted Jewish homes, despite public announcements that this was prohibited. A few days later, they organized a pogrom, during which Jews who tried to defend themselves were killed, etc. (Dean, ed., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, 1395, 1402, 1456, 1480).

⁶¹ For example, when the Germans looted Jewish houses during the occupation of Velyki Mezhyrychia, the local population took their clothes from the place of looting (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1422U).

⁶² Dean, "Local Collaboration," 134.

⁶³ AO SSU RR, f. 4, ref. 10424, p. 34.

and other gold items (bracelets, watches, wedding rings) in one of the apartments of the Jewish family. Hornyk also admitted that after Rivne Jews were executed, her husband went to the victims' apartments searching for gold. She saw that he had \$12, 5 gold fives, a watch, and a coat. She even quarreled with him because he gave her just the watch and coat.⁶⁴

During the relocation to the ghetto, Jews were forbidden to take many things, so much of their stuff became the property of locals and occupiers.⁶⁵ In addition, there are cases when non-Jewish residents, whom Jews asked to help transport their property to ghetto houses, tried to rob them.⁶⁶

A similar process of looting Jewish buildings took place after the ghetto was destroyed. Available sources make it possible to analyze this issue from the standpoint of different (all) sides of the genocide process: victims, observers, executioners. Evidence of the latter category is "The Diary of an unknown OUN member, Derman resident, about the extermination of Mizoch Jews and the uprising in the local ghetto," describing the looting of the ghetto by locals and generally praising the liquidation of Jews in Mizoch. In particular, the diary mentions women who took bundles of Jewish stuff, and it is noted that "many people will make a good living."⁶⁷ The victims' memoirs supplement the information of non-Jewish observers. They are more emotional and show not only longing for the lost property but also their own reflections and assessments of neighbors' actions, calling them "locusts," "experts" in robberies, etc.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ AO SSSU RR, f. 4, ref. 10424, p. 23–23 rev.

⁶⁵ The looting of Jewish homes began as soon as the Jews moved from them to the ghetto. As soon as the gates of the ghetto in Nova Ushytsia were closed, where the Jews were resettled in September 1941, the police and local residents broke into Jewish homes and stole everything they could (Dean, ed., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, 1433).

⁶⁶ Varvara Barats, a Jewess from Rivne, recalled that when she transported things to the ghetto, the carrier took advantage of the woman's helpless position. At first, he demanded 25 marks for transportation, and transportation he asked for another 10 marks. And he took everything he wanted from the apartment, despite the owner's remarks (Барац, *Бегство от судьбы*, 43–44).

⁶⁷ In the Diary, the author describes the process of looting the ghetto by local residents in Mizochi during its liquidation and fire: "They begin to clean the houses that have not yet burned down. Women wash themselves with sweat, carrying a pile of various Jewish clothes on their shoulders. Yes, in hell, where the Jews die, a cunning man sees paradise. He is still moving his body parts, and the man is already removing the rags from him and leaving him naked... many people will make a good living" (SARR, f. P. 30, op. 2, ref. 83, p. 11 rev.).

⁶⁸ In the Memorial Book of Rivne, the witness compares the robbers to locusts that spread to Jewish homes. Poor and rich, educated and ordinary people participated in the illegal appropriation of property. Many of them could not carry the loot in their hands, so they carried it on horses. Poles and Ukrainians who looted the ghetto were called "experts" in this matter ("The Holocaust (Меморіальна книга Рівного)"). The Jew Oleksandr Levin from Rokytno recalled that after the destruction of the ghetto,

Robberies in the ghetto have become widespread. In general, historians note that the robbers were lured there by the stereotype of "Jewish gold" hidden in every Jewish house, including in basements, secret rooms, special niches in the walls, furnaces, under the doorsteps.⁶⁹ And they took everything from small things to large ones. In Ozeriany, according to the witness, the doors were removed, cattle, horses, sewing machines were taken away, and large furniture was taken out by horses.⁷⁰ A characteristic feature of looting the property left by Jews after the liquidation of the ghetto was the participation of people from neighboring villages.⁷¹

Evidence of the ghetto robbery after the liquidation is confirmed not only by documented witnesses⁷² but also by photographs. Dieter Pohl, in his study, provides a photo with the description: "Lutsk residents rob the ghetto after its liquidation on September 3, 1942"⁷³ (Photo 1).

Following the liquidation of the ghetto, the preservation of buildings from looting and destruction by local non-Jews became a real problem for local authorities. Even though they were "sealed," closed to prevent the intrusion of robbers, guarded, these buildings began to attract many people. As a witness from Olyka said about ghetto robbers – "there were always enough of such people."⁷⁴ Eyewitness accounts describe the process as follows:

the peasants broke the walls with axes searching for hidden valuables, – "turned into real marauders" (Левин, "Негаснувшие свечи Холокоста," 288–289). Michael Diment described the robbery of the ghetto in Torchin in his diary: "...I got into the ghetto, but it was empty, all the houses were empty. The police and villagers took away the furniture. The peasants transferred the best things to their carts, and the rest were stored separately. Various household utensils, such as bed linen, were also stored separately... In the houses, everything is turned upside down, scattered and gutted" (Дімент, *Самотній вигнанець*, 99–100).

⁶⁹ Ольга Белова, and Владимир Петрухин, "Еврейский миф" в славянской культуре (Москва: Мосты культуры, 2007), 311–313.

⁷⁰ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1463U.

⁷¹ For example, in the Ozeryan ghetto (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1463U), ghetto in Serniki (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 544U), ghetto in Horynhrad (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1402U), ghetto in Stolyn (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 195B), Mizoch ghetto (author's archive, interview with Hanna Hermaniuk (August 6, 2016); author's archive, interview with Terenty Hermaniuk (July 30, 2016); author's archive, interview with Maria Lytvynets (August 8, 2016)).

⁷² For example, a witness from Velyki Mezhyrichia mentioned that when the Jews left the ghetto, no one guarded the houses, "then terrible things happened, pillows, feathers were all lying around, scattered" (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1422U).

⁷³ Дітер Поль, "Масове вбивство євреїв України за німецької військової адміністрації в Рейхскомісаріаті Україна," in *Шоа в Україні: історія, свідчення, увічнення*, ed. Рей Брандон, and Венді Лауер (Київ: Дух і Літера, 2015), 84.

⁷⁴ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1773U.



Photo 1. Lutsk residents rob the ghetto after its liquidation on September 3, 1942

“things were taken and houses were dismantled,”⁷⁵ “those who wanted furniture took it, others tore the floor, took the boards. In other words – people took what they wanted,”⁷⁶ etc. Civilians not only appropriated the items found in the ghetto but also demolished and dismantled former Jewish buildings for their own needs, including firewood.⁷⁷ In Horynhrad, there were cases when residents of the neighboring village of Mykulyn dismantled and transported “Jewish houses” by boat because the Germans completely burned down their village.⁷⁸

Information on the looting of former ghetto buildings is provided by almost all councils in which ghettos existed. For example, in a report on the activities of the Ostroh district administration in February 1943, the head of the Ostroh district, Ivan Motrenko, informed Rivne Gebits Commissar Dr. Beer that 30% of buildings in the former ghetto had been protected from

theft and destruction.⁷⁹ It was clear from the report that the administration failed to protect the ghetto buildings. Also, in February 1943, to prevent the houses of the former ghetto from destruction, the doors and windows of the houses were blocked, and the guards of the town council were on duty day and night, preventing theft. As early as March 1943, in a similar report, we found information that the three guards were on duty day and night, preventing the looting of the ghetto.⁸⁰ In April 1943, work on the protection of ghetto buildings continued.⁸¹ However, apparently, such actions did not give the desired effect because the report of the Ostroh district administration for June 1943 indicated the presence of people who “dismantled houses, both in the ghetto and outside it, for heating.”⁸²

The looting of former ghetto houses in the Korets district has reached alarming proportions. The head of the Korets district administration told the police commander that the theft of houses in the “Jewish precinct” “has reached terrible proportions.” Declaring himself powerless, he said, “my anti-theft tools are not working,” and asked three times to provide protection. He suggested ambushing every 3–4 days and sending the criminals to forced labor (Photo 2).⁸³

The Dubrovytsia Town Council also failed to deal with the looters, and reported to the police repeatedly in January and February 1943.⁸⁴ Finally, the administration noted that if the police did not fulfill their responsibilities, they would absolve themselves of responsibility for guarding houses.⁸⁵

In some cases, the influx of people wanting to profit from Jewish property did not stop even under fear of death. In Rozhyshechi, despite the announcement that the looting of Jewish property would be punishable by death, the civilian population continued to do it. The secretary of the council, Vasyliuk, noted that to prevent people from looting a ghetto, shutsmen of the regional council “had to use the weapon.”⁸⁶

⁷⁹ SARR, f. P. 27, op. 1, ref. 1, p. 13.

⁸⁰ SARR, f. P. 27, op. 1, ref. 1, p. 62–63.

⁸¹ SARR, f. P. 27, op. 1, ref. 1, p. 76–78.

⁸² SARR, f. P. 27, op. 1, ref. 1, p. 98.

⁸³ SARR, f. P. 48, op. 1, ref. 11, p. 200.

⁸⁴ SARR, f. P. 293, op. 2, ref. 5, p. 87, 100.

⁸⁵ SARR, f. P. 293, op. 2, ref. 5, p. 100.

⁸⁶ State Archive of the Volyn region (hereinafter – SAVR), f. P 76, op. 2, ref. 1, p. 121.

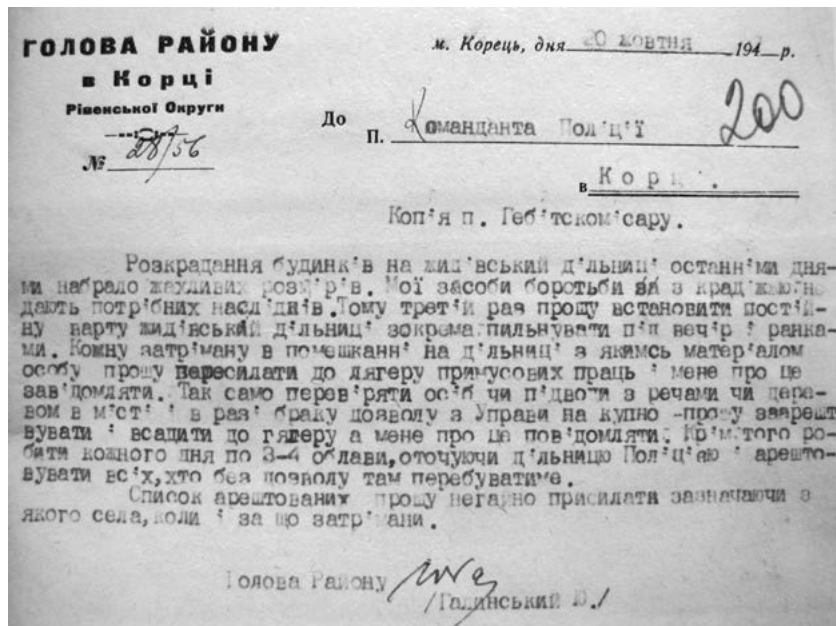


Photo 2. Letter of the head of the Korets district administration Yu. Halytskyi to police commander in Korets town as of 20.IV.1942 about the theft of former ghetto houses, the need to establish security and punish robbers

Jewish Property After the Murder of the Owners

Mass killings of Jews released significant material resources of the victims. Local non-Jews could get them after Jews were taken to be executed, at the place of execution, after the execution, etc. The route of the genocide victims to the location of execution was a place where non-Jewish residents had the opportunity to appropriate their belongings. Jews usually had valuables with them because during such “relocation actions,” the occupiers allowed and sometimes ordered to take valuables and food supplies for a few days. For example, in Rivne, Jews were allowed to take luggage up to 16 kg on their last trip.⁸⁷ In the photos, one can see the things they carried with them on November 6, 1941, on the way to the Sosonky tract (Photos 3, 4).⁸⁸

⁸⁷ For example, during such “resettlement” in Rivne (stocks in “Sosonky”) in November 1941, it was allowed to take a supply of products for 3 days, as testified by the Jews Rosenberg Eduard (State Archive of the Russian Federation (hereinafter – SARF, f. 7021, op. 71, ref. 40, p. 11 rev.), Emilia Rablynska (SARR, f. P. 534, op. 1, ref. 4, p. 210–211). You were allowed to take 16 kg of luggage with you (Крыглов, “Уничтожение евреев в г. Ровно,” 109).

⁸⁸ ВArch, f. В 162, ref. 04229, p. 4; ref. 04231, p. 6.



Photos 3, 4. Jews of Rivne with their property go to Sosonky, November 6, 1941



Sometimes, realizing the hopelessness of their situation, the Jews threw their belongings out on the road so that the “Germans would not get them.”⁸⁹ In this way, local observers could get them. In the villages, it was often children who grazed cattle nearby⁹⁰ and didn’t think about the possible negative consequences of their actions.⁹¹

Civilians, whom Father Patrick Desbois called “small death jobs,”⁹² had the opportunity to appropriate the victims’ property at the site of the execution. These were workers who were forcibly taken away to carry out various types of work in the process of murder, including digging graves, delivering victims to places of execution, collecting and selling Jewish clothing, property, searching for Jewish valuables, etc.⁹³ Civilians, primarily residents of settlements where Jews were being exterminated (neighbors), as well as Soviet prisoners of war and prisoners of Nazi prisons, were involved in small death jobs. They were not police officers or collaborators. Most often, these were young men and women, children or adolescents who were forcibly taken from their homes by armed men.⁹⁴ It should be noted that there was a labor shortage in the villages during the war because adult men could be at the front, in the army, underground, etc. Therefore, there were many cases when women were forced to do this job.⁹⁵

The prisoner Yakiv Pavlenko is just one example of such workers. He was forced to be a sorter at the site of the November 1941 murder of Rivne Jews. He was warned that those stealing Jewish clothing would be shot. However, it was cold, and when Pavlenko asked for a sweater from Jewish things, he got the permission.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ For example, according to the witness, the road in Tuchyn along which the Jews were taken to be shot was paved with Soviet money: “Millions of money were lying on the road” (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1386U).

⁹⁰ In Mizochi, the witness recalled that shepherd children collected jewelry thrown by Jews in Stubelka river during the aktion in October 1942 (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 574U).

⁹¹ A witness from Radyvyliv recalled that when she was 9 years old, she even dived into the river to get a bag with gold thrown away by a Jewish woman. However, a policeman saw it and took away the “gain” (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1483U).

⁹² Desbois, “The witnesses of Ukraine,” 96. For more detail on “small death jobs” and their role in the Nazi plans to carry out the Holocaust in the Volyn-Podillia general district see: Mykhalchuk, “«Small death jobs»,” 157–165.

⁹³ Desbois, “The witnesses of Ukraine,” 96–97.

⁹⁴ Дебуа, *Хранитель спогадів*, 109.

⁹⁵ For example, the burial of Jewish graves, as was in Pinsk (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 176B); Mykhalchuk, “«Small death jobs»,” 162.

⁹⁶ USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (hereinafter – USC SFI VHA), testimony No. 1561.

Items collected from the places of execution were delivered to storage and sales points. In Rivne, such items, according to Jewish Varvara Baratz, were taken to the synagogue.⁹⁷ Bundesarchiv has photos of this process (Photo 5).⁹⁸



Photo 5. Transportation of property of executed Jews to the storage point

Sometimes such workers were rewarded and received Jewish things semi-officially (such property belonged to the state). In Varkovychi, workers who buried Jews were allowed to take Jewish belongings.⁹⁹ According to a witness from Tuchyn, his father, who buried the site of the mass murder of Jews, was given clothes because there were many (ten) children in his family.¹⁰⁰ In some cases, “small death jobs” workers not only managed to get Jewish things but also allowed other residents to take advantage of this opportunity. For example, on Chetvertnia, according to the witness, men who buried the pits told other people that they could take Jewish things.¹⁰¹ Mizoch residents also get such an opportunity as locals could take clothes lying in the ditch.¹⁰² Among

⁹⁷ Барац, *Бегство от судьбы*, 37.

⁹⁸ BArch, f. B 162, ref. 04239, p. 13.

⁹⁹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1396U.

¹⁰⁰ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1387U.

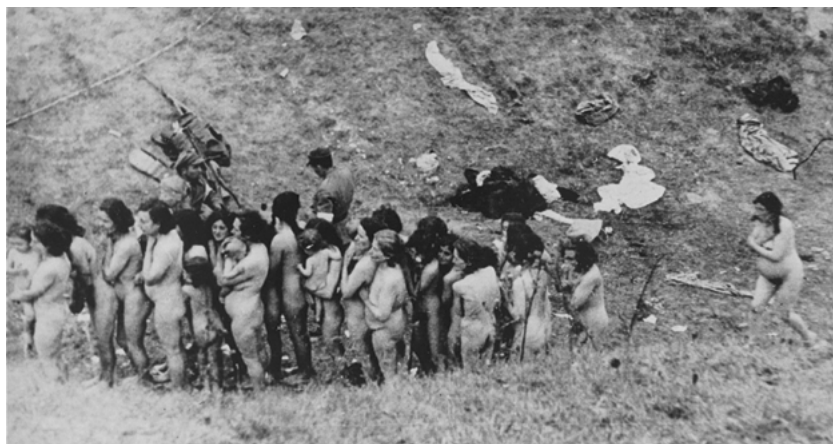
¹⁰¹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1475U; Mykhalchuk, “«Small death jobs»,” 163.

¹⁰² Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 574U.

the photographs of the extermination of the Mizoch Jews there are two, which show chaotically scattered clothes next to the victims (Photos 6, 7).¹⁰³



Photos 6, 7. Mizoch Jewish women and children undressed before execution, October 14, 1942



Of course, small death jobs were not the only group to take Jewish property from execution sites. Civilians not involved in such work did the same. German Hanz Pilz recalled that 10 days after the murder of Rivne Jews, he was at the scene of the shooting on November 16, 1941, and photographed

¹⁰³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum arkhiv, photo No. 17876, 17877.

Ukrainians who were looking for valuables there.¹⁰⁴ In particular, the photos show people trying on shoes found at the place of execution (Protos 8–11).¹⁰⁵



Photos 8–11. Locals searching for things and valuables at the place of execution of Rivne Jews in "Sosonky" in November 1941

It was easier for civilians to appropriate Jewish belongings when the occupiers allowed it,¹⁰⁶ and when there were ties with them (or government officials). For example, a Sernyky resident wore a jacket from Jewish clothes when loading items from the execution site and was to be shot because a German saw it. However, he was a relative of Sernyky commandant, so he got released.¹⁰⁷ The cooperation of individuals with government officials on the basis of family ties can be traced in other examples. A resident of Hrinnyky took things out of the ghetto (furniture, pillows, featherbeds) and wore Jewish clothes given to him by his brother, a policeman. Forcing

¹⁰⁴ Круглов, "Уничтожение евреев в г. Ровно," 124.

¹⁰⁵ ВArch, f. В 162, ref. 04233, p. 8; ref. 04234, p. 9; ref. 04235, p. 10; ref. 04237, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ For example, in Vyshnivtsi (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 841U), in Balyń (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 649U).

¹⁰⁷ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 545U.

Jews to undress during the mass shooting, he took away their clothes. Then his wife washed the clothes from the blood and it was sold.¹⁰⁸ Another fact, when the property of Jews was transferred to civilians from the police was the transfer of the relatives, wife.¹⁰⁹

It should be noted that the belongings of the Jews killed at the place of execution were of interest to local residents immediately after the killing,¹¹⁰ after the end of the war during the Soviet era,¹¹¹ and during Ukraine's independence.¹¹²

Authorities' Reaction to the Looting of Jewish Property by Civilians (Official and Real)

In appropriating Holocaust victims' property, there was a competition between the authorities and local non-Jews. With the exclusive right to seize such property, the occupation authorities used penalties on competitors, including execution. The relevant decrees enshrined the monopoly right of local authorities to Jewish property. It was common practice to hand over detained robbers to the police with looted items.¹¹³ Punishment decrees varied in severity, from preventing "civilians from requisitioning houses, tools, heating elements, and pets,¹¹⁴ to the death penalty for embezzling "Jewish" property that was considered robbery.¹¹⁵ For example, in one of these announcements in November 1941, signed by Rivne Gebitskommissar Dr. Beer,

it was stated that "theft and destruction of things entail the death penalty" (Photo 12).¹¹⁶



Photo 12. Announcement of Rivne Gebits Commissar Dr. Beer on the use of the death penalty for theft of property

There were also government warnings to the population not to buy looted Jewish property, which was clearly not uncommon at the time. On May 1, 1942, Ivan Pavliuk, the head of the Hoschansk district administration, instructed the village elders, "To warn the population to be very careful in all sales of various Jewish property and not to buy blindly, so as not to lose money."¹¹⁷ The minutes of the meetings of the heads of the Rivne district on April 25, 1942, warned people to be careful not to buy things "so as not to lose money later."¹¹⁸ In this context (the struggle against purchasing Jewish property), an interesting case occurred in Sernyky. According to the witness, the German ripped a Jewish pillow bought by a local with a bayonet and put it on the buyer's head.¹¹⁹

However, the official reaction of officials could be different from reality. In practice, local representatives of the Nazi administration, heads

¹¹⁶ BArch, f. B 162, ref. 04228, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ SARR, f. P. 245, op. 2, ref. 1, p. 70.

¹¹⁸ SARR, f. P. 22, op. 1, ref. 139, p. 4; f. P. 33, op. 1, ref. 21, p. 39, 40.

¹¹⁹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 544U.

¹⁰⁸ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 36447.

¹⁰⁹ Yes, according to the interrogation protocol dated May 16, 1944. S. Markhunenko admitted that as a policeman he participated in the arrest of Jews in Rivne and engaged in robbery in Jewish apartments. He transferred the property to his wife: "I remember that I took fifteen pairs of men's underwear, eight sheets, two suits, and other things from the apartments of the Jews, and I exchanged some of the clothes for food. Part is at my wife's house" (AO SSU RR, f. 4, ref. 2656, p. 19–20).

¹¹⁰ For example, in Kovel (Dean, ed., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, 1389). In the "Sosonky" tract, a week after the shooting of Rivne Jews, local residents were digging the ground with sticks at the site of the aktion, trying to find jewels (Круглов, "Уничтожение евреев в г. Ровно," 124). In Radyuylov, local residents searched for jewelry at the site of the shooting a month after the shooting (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1782U).

¹¹¹ For example, in Mizochi in 1957 (author's archive, interview with Ludmyla Pidtopta (August 9, 2016). In Tuchyn, after 20 years of killing Jews, looters dug up the place of execution (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1389U). In the post-war period, excavations of Jewish graves were recorded in Pinsk (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 176B).

¹¹² For example, in Sosonky, Rivne, looting was constantly recorded from the 1950s to 2021 inclusive.

¹¹³ SARR, f. P. 68, op. 1, ref. 2, p. 16.

¹¹⁴ SARR, f. P. 33, op. 7, ref. 291, p. 187.

¹¹⁵ SARR, f. P. 29, op. 1, ref. 19, p. 110.

of administrations, and the police themselves were involved in the theft of Jewish property, often cooperating with local residents. Researcher Mykhailo Kunitskyi notes that a relatively small part of Jewish property fell into the hands of the central state institutions of the Reich. The most valuable items and jewelry were taken by German and local police forces, etc., the local population.¹²⁰ The robbery of Jewish property by these participants is successfully illustrated by the words of one of the witnesses, “The Germans took the good stuff, the shutsmen took little worse stuff, and other people took the bad stuff.”¹²¹ Losing to the authorities in the struggle for Jewish property, locals, in their own testimonies, regretted it.¹²²

In turn, the reaction/actions of local authorities to the appropriation of Jewish property by local residents can be divided into 3 categories: 1) punishment for robbery (including execution), 2) permission to loot, and 3) robbery permit in exchange for material motivation (cooperation with civilians, joint agreements).

The competition for Jewish property between the occupiers and the locals (and, as a result, the death penalty) is aptly illustrated by the memoirs of Baptist pastor Volodymyr Borovskyi. Arriving to Kovel in January 1943 from Berlin, he saw empty Jewish houses with broken windows and doors. “They told how different people, when there were no Jews, tried to steal Jewish property. The Germans shot a peasant woman to scare others, and the corpse lay on the street for some time. There were more such cases, although the Germans, especially their top officials, appropriated this property the most”, – wrote Borovskyi.¹²³ According to other witnesses, the death penalty for robbers of Jewish apartments could have been carried out not only by shooting but also by hanging. In Brest, the witness noted that although Jewish things were sold cheaply to people, “there was a law that strictly forbade robbery.” To be convincing, the Germans once hanged a policeman who took such things without permission.¹²⁴ However, such radicalism did not always occur in robbers’ punishment. Sometimes they were simply taken around the city with the words: “We robbed the ghetto.” Then they were

¹²⁰ Куницький, “Соціально-правовий статус,” 21.

¹²¹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 642U.

¹²² In Vyshnivtsi, after the shooting of the Jews, the local people present regretted that they did not get anything from the victims’ property, because the Germans and the police took everything away (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 842U).

¹²³ Володимир Боровський, *Під покровом Всевишнього. Спомини* (Атланта: Видання Українського Євангельського Об’єднання в Північній Америці, 1983), 140.

¹²⁴ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 156B. Punishment by gallows is also mentioned by a witness in Kostopol (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1787U).

released. It happened in Ostroh. And then, as the witness noted, there were not one or two robbers, but a dozen or two.¹²⁵

In many memoirs of Holocaust witnesses, there are cases of a lack of authoritative reaction to the looting of Jewish property. Sometimes they were caused by the occupiers’ permission to take Jewish property,¹²⁶ and sometimes by the lack of security in the ghetto.¹²⁷ It happened that the police did not ban the barter process.¹²⁸ In such situations, residents negotiated and resorted to bribery. For example, in Varkovychi, by agreement with the police, people were allowed inside the ghetto. When answering the interviewer’s question, “Did the police ask for something to allow you in?” the respondent replied, “Well, they wouldn’t do it for free.”¹²⁹ Permitting the robbery in exchange for bribing government officials was a cost-effective way to improve the financial situation for both sides. The fact of fellowship contributed to it. For example, to steal things from the ghetto, peasants and locals in Mizoch could negotiate with the police for food (vodka, eggs, etc.).¹³⁰

Thus, when locals get Jewish household items and clothing, in the words of Martin Dean, it “expanded the form of local complicity in crime.”¹³¹

Self-Willed Transfer of Property by Jews to Local Residents

Locals did not always get Jewish property through appropriation. There were cases when Jews gave their belongings, in particular, for hiding or rescue. The realities of the occupation showed that part of the population hid Jews for mercantile purposes. According to Belarusian researcher Evgeny Rosenblatt, there were more “paid” rescuers than “free.”¹³² There were quite frequent cases when the hiding of the Jews ended when they ran out of material resources for the rescuers, and vice versa, when they got them again, the motivation to continue hiding the victims returned. For example, Claire

¹²⁵ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 44884.

¹²⁶ Such cases were recorded in Vyshnivtsi (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 840U, 841U), Domachevo (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 135B), Varkovychi (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1396U), Lanivtsi (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 822U), Ozeriany (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1463U), etc.

¹²⁷ For example, in Varkovychi (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1398U).

¹²⁸ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1463U.

¹²⁹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1398U.

¹³⁰ Author’s archive, interview with Neonila Panyokha (July 25, 2016).

¹³¹ Dean, “Local Collaboration,” 131.

¹³² Евгений Розенблат, “Спасение евреев Беларуси в годы Холокоста: праведники и праведне,” in *Холокост: новые исследования и материалы: материалы XVII Междунар. конф. по иудаике*, v. IV., iss. 37 (Москва, 2011), 81.

Boren, a Jew from Mizoch, said that she and her mother were initially hidden by a Czech man, who later said he could no longer hide them because Jews were constantly searched for. After that, the Jews dug up gold in their yard, returned and gave him money to buy food, and he hid them for some time.¹³³

Ida Katz, a Jew, recalled that while hiding in Balyn with Deacon Jacov, her father gave him a golden five. He took it, but the next day he told them to leave him, “I didn’t know where you came from, and I don’t know where you go.” The deacon not only sent them away (although he took the money) but also reported them to the appropriate authorities. The Jews barely managed to escape.¹³⁴

Michael Diment noted in his diary that after escaping from the Lokachi ghetto, the forester Fedir, who was hiding him, told him after a while, “You are lying here in the straw, so why do you need a warm suit? Let’s exchange.” The Jew had to give away his clothes but got the rescuer’s worn-out pants and jacket instead. And eight days later, the forester asked him to leave. Here, unlike in the previous example, the rescuer did not report the fugitive to the police and allowed him to leave. Max Weltfrint, a Jew from Mizoch, described another situation. He witnessed the death of the Wasserman family at the hands of a peasant who hid them. According to Weltfrint, the owner of the house and his accomplices killed the Wasserman family in the field (only son-in-law Moshe Maizlich survived) and took all the family gold, money, and jewelry.¹³⁵ The presented cases testify to the diversity of actions and reactions of local residents, including rescuers, to the vulnerable position of Jews. The idea of people hiding Jews as exclusively positive characters does not reflect absolute reality. Many of them tried not to advertise the fact of hiding Jews.

Threats and blackmailing were the extreme cases of such “exchange.” It was practiced by both locals and government officials, mostly police officers, who had greater opportunities to use force.¹³⁶

The opposite was the case when Jews gave their property to non-Jews on their initiative. It was an unexpected act of acquisition of Jewish property, which highlighted the friendly relations between the two sides. For example, in Lanivtsi, on the way to the shooting, a Jew threw a watch at a local resident

“Hrudtsev.”¹³⁷ In Lokachi, after the rescue, the Jew dug up the property hidden in the ground and gave a lot of clothes to people, including the man who hid her at the time, and other people.¹³⁸ Many memoirs repeatedly mention that the Jews gave their rescuers gold and other valuables as a gratitude.¹³⁹ Such practices existed both during the Nazi occupation and after the establishment of Soviet power after the end of World War II.¹⁴⁰

Sometimes property left by Jews to non-Jewish residents “for keeping” often became their property for a time. Constant confiscations, requisitions, and contributions forced Jews to hide their jewelry, valuables, silver, porcelain, clothing, fur, and even furniture at their “Christian friends”: Poles, Czechs, Ukrainians – until the war ends.¹⁴¹ Authorities tried to combat such phenomena and searched for Jewish things among the locals.¹⁴² Emil Goldbarten from Mizoch said that in December 1941, working at a local sugar factory, he gave free kerosene for Christmas at the request of a Ukrainian worker Karp. The Ukrainian wanted to pay, but Emil “decided he was a good guy” and gave kerosene for free. So when the need arose, Karp hid Goldbarten. So, as Emil summed up, “for these two liters of kerosene, he sheltered me.”¹⁴³ He also told a story about hiding at another Ukrainian, a former worker who had worked for him for 15 or 20 years. The day before the ghetto was created, he handed over his belongings to this man for keeping, including two or three steel kegs with kerosene.¹⁴⁴ Thus, Emil Goldbarten’s example shows

¹³⁷ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 822U.

¹³⁸ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1481U.

¹³⁹ For example, in the village of Halevo, near Pinsk, a Jewish woman who came to the family during hiding gave the witness a gold ring – “let it serve as a memory” (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 177B), in Mizochi, a Jewish woman gave a gold ring to a woman who carried groceries to the ghetto (author’s archive, interview with Teklia Demydiuk (August 12, 2016)).

¹⁴⁰ For example, in Pysarivka, Khmelnytskyi region, a Jew who came to the village after the war donated property to those residents who helped him escape (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 849U).

¹⁴¹ For example, as it was in Dubno (Dean, ed. *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, 1353), Sernyky (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 544U; Desbois, *In Broad Daylight*, 54), etc.

¹⁴² For example, the head of the village of Sukhivtsi, Yashchuk, on September 25, 1941, informed the Klevan district administration that they did not have “Jewish” horses, carts, and harnesses in the village. No Jews were found who had inventory. They only found “one cow and one pig that Jews left with citizen Kolner Onysko” (SARR, f. P. 26, op. 1, ref. 29, p. 12). On February 18, 1942, the head of the Kostopol city administration pointed out to the commandant of the city police that three Kostopol citizens had Jewish sewing machines, and asked to send policemen to the mentioned persons, to take the machines from them and deliver them to the city administration (SARR, f. P. 291, op. 1, ref. 146, p. 59).

¹⁴³ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 07722.

¹⁴⁴ Михальчук, “Порятунок євреїв в Мізочі,” 233.

the importance of good neighborly relations of the pre-war period formed based on economic/labor/property relations for salvation.

It should be noted that many residents who hid Jewish things often kept their word and returned the property, as noted by both witnesses¹⁴⁵ and Jews.¹⁴⁶ However, there were opposite cases. Punishment for hiding Jewish things was not as severe as for hiding Jews, but it was still a real danger. Sometimes dishonest residents “compensated” such a risk by appropriating the property left by the victims. In Klevan, the witness said that when taking things from Jews, locals often profited from it, “There are a lot of people here who took gold for a purpose that they will give it away.”¹⁴⁷ Rachel Zeidman from Lutsk recalled that her father had agreed with his Polish neighbors to hide things. However, when she came for them, he gave her only a meager portion and told her not to come again.¹⁴⁸

In order not to give things to the Jews, locals sometimes reported owners to the occupiers, who ambushed them.¹⁴⁹ There were cases when people dug up Jewish things and took them away.¹⁵⁰ Another example of the acquisition of Jewish property was the death of Jews. In this case, the former owners could not take away their belongings, and they became the property of the new owners.¹⁵¹

Usually, the material property increased the chances of Jews being saved, but there were opposite cases when its presence endangered or threatened their lives. One such story is related to Isaac Rosenblatt of Mizoch. The shepherds (yesterday’s friends) persecuted him and told him, “Jew, we will report

¹⁴⁵ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1782U.

¹⁴⁶ For example, testimony of Jews about the village of Stadnyky in the Ostroh district (USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 43886), Balyn (USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 11210), Hrytsiv (USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 29299).

¹⁴⁷ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1366U.

¹⁴⁸ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 50672.

¹⁴⁹ For example, in the village of Medoshiv (USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 36447). In Rivne, after the shooting in Sosonky, the Jew M. Vaks tried to protect his wife Sonia and a 9-year-old boy in the house of his former housekeeper. She accepted them, saying to bring the best things. When he did, she handed over her wife Sonia and child to the German authorities (Барац, *Бегство от судьбы*, 36).

¹⁵⁰ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 544U.

¹⁵¹ Olga Rui from Ostroh mentioned a Jew who left things with them. When the family found out that he had been shot and that his relatives were also dead, they opened a suitcase and found chisels, chains, locks, etc. there. “All this was necessary for the household, and this is how we survived the occupation, thanks to the Jew. My mother often exchanged these tools for lard, soap, and sal,” – Olga Rui recalled (Святослав Ситай, ed., *Криваві жорна війни: трудова повинність на Рівненщині у 1941–1944 роках: спогади, документи, факти* (Рівне: Вид. О. Зень, 2013), 56).

on you, we need your clothes, or we will hand you over to the police.”¹⁵² Then he was beaten so badly that he urinated on himself.

Dangerous situations often occurred during ghetto looting. Borukh’s Jew hid in the Ludwypil ghetto after its liquidation and could not leave for three days because local women were looting property from the ghetto and even fought among themselves.¹⁵³ Jew Mykhailo Kostrichenko recalled that a woman who robbed the ghetto found him and started shouting that there were “Jews.”¹⁵⁴ In such cases, robbers caused the deaths of Jews. A witness from Ozeriany actually admitted it.¹⁵⁵

Sometimes material things weighed more for the locals than the life of a Jew. For example, in Tsapsevychi, a peasant persecuted a Jew for his suit, and threw him in the Horyn river, where he drowned;¹⁵⁶ in Mezhyrich Koretskyi, a woman agreed to an SS proposal to throw Jewish children into a pit and received a blanket.¹⁵⁷

It was pretty common to receive Jewish property as a result of barter for food. This act was voluntary on the Jews’ part but was officially banned by the authorities. Nevertheless, commercial relations did not end. Sometimes Jews and the local non-Jewish population devised schemes for such mutual exchange. For example, in Lanivtsi, Jews exhibited items behind the opened ghetto fence. If someone from the locals was interested in the product, a deal could take place.¹⁵⁸ A witness from Stolyn said that food was thrown over the fence in the ghetto for “junk.”¹⁵⁹ For the Jewish population, it was a chance to survive; for the other side – to maintain their financial situation in difficult times or get rich. In this context, Shmuel Spector noted that for the peasants, “hungry Jews were good trading partners.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 38507. See also: Михальчук, “Порятунок євреїв в Мізочі,” 228.

¹⁵³ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 49417.

¹⁵⁴ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 34403.

¹⁵⁵ After the destruction of the ghetto in Ozeryany, the witness went to look for property there with three friends. During the search in the attic of the building, a Jew was found with a knife. He rushed at the witness who entered his house. The police saw this and shot the Jew (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1463U).

¹⁵⁶ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 47316.

¹⁵⁷ Анастасія Обарчук, *Межиріч Корецький: нариси історії волинського містечка* (Рівне: ПП ДМ, 2010), 163–164.

¹⁵⁸ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 822U.

¹⁵⁹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 194B.

¹⁶⁰ Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews*, 133.

Testimonies of Holocaust victims and witnesses confirm that part of the population provided food to Jews free of charge, without requiring remuneration. However, the other part saw it as their own economic interest. Usually, the exchange of Jewish things for non-Jewish food was not equivalent, so it sometimes resembled robbery. For example, in the Lanivtsi ghetto, Jews asked for a piece of bread for their clothes.¹⁶¹ And Ida Katz from Balyn mentioned that she received a dozen or a few dozens of eggs for a crystal vase.¹⁶²

Behavioral Models, Motivations And Dilemmas of Non-Jews Regarding the Property of Holocaust Victims

The analyzed cases of property acquisition of Holocaust victims by non-Jewish residents allow stating various models of their behavior (or their combination).

A certain category of locals condemned the appropriation of Jewish property, which is explained by moral principles. Moreover, this attitude applied to quasi-legal, official practices (buying and selling) and informal (robbery). It was unacceptable and “morally difficult” for some residents of the region to buy the victims’ property after they were shot. This is how a witness from Dubno described her refusal to buy Jewish things.¹⁶³ While some witnesses simply stated that they did not buy such things during the sale¹⁶⁴ or robbery of the ghetto,¹⁶⁵ others condemned people for such actions, “Those who had no conscience, took things, and others who had a conscience did not [buy].”¹⁶⁶

For a certain category of people who did not dare to take Jewish property, the opinion of others and the possible condemnation of relatives, friends, and neighbors played an important role. This was especially true for children, for whom family guidelines played a key role.¹⁶⁷ According to a witness from Sarny, when people went to rob Jewish houses after the ghetto was

liquidated, her mother strictly forbade her to go there and take anything.¹⁶⁸ Stepan Trokhymchuk recalled that when people took clothes and furniture from houses in Lanivtsi after the executions of Jews, his parents told him that “no one has the right to take someone else’s stuff, because it is a sin to take someone else’s property and appropriate it.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, the children behaved according to their parents’ instructions. In Chetvertnia, after the execution of Jews, a 9-year-old witness told her mother that local women were sorting Jewish clothes and offered something to her, but she did not take it, and her mother praised her for it, “Well, that’s good. We don’t need someone else’s blood. Don’t take it.” Being 9 years old, the girl could evaluate her actions and condemn the neighbors, “I didn’t take it, and people took it with blood. Oh, nothing scares them.”¹⁷⁰

Children could be punished for violating the instructions. Parental prohibitions were intertwined with threats. For example, by preventing his son from robbing the Mizoch ghetto, his father threatened to beat him with a stick.¹⁷¹ The authority of the parents worked even when the children were adults and held positions in the occupation administration. For example, a 19-year-old resident of Derman village, who joined the Mizoch district police and boasted of a suit taken from the Jews, was beaten by his father. “After that, I didn’t go to the police anymore,” the policeman testified.¹⁷²

Often parents ordered their children to get rid of Jewish belongings. Such cases are recorded repeatedly.¹⁷³ Sometimes children did it themselves. Patrick Desbois recalled the testimony of a man from Tuchyn who said that as a 14-year-old, he wore the jacket of a murdered Jew but threw it away after a neighbor recognized it, and he felt ashamed.¹⁷⁴

All parent-child behaviors should be objectively pointed out. Isolated cases show that some parents, on the other hand, encouraged their children to take Jewish property. For example, when Jews in Smordwa went to be

¹⁶⁸ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 45897.

¹⁶⁹ Усач, “«То не німці...»,” 155.

¹⁷⁰ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1475U.

¹⁷¹ Author’s archive, interview with Roman Dmytruk (August 12, 2016).

¹⁷² AO SSU RR, f. 4, ref. 3444, p. 48–50.

¹⁷³ In Balyn, the parents forced their child to take back to the ghetto an embroidered picture that she had taken. Moreover, the mother followed her and watched whether her daughter would fulfill the order (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 649U). In Lunivtsi, the parents ordered the daughter to get rid of the dress and scarf that she had picked up when the Jews were being led to be shot (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 193B).

¹⁷⁴ This jacket, along with other things, went to his father, who dug a Jewish grave and had 10 children (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1387U; Desbois, *In Broad Daylight*, 195–196).

shot and threw packages along the way, a father ordered his 12-year-old son to check “maybe someone threw away the gold.”¹⁷⁵

In addition, an important detail should be noted as most of those who refused to take Jewish property and restrained others said that Jewish property obtained through dishonest means — “human tears” — would eventually turn into trouble/evil for the new owners. Such a belief was manifested not only in eyewitness¹⁷⁶ but also was described in folk tradition.¹⁷⁷

Other cases indicate that Jewish property was not taken because of close friendships and personal acquaintances. Thus, sometimes the instructions of the parents and the acquaintance with the Jews complemented each other. According to a witness from Sernyky, “their family did not take anything from Jewish property because their mother forbade it as they knew that Jews.”¹⁷⁸ In Goshcha, the witness mentioned that when a Jew asked to exchange clothes for food, he gave it for free, because

We knew all those Jews, we went to school together, we played in the meadow together, those were good guys... How can I take something from him if he came — he wants to eat... It’s not an exchange. He just takes off his stained shirt or pants — Will I take it?¹⁷⁹

A partial explanation of friendly relations should be sought in the pre-war period of socialization, the coexistence of the region’s inhabitants, when Jews and non-Jews lived side by side, made friends, went to school together, and were closely connected through trade and economical operations. In the words of a non-Jewish witness, it sounded like this, “We lived with them [Jews] all the time,” “lived together.”¹⁸⁰

The important thing is that such people could not be crystal clear about other people’s things. Their honesty concerned only friends. Otherwise, they could be tempted to take someone else’s property. For example, when a Jew from Lokachi asked a Ukrainian friend why she did not take her clothes, she received the answer, “If I didn’t know, were a stranger, then maybe I would have gone and taken it. But I grew up with you, and I know all of you. Why would I take your property? Why would I take it?”¹⁸¹ The only time people could take such property was after the death of its owner because they

¹⁷⁵ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1371U.

¹⁷⁶ Author’s archive, interview with Terentii Hermaniuk; Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1343U.

¹⁷⁷ Белова, and Петрухин, “Еврейский миф,” 310–311.

¹⁷⁸ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 544U.

¹⁷⁹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1431U.

¹⁸⁰ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1343U.

¹⁸¹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1481U.

would no longer need it. For example, in Miatyn village (12 km from Rivne), a neighbor took things from a Jewish woman’s house because he thought she had been killed in Sosonky. However, when it turned out that she managed to escape, he gave her all her property.¹⁸²

The opposite side of local non-Jewish attitudes toward Jewish property was its acquisition. The analysis of such actions by different population categories cannot be reduced to a black-and-white assessment.

Some residents considered the legal purchase of a property a normal phenomenon but did not accept its unofficial looting.¹⁸³ The motivation of some residents who bought such things was almost always to solve the difficulties of financial situation and improve living conditions. Their statements specifically stated why they needed the property (nothing to wear, no home, etc.). Some researchers assess such actions of buyers as legitimation and support of the Nazi government. Historian Petro Dolhanov, who analyzed similar statements by locals who bought Jewish buildings in Volyn, concludes that yesterday’s neighbors could no longer remain bystanders after moving to Jewish homes. They accepted the occupying power’s offer to participate in the distribution of resources generated by the Holocaust. Thus, they expressed their consent to the crime.¹⁸⁴

In the cases of the acquisition of Jewish property, we see a difference. The appropriation of the property of dead Jews, which was already officially owned by the state, did not threaten Holocaust victims, as they were killed. However, the attempt to buy Jewish houses, whose owners were still alive and the buyers knew about it, threatened their existence. In this case, for the sake of potential buyers, the authorities could deprive Jews of their property, “relocate,” or get rid of them in various ways. Therefore, we should talk about the potential liability of such buyers.

A certain part of the population was quite normal about the appropriation or theft of Jewish belongings, considering it one of the ways to survive the difficult time of occupation (the dead do not need property, and the living will need it).¹⁸⁵ There was a large category of people who tried to increase their wealth. In this case, the robbery of Holocaust victims was used for their own enrichment, regardless of the status of the victim (living or dead). Among the representatives of this group, there could be those who did not want

¹⁸² USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 22263.

¹⁸³ Witnesses openly say that they had Jewish clothes (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 161B).

¹⁸⁴ Долганов, “Бенефіціари Голокосту,” 77–78.

¹⁸⁵ For example, the day after the aktion in Mizoch in October 1942, a resident of a nearby village took off the shoes of a dead Jew lying on the road (author’s archive, interview with Neonila Paniokha).

Germany to lose the war because of the possibility that the real owners would return and the prospect of being held accountable for their crimes. In particular, Yitzhak Arad noted that there was a part of the locals who sought the victory of Germany as an interested party.¹⁸⁶ This group had the shakiest moral guidelines. Such people were not ashamed to appear in public in Jewish clothing. Some witnesses emphasized that they even came to church services¹⁸⁷ or searched for valuables at the place of execution.¹⁸⁸

This category included residents who openly robbed ghetto prisoners during the barter, despite their difficult situation. Their self-reflection and evaluation of their actions conceptualized the idea that they “helped” Jews this way. For example, a witness from Tomashivka said that in the ghetto, he exchanged a watch for 10 kg of flour, claiming that then the Jews “needed help.”¹⁸⁹ However, the exchange of food for a fee can hardly be called help but rather a simple barter. In some places, such actions clearly resembled robbery. In Ozeriany, at the request of the Jews to give them bread, the witness directly replied, “Give me your watch – I will give bread.”¹⁹⁰ According to the witness, he paid for his watch with a slice of bread and gave some lard.¹⁹¹ In addition, he asked the Jews for “cigarettes,” for which he did not give them anything because “they did not ask for anything.”¹⁹² In general, the witness stated that he went to the ghetto to exchange food many times and each time asked for a watch because he had clothes. He considered this practice quite normal, even given that he personally knew Holocaust victims.

¹⁸⁶ Арад, “Разграбление еврейской собственности,” 35.

¹⁸⁷ USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 29420; USC SFI VHA, testimony No. 47316.

¹⁸⁸ When there was a search for jewelry at the shooting site in Radyvyliv a month after the Tragedy, local boys boasted about whose father brought more money: “my dad brought 2 fives,” other – 5, etc. Among the amazing facts, women’s hair, which could contain gold, was searched for valuables (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1782U).

¹⁸⁹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 127B.

¹⁹⁰ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1463U. Father Patrick Desbois mentions the same incident with a watch and bread, which was told by a witness in Rokytne (Desbois, *In Broad Daylight*, 34).

¹⁹¹ The witness notes that the Jews did not eat lard, but when there was no choice, they ate it (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1463U). Another witness from the Varkovychi also notes that the Jews ate lard because there was nothing to eat (Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1398U).

¹⁹² Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1463U. Part of the interview looks like this:
– Yahad-In Unum: Tell me, please, when they gave you this tobacco, cigarettes – what did you give them in return?

– Witness: Nothing, nothing. I don’t want to lie. I didn’t give them anything. They didn’t ask for anything. Even the last thing they said – a rainy day is upon us and that’s all. Ivan, bring bread, milk.

– Yahad-In Unum: And what did you give them for a watch?

– Witness: A slice of bread and that’s it. What else could I give? They cut another piece of lard.

After all, the negative role described by witnesses is not a reason for them to think about moralizing. They are also not burdened by the possibility of being recognizable, as in the years of these events.

Thus, the problem of behavior patterns and motivation of local non-Jews regarding the property ownership of Holocaust victims need different approaches. There was a number/range of behavioral reactions from the abandonment of such property to its appropriation, and the desire to make money, the formation of which was influenced by various factors (socio-economic, personal, (im)moral).

Acquisition of Jewish Property by Non-Jewish Residents: Common and Different Things Compared to Other Regions

The acquisition of Jewish property by non-Jews during the Holocaust is a common phenomenon. The analysis of the sources gives grounds to claim similar processes that took place in other occupied territories of Ukraine: theft of victims’ clothes at the site of the execution of Jews (Piatka village, Zhytomyr oblast);¹⁹³ theft of belongings from the transport used to carry the belongings of the killed (Illintsi, Vinnytsia oblast);¹⁹⁴ search for clothes and shoes at the graves of mass murders (Ingulets, Dnipropetrovsk oblast);¹⁹⁵ intention to loot the ghetto (Piatykhatky, Dnipropetrovsk oblast);¹⁹⁶ ghetto robbery after its liquidation (Chernivtsi, Nyzhni Stanivtsi, Chernivtsi oblast, Kranoselivka, Zaporizhzhia oblast),¹⁹⁷ search for valuables in Jewish belongings, theft of Jewish property from warehouses (Lubny, Poltava oblast),¹⁹⁸ transfer of Jewish property (clothes) to employees for work performed (Hrabovets, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast).¹⁹⁹

There is also evidence when people claimed that they did not take property (but other people did) (Piatka village, Zhytomyr oblast, Nyzhni Stanivtsi, Chernivtsi oblast),²⁰⁰ under the influence of relatives or condemnation refused to rob the ghetto (Piatykhatky, Dnipropetrovsk oblast).²⁰¹

¹⁹³ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1719U.

¹⁹⁴ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 2172U.

¹⁹⁵ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 941U.

¹⁹⁶ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 948U.

¹⁹⁷ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 2326U, 2217U, 396U.

¹⁹⁸ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1921U.

¹⁹⁹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 2278U.

²⁰⁰ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 1719U, 2217U.

²⁰¹ Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 948U.

As in the Volyn-Podillya General District, there have been isolated cases where parents were positive about their children's acquisition of Jewish belongings and sometimes encouraged them to take such items. For example, a child who took only one toy (a little horse) from the ghetto of Chernivtsi was reproached by her mother for not taking some other things.²⁰²

What is also common is that Jewish property was of interest to all segments of the population, regardless of social status, age, gender, or ideological and political preferences. In our opinion, the robbery of Jews did not depend on the anti-Semitic sentiments of the robbers (or such cases were extremely rare), and the material factor was determining. Sometimes civilians took Jewish property not for themselves but for the needs of organizations.²⁰³

The peculiarities of looting Jewish property in various parts of Ukraine depended not only on the Nazi occupation but also on the pre-war position of Jews under Soviet rule. The relative poverty of Jews in the eastern and central regions of Ukraine is explained by the economic measures of the Soviet government. Thus, it should be emphasized that both the Reich and the local non-Jewish population in the Western regions were more enriched with Jewish property, as Jews living in Galicia and Volyn had more material wealth than Dnipro Jews due to the temporary Soviet occupation in 1939–1941.

In the Volyn-Podillya General District, as in most of occupied Ukraine, the killing of Jews took place in the context of the Holocaust by bullets during the shootings²⁰⁴ in the pits where their belongings remained after the murder. Thus, they were easier to take. This practice is different from the Holocaust in Western Europe, where Jews were killed in special camps.

The process of looting Jews and its timing in various occupied areas of Ukraine was determined by the time of extermination of victims. For example, if the majority of Volyn Jews were killed by the end of 1942, the process of extermination of Galician Jews lasted until mid-1943.

The Volyn-Podillya General District and Galicia District were regions where many pogroms took place at the beginning of the Nazi occupation, during which Jewish property was looted. In other areas, such a mass phenomenon is not observed. And there is a difference within the terrain

of the studied region. The pogroms in the Volyn-Podillya General District took place mainly in the newly annexed in 1939 western Rivne and Volyn regions.

Conclusions

Reconstructing the behavioral patterns of the local non-Jewish population during the Holocaust requires analysis not only by historians but also by other experts. The difficulty of analyzing the problem is manifested in the destructive consequences of war when what in peacetime could be in a latent state (profit, selfishness, greed, propensity to commit crimes) in military circumstances comes to the surface, becoming the dominant factor in the behavior for each person.²⁰⁵ In extreme violence conditions, there were combinations of such behavioral patterns, where the line between “one's own” and “another's” could seem quite conditional.

Extreme violence, such as the Holocaust in occupied Ukraine, could have taken place because it brought certain material benefits to both the Nazi occupation administration and part of the local non-Jewish population. The property of the victims of the Holocaust and the material component of the relationship, in general, were a kind of motivational background for cooperation with the occupiers when both sides were aware of the importance of collaboration based on pragmatic mercantilism/materialism.

Using their interest in the material goods of the war-impooverished population, the Nazis distributed Jewish property among those whose support they needed. Although the Germans despised the Slavs, allowing them to use the victims' property was essential to maintain their dominance. It was a kind of payment for conformism and their tacit consent to the genocide of the Jews. Historian Petro Dolhanov called it the principle of “forming a tacit collective agreement that Jews no longer have a place in the life of communities.”²⁰⁶

Although the people who acquired Jewish property were of different backgrounds, genders, and ages, they all had close pre-war social ties to the victims, usually neighbors. The above-described practices of acquiring Jewish property have become a litmus test in the perception of the tragedy of Jewish neighbors.

Jewish society has implemented various behavioral responses to the tragedy of the Jews. Under extreme conditions, it is impossible to be a daily hero with the victims of the Holocaust, but the choice not to do evil has always

²⁰⁵ Олександр Лисенко, “Деякі теоретичні аспекти дослідження проблем соціальної солідарності в період Другої світової війни,” *Сторінки воєнної історії України* 17 (2015): 8–9.

²⁰⁶ Долганов, “Бенефіціари Голокосту,” 84.

²⁰² Yahad-In Unum Archives, testimony No. 2326U.

²⁰³ Sometimes property was taken not for themselves, but for the needs of organizations. For example, a teacher from Tuchyn indicated that together with the other citizen in Mezhyrychy “Jewish things were carried in bags” and then handed over to the UPA (SARR, f. P. 2771, op. 2, ref. 2144, p. 26).

²⁰⁴ According to Oleksandr Kruhlov, 70% of Jews were shot dead on the territory of Ukraine, 22–23% were gassed, 5% (mainly in the Romanian occupation zone) died of hunger and disease in the ghetto. About a third of the victims died in 1941, half in 1942, and the rest in 1943–1944. (Александр Круглов, *Енциклопедія Холокоста: Еврейская энциклопедия Украины* (Київ, 2000), 204).

existed. However, it was common to acquire their belongings even among those “who did not do evil” and sympathized with the victims. Those who considered it an inadmissible moral sin were in the minority.

Deprived of property, Jews were less likely to survive persecution, which could have led to their deaths. Given this, many non-Jews can no longer be considered “observers” today. Their appropriation of Jewish property could have had a greater or lesser effect on the dynamics of the Holocaust at the local level.

It is challenging to analyze the level of consciousness and beliefs of people who robbed Holocaust victims. In this respect, we stand in solidarity with the rhetorical question of Aron Shneer, who cites the example of the interrogation of a Jewish robber. To the investigator’s question, “Did he rob people?” he answered, “Not people, but Jews...”²⁰⁷ Today, analyzing the above problem requires using broader methods than those used by historical science. Therefore, specialists in psychology and law should be involved.

Although by appropriating Jewish property through unofficial practices, locals exposed themselves to danger and punishment, as they acted contrary to the orders of the occupation administration, they (knowingly or not) participated in the legitimization of Nazi crime. In this case, there was a double robbery: Jews were robbed as victims of the Holocaust, and the Nazi occupation authorities were robbed as legitimate property owners. Motivation for the appropriation of Jewish property was due to materialistic reasons, where the anti-Semitic component could play only a minor role.

The thirst for material property mobilized the most shameful human instincts that could lead to the death of Jews. According to Timothy Snyder, most of the local non-Jewish population was corrupted by the prospect of seizing Jewish property, and many began to view the killing of Jews in terms of their own economic interests.²⁰⁸ These things are inextricably linked as robbery has always been a companion to war.

The role of local people in the theft from Holocaust victims in Ukrainian historiography was diminished, in particular in comparison with the same crimes committed by the official German administration. Some researchers argue that the “looting of Jews by the local population can not be considered a mass phenomenon.”²⁰⁹ However, there is another position: “the looting of Jewish property by locals was a mass phenomenon, and the desire to profit from Jewish property was perhaps the most common motive for

²⁰⁷ Шнеер, “За убийство євреїв ніякої відповідальності,” 64.

²⁰⁸ Тімоті Снайдер, “Життя і смерть західноволинських євреїв,” in *Шоа в Україні: історія, свідчення, увічнення*, eds. Рей Брандон, and Венді Лауер (Київ: Дух і літера, 2015), 142.

²⁰⁹ Зілінський, “Пограбування єврейського майна,” 123.

the participation of local people in the Holocaust;²¹⁰ the robbery of Holocaust victims served as means of “legitimizing” the genocide among the local population, encouraging it to collaborate.²¹¹

The findings of our study show that locals were much more involved in the Holocaust than previously thought, including the misappropriation of genocide victims’ property. The acquisition of Jewish property by non-Jews has reached significant proportions, and in specific cases (especially the liquidation of the ghetto), this process has become widespread.

Although the issue of acquiring Jewish property was considered in the case of the Volyn–Podillya General District, the study results are certainly much broader for a general understanding of the issue in the Nazi-occupied Eastern Territories.

Today, there are approximate figures by Dieter Pohl covering the involvement of local Holocaust perpetrators (police) in solving the “Jewish question.”²¹² However, it is unlikely that such statistics will be reported on civilians who resorted to looting Holocaust victims and thus depriving them of their economic livelihoods and contributing to the genocide.

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²¹⁰ Андрій Усач, “Місцеві колаборанти та Голокост в Україні: перспективи і виклики дослідження,” in *Українське суспільство і пам’ять про Голокост: наукові та освітні аспекти* (Київ: УЦВІГ; КВІЦ, 2018), 46–47.

²¹¹ Долганов, “Бенефіціари Голокосту,” 83.

²¹² Dieter Pohl, “Ukrainische Hilfskräfte beim Mord an den Juden,” in *Die Täter der Shoah: Fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?*, ed. Gerhard Paul (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), 219, 232.

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THE PARTICIPATION OF THE UKRAINIAN AUXILIARY POLICE IN THE MASS MURDER OF JEWS IN THE REICHSKOMMISSARIAT UKRAINE¹

The aim of the research is to uncover the participation of representatives of the Ukrainian auxiliary police in the mass killings of Jews, study of their motivation to participate in these crimes, and highlight the main stages of mass killings in which local police officers took part. The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism, system-formation, scientific character, verification, the author's objectivity, moderated narrative constructivism, and the use of general scientific (analysis, synthesis, generalization) and specially-historical (historical-genetic, historical-typological, historical-systemic, etc.) methods. Scientific novelty on the basis of criminal cases from the Yad Vashem Archive, as well as regional archives of the Security Service of Ukraine, the forms and methods of participation of representatives of the Ukrainian auxiliary police in the mass killings of the Jewish population were analyzed. Eyewitness accounts from the archives of Yahad-In Unum and Yad Vashem were used to more fully reveal of the crimes.

Conclusions. *In the mass murders of the Jews were participate members of the Ukrainian auxiliary police. Most local police officers were involved in the preparation and conduct of the mass shooting. They were actively involved in identifying and arresting Jews, escorting them to the place of execution, and guarding the place of execution. Sometimes police officers took part in the shootings. For the most part, these were, before the occupation, ordinary Soviet citizens who did not stand out from the general mass of the Soviet people. However, during the Nazi occupation, they joined the Ukrainian auxiliary police, usually voluntarily, and were involved in the criminal activities of this occupation structure.*

Keywords: *Ukrainian auxiliary police, Holocaust, mass murders.*

Since the summer of 1941, occupation zones with civilian administration began forming on Ukraine's lands occupied by German troops. In particular,

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