

C. LVIV 1944 – c. 2009: JEWISH CULTURAL OBJECTS AND PROPERTY. SOME CASES AND TENDENCIES, TARIK CYRIL AMAR⁶¹⁷

Lviv is the Ukrainian name of the now western Ukrainian city also known as Lwów (in Polish), Lemberik (Yiddish), Lemberg (in German or Yiddish), or Lvov (in Russian). Long inhabited by a multi-ethnic population, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the city was the capital of the Habsburg province of Galicia and generally called Lwów or Lemberg. On the eve of the Second World War, it was home to a politically dominant Polish and mostly Roman Catholic majority population and several minorities, with about a third of all inhabitants Jewish and about a sixth Ukrainian, who were usually Greek Catholics.⁶¹⁸

From the Middle Ages on, and in spite of varying antisemitic constraints and persecutions, Lviv was also a major and often thriving center of Jewish religious, cultural, and political life. From the later nineteenth century, its Jewish community made important contributions to collecting and preserving Judaica and Jewish art; in the first third of the twentieth century these efforts converged in the Kuratorium Board for the Protection of Monuments of Jewish Art and its successor organization, the Society of Friends of the Jewish Museum in Lviv.⁶¹⁹

The collapse and dissolution of the Habsburg Empire under the strain of defeat in the First World War led to an escalation of the conflict between competing Polish and Ukrainian national/ist projects, both claiming Lwów/Lviv. After Polish victory (accompanied by a pogrom), the city became a major regional center in an increasingly authoritarian interwar Poland, while militant Ukrainian nationalists turned toward terrorism as well as authoritarian and fascist models. Lwów's Jewish population suffered severely from the First World War but kept growing after it. Its Jewish Gmina community was the third-largest in interwar Poland and very active.

In 1939, as a consequence of collusion between Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union, the city was occupied and annexed by the latter, officially renamed Lviv (in Ukrainian) and incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet republic. After the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, it came under German occupation until 1944, when it was reconquered by Soviet forces. During the German occupation, virtually its whole Jewish population was murdered in the Holocaust.

From 1944, with its Polish majority population expelled, Lviv was a part of Soviet Ukraine again. From 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it has been a city in independent Ukraine. As of 2001, an official census that is not perfectly reliable showed a total population of about 725,000 registered inhabitants. Nearly ninety percent of them were identified as ethnically Ukrainian, about nine percent as Russian, about one

⁶¹⁷ Part of the research used for this article was done at and funded by the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for which I would like to express my gratitude. Finished before 2009, this article does not systematically reflect subsequent developments or publications.

⁶¹⁸ For Lviv's twentieth-century history, see also Tarik Cyril Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv. A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015) and the literature referenced therein.

⁶¹⁹ Zofia Borzymińska, "Kuratorium Opieki nad Zabytkami Sztuki Żydowskiej Gminie Wyznaniowej we Lwowie," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, No.2 (2005), 155-173, Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz, "Judaicasammlungen zwischen Galizien und Wien. Das Jüdische Museum in Lemberg und die Sammlung Maximilian Goldsteins," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte, Kultur und Museumswesen*, Bd.1 (1994/95), 133-145, and Faina Petriakova, "Judaika v muzeinomu landshafte Lvova: konets XIX-XX st," in *Dolia evreiskoi dukhovnoi ta materialnoi spadshchyny XX st.* (Kyiv, 2002), 272f.

percent as Polish and 0.3 percent as Jewish.⁶²⁰ With virtually all of the very few survivors of the Holocaust – some paradoxically saved by a brutal Soviet deportation in 1940 – having left immediately after the war, Lviv’s small post-Soviet Jewish community has little direct continuity with its pre-Holocaust predecessor.

In wartime Lviv, the Holocaust was the decisive factor in determining the fate not only of its Jewish victims but also of their property, including cultural objects. Abuse and murder in many forms went hand in hand with plunder in multiple ways and by various German as well as non-German individuals and institutions. At the same time, the effect of the Holocaust on cultural objects would remain beyond reconstruction without a more precise sense of what happened in Lviv before 1941 and after 1944.

Several key features delineated this context: Lviv experienced radical ruptures of political regime three times between the fall of 1939 and the summer of 1944. While only the German occupation brought policies of antisemitism and genocide to the city, both new regimes initiated massive and violent changes, including large-scale and pervasive property shifts involving official as well as informal practices of expropriation. Secondly, between 1939 and 1946, Lviv’s population was changed fundamentally. By the later 1940s, no more than a tenth of its inhabitants were *not* newcomers. Thirdly, since the Soviet reconquest of Lviv in 1944, the city has been part of two different states, a Soviet Ukrainian Republic and then an independent Ukraine since 1991.

The Soviet Occupation 1939-1941

Lviv’s first Sovietization between 1939 and 1941 brought with it massive repression, including expropriations, so that generally speaking, large-scale compulsory changes in property started before the German occupation, as Dieter Pohl and Martin Dean have pointed out for the parts of Eastern Europe under Soviet occupation between 1939 and 1941 as a whole.⁶²¹ As a consequence, after the German attack of 1941, some Jewish property fell into German hands via, as it were, intermediary Soviet expropriations. In Lviv, the latter affected not only virtually all types of commercial property and public institutions, but also scientific, academic, educational, and cultural institutions (such as museums, theaters, libraries, etc).⁶²²

Adding the general effects of war as well as currency manipulations and massive tributes in the shape of punitive taxes or state loans, Soviet rule over Lviv impoverished the city substantially, also leading to the mobilization of additional resources by selling or bartering personal property – often, at the beginning of the occupation at least, to members of the Red Army and the new Soviet elite. While it is impossible to say how many things remained in Lviv and how many were taken further East by their new owners – either at once or during the flight of the Soviet forces and elite in June 1941 – this category may need additional research. Again, there is as yet no information on the specific extent to which this phenomenon affected property owned by Jews in general or cultural objects in particular.

Regarding individual institutions, there is a clearer picture, at least in some cases. Thus, the city’s Gmina was dissolved and its property confiscated, entailing the closure of two of prewar Lviv’s most important Jewish

⁶²⁰ According to the Ukrainian national census of 2001. <http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/results/general/nationality/lviv/> (accessed on 10 June 2009). As all census data, the 2001 Ukrainian census should be treated carefully. The general impression that Lviv is now a predominantly ethnically Ukrainian city with only small or very small minority communities, however, is at any rate correct.

⁶²¹ Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews, The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and USHMM, 2008), 191 and Dieter Pohl, “The Robbery of Jewish Property in Eastern Europe under German Occupation, 1939-1942,” in Martin Dean, Constantin Goschler, Philipp Ther, *Robbery and Restitution. The Conflict over Jewish Property in Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2007), 69f.

⁶²² Bonusiak, Andrzej, “Sowietyzacja Kultury Lwowa w Latach 1939-1941,” in *Lviv. Misto, Suspilstvo, Kultura*, tom 3, VLU, Spetsialny Vypusk (1999), 563f.

cultural institutions, the Gmina's library and its museum. In 1940, the Gmina library holdings were taken over by the newly established Lviv branch of the library of the Ukrainian Academy of Science. The new branch consisted of the possessions of six major libraries, all formally dissolved. Three quarters of the new branch's holdings were derived from the Ossolineum, a key library and symbol of Polish culture. From the Gmina library the branch received about 18,000 volumes.⁶²³

The Gmina library had been founded in 1900. According to a recent official publication by the Polish Ministry of Culture and Art, in 1930 it held 16,479 items. They included early printed books, periodicals, and an archive containing manuscripts of scholarly works, Kahal documents from Lviv as well as other towns in Galicia, as well as the Gmina's own archive from 1925 and a chronicle covering the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the spring of 1940, the archival holdings were mostly transferred to archives in Lviv, while the Lviv branch of the Ukrainian Academy of Science took over the books.

The about 5,000 exhibits of the Gmina's museum, opened in 1934, were given to Lviv's Museum of Arts and Crafts.⁶²⁴ In Lviv, the Gmina museum's holdings were clearly the most significant Judaica collection, as the collector and private scholar Maximilian (Maksymilian) Goldstein pointed out in 1942.⁶²⁵ Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz has characterized them as among "the most interesting and diverse worldwide." They included various sacral objects, deposits from synagogues in Lviv, contributions from private donors, and acquisitions made through the Society of Friends of the Jewish Museum in Lviv. Their main component was Marek Reichenstein's collection of Ketubot and graphic works as well as parts of his library.⁶²⁶

Maximilian Goldstein, a key initiator of the Gmina museum as well as an early contributor to its collection, was employed by the Soviet authorities to catalogue the transferred objects.⁶²⁷ Regarding his own collection, he received permission to keep it at home. It mainly consisted of ethnographic objects from Galicia as well as contemporary objects, such as posters or postcards and materials from the period of the First World War.⁶²⁸

Smaller but not to be overlooked were several other Judaica collections also affected by Soviet decisions. Thus, the Soviet Museum of Arts and Crafts itself was based on the former City Arts and Craft Museum. The latter had started acquiring Judaica in 1895, as did the museum of the Ukrainian Shevchenko Society, the Historical Museum of the City of Lviv and the National Jan Kazimir III Museum. The Soviet authorities merged the latter two, creating the new "Lviv Historical Museum."⁶²⁹

⁶²³ Maciej Matwijów, *Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich w latach 1939-1946* (Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2003), 74, 76.

⁶²⁴ Petriakova, "Judaika," 274.

⁶²⁵ Derzahnyni Arkhiv Lvivskoi Oblasti, *fond 35, opis 13, sprawa 146: 20*, hereafter abbreviated as DALO 35,13,146:20

⁶²⁶ Kohlbauer-Fritz, "Judaicasammlungen," 133, 140, Petriakova, "Judaika," 273, Borzymińska, "Kuratorium," 158.

⁶²⁷ Zofia Borzymińska, "Kuratorium Opieki nad Zabytkami Sztuki Żydowskiej Gminie Wyznaniowej we Lwowie," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, No.2 (2005), 153-165.

Bibliotekei na wschodnich ziemiach II Rzeczypospolitej. Informator (Poznań: Wspólne Dziedzictwo, Ministerstwo Kultury I Sztuki, 1998), 328.

Jens Hoppe, *Jüdische Geschichte und Kultur in Museen. Zur nichtjüdischen Museologie des Jüdischen in Deutschland* (Münster: Waxmann, 2002), 275.

⁶²⁸ Kohlbauer-Fritz, "Judaicasammlungen," 143.

⁶²⁹ Petriakova, "Judaika," 272.

German Occupation and Holocaust 1941-1944

In the summer of 1941, Lviv was occupied by German troops and subsequently turned into the administrative center of a new district Galizien of the German Generalgouvernement regime in central and eastern Poland.⁶³⁰ The German occupation of Lviv began with two massive pogroms that involved local perpetrators, especially Ukrainian nationalists, at the beginning and end of July – the so-called “Prison Aktsia” and the “Petliura Days.” It then led quickly to ghettoization, forced labor, “contribution” forced levies for Lviv’s Jews, the establishment of the Yanivska (or Janowska) camp, and mass deportations to the Belzec death camp. The number of Jews in Lviv in early October 1941, i.e. after the first pogroms and Einsatzgruppen killings, yet before the peak of the Holocaust, has been estimated at between 111,000 and 160,000.⁶³¹ In 1942 and 1943, nearly all of them were murdered, in most cases either in the city’s ghetto, the Yanivska camp, or in the Belzec camp.⁶³²

German looting in eastern Europe was generally more ad hoc and less formalized than in the West.⁶³³ In Lviv as well, a formalistic “confiscation decree” went together with several German agencies seizing large quantities of loot while various perpetrators engaged in “spontaneous expropriations.”⁶³⁴ Regarding cultural property, the outcome of an earlier bureaucratic turf war meant that, by the time Lviv was added to the Generalgouvernement, the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg played a reduced role there, unlike in the occupied territories in general. The Dutch businessman and war criminal Pieter Menten, who worked for the Nazi SD and participated in massacres, however, came to specialize on looting art in Lviv, taking large amounts of objects to the Netherlands and even provoking a special SS investigation.⁶³⁵

Lviv’s quickly imposed Judenrat was made to transmit a constant stream of demands for specific things to be stolen from Lviv’s Jews and handed over to its new German inhabitants. According to David Kahane, who witnessed these events, the objects taken in this manner included not only furniture, clothing, or jewelry, but also antiques.⁶³⁶

As elsewhere, substantial pickings went to some of those who were also under occupation, but not subjected to genocide, forming a bond of mutual interest between the occupiers and some of their subjects, involving some of the latter to one degree or another in the Holocaust.⁶³⁷ German agencies made efforts to monopolize the robbing of the victims, as reflected in German official documentation. Yet in everyday Jewish experience, as reflected in diaries or testimonies, the looting by the Germans, more or less systematic, occurred together with that carried out by unknown but significant numbers of local non-Jews. Thus, it is impossible to

⁶³⁰ In terms of international law, it should be pointed out, the German *Generalgouvernement* was not an ordinary occupation regime but an undefinable monstrosity, as in other respects as well.

⁶³¹ Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939-1944. Życie codzienne* (Warsaw, 2000), 50. See for slightly higher minimum estimates Frank Golczewski’s contribution on Poland in Wolfgang Benz (ed), *Die Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (München: Oldenbourg, 1991), 445: According to the Lwów *Judenrat*’s estimate, there were 119,000 Jews in the city in October 1941 and their number decreased to 103,000 by January 1942. Jones, *Żydzi*, 122.

⁶³² Dieter Pohl, “Schlachtfeld zweier totalitärer Diktaturen – die Ukraine im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” *Österreichische Osthefte*, Jahrgang 42 (2000), Heft 3-4, 349 and idem, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941 - 1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (München: Oldenbourg, 1996), 139-151. Especially for the extremely low number of Jewish survivors in the city in 1944 Hryciuk, *Polacy*, 50, Wolfgang Benz (ed), *Die Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (München: Oldenbourg, 1991), 484, 491, Eliyahu Jones, *Żydzi Lwowa w okresie okupacji 1939-1945* (Łódź, 1999), 123.

⁶³³ Pohl, “Robbery,” 72f.

⁶³⁴ For surveys of German looting and ubiquitous corruption Pohl, *Judenverfolgung*, 299-304 and Thomas Sandkühler, “*Endlösung*” in *Galizien: der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz 1941-1944* (Bonn, 1996), 198.

⁶³⁵ Pohl, *Judenverfolgung*, 303.

⁶³⁶ David Kahane, *Sbchodennyk lwivskoho hetto* (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2003), 39.

⁶³⁷ For this phenomenon in the occupied East in general, Martin Dean, *Robbing*, 210ff.

understand what happened to Jews and their belongings during the German occupation without paying attention to the attitudes and behavior of non-Jewish local inhabitants.

Major German operations as well as pogroms were accompanied by both German formalized seizures and multiple small and large opportunities for non-Germans and Germans to add their individual ingenuity and violence. Signally, it was on 28 July 1941, during the Petliura Days pogrom, accompanied by widespread plunder by non-Germans, that the German authorities extorted their first, large “contribution” from Lwów’s Jews.⁶³⁸ For the victims, raising this money often meant selling off their property at highly depreciated prices or handing over objects, such as jewelry or heirlooms instead of cash.⁶³⁹ Jewish survivors would also remember local non-Jews taking advantage of this. David Kahane recalled that the news of the “contribution” spread quickly and that “peasants from the villages around Lviv” arrived in town in large numbers to buy up Jewish property, such as furniture.⁶⁴⁰ The line between formalized expropriation, corruption and face-to-face robbery was fluid. By July 1943, the German bureaucracy attempted to trace what exactly had happened to the “contribution” of July 1941 once it had been collected and found that its scant records, in essence, indicated that the district governor, the Stadthauptmann, and the Stadtbaudirektor had refurbished their residences by plundering Lviv’s Jews.⁶⁴¹ While this may seem counter-intuitive, only the victims of these centralized as well as decentralized activities saw anything resembling a whole, if still incomplete, picture and even for this simple reason alone their voices, where available, are of special significance.

The segregation, oppression and finally annihilation of Lviv’s Jewish population, also led to large shifts in the possession of residential space, which, in turn, entailed the loss of thousands of households full of various objects to their owners. To David Kahane, observing the initial ghettoization process from a victim’s perspective, it could even seem as if its main purpose was to “deprive the Jews, moving from one place to the other, of their property.”⁶⁴² Having already forced thousands of Jewish families to move, at the beginning of November 1941, the German authorities ordered about 80,000 Jews to move into the area, designated for the ghetto, largely identical with the generally poorer Zamarstynów or Zamarstyniv quarter in the north of the city.⁶⁴³

Suspended in December, when 20,000 Jews had not yet moved to this ghetto, this first ghettoization was also accompanied by face-to-face looting of the victims, while several thousand of them were murdered in what became known as the “Bridge Aktsiia.”⁶⁴⁴ The city’s German bureaucracy drew up long lists of spoils, including cash, furniture, jewelry, furs, clothes and bedlinen, with the Stadthauptmann office taking the money, while some of the things went to its employees as well as German policemen and the SS.⁶⁴⁵ There were also “no objections” to releasing furniture and clothes at low prices to the rural population as a reward for complying with agricultural delivery quotas.⁶⁴⁶ According to the famous scholar of jurisprudence Mauricy Allerhand, who lost his large library and art collection when he was forced into the ghetto, this first wave of ghettoization led to an “unheard of exploitation [wyzysku] from the ... Ukrainian population and, in

⁶³⁸ Jones, *Żydzi*, 52f.

⁶³⁹ Khonigsman, *Katastrofa*, 158.

⁶⁴⁰ Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 51.

⁶⁴¹ Jones, *Żydzi*, 52f and AAN 362/224: 94ff (USHMM RG-15.007M, Reel 16)

⁶⁴² Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 65.

⁶⁴³ On the thousands of forced relocations before the ghetto began to be set up see the Judenrat’s letter of 10 November 1941, DALO R-35,2,155: 4 (USHMM Acc.1995.A.1086, Reel 6)

⁶⁴⁴ Pohl, *Judenverfolgung*, 160.

⁶⁴⁵ DALO R-37,4,941: 31, 37-39 (USHMM Acc.1995.A.1086, Reel 26)

⁶⁴⁶ DALO R-35,12,69: pagination illegible (USHMM Acc.1995.A.1086, Reel 25)

exceptional cases, also from the Polish [one].”⁶⁴⁷ David Kahane remembered that at the beginning of the German occupation, Lviv’s streets had been crowded by carts stacked high with Jewish property.⁶⁴⁸

The German occupation thus brought ubiquitous and multifarious seizures of Jewish belongings – specifically targeted and singled out, unlike under the preceding Soviet occupation, as Jewish – official and unofficial, from above and from below, by the occupiers and by locals. Moreover, the massive impoverishment produced by antisemitic persecution, combined with a status of extreme disenfranchisement and segregation, also produced constant pressures to sell or barter – under highly unequal conditions – what was not seized. Regarding the possibility to reconstruct the fate of individual objects, this plethora of depredation, added another layer of complexity and opacity to the preceding effects of the less extensive Soviet expropriations.

While the despoliation of more than 100,000 victims and tens of thousands of households was a constant background to the peak pogroms and “Aktionen” of the Holocaust in Lviv, various German agencies were busy looting specific institutions or despoiling and destroying specific objects, buildings, and sites. Jewish genealogical records were looted and there are, as Patricia Grimsted has pointed out, German shipping lists for them in Lviv archives, but they have not yet been systematically investigated.⁶⁴⁹ Almost all of Lviv’s nearly fifty synagogues and prayer houses were destroyed, together with much of their furnishings, objects, books, and documents.⁶⁵⁰

Yet some objects did survive this first wave of destruction and plunder. The Religious Department of Lviv’s Judenrat established a special “Collection Group” to salvage them. As David Kahane described its members task, they collected “Torah Scrolls, sacral vessels and other objects – candle holders, lamps, and books, not yet stolen by ‘aryans.’ All of this was stored in ... the basement of [a building of the Judenrat],” which gradually turned into a “kind of a museum, which could have been proud of its rare holy books as well as extraordinary samples of decorative art, many of which had been used in synagogues. There you could have found examples of all holy objects, which the Jews of Lviv had [...] collected over the preceding six hundred years of their history.”⁶⁵¹

In the end, however, all contents of the basement were seized by the Germans and disappeared without a trace. On the eve of the “August Aktion” of 1942, the basement still contained hundreds of Torah Scrolls. David Kahane’s plan to save them by hiding them at Lviv’s Greek-Catholic St. George Cathedral, however, was not realized.⁶⁵² Some of the objects from the basement were delivered to a “factory for recycling raw materials,” i.e. probably the Rohstofffassung works in Lviv.⁶⁵³

According to the so-called Katzmann report, named after its author Friedrich Katzmann, one of the key perpetrators of the Holocaust in Lviv, the loot from the victims included 4.3 tons of silver.⁶⁵⁴ Martin Dean has found that “hundreds of kilos of silver” from plundered Jewish property and ritual objects arrived at the Reich Treasury in Berlin in 1942, with “much of this loot ... not rapidly sold off,” but stored at least for some time.⁶⁵⁵ The possibility that some objects from Lviv, too, shared this fate, may be worth further investigation.

⁶⁴⁷ ŻIH 229/3: 1f and 229/22: 3 (USHMM RG-15.069) and Adam Redzik, “W Sprawie Okoliczności śmierci Profesora Maurycego Allerhanda,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no.2 (2005), 178.

⁶⁴⁸ Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 52.

⁶⁴⁹ Patricia Grimsted, *Trophies of War and Empire: The Archival Heritage of Ukraine, World War II, and the International Politics of Restitution* (Cambridge, Mass.: HURI, 2001), 205f

⁶⁵⁰ Khonigsman, *Katastrofa*, 125.

⁶⁵¹ Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 67.

⁶⁵² Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 88.

⁶⁵³ DALO R-35,13,146: 20 and Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 67.

⁶⁵⁴ Thomas Sandkühler, “Endlösung” in Galizien. *Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz, 1941- 1944* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996), 198.

⁶⁵⁵ Dean, *Robbery*, 194f.

Lviv's two major Jewish cemeteries were destroyed. The old Jewish cemetery, stemming from the fourteenth or fifteenth century, had been the object of research as well as preservation and restoration efforts by the Kuratorium. It had been closed in 1855, when the new Jewish cemetery was opened. It was razed during the German occupation, when Jewish workers were forced to demolish and crush its gravestones.⁶⁵⁶ At least part of its matsevot were used as building material. David Kahane reported that the Religious Department of the Judenrat had set up a group of young people to take pictures of the cemetery and record the inscriptions on the gravestones, but that the results of their efforts were lost. When Kahane was imprisoned in the Yanivska camp in November 1942, he found that some gravestones had been used as pavement material there, too. In December 1942, he himself was part of a group taken to the old cemetery and forced to remove more of its gravestones, this time to be used as paving material for a street.⁶⁵⁷ Friedrich Katzmann included in his report a picture of a Jewish cemetery near Lviv and added the caption that "2000 cubic meters of road building material" had been extracted from it.⁶⁵⁸ The new cemetery was also severely damaged but continued to exist after the war. According to David Kahane and Yosif Helston, some of its most valuable matsevot were taken to Germany, but there seems to be no information on their further fate.⁶⁵⁹

In July 1941, apparently to protect it from German seizure, Maximilian Goldstein added his personal collection to the former holdings of the Gmina at the Ethnography Museum.⁶⁶⁰ Initially it remained in his apartment but subsequently it was transferred to the Museum, while Goldstein was forced into Lviv's ghetto. He continued to work at the Museum and survived the major deportation and killing operations of March and August 1942 but was dead by 1943.

In early 1942, the Generalgouvernement Main Department of Science and Teaching (Hauptabteilung Wissenschaft und Unterricht) ordered the creation of a "Staatsbibliothek Lemberg," consisting of two departments, one to contain all university libraries and another one for all other major libraries, including the library of the Gmina. In October 1942, another Hauptabteilung document clearly identified the Gmina library as part of the Staatsbibliothek.⁶⁶¹ Yet this status was not uncontested. In December, the Hauptabteilung produced a draft letter to Wilhelm Friedrich Krüger, the head of the SS and police (HSSPF) in the Generalgouvernement. In this document the head of the sub-department for research libraries at the Hauptabteilung, Professor Gustav Abb, reported information from Lviv indicating that the SD security service of the SS had made a decision to take the Gmina library to the Reich. According to Abb the library had been sealed in August 1941 and should not be removed from the Generalgouvernement but taken to Cracow for the "Sektion für Judenforschung" at the "Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit."⁶⁶² Such tensions were typical for a larger conflict in which Generalgouvernement ruler Hans Frank sought to keep major book holdings out of reach of competing agencies such as the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg or the Reichssicherheitshauptamt. As late as March 1943, conflicts over books in Warsaw made the Generalgouvernement administration re-state its position to Krüger that the SD should put at the disposal of

⁶⁵⁶ Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 83 and Yosif Helston, "Evreiskyi nekropol u Lvovi," *Halytska Vrama*, Січень (January) 1998, no. 1 (37), 14f.

⁶⁵⁷ Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 123, 140.

⁶⁵⁸ Friedrich Katzmann, *Lösung der Judenfrage im Distrikt Galizien* (edited by Andrzej Żbikowski, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warsaw, 2001), 23d.

⁶⁵⁹ Kahane, *Shchodennyk*, 83 and Helston, "Evreiskyi nekropol," 14f.

⁶⁶⁰ Kohlbauer-Fritz, "Judaicasammlungen," 133.

⁶⁶¹ Andrzej Mężynski (ed), *Biblioteki naukowe w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* w latach 1939 – 1945. Wybór dokumentów źródłowych (2003), 93f.

⁶⁶² Mężynski (ed), *Biblioteki*, 135ff.

the Hauptverwaltung all, private as well as public Jewish libraries.⁶⁶³ By March 1943, the Staatsbibliothek Lemberg had four departments instead of two and it is unclear if any of these four officially included the Gmina library.⁶⁶⁴

1944-1991

In July 1944, Lviv was reconquered by Soviet troops. There is, unfortunately, only little and fragmentary evidence or research regarding the Soviet authorities' specific actions concerning objects, which had been the property of Jewish individuals or institutions before the German attack. Unsurprisingly, they did not question the validity of their own expropriations, made between 1939 and 1941, which meant that large amounts of objects – even if they were still in Lviv or could be recovered and identified – were not considered for any kind of restitution except to the public or state bodies that had received them during the first Soviet occupation.

Moreover, the Soviet authorities were generally reluctant to accommodate the needs even of the few survivors, who managed to return and make claims. At the same time, some of those Soviet officials, who had come to Lviv during the first Soviet occupation of 1939 to 1941, also returned and claimed apartments by dint of the fact that they had occupied them then. Significantly, there is evidence that claims by survivors were treated worse. Thus, when one of them demanded the return of her property she was turned down, ostensibly for lack of documentation.⁶⁶⁵ A decorated Soviet war veteran and party member, who had been in Lviv before 1941, did obtain an apartment and his requests for furniture were satisfied quickly.⁶⁶⁶

Throughout the Soviet Union the staggering loss of life and material damage inflicted by the German occupation was investigated by local branches of the “Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders and their Accomplices, and of the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises, and Institutions of the USSR.” Its brief was comprehensive. It was all the more telling that it did not include any reference to the special and large-scale violence against Jews.⁶⁶⁷ Rather, Soviet policy and discourse in general was already strongly deemphasizing the genocide committed against them.

In Lviv, Extraordinary Commission materials clearly followed this trend, marginalizing the Jewish identity of many victims, which also meant that the issue of their belongings was not raised. There is, however, an exception. In June 1945, the Commission for Lviv's Shevchenko Raion quarter submitted a special internal report on the “damage” inflicted on the quarter's Jews. Putting their total number at “40,000 Jewish families” before the German occupation, the report described their ghettoization, continual mass executions, and deportation to the “death camp of Belzec.” Stating clearly that all Jews had been “exterminated,” the report

⁶⁶³ Andrzej Mężynski, “Die Judaistische Bibliothek bei der Großen Synagoge in Warschau und das Schicksal der Bücher aus dem Warschauer Ghetto,” in: Regine Dehnel (Hrsg.) *Jüdischer Buchbesitz als Raubgut* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 2006), 92.

⁶⁶⁴ Mężynski, *Biblioteki*, 233f (endnote 249).

⁶⁶⁵ DALO R-6,2,44: 125.

⁶⁶⁶ DALO R-6,2,44: 126, 128.

⁶⁶⁷ Marian R. Sanders, *Extraordinary Crimes in Ukraine: An Examination of Evidence Collection by the Extraordinary State Commission of the USSR, 1942-1946* (unpublished dissertation, Ohio University, 1995), 71f and Marina Sorokina, “People and Procedures. Toward a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR,” *Kritika* 6,4 (Fall 2005), 801. For more detail on the Commission's large structure, staff, large number of local contributors, the propaganda, legal, and historiographical use of its materials, and the continuing history of their secrecy Sorokina, “People,” 801ff, 824.

emphasized the concomitant plunder and provided estimates for the total value of the spoils as well as a twenty-page list of victims.⁶⁶⁸

The Lviv branch library of the Ukrainian Academy of Science established a separate Kabinet sub-department of Jewish literature, renamed in 1947 as Department of Jewish Literature. According to Yakov Khonigsman's recollections, it is possible that it still contained at least some of the former Gmina library holdings. He worked at the Kabinet from the spring of 1945 and found himself employed cataloguing incunabula and other old printed books from Venice, Prague, Florence and Germany.⁶⁶⁹

The staff of the Kabinet also looked for and gathered books from private libraries, whose owners had been killed in the Holocaust, as well as remains of libraries, which had formerly belonged to synagogues or other institutions of Jewish life. In 1949, however, during the escalating Stalinist "anticosmopolitan" campaign, with its central antisemitic tendency, the Department of Jewish Literature was closed down. Some of its holdings were destroyed. According to Khonigsman, others, perhaps including the more valuable and historic objects, were stored at two sites in Lviv – the basement of the Academy of Science branch library and a former Jesuit church used as a warehouse – or taken to the central Academy of Science library in Kyiv, which, according to Khonigsman, received nineteen crates from Lviv.⁶⁷⁰

After the Soviet reconquest of Lviv, one synagogue was allowed to re-open and in the summer of 1947, its official board was petitioning the regional oblast administration about the area of the old Jewish cemetery, unsuccessfully trying to stop it being turned into a market.⁶⁷¹ When the synagogue was closed down in 1962, it also lost control over the area of the new cemetery, which was then merged with a neighboring Christian one. During the Soviet period, the sites of two smaller Jewish cemeteries, stemming from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, were turned into a car park and the premises of a construction enterprise respectively.⁶⁷²

1991 – c. 2009

As of 2009, in general restitution of Jewish property in post-Soviet independent Ukraine remained restricted to some buildings as well as a limited number of religious objects: without legislation providing for the restitution of private property, the available possibility of communal restitution led to several hundred buildings and small numbers of religious objects being claimed for Jewish communities.⁶⁷³ Even in this limited area, progress was extremely slow. By the beginning of 2004, about forty synagogue buildings out of an estimated 2,000 potential objects of communal restitution had been returned to communities.⁶⁷⁴ By July 2005, the share of restituted objects was estimated at ten percent. The process, if it was one, was clearly massively incomplete.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁶⁸ DALO R-221, 2, 76: 5f (USHMM Acc.1995.A.1086, Reel 30)

⁶⁶⁹ Khonigsman, "Neskolko slov," 41-43.

⁶⁷⁰ Khonigsman, "Neskolko slov," 41-43.

⁶⁷¹ DALO-P 3,2,256: 33-34

⁶⁷² Helston, "'Evreiskiy nekropol,'" 14f.

⁶⁷³ Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 155f. See also Laurence Weinbaum, "Defrosting History: The Restitution of Jewish Property in Eastern Europe," in Avi Beker (ed.), *The Plunder of Jewish Property during the Holocaust. Confronting European History* (Palgrave: 2001), 107.

⁶⁷⁴ "Country Page Ukraine," <http://www.ncsj.org/Ukraine.shtml#Jewish> (accessed 8 January 2009)

⁶⁷⁵ Vladimir Matveyev, "Trade, Property Restitution on Table as President of Ukraine Visits US," JTA, 4 July, <http://www.ujc.org/page.aspx?id=101277> (accessed on 9 January 2009)

Regarding those objects that have remained in Lviv in particular, there were two main collections. The Ethnography Museum, successor of the Museum of Arts and Craft, had about one thousand objects, which include significant parts of the Gmina Museum and the Goldstein collections. Most of these objects were not displayed.⁶⁷⁶ The Ethnography Museum also kept a large part of the photo archive created in the interwar period by the Kuratorium.⁶⁷⁷

Moreover, in the 1950s to 1970s, the Museum's collections were expanded to an unknown extent by the efforts of one of its employees, art historian Pavel Zholtovskiy, who searched through scrap heaps and metal recycling sites for Jewish objects, with finds, however, frequently consisting only of fragments.⁶⁷⁸

Lviv's post-Soviet Museum of Religions, the successor of a Soviet Museum of Religion and Atheism founded in 1973, had a major collection of Judaica, derived in part from other postwar Lviv museums, which, in turn, handed over objects traceable to several prewar collections, as the late local researcher Faina Petriakova found. Thus, according to Petriakova, via the postwar Ethnography and History Museums as well as the Lviv Art Gallery the Museum of Religions obtained holdings ultimately stemming from the Gmina's museum, the Jan Kazimir III Museum, and the Goldstein collection. Moreover, the Museum of Religions also received 30 objects from the Lviv synagogue, which was closed in 1962 as well as further acquisitions, including "presents" as well as "confiscations" and an undefined "treasure" found in 1977 in a village near Lviv.⁶⁷⁹

Altogether the collection of the Museum of Religions had about one thousand objects, including, according to available information, 420 Torah scrolls or fragments of scrolls from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. 76 objects were on display. Since 1999 the museum organized or took part in a number of temporary exhibitions. As of 2002, it was the only museum in Ukraine with a separate, if extremely modest part of its exhibition reserved for Judaica.⁶⁸⁰ There were some plans to open a larger separate exhibition space for the Judaica collection in an additional building. There also were a number of publications and catalogues with more detailed but by no means comprehensive information on the holdings of the Museum of Religions. A full catalogue was said to have been prepared by Faina Petriakova but was not published.

Apart from the Ethnography Museum and the Museum of Religions, the Lviv Art Gallery had two smaller relevant collections: First, there were more than three hundred pictures, categorized as Judaica. Unsurprisingly, these pictures had diverse and complicated histories bringing together works from private as well as public collections.⁶⁸¹ Thus, 35 objects were transferred to the Art Gallery in 1949 from the Ethnography Museum as "portraits of ... rabbis and wealthy Jews" and "ownerless things [beshospodarchi rechi]," but originally they had been part of the Gmina Museum's collections.

Importantly and unfortunately, it seems that nobody had been able to find any more or less comprehensive lists of transferred objects, whether from the Gmina Museum to the Ethnography Museum or, as in the case of these pictures, from the latter to the Art Gallery.⁶⁸² Documentation remained fragmentary. In 1967, the Art

⁶⁷⁶ Vladimir Matveev, "Evrei Lvova, 'Vernite nashu Iudaiku,'" *Vinnitska Ierusalimka*, no. 15-18 (2006/5767), 1.

⁶⁷⁷ Kohlbauer-Fritz, "Judaicasammlungen," 140.

⁶⁷⁸ Petriakova, "Judaika," 275.

⁶⁷⁹ Faina Petriakova, "Judaika v muzeinomu landshafte Lvova: konets XIX-XX st.," in *Dolia evreiskoi dukhovnoi ta materialnoi spadshchyny XX st.* (Kyiv, 2002), 276.

⁶⁸⁰ Petriakova, "Judaika," 276.

⁶⁸¹ Petriakova, "Judaika," 277.

⁶⁸² Halyna Hlembotska, "Kollektsiia zhivopisi iz Muzei evreiskoi obshchiny Lvova v sobranii Lvovskoi Galerei iskusstv," *Lviv Hesed Ariei Bulletin*, 2008, no.3, 4.

Gallery acquired a number of pictures from the former Goldstein collection. In the year 2000, it staged the first exhibition especially dedicated to its Judaica holdings.⁶⁸³

Secondly, there are about thirty sacral objects, the majority of which were acquired from the personal collection of the Ukrainian artist Yaroslava Muzyka. The exact fate of these objects is unknown. Muzyka became a victim of Stalinist repression after the war, which may have led to their confiscation. Faina Petriakova suggested that Muzyka may have obtained the objects as a present from the fellow artist and first curator of the Gmina Museum Ludwik Lille, when he left for Paris in 1937.⁶⁸⁴

Maximilian Goldstein was an accomplished numismatist and the numismatic parts of his collection were transferred from the Ethnography Museum to the History Museum at the end of the 1940s. The History Museum's Judaica collection was small, consisting of ritual objects, clothes, photographs of buildings and pictures showing Jewish subject matters.⁶⁸⁵ The Lviv branch of the library of the Ukrainian Academy of Science published information that it had a collection of about 180 Jewish old printed publications [staropectatni vydannia] from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, produced in places as diverse Venice, Amsterdam, Istanbul, Prague, Brno, Halle, and Frankfurt.⁶⁸⁶

By the end of 2006, different positions were taken among the Jewish communities of Lviv and Ukraine. There were demands to return some of the objects in Lviv's museums, especially Torah scrolls for religious purposes as well as an alternative project of establishing a Jewish Museum and transfer objects to it, which is also one of the chief aims of Lviv's Sholem Aleichem Cultural Society.⁶⁸⁷ A representative of Lviv's municipal authorities as well as an adviser of then President Viktor Yushchenko both declared that some objects could be handed over but exclusively for religious use.⁶⁸⁸

In sum, concerning Jewish cultural property in Lviv as of 2009 neither restitution nor research had long or very productive histories. In spite of the efforts of some researchers, very little was known, especially if juxtaposed with Lviv's historic significance as a center of Jewish life in Europe. There were some signs that local public interest in Lviv's Jewish heritage was growing, if from an extremely low base. While the results of that development were hard to predict, they quickly included some deplorable elements of commercialization and stereotyping, such as at the restaurant "Under the Golden Rose" in the city center. At the same time, Lviv's museums and public authorities were showing some limited signs of a more serious and adequate interest.

As of 2017, these have led to some results which this article cannot address. At the same time, the current state-supported policy of glorifying the far-right Ukrainian ethno-nationalists of the Second World War – begun under former president Yushchenko and taken up again with a vengeance under president Poroshenko – despite their strong fascist leanings and antisemitism as well as records of Holocaust participation and mass killings and ethnic cleansing of Polish civilians will inhibit and distort this rediscovery, since remembering

⁶⁸³ Petriakova, "Judaika," 277.

⁶⁸⁴ Petriakova, "Judaika," 276.

⁶⁸⁵ Petriakova, "Judaika," 275.

⁶⁸⁶ Olga Kolosovska, "Kollektsiia evreiskikh staropectatnykh izdaniia v fondakh Otdela pedkoi knigi Lvovskoi nauchnoi biblioteky im. V. Stefanyka NAN Ukrainy," Knigopechatanie.

⁶⁸⁷ Boris Orach, "Po sledam galitskikh evreev. Vo Lvove vozrozhdaetsia evreiskii muzei," Shofar, no.8 (167).

⁶⁸⁸ Vladimir Matveev, "Evrei Lvova, 'Vernite nashu Iudaiku,'" *Vinnitska Ierusalimka*, no. 15-18 (2006/5767), 1f.

Ukraine's Jews honestly and respectfully would require remembering their deaths, which would entail facing the brutal criminal record of Ukrainian nationalism with respect to Jews and the Holocaust.⁶⁸⁹

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⁶⁸⁹ Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Jared McBride, Per Rudling, Tarik Amar, "Ukraine's Struggle with the Past is ours too," <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/per-rudling-tarik-amar-jared-mcbride/ukraine-s-struggle-with-past-is-ours-too>.