

6 Remembering the Absent: Jews and Jewish Heritage in Zhovkva²⁵¹

Life and Death Among Neighbors

Memories of the Jews who lived in Zhovkva before the war are clearly differentiated. The oldest generation born in the town remembers the Jews differently to the resettlers, whose memories are different again from the younger residents of various backgrounds. It is not surprising that the pre-war residents of Zhovkva remembered the Jews most often and in most detail – they were the only group for whom contacts with the town's Jews had been part of their personal experience. These memories appeared fairly frequently in the first, free-speaking part of the interviews. In her study of memory in the previously multiethnic village of Jaśliśka near Sanok in south-eastern Poland, Rosa Lehmann identifies three types of narratives about Jews before the Holocaust: “political” (dividing the speaker's own group from the ethnic and religious other, marking borders, highlighting inter-group rivalries and the statuses of specific groups); “mythical” (prejudices and misunderstandings resulting from lack of knowledge, such as the myth of Christian children being kidnapped for matzo); and “positive” (describing concrete examples of positive relations with Jews).²⁵² The testimonies of autochthonous residents of Zhovkva contained all three types of narrative, with minor modifications. Similarly to Lehmann's study, “political” accounts appeared most frequently, i.e. those in which the speaker delineated the Jewish community from their own (Polish or Ukrainian) group whilst describing its size and status.

We went to the same [school], and there were many Jews [*Zhydivochky*] there then. There were more Jews than us, Ukrainians or Poles. I once had a small calendar, and you know what? Zhovkva used to have a population of about 10,000, and of those 10,000 more than half were Jews, that's more than Poles or Ukrainians. [And did you have any Jewish friends?] I did, you know. Across the road [...] there was a Jewish centre. But we all lived together in peace! (Z30Af).

251 A shorter version of this chapter was previously published as a stand-alone article: “(Nie)pamięć na gruzach. Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich w świadomości nowych mieszkańców miasta,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, Vol. 7 (2011), pp. 144–169.

252 Rosa Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence. Poles and Jews in a Small Galician Town* (Oxford–New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), pp. 103–105.

In this fragment, the third type of narrative elucidated by Lehmann also makes an appearance, i.e. the “positive,” according to which harmonious pre-war coexistence is emphasized. Statements of this type usually supported their claims with a concrete example and appeared to have an offsetting effect: they allowed speakers to distance themselves from negative stereotypes. An image of mutual contact between the Christian and Jewish communities was observable in the memories of autochthonous residents of Zhovkva; respondents primarily remembered relations from the professional sphere, such as shopping in Jewish stores or working for Jewish employers. These narratives were articulated in a warm tone, but Jews were presented more as members of a specific social or professional group than as distinct individuals with personal names.

They [the Jews] had their own kind of farms, land on which they gathered people [to work]. My mum went to one, to get a jug of milk, so that she had something to bring us. [...] Sometimes she didn't have any money, and we would come to the farm where he [the Jewish owner of the farm] sold us milk, and he would give it to us on credit, writing down how much we had taken. Then, when mum got some money somewhere or whatever, we would settle up. They gave us everything we needed, no questions asked. [...] The Jews were good people. No doubt about that, better than the Ukrainians (Z14Af).

The interviews contain no traces of deeper, closer relationships between members of the two ethnicities. Respondents stated that their parents had had no Jewish friends, or they admitted that they struggled to recall the names of Jewish schoolmates. A similar picture of Christian-Jewish relations emerges from the analysis conducted by Anna Landau-Czajka, who argues that even in partially or fully assimilated families, Jewish residents rarely interacted with local Christians other than in the professional realm.²⁵³ One interviewee, a Pole (Z8Af), stated hesitantly that there had probably been some Jewish children in her school, but she remained unsure, because Jews had had their own faith-based education. She finished her statement with the sentence: “they wore their sidelocks and had their own rabbis,” explaining why she had no memory of Jewish schoolmates: they were not part of her world because they were not full members of her group, they belonged to the world of Others. Another interviewee blamed the Jews themselves for the creation and maintenance of inter-ethnic boundaries, arguing that, for example, Jewish residents were not in favor of mixed marriages (although in reality, such marriages were frowned upon by both groups).

253 Anna Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech... Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* (Warszawa: IH PAN, 2006).

There were no expressions of blatant prejudice or “jokes” about children being kidnapped for matzo. At the same time, some interviewees expressed a mixture of curiosity and fear at the different culture of the Jews, which was a world unknown to them. From the words and phrases they repeated (sometimes incorrectly) and rarely understood – both at the time and, even less so, in the present day – it is possible to discern how inviolable and even magical the boundary between “us” and “them” had been.

There were Jews, yes... There were Jews who spoke Polish, and Jews who spoke Yiddish [*po zhydivsky*]. And there were Hussite Jews [sic – *husyty* – the speaker means Hasidic, *khasidy*] – the ones with those sidelocks, the Old Believers²⁵⁴ of the Jews, and they spoke only in... I think it was called something like hybrid language [*po hibrydsky*; she obviously means Hebrew, *ivryt*]. They only spoke their own language. And they were very kusher [sic – *kusherni*, a mispronunciation of Ukrainian *kosherni*, i.e. they observed kashrut]. For example, there was a Jewish woman who bought milk from us, and my mother always had to milk the cow into her pan, not into ours, because our pan or cup was already treif [*trefny*, i.e. non-kosher] (Z1Af).

The Holocaust overshadowed the memories related to the Jews of most of the pre-war residents of Zhovkva. Whilst relations between Christians and Jews in the pre-war period received sporadic treatment in the interviews (which could also be a consequence of the age of the respondents), the Shoah was discussed by every member of this group. Many speakers talked about their memories of Jews from before the war in broad brushstrokes, then immediately moved on to the wartime catastrophe. These statements were also divisible into distinct types, based on structure, content and emotional saturation. Many accounts were “comprehensive” narratives, which tried to describe the entire Holocaust in a few sentences as a single, closed statement.

Then they started to exterminate them. At first they told them how much gold they would have to give up, then how much of everything else, and they had to carry out all the instructions. Once they had taken everything away, they built a ghetto. [...] It was possible to go inside, people did go in, but if you were to go in there, you wouldn't come

254 The Old Believers were a group of Orthodox Christians that appeared after a schism resulting from a section of the Russian Orthodox Church refusing to recognize the liturgical reforms of Patriarch Nikon in 1652–1656. The Old Believers were officially classed as heretics by the Russian Orthodox Church and were persecuted, firstly by the Tsarist authorities and later by the Soviet regime. In order to preserve their distinct confessional identity, they gathered in distant and less accessible areas. For this respondent, the reference to Old Believers appears to mean religious orthodoxy, but also backwardness.

back out. People went in with their own fears and at their own risk. Later, they started to shoot them [...] and that was so horrible, it affected everyone else despite everything. Of course, with such mass murders happening, who could remain impartial? (Z31Am).

The above fragment is exceptional – no other interviewee born in Zhovkva spoke about the Holocaust so laconically and without emotion. Many other accounts contained traces of personal prejudices that unconsciously seeped between the lines, but nonetheless, respondents tended to discuss the deaths of their Jewish neighbors with a degree of emotional involvement. They also always included in their accounts a set of concrete, personal reminiscences – say, of a Jewish acquaintance whom the speaker had seen being transported to her place of execution, or of neighbors who were expelled to the ghetto. Besides hints of anti-Semitism and expressions of sincere regret, these descriptions of the Holocaust also sometimes contained hints of detachment from the events, both at the time and in the present. At a certain point, people stopped registering what was happening to their Jewish neighbors – through horror, repulsion, or fear for their own survival. Fear often lay at the root of the striking indifference these residents showed, an indifference that appeared in condensed form in the interviews as a recurrent statement to the effect that “we didn’t get involved in that.”

They sorted those Jews, and then they chose a committee, which decided that the healthy ones would dig graves. So they dug graves, and they took the ones who had been chosen by the sorting, but I don’t know how, because I didn’t really poke my nose around, it was terrifying to look at. Later, there were these men who stood above the holes and carried the women to their deaths, and threw them in the hole. And there was a German... [...] And there was a kind of mound, we would climb onto the mound and look. Those people just went “bang!” – and they were in the hole (Z36Af).

In his absorbing travel report from Ukraine following the history of the “Holocaust by bullets,” the French scholar and clergyman Patrick Desbois argues that there are three kinds of Holocaust witnesses: those who did not know anything themselves but who heard from witnesses; those who saw the events first hand; and those who were coerced into participating in the process of murder.²⁵⁵ A clear majority of autochthonous Zhovkva residents belonged to the second type: they saw the Holocaust unfold with their own eyes. Their testimonies contained descriptions, details and a variety of emotions, but rarely followed a chronology of any kind, usually being closer to a mosaic, or to a process of

255 Cf. Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets. A Priest’s Journey to Uncover the Truth behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

wandering from one point at which Christian and Jewish fates overlapped to the next such point.

He would transport them to the forest himself, that German; it was terrible, the way he killed people. I saw it myself. The car was parked, there was a closed off ghetto here, and there was a mother walking along with an infant in her arms. He grabbed her by the legs and stood her against the wall...! Later they threw the infant into the car (Z8Af).

Encounters between Christians and Jews sometimes also revolved around interests. Interviewees very rarely said so outright, more often stating that their parents had helped Jews with no ulterior motive by sending food packages into the ghetto. But many people did make material gains from providing help. Only one respondent talked about trade across the ghetto walls, although her interview did not become part of the main analytical corpus. Many more people discussed ways in which Poles and Ukrainians helped to conceal Jews from the Germans. These were, however, mostly vague constations of fact that “many people hid Jews;” when I asked for specific details, I rarely received a response. The only story that appeared in a number of accounts was that of a Pole of ethnic German origin, Józef Beck, who sheltered 17 Jews in the cellar of a house on Lvivska [ulica Lwowska] Street that is still standing to this day. The story appeared in significantly transformed forms, having been filtered through various retold and overheard versions; nonetheless, it is significant that it was the only individualized narrative that was told.

There were no individuals among the interviewees of this group who claimed to have directly helped in concealing Jews. Two respondents, however, recalled other forms of help that their families had provided. One woman (Z7Af) remembered how her mother carried water to a Jewish family who were hiding in their barn. A second woman told a story about how her mother had smuggled a Jewish girl out of Zhovkva using her own daughter’s identity papers.

When the Germans made the Jewish ghetto here, there was one Jewish girl, she was very beautiful and she looked like my sister. So this Jewish guy asked us, asked mum to take his wife to Poland. So mum took my sister’s papers, because they were similar. [...] Mum left all her children at home and took that Jewish girl to Poland on my sister’s papers. [...] I’m telling you, she could have gotten in touch by now, right? I think she lives in Poland now, she must be old by now, it’s OK, but nonetheless, she should have remembered. It was lucky that, thank God, we weren’t all killed and mum came home. She didn’t gain anything from it, but she saved that Jewish woman and her child (Z14Ak).

Interestingly, in both cases these stories featured as if as an aside to the main narration of the Holocaust. Both speakers were ethnic Poles, who strongly emphasized that their families had had no ulterior motive in helping the Jews.

In addition to help afforded to Jews, interviewees also recalled instances where Christians refused assistance to Jews or handed them over to the Nazis. Only in one case, however, was the speaker referring to her own personal circumstances. The respondent, whose father did not agree to conceal her Jewish friend (*nota bene* this was also the only instance in which a respondent mentioned having a Jewish friend), was still mournful, but she did not condemn her father's actions at all. Rather, she ascribed his attitude to the broader framework of Christian-Jewish relations during the war – and in this way, seemed to justify it.

That girl was so pretty, with her curly hair, like... I can still see her before my eyes. She was five years old. She said: "You can say that I'm part of the family, or something." My parents got scared. They were scared, and... the girl was taken away and killed. Her father was a doctor, a really good one, a great dentist. No one hid them, no. Essentially, no one hid them (ZA1f).

The same speaker also spoke disapprovingly of the neighbors who had given up a Jewish family they were hiding to the Germans, once the Jews had run out of money for their upkeep. "What they did was bad, it was bad," she repeated. Another interviewee spoke in similar tones of pre-war neighbors who had concealed three Jewish doctors, extracting all of their money, before handing them over to the Germans. One of the Jews, however, escaped to the forest before the tragic day, perhaps guided by a presentiment; he returned after the war and filed a lawsuit against his "benefactor." The Ukrainian was sent to prison and died whilst serving his sentence. The interviewee spoke about the incident in a stern voice, showing no sympathy for him.

Accounts of the Holocaust were without exception stories about fear and a sense of being constantly under threat – both for the Jews and the present-day Ukrainian respondents. Interviewees remembered the singular instances in which members of their own groups became "collateral victims" of the Shoah with a similar intensity to the mass murder of the Jews: ethnic Ukrainians and Poles who tried to help Jews and were caught in the process, or those who were mistaken for Jews and lost their lives as a result. In both cases, sympathy for the suffering of Jews appeared mixed with a dose of resentment that Christians had died "because of them."

For example, I was going into town in the morning, or to the church, and there was a woman lying on the road. She lived here, on this road. They killed her because they thought she was a Jew, but it was a Pole going to church. They killed her. She was walking along, and then she was gone! [with resentment in her voice] (Z36Af).

It also happened on several occasions that speakers followed their memories of the Holocaust with a seamless transition to the dangers that they themselves

had faced; sometimes, this was connected to the reality of the Shoah (such as the possibility of being mistaken for a Jew), but on other occasions memories of the speaker's own suffering were evoked through a process of analogy: using the same context to describe a completely different situation. A similar narrative divide – the usage of descriptive frames from someone else's suffering to describe one's own – is labeled by Harald Welzer and Karoline Tschuggnall as a phenomenon of “changing frames” [*Wechselrahmung*].²⁵⁶

There was a raid, I saw it through the window, and we all had an *Ausweis*, some papers for school or whatever, to show that I wasn't a Jew. We were all very dark-skinned and very similar [to Jews], so I had to carry this document with me wherever I went. I opened the blinds on the window, and there was a German standing there on the asphalt, aiming his gun at a Jew. He shot at her, and I hid straight away. [Did such raids happen often?] Yes, they carried out raids and took people away! They took people to Germany [for forced labor], they took our people to Germany! (Z30Af).

A similar statement featured a conviction that wartime suffering was universal – first the Jews suffered, then the Ukrainians: “they did the same [to the Jews] as the *Moskals* later did to us! The Germans started it, then bloody Stalin finished the job!” (Z35Af).

Witnessing the Holocaust also sometimes meant making gains from it. Memory of such profiteering is very much a taboo, and if interviewees spoke about it at all, they described “hyenas” who were somehow Other – whether situationally or permanently – such as people who were excluded from society. In the following fragment, for example, a Pole describes the behavior of Ukrainians from a village outside Zhovkva.

There was a Jew running away, the Germans had shot him in the leg and injured him. The villagers ran up to him and they saw that he was dying, and they took the boots from off his feet. I was out grazing the cows, I was still small, but I remember it very well. I even told my husband about it. I can't stand that kind of thing. You should try and save people, try your best, and if it doesn't work out, then... But don't steal his boots... (Z14Af).

Interestingly, this is the same mechanism that appeared in the accounts of Krzyż residents in relations to the post-war violence against local Germans – what Aleida Assmann calls externalization of guilt.²⁵⁷ Yet, while statements that condemned Holocaust-related profiteering appeared in a few interviews, actual collaboration in the murder of Jews was mentioned only in clipped phrases.

256 Tschuggnall and Welzer, “Rewriting Memories.”

257 Assmann, “Fünf Strategien.”

The last speaker quoted (an ethnic Pole) briefly recalled a Ukrainian auxiliary policeman who participated directly in the shooting of Jews: “he stood guard, stood there and drove [the car].” Two other respondents (a Ukrainian woman and a woman with mixed Polish-Ukrainian identity) spoke very critically of the Ukrainian police, but it was nonetheless difficult to obtain from them any more exact information about its role, or a broader comment on the fact that a Ukrainian auxiliary police existed and participated in the Holocaust.

I went to town, and there was a Jew lying in the gutter, injured, and all he needed to do was just lie there and stay still, the silly Jew. At that moment a policeman came along and, well, killed him. [Was the policeman a German or one of ours (i.e. Ukrainian)?] Ours. They worked for the Germans. [Our people were in the police as well?] I was thinking: “What did you do that for?” Idiot, he would have lived, if only he had waited till the evening (Z35Af).

The police was, well... What do I know...? Err, they were pretty nasty people, who went out looking for Jews, here and there... So, kind of, those types... (Z1Af).

This topic had clearly been relegated to oblivion – my attempts to extract it from there were met with huge difficulties. These difficulties were exacerbated by the fact that it was not only individuals who had forgotten; broader social frames of memory also obscured this theme. This conclusion is reached fairly quickly when one looks at trends in contemporary Ukrainian historiography or Ukrainian reactions to attempts by western scholars to raise related questions.²⁵⁸

A related issue that has been even more thoroughly erased from memory is the theft of Jewish property. Whilst there were a few individuals who spoke about collaboration in the Holocaust, looting was a strict taboo – not a single interviewee who had lived in the town before the war was willing to discuss it on record, and in informal conversations they all denied that such a thing could have taken place in Zhovkva. Meanwhile the resettlers who arrived after 1945 said that looting was a fairly common act:

Oh yes, there were empty Jewish houses in the town centre. Yes, everything in the centre was empty. We were supposed to live in a house [like that]. Everything was ready. But people went in there and took apart the stoves, looking for gold in the stoves. [In the

258 On the relationship between individual and collective forgetting, see: Maria Hirszowicz and Elżbieta Neymann, “Społeczne ramy niepamięci,” *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, Vol. 3/4 (2001), pp. 23–48. One of the best analyses of Ukrainian discussions on collaboration in the Holocaust is: John-Paul Himka, “Debates in Ukraine over Nationalist Involvement in the Holocaust, 2004–2008,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 39 (2011), pp. 357–370.

Jewish houses?] Yes, our people, Ukrainians, went into them. They took apart the stoves, some even took doors. Some would piss, others would shit in there... You see what it was like? (Z5Am).

One account, which contained a long and detailed description of what happened to the Jews in Zhovkva, featured a fragment that essentially justified, if not quite praised, the Holocaust – such attitudes are well known from existing studies of folk anti-Semitism in Poland.²⁵⁹ According to this argument, the Jews had deserved their treatment because they had killed Christ; but the scale and brutality of Nazi murder had made it more difficult to accept. If only the Germans had killed only the Jews, it would have quite alright: “If only they had killed the Jews because they saw how much harm they cause, and treated the other nationalities differently. But they treated the Ukrainians, the Poles and everyone else in their German way” (Z2Am).

This was the only example of such outright and extreme anti-Semitism among all of the interviews with the oldest generation in Zhovkva. Other statements contained attitudes that can be cumulatively summed up with the phrase “we may not like the Jews, but they are also people” (“I wouldn’t have been able to do anything like that. Sure, they were Jews, but why shoot them straight away?” [Z35Af]). Only one respondent, however, gave the Holocaust his explicit approval.

Hearsay: What do the Resettlers Know about Zhovkva's Jews?

With a very small number of exceptions, there were no respondents of the oldest generation who moved to Zhovkva after 1945 who did not know that Jews had lived in the town before the war. Nonetheless the manner in which they talked about the vanished Jewish population was very different from the autochthonous residents. The resettlers arrived in Zhovkva to find only traces of the Jewish community's previous existence. The statements they made during the interviews were based entirely on what they had been told by others, not their own personal experiences. The resettlers rarely composed long, closed narratives about the Jews; I usually had to prompt them with many probing questions. Sometimes, answers were restricted to a single, weighty sentence: “What people around here

259 For a definition and discussion of folk anti-Semitism, see: Alina Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1992).

say is that the Jews here were also dealt with in that way; they were murdered and buried” (Z9Af).

People who lived in the vicinity of Zhovkva before 1945 displayed the most detailed knowledge about the town’s pre-war Jewish population. This is, of course, a result of the fact that they visited the town from time to time before settling in it, for example to do some shopping with their parents. These accounts also contained the most anti-Semitic remarks, closer in nature to modern political anti-Semitism than the traditional religious variety.²⁶⁰

I remember [the Jews] a little. When they lived here, when we used to buy things from them. I was still small, but I used to come to Zhovkva with my dad quite a bit. [And were there lots of Jews here?] Loads! Let me put it this way: Zhovkva was practically a Jewish town. And let me tell you, I don’t have too much respect for the Jews. I told you that the Germans beat them, and they didn’t beat them enough. They’re still in power. You don’t hear much about Jews who work their own land. They only like it when others work for them, when they exploit others. It was tough to watch how they were killed. But I, for one, deep down... I see how they rule the world now (Z19Af).

If a respondent’s nearest town before the war was a place other than Zhovkva, they would often make comparisons with that nearby town, drawing analogies to “reconstruct” what must have happened in Zhovkva.

[Where there Jews here in Zhovkva?] Oh yes, lots, there were lots of Jews. And in Zolochiv [another town in Lviv Oblast] too, my goodness... If it wasn’t for... you know, who knows how many of those Jews there would be now, what a nightmare. Basically everything, all of the trade, everything like that was in Jewish hands. Or in the Poles’ hands, but the Poles were more interested in politics, you know, but everything to do with money, that was the Jews. The doctors were all Jews, the lawyers were all Jews, and all of that. It’s the same now (Z20Am).

Meanwhile, anti-Semitism did not feature at all in interviews with educated people.²⁶¹ This correlation may be a result of a certain “political correctness” to which these respondents adhered, a certain cultural code among educated people that limits the readiness with which one voices attitudes considered inappropriate; it may equally be that these interviewees were more self-aware or

260 Cf. Ireneusz Krzemiński, ed., *Antysemityzm w Polsce i na Ukrainie. Raport z badań* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2004).

261 That is, people with at least a high school education. There were no interviewees from the oldest generation in Zhovkva who possessed a university degree. For comparison, two respondents of the oldest generation in Krzyż were university graduates. The relatively low level of education among the resettlers in Zhovkva is another indicator of their low social status in the new post-war reality.

sensitive. These individuals rarely made sweeping generalizations about “typical Jews,” more often referring to specific individuals of whom they knew.

There were Jews here, and there were some after [the war] too; there was a guy called Liainer, for example.²⁶² [...] He was caught, he told me the story – it really is quite a story. He was caught, but he escaped, somehow he managed to get out of here. And then he was the director of a bakery here. [In Zhovkva?] Yes, he was a good man. He also wrote poetry, stories, memoirs. We were already living here, we've been here for 22 years, and he came and asked me to edit his writings, in Ukrainian (Z23Af).

The fragment cited here shows a fundamentally important tendency pertaining to post-war contacts with “locals.” The more often and intensively the newly arrived residents spoke with people who had lived in Zhovkva during the war, the more they knew about both the interwar period and the Holocaust. Respondents, who answered questions about Zhovkva's Jews with perfunctory responses or casually slid into observations on Jews in their own pre-war hometowns, did not, as a rule, remember having close contacts with autochthonous residents of Zhovkva. Speakers were able to give much more coherent responses on matters they had learned about “at first hand.” The respondent cited below, for example, obtained her information from neighbors, local Ukrainians, whereas another interviewee had spoken to a Jewish family who used to live in her house and paid a visit in the 1990s.

The people here [residents of Zhovkva] said that they left for Poland. They were in Poland, those people from our house, they escaped to Poland. And from Poland they went to Israel. The ones who were still alive, they left just like we did. And then there were those who couldn't escape, and... [And you were told of this by locals, about the Jews who lived here?] Yes, yes! The people who lived here before, the ones from Zhovkva, who were born here, they told us about it (Z16Af).

The narratives being analyzed here reveal another correlation: people who remembered the Holocaust in detail and had experienced it as an emotional event in their places of birth were generally more interested in its history in Zhovkva, showing more sensitivity when discussing the subject. In other words, someone who had witnessed the Shoah in another place was more likely to

262 Zygmunt Lajner (after 1944 Zygmunt or Zigmunt Liainer) was one of the two Holocaust survivors who stayed in Zhovkva after the war. He took part as a witness in criminal trials against Nazi perpetrators, wrote a set of memoirs, and also recorded a video testimony (Visual History Archive, Zigmunt Liainer, cat. nr. 40403). Due to the fact that he can be considered a public figure, in his case I deviate from my principle of anonymity.

acquire knowledge about it in the new place of residence. The structure of such statements was usually similar: asked about the Jews in Zhovkva, the speaker would discuss the topic for a short time, then quickly transition to a story about the Jews in their own native area, sometimes completing their account with a coda in which the story line returned to Zhovkva.

The level of emotionality (or rather, the lack thereof) in some accounts of Zhovkva's Jews as told by Ukrainians deported from Poland allows us to distinguish yet another type of memory. A complete lack of emotional engagement in the murder of the town's Jews was characteristic for some respondents in this group. These people were aware that a Jewish community had lived in Zhovkva before the war, and they also knew what had happened to it, but did not consider this matter to be of any importance. Very often, they would quickly and unobtrusively move on to other topics about the wartime in Zhovkva when asked about the town's Jews – usually, questions related to their own ethnic group's experiences. In essence, the attitude being expressed was: “we weren't here then so we don't know about it, and moreover, that was not our people, so it has nothing to do with us.”

[Were there a lot of Jews here in Zhovkva?] In Zhovkva? Yes, there were, the whole town was Jewish, that's what they say. The shops, everything was Jewish. There is some temple of theirs still standing there as well... Next to it is our beautiful church, the Basilians serve Mass there. [And were there any Jews who remained in Zhovkva after the war?] Oh I don't know. Well, you know, they were all... Whoever escaped, whoever didn't escape, they all got killed all the same. And when the Germans came and the *Moskals* were escaping, on the spot where the town hall is, there are those walls going around... How many people they killed there... They've even put a small chapel and memorial plaque there. How many children, even children, 15-year old girls, boys... (Z3Af).

In this fragment, it is striking that the speaker adorns her description of the murder of prison inmates by the Soviets in 1941 with so much detail and retells the story with such passion. Although this undoubtedly tragic event (though considerably less so than the Holocaust) also happened before the speaker arrived in Zhovkva, she internalized it much more readily than the fate of the Jews, considering it part of the local history of her own group. Jews, meanwhile, were definitively excluded from this group.

A similar resonance was audible in statements made by Zhovkva's Easterners, both Ukrainians and Russians, about the town's Jews. The following response to the question whether there were any Jewish families left in Zhovkva when the speaker arrived in the town was fairly typical: “I don't know exactly. I know those Jews were taken away somewhere around here, or maybe they left by themselves. They were persecuted, those Jews. But I can't

tell you exactly what happened” (Z26Af). What is striking in practically all of the interviews with migrants from the East is not so much the lack of sensitivity, but the complete absence of interest in what had happened in the town before and during the war, whether to Ukrainians, Poles, or Jews. This did not mean that respondents had had no previous contact with Jews or with the Holocaust. One interviewee, a Ukrainian woman from near Poltava [eastern Ukraine], had sheltered a Jew during the war. Yet the way in which she described this act was very different to equivalent fragments in interviews with Ukrainians deported from Poland, who also talked about Zhovkva's Jews by drawing analogies with their “own.”

[Did you say there were not so many Jews when you arrived here?] No, there weren't many. I only knew one, Liainer, he was a Jew. [And were there Jews here earlier?] Yes, there were. They say there were a lot of Jews here before. [And what happened to them?] They left. They left for Israel. God only knows where they went. Probably most of them to Israel. [Did the Germans kill Jews here?] Yes they did. But people helped them to hide as well. Where I am from, in the Donbas [region in eastern Ukraine], there were Jews too. There was even a doctor who stayed with us, we helped her to hide. She was called Valentyna, she was a doctor, a therapist. The Germans were there for two years, and she lived with us for two years. Despite the Germans being there! (Z11Af).

The speaker described the way in which her family sheltered the Jewish doctor in minute detail, but her account did not return to the question of Jews in Zhovkva. Remembering the rescued Jewish woman did not act as a prompt to make comparisons, serving rather as a pivot for communicating that she knew nothing more about Zhovkva because she had not been there then; it was not her history and she did not find it interesting, but she was more than happy to tell a story about similar and more interesting matters from personal experience. The fate of Zhovkva's Jews was confined in her statement to just a few words: “yes, they did kill them.” She treated it as the fate of people she did not know, about whom nobody had told her anything. They were, thus, anonymous.

It was from this group of settlers from the East that the two people who had no knowledge of the town's Jewish past came – they knew neither that Jews had lived in Zhovkva, nor that they had died there. Asked about the composition of the pre-war population, one speaker responded as follows: “Local people lived here most of all, Ukrainians and Poles. And there were lots of barracks as well, lots of soldiers. I remember that. Then, later, Ukrainians most of all, Poles, and a few Russians and Jews” (Z24Af). According to this respondent, Jews only appeared in Zhovkva after the war, alongside the representatives of all other nationalities who arrived in the town during the Soviet colonization of western Ukraine. There were, indeed, “colonizers” of Jewish ethnicity, but the fact that it was only

interviewees from among the “Sovietizers” who did not know about the pre-war Jewish community is no accident.

One reason is the greater social distance between the Easterners and the locals, relative to migrants from Poland and settlers from nearby villages. Whilst the locals sometimes treated the resettlers with contempt, they were genuinely afraid and hateful of the Easterners, who personified a repressive and imposed system. The settlers from the East were, in turn, suspicious of the locals and ill-disposed towards them, considering them to be “*Banderites*” and “nationalists.” Such a situation was hardly conducive to mutual contact, let alone discussions of the war, which required a high degree of trust. Once the situation had normalized to an extent that members of different groups began to intermingle, the Holocaust was already a distant event – especially because it was not “relevant” to the community and was not kept alive through direct recollection, the “living memory” of survivors.²⁶³ A second reason could be the general attitude of Easterners to the questions of ethnicity. Educated in the spirit of Soviet internationalism, they sometimes did not perceive that Zhovkva was comprised of residents from different ethnic backgrounds. For the same reason, they were less interested in the multicultural history of the town. The post-war memory policy of the USSR also facilitated blindness to ethnicity: it subsumed the Soviet Jews who died in the Holocaust into the general number of casualties of war.²⁶⁴ The Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak calls this marginalization of the memory of the Holocaust in the USSR an “intentional social amnesia.”²⁶⁵ In such an ideological climate, remaining ignorant of Jewish history was not a difficult task.

Family (Non-)Memory: The Next Generations

Members of the younger generations in Zhovkva could only have known about the Holocaust through hearsay. The question is whether they did indeed

263 The concept of “living memory” is used by Robert Traba in relation to memories of relatively recent events that continue to exert an influence on social reality, see: Traba, *Kraina tysiqca granic*, pp. 179–198.

264 For Holocaust memory in the Soviet Union, see: Zvi Gitelman, “Soviet Reactions to the Holocaust, 1945–1991,” 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. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 3–28. See also: Amar, “A Disturbed Silence.”

265 Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Istoriia i pamiat: Amnezia, Ambivalentsia, Aktyvizatsia,” in: *Ukraina. Protsesy natsiotvorennia*, ed. Andreas Kappeler (Kyiv: K.I.S, 2011), pp. 365–380.

hear about it. The majority of interviewees in this cohort were aware that a Jewish population had lived in the town, but their knowledge of this history was fragmentary and vague. Sometimes it could be condensed to a single sentence: “before the war half of Zhovkva was Jewish, maybe even more” (Z17Bm). More extensive responses about the pre-war presence of Jews appeared in two types: “bookish” narratives and “anecdotes.” The former contained general information including numerical statistics and broad historical facts about Zhovkva’s Jews. This knowledge had been gained not from family storytelling, but from reading books, local guides, etc. Respondents often deflated the number of Jews relative to the town’s overall population before the war, treating them as a significant presence that were nonetheless a minority in the Ukrainian-Polish town.

There were a lot of them. Sobieski [the seventeenth-century Polish king] invited them to settle here back in the day, so that they would engage in commerce. Maybe there were some earlier as well, judging by the synagogue, but in any case there were a lot of them. At that time it was Jews who mainly engaged in trade, and that’s why we have a synagogue, because Jews won’t go and trade in a town if it doesn’t have a synagogue. [...] You know, it seems to me that as many as one in five residents of the town before the war were Jews (Z39Cf).

“Bookish” responses were given mostly by people who were more educated or who had to be more closely acquainted with the town’s history for professional reasons – the respondent cited above, for instance, was a local tour guide. People whose parents or grandparents had not lived in the vicinity of Zhovkva were also more likely to give such accounts. Meanwhile “anecdotes” were told by people from local families and those whose parents had lived near Zhovkva. These narratives concentrated above all on the distinguishing features that made Jews different to the Christian population, thereby emphasizing the boundaries between the groups.

[My grandmother] used to say that there were no real [negative relations with the Jews. Well, sometimes our people complain that there was a tavern in the village. [Well, there was, wasn’t there?] Sure, there was a tavern, but no one forced you to go to there and drink the vodka that the Jews were selling. On the other hand, you could always borrow money from a Jew (Z45Dm).

However, the “anecdotes” never touched upon the Holocaust – there were no stories of, say, a grandmother’s acquaintances who were taken to Bełżec extermination camp and murdered. This state of affairs is illustrated well by a statement by a woman who gave an extensive account of a Jewish family who used to buy milk from her grandmother, who spoke in very general terms about the wartime

fate of Zhovkva's Jews. She used a lot of "hedging" phrases that showed her lack of authority as a narrator (such as "somewhere," "some kind of:")

[And did your grandmother tell you anything about the murder of the Jews? If there were Jews here, and they're not here any more...] Erm, nooo, I remember just one story, that somewhere, somewhere around here, near Kamianka Buzka [a small town ca. 30 km east of Zhovkva], there was a day when they killed a lot of Jews. They were rounded up as whole families and evicted, there was some kind of ghetto, and the Germans forced them into there later. Otherwise I don't [know anything]. [And the Jews from Zhovkva? What happened to them?] I don't know. The Germans killed them for sure. They murdered people after all, shooting on sight, it didn't matter whether you were Jewish or not Jewish (Z19Cf).

The fragment cited here shows not only absence of knowledge, but also lack of interest and unwillingness to raise the given topic. For these respondents, talking about the Holocaust was more problematic than simply stating "there were Jews here before the war." Another interviewee, a young, educated woman active in a local NGO that promotes regional development, gave a long and detailed account of the historical contribution of the Jewish community to the cultural life and architecture of Zhovkva. Asked about the Holocaust, however, she said: "Hmm, do I know about anything about the Holocaust in Zhovkva? No, I don't know that history, I can't tell you exactly what happened" (Z41Df). This state of affairs may in part result from the way in which the Holocaust is treated by education curriculums. Compared to Soviet times, it is significant that the Holocaust appears in textbooks at all; nonetheless, it is clear that it still receives little attention during the course of school education. Ukrainian history textbooks make declarative statements about respect for the multi-ethnic social landscape of Ukraine in both the past and present, but otherwise ethnic minorities are given fairly short shrift; information about the Holocaust is mostly presented in contexts outside Ukraine (such as anti-Semitism in Germany being a cause of the Holocaust, or concentration camps being a means of its realization). References to the Ukrainian context are usually restricted to the massacre at Babyn Yar, near Kyiv, where tens of thousands of Jews were killed during the Nazi occupation.²⁶⁶

266 Cf. Nancy Popson, "The Ukrainian History Textbook: Introducing Children to the Ukrainian Nation," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2001), pp. 325–350; Stefan Rohdewald, "Post-Soviet Remembrance of the Holocaust and National Memories of the Second World War in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2008), pp. 173–184; Podolskiyi, "Ukrainske suspilstvo."

Only two respondents from the younger generation discussed the Holocaust with reference to specific individuals of Jewish descent. These were not extensive accounts, but they were exceptional in that they treated Jews as subjects rather than objects of history. Both stories were connected to the rescuing of Jews by Christians. The first was told by a woman whose grandmother had sheltered a Jewish family during the occupation: the speaker did not know many details, but could show where the Jews had hidden and knew that they left Zhovkva after the war. She was also undoubtedly proud of her grandmother's actions, although it appeared that she had little conception of the scale of the Holocaust; her knowledge of this one Jewish family's fate had not prompted her to reflect more deeply on the broader history.

My late grandfather put them on a train and in this way helped them to escape from here, from Ukraine. Where they went from here, I can't tell you. But I know for a fact that they didn't end up in the hands of the fascists [i.e. the Nazis] or the Russians. So, they somehow got out, but what happened later... I don't know (Z27Df).

The second story about the Shoah was told by an interviewee who was living in the house where 17 Jews had been sheltered during the war. Whilst the first speaker was telling a story from her family history, the second had been, in a way, personally implicated in the trajectory of the Holocaust. It was not until a group of American Jews – two of the town's survivors and their families – visited Zhovkva in the 1990s that the respondent learned that the derelict cellar under his house had served as a hiding place during the war. The guests' reaction as they entered the house made no less an impression on him than the story itself.

I was surprised, of course. [...] They fainted, they cried. There was such drama... The first time they came here, that time, it was truly amazing. I had no idea they would react like that. One of them had to be taken away in an ambulance... [...] They had some memories flooding back or something... That's how I learned that something like that is right here. For them it's a special place, but for us, it's a cellar like any other (Z38Cm).

The survivors' visit was a very important event for the interviewee. An ethnic Russian whose parents came to Zhovkva in the 1950s, he had previously not shown any particular interest in the history of the town. The personal encounter with Holocaust survivors, however, gave this element of the past a meaningful significance for him; it made the past more real.

Sometimes the generalizations made by interviewees about the Holocaust in Zhovkva resembled a process of guessing out loud in order to attempt a "satisfactory" answer for the interviewer.

The Jewish community, yes, maybe there were Jews here, that would follow from what my parents said. There's a synagogue in Zhovkva, a Jewish synagogue, so that must mean

that there are Jews. But I don't really know anyone especially, any Jews... [So were there more Jews here before?] Well of course, since we have such a big synagogue, that must mean that there were more. But as I said, my parents came here later, but maybe before the war there were a lot of them, since there is such a big synagogue ... [And what happened to them?] I think that during the war, when the Germans were persecuting the Jews, they started to leave. They probably hid wherever they could. That's how it seems to me, because I was never particularly interested in that. [...] Probably some of them were murdered, and the rest, whoever managed, escaped (Z6Cf).

This fragment contains a very characteristic and oft-voiced belief that the Jews left Zhovkva of their own accord (an element of the negative stereotype that Jews were resourceful and cunning, and therefore able to get out of any situation). Statements that a significant number of Jews left Zhovkva before the war also featured in accounts by respondents who possessed fairly detailed knowledge of the Holocaust from family storytelling. The tendency to mix up facts and to alter the scale or significance of events appeared not only in relation to the supposed emigration of Jews, thanks to which they had purportedly avoided death during the war. Respondents also wrongly identified the perpetrators of the Shoah or did not consider the Holocaust to have been a unique event, being no different in essence to the ocean of other terrible events. For example, one of the women cited earlier said when commenting on her grandmother who concealed Jews during the war: “[Grandma] hid Jews, yes... But I'm not sure if she was protecting them from the Germans or the Soviets. I think it was both, because the Soviet authorities were also against the Jews (Z27Df).”

Sometimes it transpired that respondents thought they were discussing the Holocaust but were in fact describing a completely different event. One person, for example, answered a question whether Jews had died during the war in Zhovkva by referring to the aforementioned massacre by the Soviet NKVD of prisoners: “Yes, lots [of Jews died]. There is a memorial by the town hall, commemorating how people were buried alive, and even when people were walking home from church, the ground was still moving” (Z18Bf). This respondent remembered the Holocaust in a transformed and factually incorrect framework, yet in the moral dimension this was still a form of Holocaust memory, not memory of the NKVD massacre – as if two pictures had become unconsciously overlapped in the memory of the speaker. There were however instances where memory of one event acted as a pretext for talking about a different history in a way that the contours of the former event were appropriated by the latter. The following fragment illustrates this mechanism:

[Did your grandmother talk about the murder of Jews here? Or did you maybe hear about this at school?] They told us in school about the murder of the Jews, yes. Always.

And I saw some historical films where the Jews are killed. They were treated really badly, I saw it, I've seen those historical films where they are really tortured. Actually everyone suffered cruelty, really, the Ukrainians as well. There was the *Holodomor*... [But the *Holodomor* was carried out by the communists, whereas...] Yes I know. But I mean that it was the same, whether you were Jewish or Ukrainian, it was largely similar (Z4Dm).

Here, talking about the Holocaust becomes an opportunity to draw an analogy and discuss the suffering of the speaker's own group. The respondent does not negate the Holocaust, but he does try to emphasize that suffering is universal and that his own people, the Ukrainians, suffered just as much as the Jews.

Among the respondents of the younger generations, there were many instances of simple lack of knowledge. Of 44 people interviewed, ten individuals did not know that Jews had lived in Zhovkva or that they had somehow disappeared. Sometimes this was the result of a general lack of interest in the town's history, not only in the Jewish component of the past – the speakers were ignorant of history related to Jews, Poles and Ukrainians alike. I asked one interviewee whether Zhovkva before and after the war were demographically similar, i.e. whether it was mainly populated by Ukrainians, to which she replied: "I can't answer that, I don't know. We never really looked into that" (Z9Bf). It was clear from her interview as a whole that whatever had happened in Zhovkva before her family's arrival was immaterial to her: these were not only events that had passed long ago, but were not her "own;" in this case, it was not only Jews and Poles who were Other, but local Ukrainians as well. In other cases, however, the absence of memory only pertained to ethnic Others, the Jews and Poles, whilst Ukrainian history was of greater interest to the respondent. As Yaroslav Hrytsak writes, Galicia's Ukrainians built a robust national identity through selective memory, forgetting not only that their national heroes, the Cossacks in Lviv, were feted above all for their brutality against the Ukrainian and Polish bourgeoisie, but also that Galicia had been inhabited by numerous Others (and how those Others' presence there came to an end) – Jews, Poles and Germans. Eradicating these groups from memory was made easier by the fact that after the war they were no longer physically present.²⁶⁷ Such erasure of memory is most disturbing when voiced by educated individuals who, with the exception of the Holocaust, knew the multicultural history of Zhovkva very well:

267 Yaroslav Hrytsak, "Historical Memory and Regional Identity among Galicia's Ukrainians," in: *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism: Galicia as Ukrainian's Piemont*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsy (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002), pp. 185–209.

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[What about the murder of the Jews? Was this discussed at all?] I don't know. I can't tell you anything about that. What do you mean? Which murder, in which period? [During the Second World War almost of the Jews of Zhovkva were murdered by the Germans.] I heard about that fairly recently, in the last few years. Or maybe not, sorry, we're talking about different things. What I am thinking of is the murder by the NKVD, the victims' remains were exhumed. As for murdered Jews, to be honest, I don't know, I can't even... So is there, in Zhovkva, say, a grave of some sort in the cemetery? [Yes, there is a grave in the main cemetery]. So, my bad (Z33Bm).

The interviewees who did remember explicitly noted the absence of memory about pre-war Jewish community, especially the silence on this matter in the public realm. This was especially the case for individuals who had been personally touched by the Holocaust for various reasons, whether through personal encounters with survivors who had lived in their house before the war (the woman cited in the first fragment below) or through the discovery that Jews had been sheltered in their house during the war (the speaker in the second fragment below). Interviewees' reactions to the public silence could be very passionate.

In all the time I've lived here, to my memory, no one, not a single swine has blurted a single word that this is a Jewish town, built by Jews [...] Not a breath about the Jews. If the Jews had never been here, what would we even have now? [...] No one has ever said anything to me about the Jews, and I find this so strange. I don't think I've even heard the word "Jew" here (Z16Bf).

We didn't know anything, absolutely nothing, no one ever went around talking about that [...] Well, the fact that there were Jews, there was some talk about that... There was a period when that was a thing. People didn't talk a lot about it, but I knew a thing or two. That Liainer told me, he was a good colleague of mine, and a good man, he would talk about those things sometimes... (Z38Cm).

The second speaker's statement points to the reasons behind the predominant silence, also explaining the source of his own knowledge about the Holocaust. It follows from his words that in Soviet times, the only available channel for the transmission of knowledge about the past was informal contact. The new residents of Zhovkva learned about the previous existence of Jews in Zhovkva through private conversations with the few individuals who had lived in the town before the war, or, as in this particular case, through hearing the personal testimonies of survivors. If such communication did not take place, then memory was not passed on. It could in theory have been supplanted by official memory, but in the USSR there was no official memory of the Holocaust. Over several decades, the victims of the Holocaust were consigned to the margins of the larger statistics on Soviet war victims; both

official discourse and public space were methodically “cleansed” of references to the Holocaust.²⁶⁸

The Holocaust was and still is largely absent from family memory as well: the interviewees who stated that their parents or grandparents had spoken at home about the Holocaust in Zhovkva were distinctly in the minority. The Holocaust is still not a topic of conversation in most households in Ukrainian Galicia: research carried out by psychologist Elena Ivanova among Ukrainian students has shown that young people acquire all of their knowledge about the Holocaust through school education (if they gain any knowledge at all); only those with Jewish roots learned about it in their family home.²⁶⁹ Given the quality and quantity of knowledge about the Holocaust that is gained in schools, it is unlikely that young people in Zhovkva would act as “indirect witnesses” of the Holocaust that Patrick Debois sought on his journey.

The few individuals who are actively interested in the town’s Jewish past, and who carry out their own research into the Holocaust in Zhovkva, form a counterweight to the overwhelming silence on this heritage. It was in a conversation with a member of this small group that I heard the only expression of outright condemnation of Ukrainian collaboration in the Holocaust. This was also one of only a few people who voiced a deeper contemplation of the causes and nature of the Holocaust.

This infection called Nazism, it didn’t only affect Germany, it also infected all of Europe. You know very well that it was in the Slavic countries, and the Balkans and so on, everywhere, including Ukraine. [...] Later, when the time came for the Nazis to realize their policies, people sucked up to them, they were afraid of resisting official power, of course. And the defenceless, persecuted [Jews], they were in for it... The Ukrainian police helped the Germans to set up the ghetto, and with the liquidation of the ghetto. Those are known facts. Some caught them and turned them in, other people gave them shelter and saved their lives, that’s how it was. [Pause] All nations have brighter pages in their history, as well as undoubtedly shameful pages (Z40Bm).

268 Cf. Hrynevych, “Mit viiny.”

269 Elena Ivanova, “Regionalnye osobennosti kolektivnoi pamiati studentov o holokoste v sovremennoi Ukraine,” *Holokost i suchasnist. Studii v Ukraini i sviti*, Vol. 2(4) (2008), pp. 9–28. Wilfried Jilge has written about the formation of Holocaust memory among young people in Ukraine through school education, in his: “Competing Victimhoods – Post-Soviet Ukrainian Narratives on World War II,” in: *Shared History, Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939–1941*, ed. Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth A. Cole, and Kai Struve (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007), pp. 103–132.

Interest in Jewish themes was usually related to education or professional engagement in the past; respondents who fit into this category were historians (an employee of the tourist information center and an NGO), an art historian (the director of a museum) and an ethnologist (an employee of a museum complex). Such individuals are an exception rather than the norm in Zhovkva; this is confirmed by the fact that I recorded interviews with each of these people outside the family sets that made up the majority of interviews – I met them because I was already aware of their interest in the Jewish themes. Significantly, all of these respondents expressed a sense of ostracization in the local community; they all claimed that their efforts to raise awareness about the Jewish community in Zhovkva were usually met with disinterest or lack of understanding, including from local authorities.

Foreign Heritage

Attitudes to material heritage reveal a great deal about the nature of social memory. Although the Jewish population of Zhovkva has ceased to exist, its material heritage remains and, arguably, is impossible not to notice. A large walled synagogue from the seventeenth century stands in the town center, in ruins since post-war times and currently undergoing a gradual process of renovation (at the moment of writing of this book, funded by an American foundation.) By the market on the site of the former Jewish cemetery it is still possible, if one knows where to look, to see remnants of *matzevot* (headstones over Jewish graves) protruding from the ground; the doors of some houses also feature traces of *mezuzot* (parchment inscribed with texts from the Torah, attached in a case to the doorpost of a home). After 1991, three monuments were erected that publicly commemorated the town's Jews. Do these points in public space have a meaning or significance for the residents of Zhovkva? How do people relate to the material heritage?

The synagogue is still the most recognizable element of Jewish heritage in Zhovkva. There was not a single interviewee who did not know that it existed – although not every respondent made the connection between the building and the existence of a Jewish community in Zhovkva before the war. It did happen that people struggled to name the building with the correct terminology, and many were puzzled by the efforts to restore it:

They have that, what's it called... syna... synagogue. They've started to do something with it, and they keep coming over here, those bearded guys with the sidelocks. They keep coming here, they're plastering it now, they're going to refurbish it. They're going to make it all spick and span, but who's going to go there? No idea. [...] [Is it the Jews who

are renovating it, or the municipality, or the state?] No, it's the Jews themselves. They must be employing workers, paying for it and doing it up. Why would the state need it? It's been there for so many years with the state doing nothing, so why would they do something now? (Z8Cf).

Sometimes my questions aroused consternation, especially in cases of educated respondents who did not want to make a bad impression on me through their ignorance. The speaker cited below, for instance, tried to justify and “compensate” for her lack of knowledge with a desire to discuss other artefacts and with openness to general discussions on historical themes.

[When was it destroyed?] I don't know... [Embarrassment in her voice]. But it would definitely be a good thing to renovate it, despite everything... Yes, I would go there myself, I would have a look with pleasure, if there was also a guide that told you something about the history. We didn't have guidebooks for a long time here, we didn't have them in Zhovkva, and it was only recently that the museum opened. We take the children there, we show them the model of Zhovkva, the kids even get interested, they say: “wow, was it really like that?” I tell them about the Glinska Gate, the Armenian Gate [historical entry gates to Zhovkva]. As for the synagogue, I don't really know... We don't have any Jews here in Zhovkva (Z15Cf).

The oldest autochthonous residents of Zhovkva remember the times when the synagogue was still an active institution – and this is the picture they envision every time they pass it nowadays. Many of them talked about it with a sense of pride: “Our synagogue was famous throughout nearly all Europe, I don't remember exactly what place it took, whether it was the third or second largest... That's how special our synagogue was” (Z1Af). Most respondents were aware that the Germans had burned down the synagogue; a few people whose parents or grandparents were originally from Zhovkva had been told about this at home. Others had learned about the destruction of the synagogue from reading. “I for one know from my history classes that the synagogue was blown up with a bomb, I mean, not a bomb, they put some explosives under it and wanted to destroy it” (Z41Df). Every interviewee who discussed the synagogue noted its poor state of repair. They drew a connection to the absence of a Jewish community, and also with deliberate neglect by the Soviet authorities in the post-war period. The latter was strongly condemned; an interviewee who sang the praises of the synagogue in its pre-war state, ended her statement with the words “The bastards, it wasn't enough that they destroyed the churches, they even got to such a beautiful synagogue!” (Z1Af).

Another important consideration in perceptions of Jewish material heritage was the conviction that Jewish people should be responsible for maintenance

and repairs. One respondent openly declared that the synagogue was in such a bad state because the Jews had shown no interest in it:

I'll tell you honestly, that of all the monuments the synagogue is in the worst state. That's right. This is easy to explain – there are no Jews. [...] They [Jewish people] haven't shown any interest in it. They could have done something, anything, you know? But maybe they don't feel the need (Z39Cf).

The speaker argued that other religious monuments in Zhovkva (Orthodox and Catholic Churches) were maintained by resources collected from the faithful. She also complained and regretted that the situation in the nearby town of Belz was different: there, thanks to financial support from Israel, the synagogue had been restored and a museum opened.²⁷⁰ It is clear from her statement that she believes the municipality should bear no responsibility for the building's upkeep, even though the synagogue is considered a valuable landmark that attracts tourists to the town. This interviewee's opinion is also noteworthy in that she was professionally involved in local tourism (she ran an agritourism farm and conducted tours of Zhovkva). A stronger statement of a similar attitude can be seen in the following fragment:

There are various tour groups who come here very often from Israel or wherever it is, you know, those... What are they called... Jews. They come here very often for excursions of some sort, or some other things... And they even carry out refurbishments, the Jews pay for it themselves. It just so happened that in Zhovkva, in our Ukraine, there is a synagogue like that. [...] The way I understand it, the synagogue belonged to Ukraine, and Ukrainians were in charge of it. And now the Jews have learned that this synagogue exists, and that it's their monument, it's theirs, their church or mosque if you can put it that way, so they learned about it and made it theirs. Now it is theirs, a component that belongs to them, but which is in Ukraine (Z6Df).

The status of the synagogue is clear to this interviewee: it is a “Jewish object” that is extraterritorial in some magical way, and it is excluded from the overall town landscape. The young woman not only did not recognize the synagogue as part of the cultural heritage of her own group, she also explained its provenance in Zhovkva in a fairly oblique manner, making no connection with the local Jewish population. Understood in this way, the state of the synagogue perhaps does not inspire enthusiasm, but it is also unsurprising; evidently, the Jews do not want to pay for its upkeep. Perhaps they would be more willing to shell out if they were to make some additional, undefined gains, another respondent claimed: “Maybe

270 Belz was historically an important center of Hasidic worship and has regained this status since the 1990s. This is why its synagogue has been restored.

[the Jews] want to set some conditions for these things. Say, we renovate a church [i.e. the synagogue]²⁷¹ in your place, and you give us, say, five hectares of land. [Laughter]" (Z33Bm).

A much smaller group of respondents (mostly younger and better educated people) expressed a view that the Ukrainian state should pay for the maintenance of the building.

[What do you think should happen with the synagogue in Zhovkva?] It should be restored. [At whose expense?] With the same money that is used to renovate other buildings. This is history. This synagogue is, for one, a UNESCO protected site,²⁷² and it is also a beautiful building. If the Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches have a right to exist... (Z45Dm).

Such statements were usually accompanied by expressions of regret and shame that the synagogue was in such a bad state, as well as sometimes a sense that the synagogue's disrepair reflected badly on local Ukrainians. Such feelings were intensified by visits by Others who commented on the matter (mostly Jewish tourist groups) as well as a conviction that the local authorities were embezzling funds received for this purpose or were simply incompetent.

I couldn't take it any more, the place was constantly full of rubbish. So I went to the chairman of the town council, and I said to him: "Please, you could at least remove the rubbish, there are tour groups who come here, they stand there and tell the history, and people laugh. How can you not be ashamed?" [The Jews were laughing?] Yes. I said to him: "How can you not be ashamed? I for one, I'm not even from here, and I am ashamed, but you are the chairman, and you're not ashamed?" And since then people have stopped littering around there (Z10Af).

Although many interviewees argued that the synagogue should be converted into a museum, only a few had any deeper thoughts on this issue. Not many saw a potential museum as a way of replenishing the broken identity of the town. The speaker cited below was an exception in this regard, but this is understandable given her education and professional activity (she has a degree in Cultural Studies and was working in the tourist office of Lviv city council):

It seems to me that creating a museum of Jewish culture like that would be much more effective, both for the local community and for many others. This would increase tolerance above all, and that is something that we Ukrainians, I would say, don't have enough of; I would argue the same for the people who live here. That's one thing. And the second

271 Older Ukrainians often refer to synagogues as a Jewish church [*zhdydivska tserkva*.]

272 There are seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Ukraine. The synagogue in Zhovkva is not amongst them.

reason is that it would simply go well with the history, which unfortunately we... That memory, that history was taken away from people at one point and they couldn't even tell anybody, because, first, of ignorance; second, of a lack of interest, and third – who knows – indifference? (Z41Df).

It should be noted that, formally speaking, the Zhovkva synagogue is already a museum – it belongs to the town's museum complex. Among the interviewees, three museum employees were the only people who possessed specific knowledge on the actual status of the landmark; others merely repeated various rumours. The museum staff members, with whom I conducted expert interviews, spoke of the synagogue with anxiety and a feeling of helplessness. They had no complaints about a lack of funding from Jewish circles, but did point a finger at the Ukrainian state; at the time of the interviews, no funds had been set aside for the renovation of the synagogue.

The second important site for gauging attitudes towards Jewish material heritage is the cemetery – or rather, what is left of the cemetery after the site was turned into a marketplace in the 1960s. Unlike the synagogue, the former Jewish cemetery is easy to overlook; it has disappeared from sight, much like the community it used to serve. Opinions about the cemetery intertwine with broader trends in memory and forgetting of the Jewish community. The youngest cohort of respondents, born in the 1960s or later, were most likely not to know of its existence. Older people who were attuned to the changes in urban space in their immediate surroundings tended to remember the Soviet-era demolition of the cemetery. Consciousness of this fact, however, did not always coincide with a negative assessment; people sometimes described the event with no emotional involvement, or openly declared that they were simply uninterested.

This wasn't the market to begin with, this was a Jewish cemetery, it was called the *okopysko* [a folk term for a Jewish cemetery]. During the German occupation Jews were buried here. Then it was all built over. Over there, where the pigs are, on the north side, that was all Jewish graves. [...] Then they took it all apart to use the stones. I'm not sure where, I was never really interested in that. [Was it destroyed during the German occupation?] Yes. And then the Soviet authorities turned it into a market. This whole history is impossible to describe. And I was never really interested anyway, I didn't have the time (Z36Af).

Paradoxically, deep-seated negative stereotypes about Jews sometimes surfaced when people criticized the move to put the marketplace on the site of the former cemetery. Characteristic phrases such as “Jews are human too, after all” and “no matter what they were like, this is a cemetery and those are people in the ground” (Z27Bm) revealed speakers' prejudices when they were purportedly speaking in defense of the Jewish dead.

Among the younger respondents, knowledge about the previous function of the market square was displayed mainly by people who had heard something in conversations at home, and those had learned of the site's history as a result of other personal experiences. For instance, one interviewee, who lived near the square, had played there as a child and had by chance discovered the remains of a *matzevah*, which prompted her to make enquiries. Another speaker's curiosity had been drawn by the fact that a Jewish acquaintance pointedly avoided the site:

We would go to the market with my grandmother, and she would say, "P. never comes here." And I always asked why not. "Because it used to be a cemetery, that's why P. never comes here to the market on Saturdays." [...] It was a kind of landmark, this cemetery. And on the whole... They did have some plans to move the market somewhere else. But they were only plans. The town council was talking about it. But that was as far as it got. [...] I don't know, it must be really tough for the Jews. Because a cemetery for them is like, they call it a "house of life" (Z44Df).

This statement contains a clear indictment of the fact that the marketplace was built on the site of the cemetery; the transcription does not adequately convey the emotion with which the respondent spoke, but her strong disapproval is clearly audible in the recording. Another speaker was yet more passionate in her disapproval:

You know that our marketplace is built on the bones of the Jewish population? This cemetery was enormous, even the biggest graveyard in Zhovkva. And then there are the burial vaults and headstones. I still remember the inscriptions, and how in Soviet times pigs used to walk all over them. I know that Liainer's wife, R., never went to the market. Her parents are lying under those stones. [And how did people respond to the market being built on the cemetery?] I can tell you what I thought about it. It's terrible, it's an offence against humanity. And against God, and against mankind as His creation. [How did people respond?] Well they went to the market. I also went (Z1Bf).

Respondents rarely (with the exception of experts) connected the building of the marketplace on the Jewish cemetery with the broader political outlook of the USSR. Although it was the Soviets who demolished the already ruined cemetery, the opprobrium of residents did not single them out as villains, instead hovering indeterminately between "Russkies," "the Germans" and an undefined "them." Several interviewees riled against people's indifference and cynicism, both at the time of the leveling of the cemetery and in the present, in which there is no will to change the situation.

Cattle were sold in the midst of Jewish tombstones, but who cares? People just didn't think about what it was they were walking on... [And were there any attempts to move the market?] No. There are rumours, but they are based on the fact that this is a convenient location, in the town centre, and that that was a long time ago, it's difficult to

move people around. It is difficult. This is business we are talking about, after all [with irony] (Z42Cf).

How can we summarize the attitudes of respondents to Jewish material heritage in Zhovkva? Undoubtedly, it is the synagogue, a monument impossible to ignore, that they noticed above all. Not many knew about the cemetery, one person was aware that a ritual slaughterhouse was still extant, and no one mentioned the *mezuzot*, let alone remembering objects that had ceased to exist. With a few exceptions, respondents did not consider the synagogue or the cemetery to be their “own” – they did not feel connected to these sites or feel in any way responsible for them, rarely seeing any potential benefit in restoring them from their current ruinous state. The deputy director of the Zhovkva museum summarized this situation very well:

No one has engaged themselves with this. No one has researched it or popularized it, and besides, the town suffered another huge tragedy in 1941 – a rupture in its historical and cultural continuity. These are very important matters, because if you don't have continuity in these things, then knowledge disappears, traditions and so on disappear, and you have to start from scratch. [...] People came here from the villages, from the East, having no idea what these ruins were, and so on. These ruins caused great difficulties and lots of negative emotions, and they were unsafe for children, and alcoholics would gather to drink around them, and there were thefts and acts of vandalism and looting, and so on. All of these things were a concern to the authorities, so they got rid of the ruins. They didn't have any money to do anything else... There were even nice buildings in a fairly decent state, just without a roof or something like that. They demolished them, took them apart, bulldozed them, or cleaned them up in some other way. Then they made town squares, bringing a bit of order, in whatever way they could at that time. No one had any idea what this or that place was. There was no talk of it having been an ideal town in the past (Z40Bm).

Until the 1990s, the condition of the Jewish material heritage in Zhovkva continued to deteriorate; moreover, not a single memorial to the victims of the Holocaust or the pre-war Jewish community was erected. This is the broader context in which the above examples of fragmentary and incomplete memory – or even total absence of memory – should be interpreted. The people who grew up in this symbolic space were cut off from both potential sources of social memory transmission: their physical uprooting nullified, or at least limited, family-based memory, and the totalitarian state did nothing to substitute this source of knowledge about the past. After 1991, Ukrainian memory policy started to change; however, the changes have been gradual and often hardly noticeable at the local level. Besides the gaps in school education already noted, which are not at all compensated for by teachers in Zhovkva, grassroots activity to commemorate

the Holocaust remains marginal. If one agrees with historian Stefan Rohdewald that the Holocaust of Eastern European Jewry took place at the peripheries – both physically and symbolically – then it has also been at the peripheries that it has been remembered since 1991.²⁷³ The Holocaust memorials that have appeared in Zhovkva since the fall of communism are socially invisible; they are physically marginal, because the largest of them stands several kilometers outside the town, neglected and vandalized, in an empty field where several thousand Jews were murdered in 1943; and they are symbolically marginal because a clear majority of residents are unaware of the existence of the other two memorials (a symbolic grave in the communal cemetery, and the *ohel* [grave] of *Tzadik* Aleksander Sender Schor in the marketplace on the site of the former Jewish cemetery).

The local authorities have not undertaken any commemorative initiatives related to the town's Jewish heritage, nor do they give support to the efforts of local organizations, which have limited resources and opportunities. It can be tentatively concluded, therefore, that memory policy in relation to the Holocaust has not actually changed significantly since 1991, despite a superficial opening up to the Jewish past. Neither in Zhovkva specifically, nor in Ukraine as whole is there a cultural fascination with historical Jewish culture. In many circles in Poland – especially among young people – broad movements to rediscover Jewish heritage – at least in the “ethnographic” dimension of music and cuisine, and also through deepening knowledge of the histories of local communities – have provided a means of constructing regional identities.²⁷⁴ In contrast, in Ukraine no equivalent phenomenon is visible on a larger scale. Given this situation, it is hardly surprising that the majority of residents of Zhovkva are unaware of and uninterested in the town's Jewish past, and that initiatives launched by the minority of local residents who are cognizant of the problem receive neither social support nor recognition.²⁷⁵

273 Rohdewald, “Post-Soviet Remembrance.”

274 On the building of local identities on the basis of past multiculturalism, see: Erica Lehrer, ed., *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015). For a wider discussion of the phenomenon of Jewish heritage without Jews, see: Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

275 It was thanks to the efforts of the Svitlo kultura [Light of Culture] organization and the town's last remaining Holocaust survivors that the memorials mentioned above were erected. The organization has also tried to launch initiatives to restore the synagogue, for example by winning a grant from American sources to carry out partial renovation works; however, the effort was ultimately unsuccessful – the materials purchased were stolen in as yet unexplained circumstances, and the funding was withdrawn.

Survivors, Ghosts, Visitors

In my conversations with the residents of Zhovkva, I was also interested in their attitudes towards Jewish people today. There were around 70 individuals who survived the Holocaust in Zhovkva, all of whom, bar two, left the town after the war; in the present day, however, not a single person claimed to be of Jewish origin. The reasons behind this state of affairs are the mass emigration to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s of the descendants of Holocaust survivors and also of “Soviet” Jews (i.e. those who came to Zhovkva from other parts of the Soviet Union after 1944). My interviewees were generally aware of this fact, although there were some who gave inflated estimates of the present-day local Jewish population (“If you were to count them, I would say there are around thirty people, not more” [Z1Bf]) or who hedged their bets with vague claims that “there are probably some Jewish people around here somewhere.” Characteristically, many statements clung to stereotypical images of the pre-war Eastern European Jews who had disappeared from the landscape as a result of the Holocaust: “there are some Jews in Zhovkva, but not, you know, officially, with sidelocks like in Israel, none like that” (Z27Df).

When I asked about the Jews who had remained in Zhovkva after the war, older respondents spoke only of one of the survivors, Zygmunt Liainer. “He was my friend, a bit. He was a good person. [Did he tell stories about the wartime, about how he survived?] I don’t know how he survived, but I wouldn’t want to talk about him, he was a cultured Jew” (Z33Am). Zygmunt Liainer was – both in Soviet times and after 1991 – the practical and symbolic representative of Zhovkva’s Jewish community; in a way, he was a kind of a “Jew on duty.”²⁷⁶ When he died, it was the end of an era: the town no longer had a single Jewish Holocaust survivor, no more representatives of the vanished world. Interviewees also made this observation – noting, for example, that much fewer Jewish visitors were making excursions to Zhovkva since Liainer’s death. Now that there are no Jews left in the town, these visitors provide the only opportunity for real-life interaction with Jewish people, as well the only frame in which stereotypes, and knowledge gained from books and domestic discussions, can be tested against reality. However, my interviews showed that no such interaction takes place. The Jewish excursions take place in such a way that the residents of Zhovkva and Jewish tourists continue to live in separate worlds, with no overlap whatsoever.²⁷⁷ The

276 Polish residents of Krzyż spoke about one of the town’s few remaining Germans in a strikingly similar manner.

277 A separate question altogether is the nature of the Jewish tour groups that come to Zhovkva and other former shtetls. On Jewish visits to Polish towns, see: Jackie

town's residents treat the tourists as exotic and non-threatening curiosities – in fact, they notice this attitude themselves:

[What do people in Zhovkva think of these Jewish tour groups?] How can I put it... “The Jews are here! The Jews are here!” They talk about it for half a day: “Did you see? A whole bus of Jews!” They’ll tell a couple of jokes about Jews and then, a couple of days later, they’ll have forgotten that they were here. They notice the skullcaps and sidelocks. But that’s it, and half a day later, they will have forgotten. I suppose it’s no different to other tourist groups (Z45Dm).

Despite this speaker’s assertion that Jewish visitors to Zhovkva were perceived no differently to other tourists, other conversations showed that this was not the case, especially among the oldest respondents – people who were witnesses of the Holocaust in Zhovkva or in their places of birth. When I asked them about attitudes to Jewish tourists, I usually received replies to the effect that: “We have nothing against them, no one is hostile to them” (Z16Af). One interviewee (Z8Af) argued that today’s Jewish visitors try not to advertise their Jewish identity, due to fear of locals; a respondent cited above stated that he didn’t wish to discuss Liainer because he was a “cultured Jew” – seemingly implying that talking about someone as a Jew necessarily put them in a bad light. One respondent asked me to turn off the tape recorder during a story about how her son lent his car to a group of Jews who wanted to travel to the Holocaust monument outside the town. All of these examples show that for the oldest generation, it is not only memory of the Jews that poses a problem, but also the present-day instances in which real-life Jewish people enter their lives. As Michael Bernard-Donals argues, memory consists of *anamnesis* (memories that return to the remembering agent without their volition) and *mneme* (rational, constructed narratives about events, or in other words, cultural memory); furthermore, the former – individual memories or facts that a society as a whole has erased from the sphere of *mneme* – constantly interfere with the latter. The Holocaust is always a part of *anamnesis* – an obstinate and unwanted return of the repressed; Jewish people who appear in Zhovkva today are in a way representative of that branch of (non-) memory. Between the lines of their statements, interviewees conveyed a sense of insecurity, a defensive fear, and a readiness to fend off potential accusations. These complex emotions, meanwhile, were not observed among younger people who did not live through the war. For them, Jewish tour groups really were no different to “any other visitors;” at most, respondents simply did not understand

why Jewish people would come to Zhovkva. Thus, while for the oldest generation the Holocaust and the Jewish tour groups who served as a reminder of this past were linked to memories that had been suppressed, for the younger respondents, they simply fell within the social frames of forgetting:

If there are Jews here, it's only people who have come from outside. Not a long ago there was a really large delegation of those Jews here, they were going around the sites, counting things, something like that... Well, maybe there is some history here that is somehow connected to them, sure... But I'm telling you, that has no connection to us. With us, with Zhovkva... It's their business (Z6Df).

Real interaction between Jews visiting Zhovkva and local residents only took place under one set of circumstances: when a Holocaust survivor or their descendants came into contact with locals. There were only two such individuals among the interviewees. One has been quoted above: the man who was living in the house where Klara Schwarz, her family and neighbors (together 17 people) hid during the war. The second was an older woman who was living in a house previously owned by Jews; a Jewish woman who had been born in that house visited her in the 1990s.

For me it was like this. Some Jewish people came from Israel. [...] They approached the window and [one of them] said "I was born here. I came to have a look at how things are here..." I told them to come inside, I invited them in. They were recording everything on a camcorder, everything... They were so happy. I have a photo somewhere... Later they wrote me a letter, those same Jews. They had photographed every corner here and they wrote to say that the whole family had been touched that I welcomed them like that, that I invited them in... She remembered everything, she was born in this house (Z16Af).

The warm welcome offered to the Jewish family by the interviewee, as well as the emotional tone of voice in which she recalled this episode, show that deep compassion and emotional memory are possible in the Polish-Ukrainian-Jewish triangle (with the Russians in the background) in Zhovkva – but only when people's trajectories directly meet. However, such meetings happen rarely in today's Zhovkva.

Two quotes from an interview with the same respondent – the man who rediscovered the town's past after being visited by Holocaust survivors – effectively summarize the state of memory about Jews in Zhovkva.

I saw how moved they were, that it was very important to them... [...] I said to them, I see how significant this is to you, so why don't you put up some sort of memorial here...? [A memorial?] Yes... They could put up some kind of memorial or something.

That's what I thought, and that was the end of it. If it's so important to you... if you want, go for it. [You would have no objections?] Why would I? Absolutely not (Z38Cm).

They made a memorial, that Liainer guy, you know. In that spot where the Zhovkva Jews were shot, they made a monument. There is a forest there, and that's where he put the monument, in my opinion a nice little monument, and he did it at his own expense and all. [...] There was a monument and that, what do you call it. That iron bow, you know? [Menorah?] Yes, menorah. But then it started to get horribly destroyed, first on one side, then the other. There were bronze letters on there, saying "in memory of the Jews," or something like that, and people started taking them. [...] The menorah was taken away by his [Liainer's] son, he said it was the most important part of the monument, that's how I understood it. And now there is nothing there (Z38Cm).

Both fragments illustrate the extent to which memory about Jews is "not ours" for the residents who arrived in Zhovkva after 1945. There would be no objection to a Jewish initiative to place a Holocaust memorial in the town; however, the homeowner felt no drive to do so himself.²⁷⁸ A monument to commemorate the victims of the Shoah was built on the initiative of the town's last Holocaust survivor and with funds from the Jewish diaspora, but local hooligans vandalized it and the now-deceased Holocaust survivor's son removed the remaining parts. In these hypothetical and real deeds, the locals are absent (with the exception of the anonymous vandals, who probably acted with material gain in mind, rather than because they were anti-Semites). Social memory of an event can be more or less personal, i.e., it can be seen as "our own" to greater or lesser extents. Among today's residents of Zhovkva, memory of the town's Jews, and above all memory of the Holocaust, is very distant and often unwanted; in some instances, there is no memory at all. Rosa Lehmann's typology of three distinct varieties of Holocaust narrative can be useful to understanding this situation: according to this scholar, remembrance can be classified into memories of the victims, the witnesses, and the others (with the children of victims and witnesses also falling under "others.")²⁷⁹ Except for the respondents who were born in Zhovkva, all of the interviewees remembered them as "others;" they had heard little or nothing at all, and could not bear witness to the Shoah. This otherness has different degrees and is manifested in various dimensions: spatial (the first generation of migrants, who were in a different place when the Holocaust happened), temporal (the second generation of migrants, who were born after the Holocaust), and

278 Analogous attitudes were observed in Krzyż in discussions of the German village cemeteries that were going to ruin. Here, similarly, respondents were prepared for "someone" to do "something," but remained entirely passive themselves.

279 Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence*.

moral – when the victims of the Shoah are excluded from the community seen to be “our own.”

The reasons behind this widespread lack of knowledge are to be interpreted with reference to the ways in which social memory is formed: through the interaction of various modes of transmission, including official (state) memory, private memory (especially family transmission) and public memory outside the realm of state policy (social transmission). I have discussed above the reasons behind the absence of family frames of memory about the Jews in Zhovkva. We might consider, therefore, why official memory about Jewish life and death in Zhovkva is so limited, and why social transmission remains insignificant. The answer to the first question may go somewhat beyond the scope of this book, but the essential fact is fairly easy to pin down: memory about Jews, and especially about the Holocaust, did not become a priority of Ukrainian memory policy after 1991. Although this topic is not off-limits as it was in Soviet times, official historiography, the narrative with the greatest influence on educational policy, generally ignores it.²⁸⁰ As Anatolii Podolskyi, the director of the Ukrainian Centre for Holocaust Studies, argues, the Soviet heritage can no longer be blamed for the current state of memory in Ukraine, despite the fact that, in a certain sense, Ukrainian memory policy is a continuation of Soviet practices: it suppresses the Holocaust in order not to diminish the status of “our own” victims – the Ukrainians who died during the war and *Holodomor*.²⁸¹ This strategy does not only apply to the Holocaust: other inconvenient topics include the anti-Polish operations of the UPA during the war and the later deportations of Poles. Both in the official memory policy of the Ukrainian state and in Ukrainian public discourse, there is no room for discussion of the Shoah because both of these realms are dominated by memory of ethnic Ukrainian victims and heroes, much as in Soviet times when the Holocaust was downplayed.

However, the fact that the state does not initiate or support efforts to commemorate the Holocaust does not *a priori* negate the possibility of social activism

280 Of course, there are important discussions of the Holocaust in Ukraine (such as the debate between Yaroslav Hrytsak and Sofia Hrachova on Ukrainian collaboration in the Holocaust, or recent polemics surrounding Omer Bartov’s book *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-day Ukraine* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University, 2007)). However, unlike in Poland where debates about the work of historian Jan T. Gross have had widespread social resonance, the Ukrainian discussions do not reach beyond a narrow circle of specialists.

281 Podolskyi, “Ukrainske suspilstvo.” See also: Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Holokost i Holodomor: vyklyky kolektyvnoii pamiaty,” *Krytyka*, Vol. 1–2 (2011), pp. 14–16.

in this sphere – this is shown by the example of the informal, bottom-up efforts to return the Ukrainian nationalist underground to public memory, which emerged before the Ukrainian authorities had recognized this as a suitable topic for commemoration. Social remembrance of the Shoah is scarce because private and social memories about this event were effectively marginalized during the Soviet period, much like the local communities of Galicia that were destroyed. This is clearly visible in Zhovkva, where the pre-war populations of Jews, Poles and Ukrainians disappeared, followed closely by memories about those vanished peoples. As a result, what is possible and necessary today is not just a return of memory, but a painstaking rebuilding, almost from scratch. Importantly, at least some of the local elites in Zhovkva were perfectly aware of this state of affairs:

Well, the old generation, the ones who are in their eighties now, it's like they know everything. They all know about the Holocaust. Well, I say they know the Holocaust – they might not know this word, but they know what it was. As for younger people, maybe the older ones told them... That monument of ours is so far out of town. There aren't any tours to go and see it, nothing. If it was a bit closer, and... I don't know, maybe we should apply for a grant or something to start some additional teaching in schools, do some excursions to that monument to the mass murders (Z44Df).

I would surmise that any real breakthrough in social memory of the Jewish presence and the Holocaust in Zhovkva – and other former shtetls in Ukraine – can only happen if the activities tentatively suggested by the above interviewee become official state policy. For now, however, there are no signs of such a development.

