

“Aryan” Germans at an Auction of Deported Jews’ Possessions (1942)

Abstract

As German Jews were expelled from their communities in 1941, sent to ghettos and ultimately to death camps, they were forcibly dispossessed of their property and personal belongings—including their homes, furniture, money, jewellery, tools, clothes, and children’s toys. Many Germans saw opportunities in this dispossession for personal material gain, and directly benefited from it, for example by obtaining the former homes of Jewish families, or by purchasing dispossessed goods at auctions, such as the one shown here in the summer of 1942 in the central German town of Hanau. The images show Germans who have lined up to bid on goods stolen from Jews as they were deported. They convey the enthusiasm and even joy with which these Germans partake in this activity. Some Germans likely saw such auctions in very pragmatic terms: purchasing linens formerly owned by Jews, for example, may have been seen as an opportunity to purchase consumer goods that had disappeared from the wartime economy. Germans who had lost their own homes and possessions to Allied bombing raids may have viewed the acquisition of their Jewish neighbors’ goods as a fair and legitimate trade. Yet the alacrity with which these “Aryan” Germans engaged in such activities demonstrates their complicity with the broader persecution and deportation of German Jews and signals a lack of concern for their welfare.

Source





Source: Black and white photos, Hanau, 1942. Photographer unknown. Medienzentrum Hanau, Sig. MZHU0110_C3

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