

Holocaust remembrance in Ukraine: memorialization of the Jewish tragedy at Babi Yar

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At the core of the debate in Ukraine about Babi Yar lies the Holocaust. Between 1941 and 1943 1.5 million Jews perished in Ukraine, yet a full understanding of that tragedy has been suppressed consistently by ideologies and interpretations of history that minimize or ignore this tragedy. For Soviet ideologues, admitting to the existence of the Holocaust would have been against the tenet of a “Soviet people” and the aggressive strategy of eliminating national and religious identities. A similar logic of oneness is being applied now in the ideological formation of an independent Ukraine. However, rather than one Soviet people, now there is one Ukrainian people under which numerous historical tragedies are being subsumed, and the unique national tragedies of other peoples on the territory of Ukraine, such as the massive destruction of Jews, is again being suppressed. According to this political idea assiduously advocated most recently during the Yushchenko presidency, the twentieth century in Ukraine was a battle for liberation. Within this new, exclusive history, the Holocaust, again, has found no real place. The author reviews the complicated history regarding the memorialization of the Jewish tragedy in Babi Yar through three broad chronological periods: 1943–1960, 1961–1991, and 1992–2009.

Keywords: Babi Yar; Jews in Ukraine; anti-Semitism; Holocaust

At the core of the decades-long debate in Ukraine about the memorialization of the Jewish tragedy at Babi Yar lies a lack of acknowledgement of the Holocaust. Between 1941 and 1943 1.5 million Jews perished in Ukraine, yet a full understanding of that tragedy has been suppressed consistently by ideologies and interpretations of history that minimize or completely ignore the Holocaust. For 70 years, the murder of Jews at Babi Yar that began in September 1941 has never been fully accepted in Ukraine as an event integral to the genocide of European Jewry overall, or in particular, as the site of a massive destruction of the local Jewish population. However, despite decades of conscious efforts to minimize the tragic fate of Jews during the Holocaust in Ukraine, in response there have been consistent and conscious counter-efforts undertaken to memorialize the genocide. The most notable of these efforts have been at Babi Yar, in Kyiv, both as the actual site of the destruction of Jews, as well as a symbolic memorial to all the Jews of Ukraine who perished. I group the complicated history of the numerous attempts to memorialize the Jewish tragedy at Babi Yar into three broad periods: 1943–1960, 1961–1991, and 1992–2009.

For post-war Soviet ideologues, recognition of the Holocaust went against all tenets, a principal one of which was the creation of a “Soviet people” and an aggressive companion strategy of eliminating all national, ethnic, or religious distinctions and identities. In the

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years after the war, recognition of the Holocaust, and of the murder of Jews at Babi Yar as integral to the Holocaust, would have required acknowledging that Germany conducted a war not only against the Soviet people, but conducted a separate war specifically against Jews.

Since 1991, a similar logic of “one people” has been applied to the ideological formation of an independent Ukraine. However, rather than one Soviet people, there is now one Ukrainian people under which numerous historical tragedies are being subsumed, and the unique national tragedies of other peoples on the territory of Ukraine, such as the massive destruction of Jews, is again being suppressed.

During the first decade or so of Ukrainian independence, the issue of properly memorializing the Jewish tragedy at Babi Yar was actively, if not always positively, debated. Nonetheless, the underpinnings of a new ideology, that of one Ukrainian people, was being put into place. With the advent of President Viktor Yushchenko’s tenure in 2004, the idea of one Ukrainian people was officially buttressed by a new interpretation of history, one in which the twentieth century in Ukraine was, in first order, a decades-long battle for the liberation of the Ukrainian people.

Now, no longer a symbol of a tragedy for the Soviet people, Babi Yar began to be transformed into a symbol of tragedy for those who perished in the struggle for Ukrainian national liberation. Within this new, exclusive history, the Holocaust, and Babi Yar, both as an actual site for the mass murder of Ukrainian Jews, as well as part of the genocide of all European Jews, once again has found no real place in Ukrainian historiography or public understanding. In the cases of the Soviet Union and of an independent Ukraine, the refusal to recognize the Holocaust as elemental to the twentieth century histories of both has allowed the issues of acquiescence, responsibility, and anti-Semitism to be avoided.

According to the *piataia grafa* (fifth row) in the Soviet internal passport, citizens of the Soviet Union had a “right” to a national identification that they were required to record in this fifth row. At the same time, citizens were deprived of the real risk-free possibility to manifest this national identity publicly. This declared, but not genuine, right was one of the causes of the almost universal silence regarding the Jewish component of Babi Yar. Unique indicators of national identity were trivialized or eliminated. Until 1961, the silence around Babi Yar was quite successful. However, with the publication of Evgenii Evtushenko’s poem “Babi Yar” (1961), and the unexpected landslides of gravel and cement slurry that broke through a holding dam and poured into the ravines around Babi Yar¹, the silence was broken. After 1961, for the next three decades, it was possible to speak about Babi Yar and commemorations of the dead began, although the previous position not to recognize the specifically Jewish aspect of Babi Yar continued.

Since Ukrainian independence in 1991, with the exception of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the tragedy, the positions of leading government officials regarding Babi Yar and its place in the European Holocaust has continued to be one of minimization. Instead, overt attempts by public figures, as well as public officials to position Babi Yar primarily within the context of the national liberation struggle have intensified. For example, the leader of the Kyiv chapter of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Bohdan Chervak, refers to Babi Yar as “above all else, a place where the lives of hundreds of Ukrainian patriots were cut short, participants in Ukraine’s national-liberation struggle to obtain independence.”² Similarly, President Yushchenko approved plans to erect a statue at Babi Yar to memorialize poet and OUN member Olena Teliha and her “comrades-in-arms (*soratnykiv*) in Ukraine’s liberation movement” (Ukraine. Ukaz 416/2006), but did not issue a single directive with regard to the commemoration

of Jews murdered at Babi Yar. The depiction of Babi Yar by a president of Ukraine as primarily a place of suffering for Ukrainian nationalists indicates not only a profound disrespect for the history of Babi Yar as truly a place of suffering for tens of thousands of Jews, but also implies a purposeful distortion of historical reality.³ This distortion, however, is in keeping with the history that is being rewritten for the school textbooks in Ukraine where “the Holocaust has no tie ‘with the national history’.” In the textbooks of world history, it is mentioned that the Holocaust took place in various countries in Europe, but not in Ukraine (Jilge 14).

1943–1960

The German army occupied Kyiv on 19 September 1941; 10 days later, on 29 September 1941, the mass murder of the city’s Jewish population began. After two days of shooting, a secret communiqué was sent to Berlin by the occupying forces that stated “33,771 people were shot . . . smoothly . . . without incident” (Einsatzgruppe Archives). Records indicate that Jews continued to be shot for three more days, and that the city was then declared *Judenfrei* (free of Jews) (Browning 401). On 19 November 1941, the newspaper *Izvestiia* published, “information has been obtained from the reliable sources that in Kyiv, the Germans executed 52 thousand Jews – men, women, children.”

During an interview with Vladimir Tolts on Radio Liberty, Marina Shevchenko, a director at the Museum of the Great Fatherland War in Kyiv, indicated that “in 1942, the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement analyzed information sent to central headquarters about Kyiv and Kyiv oblast – this, in my opinion, is the first reference about the number of people destroyed in Babi Yar – in which it was stated, practically literally, that the fascists shot about a 100,000 Jews in Babi Yar. On 28 November 1943, the statements of the partisan Panasik were published in an article in the military press – the newspaper is in our museum, *Forward, to the West* – and this figure is again referenced.” In 1998, Mykhailo Koval, head of the Department of the History of World War II at the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NANU), compiled an extensive list of British, German, Soviet, French sources that graphically substantiate eyewitness accounts of these killings.⁴

After Soviet troops entered Kyiv on 6 November 1943, the rebuilding of the city began immediately. The first known attempt to honor the memory of the Jews who perished in Babi Yar was an initiative by David Gofstein to organize a memorial meeting at Babi Yar for the third anniversary of the shootings, an attempt that was suppressed by Party officials (Mitsel 26). Noting Gofstein’s efforts, Mitsel (57) cites the secret document of the People’s Commissariat of National Security, “The poet Gofstein judges and reacts to the situation in a peculiar way: ‘That which the Jews are going through is good. This will restore their national self-consciousness, which was lost’ . . .”

Renowned Kyiv architect Avraam (Abba) Miletskii (32) describes one early memorialization effort, “The first attempt to build a monument was toward the end of the 1940s. Chief architect of Kyiv Vlasov provided a design proposal . . . Neither the craftsmanship of this great architect nor his personal friendship with N. Khrushchev helped him complete this concept.” Another effort, Dmitri Klebanov’s symphony “Babi Yar,” was sharply criticized as “unpatriotic” in a 20 March 1949 memo from the department of propaganda of the CP(b)U to Khrushchev (Mitsel 190–1).

Historian Vladyslav Hrynevych (4) writes, “The eradication from memory of Jewry and the catastrophic tragedy of the Holocaust was a very significant moment in the official history of the war. In 1945, in the decision of the Council of the People’s Commissars of

UkSSR to establish a monument in memory to those shot in Babi Yar, about Jews there is not a word.”

Soviet ideology dictated that the victims of war be only the fraternal Soviet people. However, other, less official insights into the mindset of Soviet leaders can be found in Leon Leneman’s book *La Tragédie des Juifs en U.R.S.S.*, published in France in 1959, which contains the personal recollections of the Polish Communist and Jew Maria Khelminskaya, who worked for a time after the war in the secretariat of Nikita Khrushchev. When Khelminskaya was discharged, Khrushchev explained to her, “I understand that you as a Jew look at this situation subjectively. However, we Communists are objective. In the past, Jews committed numerous sins against the Ukrainian people. People hate them for this. In our Ukraine, we do not need Jews. I think, for Ukrainian Jews, who survived Hitler’s attempts to destroy them, it would be better not to return here. . . . We are not interested that the Ukrainian people interpret the return of Soviet authority as the return of Jews” (Mitsel 26–27).

In October 1944, the Kyiv City Council issued a directive designating a section of land that included Babi Yar and other smaller ravines to be used for sand quarries to provide raw materials for nearby brick factories. In 1950, the steep ravines of Babi Yar, at the bottom of which lay corpses, were partially filled in order to improve local transportation. Slurry with by-products from nearby brick factories was dumped to fill the ravines upon which residential construction later began. By 1959, the Syrets neighborhood, in which Babi Yar is located, an area of more than 59 hectares, was crisscrossed with nine new streets and residential buildings. According to documents, in 1964, during construction on Grekova Street, the remains of corpses were found, but nothing is known of their disposition (Evstafeva and Nakhmanovich 187–204). Construction decisions by the Kyiv City Council, spanning 40 years, included the building of a factory, roads, a subway line, a park, sports complex, media center, and residences. The original location of the ravines or the locations of the mass shootings can no longer be identified. “Babi Yar practically disappeared from the face of the earth” (Evstafeva and Nakhmanovich 201–03).

About the disregard for the tragedy, Miletskii (36) wrote, “The words ‘Babi Yar’ were forbidden for many decades. Even to refer to one of the oldest cemeteries in Kyiv, adjacent to the steep bank of the ravine – the Old Jewish Cemetery – was forbidden. Among the dead buried there were the graves of important scientists, doctors, and people prominent in cultural life. Destroyed also were the common graves of the victims of pogroms. The grave of my father was there, as well. Instead, on this site they built a sports center, a television station, the archive building of the Communist Party of Ukraine.”

American journalist Ben Tsion Goldberg (354–55), son-in-law of Sholom Aleichem, traveled to Ukraine in 1937, 1949 and 1962. About his visit to Kyiv in 1962, the author wrote, “I asked my Intourist guide, ‘What is being done with Babi Yar?’ ‘*Yama* (the pit)’ she replied, ‘has been filled in. Only two plaques with inscriptions are there.’ After her answer, I no longer wanted to visit the dead.”

Between the 1950s and 1970s, writer Viktor Nekrasov recorded his observations of changes to Kyiv. About Babi Yar, he wrote, “The ravine is no longer there. It has been washed away, now filled with slurry, and bisected by an asphalt road. Once there was a steep ravine, an enormous ravine. Babi Yar. Kiev’s darkest days. Only a small bouquet of flowers” (Nekrasov 80). When Nekrasov wrote these words, no public commemorations to honor the dead at Babi Yar were being held. Instead, people came to the area of the ravines individually to remember those close to them who had perished, leaving only small bouquets of flowers so as not to draw attention.

Such was my experience. I first visited Babi Yar with my father in the spring of 1944. The memory of feeling terrified remains from my childhood. The banks of the ravines were steep. It was cold. The winds howled in those ravines. My father walked and wept. Somewhere along the steep banks or at the bottoms of these deep and huge ravines were the bodies of his older brother, his brother's wife, their five daughters, his older sister and her family, and more than a dozen other relatives. I would occasionally return to the edge of those ravines before they were filled. At the different ends of the ravines, I almost always found dried, and sometimes fresh, randomly and imperceptibly dropped, small bouquets of field flowers, individual chrysanthemums, sometimes red roses.

1961–1991

With the publication of Evtushenko's poem "Babi Yar," 1961 became a landmark year in the history of the memorialization of Babi Yar. A denouncement of the Soviet distortion of the Nazi massacre of the Jews in September 1941, as well as of persistent and widespread anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, Evtushenko's poem became the first true monument to the Jews of Babi Yar. At a press conference in 1991, during the 50th anniversary commemorations of Babi Yar, Evtushenko stated that he felt compelled to write his poem after visiting Babi Yar with his colleague Nekrasov and becoming aware of the heinous acts of barbarism that took place there.⁵ Evtushenko's poem stirred the world, opened the door to the closed world of almost legal anti-Semitism in the USSR, and provoked the beginning of a debate about the events at Babi Yar.

The publication of "Babi Yar" in the Moscow-based newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta* on 19 September 1961, 10 days before the 20th anniversary of Babi Yar, caused quite a sensation in the Soviet Union. Yet in Ukraine, the poem was met with official silence. "For 23 years this poem, which was translated into many languages, was forbidden in Kiev. *Perestroika* had already begun, but Ukraine's ideologues still refused to allow Evtushenko to read his poem in the republic" (Orlov).

Before the stunning surprise of Evtushenko's poem had completely quieted, Dmitri Shostakovich's 13th Symphony, based on Evtushenko's "Babi Yar" and given the same name, premiered in Moscow on 18 December 1962. It was not broadcast on radio or television, nor recorded or filmed. On 1 December, just weeks before the premiere, Khrushchev, maintaining the official line that there had been no genocide of Jews, criticized the symphony during a speech at a cultural exhibit in Moscow. "The composer Shostakovich invented some kind of symphony 'Babi Yar', raising the unnecessary for anyone 'Jewish question' even though the fascists killed not only Jews" (Lisniak). Despite condemnation, on the evening of the premiere, people risked standing as close as three blocks away asking for extra tickets. After the finale, the ovation was fervently endless. Two concerts in Moscow were followed by three concerts in Minsk. However, in Kyiv, local officials permitted this symphony to be performed only 20 years later.

In 1966, an eyewitness to the atrocities at Babi Yar, Anatoli Kuznetsov, who had lived near the ravine, published his recollections in the journal *Yunost* and, in 1967, more fully in the book *Babi Yar: Roman-Dokument*, published in Moscow by Molodaia Gvardiia. Again, quite a sensation was created throughout the Soviet Union. People traveled from Kyiv to Moscow by train overnight to purchase the book. Immediately after publication, authorities banned the book. Copies, however, had been smuggled to the West and the text translated (Kuznetsov). After the publication of Evtushenko's poem "Babi Yar" six years earlier, the publication of Kuznetsov's collection of documents and eyewitness accounts

about the mass murder of Jews was one of the most influential events to raise the level of public awareness about Babi Yar, forcing a degree of official acknowledgement of the uniquely Jewish dimension.

Kuznetsov's presentation (389–90) brought to light the heinous crime of Babi Yar:

Until recently, in the house in the cemetery lived the caretaker, M.S. Lutsenko, or Auntie Masha (*Tiotia Masha*) . . . The Germans had forgotten all about her; they probably never suspected that she had snuck up to the brushwood hedge and had seen all that they did. As she showed me around, she told me again and again about where it all began, where they blasted into the top of the slopes so that the dirt would tumble down – ‘and here, and there, they forced them to lie on the ground and they were screammmming . . . oh dear Mother of God . . . and they beat them, beat them with shovels’. . . I began to write this book in Kiev, but could not continue, so I left. I could not sleep. At night, all I could hear was their screaming.

This period of intense public expression occurred during a unique and short-lived window of freedom during the 1960s, a period known as *ottepel'* (the Thaw). *Ottepel'* allowed an open meeting to take place at Babi Yar in September 1966 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the massacre. Initiated by film student Emmanuil Diamant (Gedz), among those present were author Nekrasov and literary critic Ivan Dziuba, film director Rafael Nakhmanovich and cameraman Eduard Timlin. The authorities, however, confiscated Diamant's film. In his book, Nekrasov (84) cites a fragment of Dziuba's speech, “There are tragedies before the immensity of which any word is powerless and about which more can be said with silence – the great silence of thousands of people. However, silence speaks only when everything that was possible to say, has been said already. When nothing has been said – then silence becomes the accomplice of falsehoods . . . Babi Yar . . . is a tragedy of humanity, but it occurred on Ukrainian ground. Therefore, a Ukrainian does not have a right to forget about it, just as a Jew does not . . .” Soon after this event, a granite marker was placed on site with the inscription, “In the Shevchenko district of Kiev, a monument will be built to honor the memory of the Soviet citizens, soldiers, and officers of the Soviet Army, who were killed at the hands of the fascist aggressors during the occupation of Kiev” (Miletskii 32–33).

International reaction and discussion triggered by Evtushenko's poem and Shostakovich's symphony forced Soviet officials to confront the issue of a permanent memorial, leading to a decision to conduct an architectural competition. In 1965, authorities announced closed architectural competitions simultaneously for two places – Babi Yar, as well as for the site of a prisoner-of-war camp in Darnytsia, near Kyiv. The competition guidelines read, “Monuments must artistically reflect heroism and the unbending will of our people in the fight for the victory of the great ideas of communism. . . courage and the fearlessness of the Soviet citizens before the face of death. . .” News of the competition was greeted with “unusual enthusiasm,” as “a sign of freedom.” The winning submission, however, by architects A. Miletskii and M. Budilovskii, including elements from the artists A. Rybachuk and V. Melnichenko, was rejected by Party leaders based on “the inadequateness of the works” (Miletskii 33, 34–36). Party leaders, led by Petro Shelest, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPU rejected the results of a second competition, as well (Evstafeva, “K istorii”).

Rybachuk and Melnichenko's design for the first competition in 1965 evoked a widespread, positive reaction during the public viewing of competition submissions. The memorial was designed as a dramatic, detailed wall of sculpted faces and bodies, stacked meters high and long, reflecting the images of the remains of the bodies and skeletons unearthed at Babi Yar found in photographs of the Extraordinary State Commission archives. Years later, reflecting on their submission, Rybachuk and

Melnichenko (25) wrote, “There are events in human history, which are impossible to comprehend by the human mind – . . . Such events can be defined as catastrophies [*sic*] of human spirit . . . [that] must be always remembered . . .”

The scope of commitment and creative vision brought to the 1965 competition is illustrated by the efforts of one the Soviet Union’s most respected architects, Iosef Karakis, who, along with Zinovii Tolkachov and sculptors Yakiv Razhba and Evgenii Zhovnirovskii, submitted three designs. In 2002, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Karakis’ birth, an album-catalog was published that included design sketches of all three submissions and included Karakis’ original explanatory notes,

That part of Babi Yar that is still intact in its original state will become protected space, where the foot of man must not step. The place where the shootings occurred is to be filled with red gravel or planted with red poppies. Visitors will walk down into the central section of the park, surrounded on three sides by steep edges of the ravine which is crisscrossed with suspended walkways . . . The first version of the monument design will be executed in the form of a huge tree standing, yet split open in the center, and inside will be the museum . . . The theme of the second version is reflected in the sculptural group that surrounds the statue of grief . . . The third version provides for the installation of a monument in the form of the concrete block, 10-meters in height that is pierced through with a silhouette of a person. The top of the block is crowned with an eternal flame. (Brazhnik et al 87)

The statue finally commissioned in 1972 by Party officials, designed by a team headed by architect A. Ignashchenko, was unveiled on 2 July 1976, with little publicity, and identified as a monument to Soviet people honoring citizens, soldiers, and prisoners of war shot by the Germans at Babi Yar.⁶

In 1991, additional plaques with inscriptions in Russian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish were added (Evstafeva “K istorii”). After 1976, except for a documentary film in 1985 produced by Vitali Korotich, “Babi Yar: Lessons of History,” based on a script by Aleksandr Shlaen – a film that received almost no publicity except among intellectual circles in Kyiv – there was no serious political, cultural or social effort for the next 15 years to commemorate Babi Yar.

Completely unknown in Ukraine, and little known elsewhere, were attempts in the West to commemorate Babi Yar, such as the joint Ukrainian-Jewish commemoration of the 30th anniversary held in London in 1971 through the efforts of the Mazepa



Figure 1. Bronze plaques in three languages at the base of the Babi Yar monument in Kyiv.

Anglo-Ukrainian Society. Some 300 people attended a public meeting on the occasion, including representatives of more than 15 European peoples. Speakers included Matthew Waley-Kogan, a member of one of the oldest and most widely known Jewish families of England, author Anatoli Kuznetsov (based in London since 1969), and journalist and author Leonid Finkelshteyn, originally from Cherkasy (Zelenko 237).

In Ukraine, during the spring of 1991, a consortium of state, community, and cultural organizations again called for an open competition for a memorial at Babi Yar to be announced at the 50th anniversary commemorative events being planned for the fall. Miletskii (39) noted that in the 1991 competition guidelines, “the underlying tendency seen in previous years, to dissolve the Jewish genocide within the overall flow of Nazi crimes remained.” However, for the first time, the historical information in the program indicated that, “with Babi Yar began the mass destruction of Jews in Europe.” Unlike in 1965, the architectural competition in 1991 was not open to the public for viewing and only a small circle of people knew of its existence. Albert Kryzhopolski, a recipient of top international design awards, designed one of the 1991 competition submissions. Architect Evgenii Olenin (Olenin) consulted with Kryzhopolski and recalled Kryzhopolski’s talent and design that “was executed to match highest international standards, and that with a high degree of artistic accuracy he expressed the meaning of this PLACE and of these EVENTS . . .” Architects V. Dermerom and V. Levi won the closed competition in 1991, although, as was the case in 1965, the memorial was never built.

In the spring of 1991, no one would have believed that the USSR would cease to exist within a few months. However, *perestroika* and *glasnost* inspired the rejection of old methods. Many from among the political elite of Ukraine, including former members of the Communist Party who aligned themselves with, or even became leaders in, the popular movement Rukh, made efforts to improve Jewish-Ukrainian relations, in particular with regard to the issue of Babi Yar. In 1991, the tragedy of Babi Yar was commemorated not only on an official level, but among the public, as well. Several unique publications were printed in large quantities, such as a special edition of the journal *Svit* (“Spetsialnyi vypusk” 81); a booklet that provided a list (incomplete) of names and addresses of Jews who were murdered in Babi Yar (Zgurskii); and others (Shlaen). One of these publications was the *Chernaia Kniga* by Iliia Erenburg and Vassilii Grossman, a compilation of eyewitness accounts about the murder of Jews in Ukraine during the Nazi occupation, a publication commissioned by the Anti-Fascist Committee in the 1940s, but never released.⁷ The information was first published in Israel in 1980 and finally in the USSR in 1991.

In stark contrast to the years of Soviet silence, and even a rejection of this silence, was the weeklong commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Babi Yar tragedy. Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine Sergei Komissarenko, who chaired a government committee that organized the international commemoration, actively strove to change policies of the past (Schmidt). Three leaders of new Jewish non-governmental organizations and cultural groups were invited to join the committee, a gesture inconceivable during the Soviet period.⁸ Events planned for each day throughout the week of 29 September–6 October 1991, included musical tributes, library exhibits, films, drama productions, an international scholarly conference, special programs by Jewish organizations, as well as a reception for visiting dignitaries and several hundred guests at the elaborate Marinski Palace.

Throughout the city, posters with the words, “Eternal memory. The tragedy of Babi Yar must never be repeated” were displayed in four languages, Ukrainian, Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew. Ceremonies were held recognizing the Righteous of Babi Yar. On 29 September 1991, on the day during which 50 years earlier the massacre of Jews

began, a bronze Menorah placed on a small mound, designed by architect Yuri Paskevich was unveiled. Leonid Kravchuk, then the head of the parliament of Ukraine, the highest political position in the republic in the waning days of the USSR, unveiled the Menorah, inviting leaders of various Jewish organizations of Ukraine to speak.

The main events of the week took place during the weekend of 5–6 October. On 5 October, thousands of people began to walk from various points of the city converging on the Road of Death that led to Babi Yar. A large, open-air ceremony was held on the territory of Babi Yar. Hundreds of international guests were present from Israel, Germany, the United States, and several European countries. Actors Cliff Robertson and Tony Randall from the United States, Chaim Topol from Israel and Bohdan Stupka from Ukraine read fragments the *Chernaia Kniga*. The same actors, along with poet Evtushenko, did a dramatic reading of the poem “Babi Yar.” A new requiem “Babi Yar” – composed by Evgenii Stankevich, words by poet Dmytro Pavlychko – premiered (Burakovskiy, *Evrei i ukrainsy* 112–15). Speaking at the event, Kravchuk proclaimed:

Before the entire world we declare as unacceptable the ideological considerations of the previous regime in the Ukraine, trampling upon the rights of individuals and the right of peoples, hiding from people the historical truth about the tragedy of Babi Yar, about the fact that Jews composed the majority of the victims of mass shootings here. This was genocide, and fault for it lies not only with the fascists, but also with those, who in proper time did not stop the killers. Part of it we take upon ourselves. Today’s sad commemoration - this is a unique and suitable moment to ask forgiveness from the Jewish people, against whom so many injustices were inflicted during our history. It is difficult, but it is necessary that the people admit errors and request forgiveness. Without this, progress is impossible. (Burakovskiy, *Evrei i ukrainsy* 113–14)

1992–2008

The open frankness of 1991 soon slipped away. The three-decade period that began in 1961 with recognition of the Jewish tragedy at Babi Yar by the creative intelligentsia and ended in 1991 with a political recognition did not result in a permanent memorialization of the Holocaust in Ukraine.

Within a year of the proclamation of Ukraine’s independence, in tribute to “Ukrainian nationalists . . . murdered by the Germans,” a large wooden cross was placed not far from the Menorah (Evstafeva “Kievskii koshmar”; *Babii Iar*). During the next decade, markers designating various groups of victims of Babi Yar were placed around the territory – to the prisoners of the Syrets concentration camp, to the 22 players of the Kyiv soccer team and to the patients of the Kirilivska mental institution who were shot in 1941–1942. In 2000, again not far from the Menorah, a cross was placed to honor two Ukrainian Orthodox clergymen who encouraged people to resist the Germans. A year later, a monument was erected to the children shot at Babi Yar (Evstafeva and Nakhmanovich 204).

During the Soviet era, one statue had been erected to commemorate one Soviet people, everyone equal victims of German aggression; during the years of an independent Ukraine, Babi Yar has become a fraternal grave of many groups, all still equal victims of German aggression. The result is the entrenchment of an unwillingness to understand Babi Yar within the broader context of the genocide of European Jews and, in particular, the Holocaust in Ukraine.

Nevertheless, the issue of a Holocaust memorial complex at Babi Yar has been raised periodically in different circles of the Jewish community in Ukraine, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the international community. This topic was particularly important for Jews with close relatives who had perished in Babi Yar.

In 2000, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, popularly referred to as Joint, allocated millions of dollars (A. Goldberg 18) for the construction of a memorial/community center at Babi Yar. The stated objective of the project, which was to be overseen by a committee composed of representatives of different Jewish organizations of Kyiv, was “to immortalize the memory of the inhabitants of Kiev who were killed at Babi Yar ... [and create] a scholarly base for the history of Holocaust and history of Jewish people in the context of Ukrainian culture ...” (Filvarov). An international architectural competition was launched for this purpose. Prior to the review of the submissions by international judges, the project was to be open to the public for consideration and to ask questions of the professionals.

In 2001, during a ceremony commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Babi Yar tragedy, President Leonid Kuchma laid a marker noting the place where the Jewish cultural and community “Heritage” center funded by Joint was to be built (Levitas; Zelinskii). The competition results for the Heritage center were presented in May 2002. Nine teams submitted designs – five from Israel and four from Ukraine. Genrikh Filvarov (Filvarov), a member of the organizing committee, noted in an article that there was a huge divide between the designs of the western and domestic architects. The former he judged to be “maximally laconic and transparent,” the latter, “using professional jargon – shallow jittering (*milkiy dryp*).” Renowned American architect Stanely Tigerman chaired the jury and the Israeli team of Ulrich and Daniel Plezner won the competition. In July 2002, the municipal building and public works committee approved the project (*Arhitektura i prestizh*).

Filvarov’s article sparked an intense debate that grew, via the Internet, to include members of Jewish and Ukrainian intelligentsia and Jewish émigrés worldwide.⁹ Broadly speaking, the debate pitted those who felt that a large, Western-style community center to include a small synagogue, a modest research facility and symbolic memorial, with a primary emphasis on a theater, athletic facilities, children’s classrooms, seniors activities, was an inappropriate way to memorialize the Holocaust and honor the dead of Babi Yar against others who saw the community center as a way of revitalizing Jewish life in Kyiv. The location was also a point of contention. Joint referred to the center’s location as “by” Babi Yar, while opponents claimed that it was directly on the site even though the actual location of the shootings could no longer be determined accurately.

Project opponents complained that key decisions had been made by a small group of select people, a *fait accompli*. Supporters of the project accused opponents of purposefully ignoring the consultative process until after major decisions had been made. Rivalries and jealousies also played a role. The public faces of the debate were American-born Rabbi Iakov Bleich, Chief Rabbi of Kyiv, who supported Joint, and Iosef Zissels, head of the Jewish Federation of Ukraine, who supported the opposition (Woronowycz; “Jewish Organizations”).

The timing of this debate coincided with the start of the construction of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. That debate had gone on for 17 years. Former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, an active supporter of the Berlin project, insisted that the memorial be specifically a Holocaust memorial, not a memorial to all who perished. In Ukraine, however, from the moment the controversies began, political authorities, including President Kuchma, initially a supporter of the Joint project, were silent and did not demonstrate any leadership in the memorialization effort or in resolving the conflict.

At first, the controversy about the acceptability of the project was conducted exclusively among Jews. However, by the end of 2002, the controversy had expanded to include the Ukrainian intellectual and cultural elite. Furthermore, whereas the debate originally centered on how to best memorialize the Holocaust at Babi Yar, the debate

then shifted to whether there should be any memorial at all, or whether it should be a Holocaust memorial or one that commemorated all victims. The discussion went public via the media. One of Ukraine's central newspapers *Dzerkalo tyzhnia* published three articles in one issue – one by Myroslav Marynovych and one by Evhen Sverstiuk, both former Soviet dissidents, as well as by philologist Akademik Dmytro Zatonskyi. As indicated in this issue of the newspaper, opposition to the Joint project began to include subtle, as well as overt, elements of anti-Semitism.

Marynovych wrote, “The parade of symbols at Babi Yar, can at any instant, at the initiative of any of the many groups involved, inevitably become a war of symbols that will affect not only the descendants of the victims that lie here, but also all the citizens of Ukraine. It would be truly fatal, if Jews themselves splashed gasoline into this smoldering fire.” He had expressed different thoughts 10 years earlier, in an interview with *Suchasnist* (“Holocaust, Babi Yar, Today” 154). In response to the question “What does Babi Yar mean for you?” he replied, “Babi Yar . . . is, above all, a symbol of the genocide of the Jewish people. And any type of silencing of this fact not only fills the soul of Jews with sorrow and outrage, but also distorts world history.”

Sverstiuk proposed that we “look on the other side of our vanities,” and called for “the truthfulness of evidence, decency, humanity, good conscience and solidarity,” arguing “all who met their death here will appear before God, where there will be no divisions of religion and nationality.” Sverstiuk seemed unwilling to acknowledge that with the brutal destruction of Jews during the first few days of the German occupation of Kyiv, the genocide of European Jews had come to Ukraine. The editor of an Orthodox Christian journal, Sverstiuk is a well-informed intellectual in Ukraine. Yet he chose to be oblivious to the fact that even though non-Jews also died in camps such as Auschwitz, these sites, nonetheless, are considered primarily sites of the Holocaust.

In his remarks, Zatonskyi was openly provocative, “Imagine what kind of impression the building of a Jewish cultural center in Babi Yar will produce among the local population, especially among the Ukrainian, Russian and Polish residents – there [at the center] they will be dancing on the bones of our Slavic ancestors! And then the stones of the furious crowd will fly not only at the Brodsky synagogue and not only at its rabbis, but they will drag them by their beards.”

During the 62nd anniversary of the Babi Yar tragedy in 2003, and at the end of the Fourth Yalta Film Festival, a scandal exploded in the Ukrainian media around the feature film “Babii Iar,” directed by Nikolai Zaseev-Rudenko and Oksana Kovaleva. The film was premiered on Ukrainian Television Channel 1 and later was shown in Israel, where it topped all ratings. Despite the film's popularity, festival organizers chose not to screen it for the jury claiming that it was “Semitic and propagandistic.” The film's director reacted, “I am infuriated when the question is asked ‘Was it this road. . . or that road. . . or was that the Road of Death?’ or ‘How do they actually know how many Jews were shot?’ or ‘Where is the list of names?’ How it is possible to speak about the propaganda of anything, when an entire city district is built on bones? History has taught us nothing . . .” (Zaseev-Rudenko).

On 2 April 2003, opponents of the Joint plan announced the formation of a voluntary Community Committee for the Immortalization of the Memory of the Victims of Babi Yar. The opponents now included not only Zissels and other members of the Jewish community, but also several members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. The community committee's co-chairs included academicians Myroslav Popovych and Ivan Dziuba, who had spoken eloquently at the spontaneous commemoration in 1966, as well as psychiatrist and human rights activist Semen Gluzman (MacIsaac). In light of the

furious controversy that had now crossed the ocean and included Jewish émigrés, Joint, without any official announcement, slowly began to pull away from the project. By 2005, Vadim Rabinovich, president of the All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress and a wealthy businessman, assumed the lead in organizing and financing the proposed community center, which continued to generate controversy. The question now arose of whether it was acceptable for private individuals to finance and build memorials to a national tragedy, or whether this was primarily the responsibility of the government (Matveev).

Many Jews whose family members were killed during the Holocaust in Ukraine, and at Babi Yar in particular, had emigrated from Ukraine. As the intense debate about the memorialization of Babi Yar continued in Ukraine, in New York, at the initiative of several former residents of Kyiv, an ad hoc committee known as the Initiative Group “Save Babi Yar” was formed in mid-2003 (Initiative Group “Save Babi Yar”). The US committee noted that the concerns of Jews living outside Ukraine should be heard, as well. The committee called upon the government of Ukraine to take an active role in recognizing the place of Babi Yar within the Holocaust and constructing a solemn Holocaust memorial at the site. This committee spurred the emergence of an international Internet-linked network – MMS (Mezhdunarodnyi memorialnyi soviet po uvekovecheniiu pamiati zhertv Holokosta na Ukrainie) [International Council for the Immortalization of Holocaust Victims in Ukraine], which connected individuals from the United States, Israel, Ukraine, Russia, Canada, Germany and Australia. MMS included architects and historians who volunteered their time and expertise. Since Joint had removed its designs from consideration, MMS announced another international design competition for a Holocaust memorial at Babi Yar to be conducted by the Ukrainian Academy of Architecture and the architecture journal *A + C* (MMS. Advertisement 208). Among the architects who had agreed to participate in the architectural competition were Manolo Nunez-Yanovsky (France), Zaha Khadid (United States), Massimiliano Fuksas (Italy), Andrei Bokov (Russia), and Evgenii Olenin (Ukraine) (Katzman). US architect Daniel Libeskind had agreed to chair the jury. However, as with the previous competitions for a memorial at Babi Yar, this one too was fated to stall.

On 1 March 2007, prompted by a directive from President Yushchenko, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine designated the territory of Babi Yar a historical preserve and authorized the transfer of Babi Yar from the authority of the Kyiv City Council to the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM). The transfer was completed in June 2008 (“Kabinet Ministriv Ukrainy”). Since new construction is not allowed on historical preserves, MMS postponed their competition indefinitely (MMS 2, *A + C* 102).

Yushchenko had created the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory in May 2006, placing the new institute directly under his control. Akademik Ihor Yukhnovskiy was appointed as head. According to Yukhnovskiy (Yukhnovskiy), “. . . the basic goal of the UINM is to develop activities that focus on the consolidation and growth of the state-creating patriotism of the Ukrainian people (*narody*) . . . the resurrection of memory about the sacrifices and repressions that the Ukrainian nation (*natsia*) endured . . . [and that] all those who fought for Ukraine, suffered, died, should be treated as national heroes of Ukraine. The policies of all government entities should be based on the Ukrainian idea.” The UINM was charged with rehabilitating the image of the inter-war party Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and their military arm, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), as well as planning state-level commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the 1932–1933 Famine in Ukraine – known as the Holodomor (*Holod*; famine; *mor*: murder). Commemoration or acknowledgement of the Holocaust did not

figure anywhere in UINM's purpose or programs, and the transfer of Babi Yar to the control of this institute provoked anger.

In June 2007, Chabad's Chief Rabbi of Ukraine, Asriel Chaiken, addressed an open letter "To the Leaders of State Entities about the Creation of a Historical Preserve at Babi Yar," in which he wrote, "... I am dumbfounded that the goal of creating a historic memorial was directed only to preserve the 'memory of the victims of war and political repressions.' Babi Yar has become the symbol of genocide, a symbol of the terrible crimes that result from racism ... this must be said aloud!"¹⁰

A member of Ukraine's parliament Vadym Kolesnichenko remarked, "Why was it not possible to transfer the responsibility of the historical preserve to the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, which includes an institute that does professional research on the Holocaust? ... It is obvious that no discussion of memorializing the victims of fascism is intended. How is it possible to make heroes out of fascists and honor them together with the same people that the fascists tortured?" ("Kolesnichenko").

On 23 September 2008, the French newspaper *Le Figaro* published an open letter addressed to Yushchenko, signed by dozens of Ukrainian historians and scholars opposed the version of Ukraine's history being promulgated by the president and his government. "The attempts by officials to impose onto Ukrainians reconciliation with those who shot Kyivians in Babi Yar, participated in ethnic cleansing in Volyn, cut down Poles and Jews and carried out punitive operations against the innocent civilians of Belorussia – appear to be cynical" (Inosmi.ru).

Building experts and architects also protested the transfer, noting that the entire concept of a historical preserve is negated *a priori* when the territory is without designated boundaries and is already so built upon that the actual location to be preserved has been obliterated. Since new construction usually is not allowed on historical preserves, the designation appears to be an evasive action to avoid building a Holocaust memorial complex at Babi Yar.

In the US, interest in establishing a memorial at Babi Yar was still evident. On 10–11 April 2008, a delegation from the American Jewish Committee (AJC) traveled to Ukraine, where the topic of Babi Yar was discussed with community leaders (VAAD). On 16 November 2007, during a meeting in Manhattan with AJC Executive Director David Harris, Dmytro Pavlychko, a member of the Babi Yar Community Committee in Ukraine, proposed that during their meetings with Ukrainian officials, the AJC could broach the subject of offering assistance with regard to a Holocaust memorial at Babi Yar, as the AJC had done with memorials in Poland (Belzhets) and Hungary (Bucharest).¹¹ Prior to the visit of the AJC delegation to Kyiv, Pavlychko personally appealed to the offices of the President and Prime Minister on behalf of the AJC. However, no commitment was forthcoming from the Ukrainian government.

Numerous other international actors have also hoped to influence the government of Ukraine to recognize the genocide of Europe's Jews as a part of the country's history. Since 2004, a French Catholic priest, Father Patrick Desbois, traveling throughout Ukraine has video-recorded more than 700 oral histories from Ukrainians who witnessed the destruction of Jews in Ukraine. His team has located more than 800 mass graves and his work has resulted in an international traveling exhibit "The Shooting of Jews in Ukraine: Holocaust by Bullets" as well as a publication *Porteur de mémoires* (2007), translated as *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews* (2008). During a visit to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, referring to his interviewees, Desbois stated, "... these people want absolutely to speak before they die ... Very frequently they tell us when we leave, 'Promise us, Father, that you will work to build a memorial for these people.' ... You know, it is a huge crime. It's not a camp,

it's a continent" (Green). In March 2008, at a roundtable discussion held in Kyiv on the topic "Ukrainian Society and the Memory of the Holocaust: Educational Aspects," a representative from the office of the United Nations in Kyiv, Frank O'Donnell, expressed the hope "that Ukraine will join the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, which has 25 member countries" (Lubenskii). Ukraine is not, and never has been a member of this committee.

At a meeting with religious leaders in Kyiv in June 2001, Pope John Paul II read a statement, "... I wish to recall the significant presence of the Jews, who form a community that is solidly rooted in Ukrainian society and culture. They too suffered injustices and persecutions for having remained faithful to the religion of their ancestors. Who can ever forget the immense tribute of blood they paid to the fanaticism of an ideology propounding the superiority of one race over others? Here, in Kyiv, at Babi Yar, during the Nazi occupation countless people, including over 100,000 Jews, were killed within a few days. This is one of the most atrocious of the many crimes that the history of the last century unhappily has had to record" (The Holy See). The next day, the Pope accompanied Rabbi Bleich to Babi Yar, where together they prayed.

During 2006–2008, the Yushchenko administration expended considerable effort to obtain international recognition for the 1932–1933 Famine in Ukraine, the Holodomor, as the genocide of ethnic Ukrainians, often referring to the Holodomor as the "Ukrainian Holocaust." The inappropriateness of this conceptualization is explained by the assistant director of the Institute of History at the NANU, an authority on the Holodomor, Stanislav Kul'chyt's'kyi:

The interpretation of the Holodomor as ethnic cleansing, according to the typology of genocide, placed it on the same level as the Holocaust. However, the combination of the words "Ukrainian Holocaust" to refer to the Holodomor is unacceptable. This is because during the Holocaust 1.5 million Jews were destroyed at the hands of Nazis and their allies on the territory of Ukraine during World War II. This can never be forgotten. By transferring these words to another tragedy forces us to forget about the first. Furthermore, the identification of the Holodomor with the Holocaust pushes the Holodomor into the realm of ethnic cleansing, while at the same time it should more properly be considered to be a type of terror.

In the past few years, the increase in the unwillingness to accept the Holocaust as a part of Ukrainian history, or even accept the historic facts about Babi Yar as they are known, has been accompanied by a corresponding and dramatic increase in the active display and tolerance of anti-Semitism (Council of Europe). Despite solid, documented evidence, Yushchenko's position from the beginning of his administration has been that there is no anti-Semitism in Ukraine.¹² "Anti-Semitism has been treated as if it is not a serious problem, but rather a marginal phenomenon at the fringes of society" (Rudling 82).

Yushchenko's claim about the lack of anti-Semitism notwithstanding, in 2006, *Silski visti*, then the largest mainstream newspaper in Ukraine, with a daily print run of 500,000 copies, ran an article about the 65th anniversary of Babi Yar. Editor-in-chief Volodymyr Bilenko wrote in his "appeal" to Jews, "... in the name of fairness and sincere co-existence, you should apologize before the Ukrainian people for the perfidious murder of S. Petliura, for participating in mass repressions against Ukrainians, for participating in the organization of the Holodomor, and finally for the convoluted thinking used in Israel for the destruction of innocent Lebanese children. Now Israel should come and repent before Babi Yar" (Bilenko).

The following year, at a gathering at Babi Yar of self-identified patriots of Ukraine in memory of the 65th anniversary of the death of OUN members shot by the Germans outside Kyiv in February 1942 and whose bodies were later dumped in the ravine, speakers clearly claimed Babi Yar as primarily a tragedy for Ukrainians. A vivid example of the

tone and content of the statements uttered at this event is provided by the chairman of the Kyiv chapter of the political party Svoboda, Andriy Mokhnyk, “. . . there are myths about Babyn Yar.¹³ First, Germans executed mainly non-Ukrainians at Babyn Yar. Second, supposedly Ukrainian nationalists helped the Hitlerites [*sic*] conduct the executions . . . It is a blatant lie. Babyn Yar is mainly a site of the tragedy of Ukrainians, with over 55,000 Ukrainians being murdered there. Simultaneously, Babyn Yar is a hallmark of the unbreakable Ukrainian spirit. In Babyn Yar, the Germans shot activists of the Ukrainian nationalist underground movement. . . . They were executed as fighters of the Ukrainian national revolution” (League of Ukrainian Canadians; “Ukrainska hromadkist” 1). In February 2008 and 2009, similar services were held.

The director of the Department of Philosophy at the NANU, one of the three co-chairs of the Babi Yar Community Committee, Akademik Myroslav Popovych, stated in March 2009, “We are suffering through a period of decline of Ukraine’s national democrats . . . the prestige of an aggressive nationalistic course, such as that of (the party) “Svoboda” is increasing . . . in place of national democrats can come an aggressive nationalistic movement and then the civil peace in Ukraine, of which we are so proud, will come to an end. And many forces for which this will be satisfactory will be found” (Kyrychenko).

On 5 October 2008, during the 67th anniversary ceremony to honor of the Jews murdered at Babi Yar, standing at the Menorah among representatives of Israel, Germany, the United States, members of the Jewish community, Rabbi Bleich, stated, “With each year, at these gatherings, there are fewer and fewer Ukrainian officials and leaders present. On this day, there is not one. . . . We cannot, we do not have the right to allow what happened at Babi Yar to be forgotten. We cannot be silent, when history is being rewritten according to someone’s pleasure. Now is the time to be screaming aloud about this, so that later it will not be too late” (Shekhtman).

“The single largest shooting of Jews in the Soviet Union occurred on 29 and 30 September 1941, on the western outskirts of Kiev in a large ravine known as Babi Yar” (Berkhoff, “Dina Pronicheva’s Story” 291). For almost 50 years, Soviet authorities avoided acknowledgement of this event, as well as a broader acknowledgement of the eradication of the Jewish population. In essence, little has changed in the close to 20 years of Ukraine’s independence, most notably the years of the Yushchenko administration. Babi Yar went from being a mass grave of Soviet people to a fraternal grave for many groups of Ukrainian people. The result of decades of conscious effort on official levels to distort the history of Babi Yar and to minimize or ignore the Holocaust means that Evtushenko’s words still ring true for Jews “Above Babi Yar there is no monument” (Evtushenko).

The original motivation for this article was to determine efforts undertaken to memorialize the Jewish tragedy at Babi Yar, in particular, the numerous efforts to design and build an appropriate memorial. The failure of most of these efforts could be linked clearly to official suppression or distortion of the history of the Holocaust and an active unwillingness to understand that the massive destruction of Jews at Babi Yar is not only a tragedy of the Jewish people, but is also an integral part of the history of Ukraine. Today Ukraine remains the only European country without a national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

Notes

1. The name Babi Yar first appeared in 1401 when the owner *baba-shynkarka* (old woman-tavern owner) sold her land to a monastery. The ravine (*yar*) at the bottom of her land was 2.5km long and 50m deep (Evstafeva and Nakhmanovich 66). Babi Yar is the more familiar transliteration from Russian of the name of this ravine; Babyn Yar is the transliteration from Ukrainian.

2. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was a political party established in inter-war Western Ukraine that had individual adherents in Soviet Ukraine, such as poet Olena Teliha and integral nationalist ideologue Dmytro Dontsov. OUN leadership had a history of active cooperation with Nazi Germany through late 1941. Both the Soviet government and the inter-war Polish government of Western Ukraine banned the OUN. When the USSR collapsed in 1991, OUN resumed activities within Ukraine, reorganizing itself there as the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN). After Ukraine's independence, another party using the name OUN, to which Bohdan Chervak belongs, registered in Ukraine. It is not clear if there is any direct link between the post-independence OUN to the inter-war OUN, though the current OUN also adheres to the ideology of integral nationalism.
3. As Karel C. Berkhoff explains in *Harvest of Despair* (52), the Nazis executed members of the OUN Melnykite faction in areas outside of Kyiv in November 1941 and February 1942. "The method and location of the executions is unknown, but the bodies probably ended up in Babi Yar."
4. To date, there is no reasonably exact figure of how many bodies lay in Babi Yar, including corpses of those who were shot on site, nor of corpses brought to the ravine from elsewhere. The often-cited Soviet figure of 100,000 is cited variously. Shevchenko states 100,000 Jews. Official Soviet historiography did not mention Jews at all. Currently in Ukraine, there is a tendency to delineate the dead of Babi Yar by various categories to prove that the majority of victims were not Jews. Particularly jarring are the undocumented numbers offered in political rhetoric. In his May 2006 directive, Yushchenko did not provide a number for Teliha's comrades-in-arms. By July 2006, the Embassy of Ukraine in the United States claimed 40. Self-proclaimed Ukrainian nationalist Chervak claimed 621. This effort to de-emphasize the number of Jewish dead is linked to the repeated denial that Babi Yar, essentially, was an integral part of the Holocaust of European Jewry.
5. Press conference, 2 October 1991, Building of the Writer's Union of Ukraine, vul. Ordzhonikidze, Kyiv (author's notes from personal archive).
6. According to Kiev Entskilopedicheskii Spravochnik (51), a bronze plaque was placed at the Babi Yar monument in 1976 with the (Russian-language) inscription: Советским граѓжданам и военнопленным солдатам и офицерам Советской Армии, расстреленным немецкими фашистами в Бабьем Яру, памятник (*To Soviet citizens and prisoners of war, soldiers, officers of the Soviet Army shot by German Fascists in Babi Yar, a monument*). In 1991, three bronze plaques were placed at the monument with the inscription (left to right) in Russian, Ukrainian and Yiddish: "Здесь в 1941–43 годах немецко-фашистскими захватчиками были расстреляны более ста тысяч граждан города Киева и военнопленных" (*Here, in 1941–1943, more than one hundred thousand citizens of the city of Kyiv and prisoners of war were shot by German Fascist invaders*).
7. Erenburg and Grossman's *Chernaia Kniga* [The Black Book], originally released in 1980 in Israel and published for the first time in Ukraine in 1991 (Kyiv: MIP 'Oberig'), is a different publication from one with a similar title, *Le Livre noir du communisme* by Stéphane Courtois, published in France 1997 and in an English translation (*The Black Book of Communism*) in 1999. An extended version of the Erenburg and Grossman book, with three explanatory articles, by Joshua Rubenstein and Ilya Altman, was published in 2008 as *The Unknown Black Book: The Holocaust in the German-occupied territories* (Indiana UP).
8. Iliia Levitas, Aleksandr Shlaen, Aleksandr Burakovskiy.
9. The author participated in the debate. See Burakovskiy ("Babii Iar").
10. The letter was posted originally at www.rabbinate.org.ua as: Письмо Главного раввина Украины А.Хайкина к руководителем государственных структур по поводу создания заповедника в БЯ, (на имя премьер-министра В.Януковича, министра культуры Ю.Богущого, председателя горсовета Л.Черновецкого), Июнь 2007 г.; I consulted the site in June 2007 and printed a copy of the letter. Several months later, when I returned to this site to verify link, the letter had been removed. The Ukrainian government portal that lists the decision regarding Babi Yar to which Rabbi Chaiken reacted can be found at: http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/ru/publish/article?art_id=69647339&cat_id=1225809. The words Rabbi Chaiken quotes "памяти жертв войны и политических репрессий" are in the first paragraph.
11. The author was present at the meeting.

12. For an overview of official positions on anti-Semitism in Ukraine after independence, see Burakovskiy (“Key characteristics”).
13. Babi Yar, accepted usage, is a transliteration from Russian into English. However, the position of A. Mokhnyk and his political party is to reject Russian usage. In order to maintain the integrity of the text, a political statement, the transliteration from Ukrainian, Babyn Yar, was used.

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