

A b s t r a c t s

Babi Yar

The Place, the Crime and Commemoration

Bert Hoppe

Babi Yar

Mass murder on the city's outskirts

When the Germans captured Kyiv in September 1941, they had already expanded their anti-Semitic terror to a campaign of genocide against the Jews. In the Ukrainian capital, members of the SS unit and the police went about the mass murder with a chilling sense of routine, and as usual, in close cooperation and with the support the Wehrmacht. A few months later, the occupiers built a concentration camp directly next to the execution site. Before the Germans were forced to leave the city, the camp prisoners were forced to burn the corpses of the people who had been murdered there in the autumn of 1941 in order to wipe away any trace of the crime.

Franziska Davies

Babi Yar in court

A legal perspective in the USSR and Germany

The massacre at Babi Yar in 1941, when SS special deployment units (*Einsatzgruppen*), with the assistance of the Wehrmacht, shot 34,000 Jews over a period of two days, has become a symbol of the mass murders for which these units were responsible. At the Nuremberg Trials and the Soviet trials in Kyiv and Riga, Babi Yar was included in the indictment, and was used as evidence of the nature of the German war of extermination. During the subsequent Nuremberg trials of 1947/48, three of the individuals who were directly involved in the planning and implementation of the massacre were called to account. It was not until the end of the 1960s, during the Callsen trial in Darmstadt, that ten members of execution unit (*Sonderkommando*) no. 4a were accused of killing around 60,000 people. Some of them received sentences of between four and 15 years, while others were acquitted. No-one from the Wehrmacht faced legal action. Most of the members of the *Sonderkommando* and the *Einsatzgruppen*, which had at least 700 members and which were involved in the mass murders, remained unpunished.

Karel Berkhoff

A witness testifies in the country of the perpetrators
Dina Pronicheva at the Callsen trial

Dina Pronicheva was one of the few survivors of the massacre at Babi Yar in September 1941. In April 1968, she gave her testimony before the Darmstadt Federal State Court at the trial of Kuno Friedrich Callsen and nine other former members of the *Sonderkommando* no. 4a, who were accused of committing murder and of being an accessory to murder. Dina Pronicheva's statement is a key historical document with regard to the atrocity that occurred at Babi Yar.

Vladislav Hrynevich

A disputed historical site
Babi Yar as a Ukrainian memorial landscape

Babi Yar as a place of remembrance was the subject of dispute in Ukraine for several decades. The attempt by Jewish activists to honour the memory of the victims was opposed by the consistent efforts of the Soviet Union to downplay the Holocaust as a part of the National Socialist aggression against the "civilian Soviet population". When Ukraine gained independence in 1991, new motives and conflicting interests came into play. The way in which Babi Yar was treated changed in accordance with the political allegiances of the sitting president. The self-identification of Ukraine as a country situated between West and East Europe is also reflected in its remembrance policy. Babi Yar is the subject of heated discussion. The most recent development is the dispute surrounding a planned central memorial site, the *Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial Center*.

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern

One day that changed the world
Ukrainians, Jews and the 25th anniversary of Babi Yar

On 29 September 1966, a large number of Ukrainians and Jews gathered at Babi Yar to commemorate the Jewish victims of the massacre of 1941. The communist party regime responded with repressive measures. Yet for those who took part, this demonstration of courage, humanity and dignity marked the beginning of a new relationship between Ukrainians and Jews. A public realm was created in which both groups were able to express their self-awareness. Jewish and Ukrainian thinkers realised that they shared a common fate. The speech given by Ivan Dziuba dedicated to the victims of Babi Yar had a strong impact on national Ukrainian thinking among dissidents and the diaspora for decades to come. And for many Jews, Babi Yar became a crystallisation point for their own national liberation movement.

Daria Badior

The dispute surrounding Babi Yar
A memorial centre or a Holocaust Disneyland?

In Kyiv, a centre to commemorate the victims of the Shoah is to be created: the *Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial Center* (BYHMC) was founded in September 2016. Since then, it has been the subject of criticism, either because of funding for the project by businessmen based in Russia, or because of the type of content presented. The appointment of the scandal-ridden Russian film director, Ilya Khrzhankovsky, as artistic director, and his concept for the memorial centre, has led to open conflict. International museum specialists and historians walked out of the preparations for the memorial centre in protest. They fear that the memorial centre will become a Holocaust Disneyland, with no space for any serious museum education or remembrance. A lack of transparency and involvement of Ukrainian civil society further exacerbated the conflict.

Dorothea Redepenning

The sounds of remembrance
Musical interpretations of Babi Yar

In art, Babi Yar was portrayed as the site of one of the largest massacres of the Second World War and as a place of remembrance even before a monument was erected there. Dmitry Shostakovich's first movement of his 13th Symphony, which is based on the famous poem by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, towers above all other commemorative musical works. These range from *Lullaby for Babi Yar* by Nechama Livšic to various Soviet singer-songwriter works, to Dmytro Klebanov's *Memorial Symphony for the Victims* and Yevhen Stankovych's opulent "*Babi Yar*" *Requiem-Kaddish*. As long as the Soviet Union refused to acknowledge the Jewish identity of most of the victims, anyone who expressed the events at Babi Yar through art risked becoming the victim of cultural and personal repression.

"After the massacre, the silence"

Katya Petrovskaya on Babi Yar, the family memory and the obstacles to remembering

Katya Petrovskaya (author of the German-language book "*Vielleicht Esther*") found out early on about the atrocity that took place at Babi Yar in 1941 from the private circle of her family. Yet in the public sphere, Babi Yar was for many years a symbol of the impossibility of remembering. Too few people had survived who were able to remember the victims. The nature of the suffering among the millions of victims of the war varied too widely, and Soviet anti-Semitism and the ideologically motivated censorship was too oppressive. At

the same time, Babi Yar, which today is a park in the middle of Kyiv, remained inseparably linked to the massacre, of which no trace can be found. There are no corpses; only a narrative remains. Remembrance entails physical and psychological effort. It requires a language of its own.

Kateryna Botanova

A place of absence

Serhiy Bukovsky's Film *Spell Your Name*

Babi Yar is regarded as being of great importance in the history of Ukraine, yet for a long time, the massacre was hardly anchored at all in the collective memory of the country. One milestone in the way in which events were viewed was the film *Spell Your Name*, which is based on interviews from the archives held by Steven Spielberg's *Holocaust Foundation*. In his film, Serhiy Bukovsky reflects on the distance that separates us from historical events. At the heart of the film are memory, forgetting and repression. *Spell Your Name* circles around Babi Yar as a blank spot in the Ukrainian national memory. Here, the focus is not on reconstructing the past, but on how history is treated in the present day.

Sonja Margolina

A grave in the air

A homage to Anatoly Kuznetsov

When he was twelve years old, Anatoly Kuznetsov witnessed the massacre at Babi Yar. He survived the German occupation and the war, and during the early 1960s, he wrote his fact-based novel *Babi Yar*. In the Soviet Union, the text was altered by the censors. It was only after Kuznetsov emigrated that it became possible to publish the book in the original version. With only the desire to tell the truth in mind, he ignores all ideological and historical taboos. He testifies to what happened at Babi Yar, unflinchingly identifying the crimes of the totalitarian National Socialist and communist regimes. He also asserts the right of the individual to a life of dignity. Kuznetsov's work is an unknown classic.