



Victoria Khiterer\*

# In the Shadow of Babyn Yar: Anatoly Kuznetsov's Eyewitness Account of the Betrayal and Rescue of Jews during the Holocaust in Kyiv

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**Abstract:** The article explores the motivation for betrayal and rescue of Jews during the Nazi occupation of Kyiv. Unfortunately, significantly more gentiles betrayed Jews during the occupation of the city than rescued them. The motivations for betrayal varied: traditional anti-Semitism reinforced by Nazi propaganda, some gentiles desired to enrich themselves on the account of Jewish property, to occupy Jewish apartments and to demonstrate their loyalty to the Nazis. Betrayal of Jews was encouraged and rewarded by the Nazis, while rescue of Jews put under mortal risk the gentiles who helped them. Only a few hundred Jews survived in Kyiv during the occupation. Some of them lived under bogus identities, which listed their nationality as Russians or Ukrainians. Others were hidden by their friends, neighbors and gentile spouses. In several cases Jewish children were adopted by gentile families. The article is based on scholarly and memoir literature, and archival materials. Anatoly Kuznetsov provided the most complete eyewitness account of the Nazi occupation of Kyiv and the Babyn Yar massacre in his book *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel*, which is one of the main sources for the article.

**Keywords:** Babyn Yar, Kyiv, Holocaust

Babyn Yar was one of the first and largest Holocaust killing grounds in the Soviet Union during the Second World War. However, for many years Soviet authorities did not allow a monument to be built in Babyn Yar and broke up unauthorized commemoration meetings there. Soviet ideology stated that all Soviet people had shared the same fate during the war. Hence, the Holocaust was a forbidden topic for discussion and commemoration in the Soviet Union. It was only in 1976 that a monument was erected in Babyn Yar; however, this did not contain anything Jewish either in its design or in the inscription on it, which stated baldly that it was dedicated

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\*Corresponding author: Victoria Khiterer, Millersville University, Millersville, PA, USA,  
E-mail: vikahistory@gmail.com. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3744-6693>

to “Over one hundred thousand Kyivans and prisoners of war killed in 1941–43 by the German fascists” (Khiterer 2017, 105–20).

Despite all the efforts of Soviet officials to hide the truth about the Babyn Yar massacre, the silence about the Holocaust of Jews in Kyiv was broken in the 1960s. A significant role in the dissemination of popular knowledge about the Holocaust was played by Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s 1961 poem *Babi Yar* (Yevtushenko 2005) and Anatoly Kuznetsov’s autobiographical book *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel*.

Kuznetsov (1929–1979) was 12 years old when the Nazis occupied Kyiv and 14 when the city was liberated. His book is a valuable source for the history of the Babyn Yar massacre and the Nazi occupation of Kyiv. Despite the reference to “a novel” in its title, it is not fiction, as it combines Kuznetsov’s personal memories with the eyewitness accounts of Babyn Yar survivors, Dina Pronicheva and Vladimir Davydov. Kuznetsov’s book also includes a chapter of Nazi documents. Kuznetsov writes in his introduction:

I am writing this book now without bothering about any literary rules. . . .

I am writing it as though I were giving evidence under oath in the very highest court and I am ready to answer for every single word. This book records only the truth—AS IT REALLY HAPPENED. (Anatoli 1970, 14)

The book was originally published in a censored form in Russian in the journal *Iunost* (Youth) in 1966 (Anatoli 1970, 13). The uncensored version was published in the US in 1970, after Kuznetsov defected to the United Kingdom in 1969. It remains one of the most complete personal accounts of the Nazi occupation of Kyiv.

Kuznetsov made another important contribution to the commemoration of the Babyn Yar tragedy. He shared his memories about Babyn Yar with Yevgeny Yevtushenko and brought the poet to the massacre site during his visit to Kyiv in 1961. The poet was shocked by what he saw and learned. Yevtushenko recalls, “I anticipated of course that there would be at least some monument—but there was nothing! And suddenly I saw trucks dumping into the [Babyn Yar] ravine garbage—pressed garbage, layer over layer. . . . It stank terribly, awfully” (Volkov 2018, 220). That same night Yevtushenko wrote his renowned poem *Babi Yar*. The poem began with the line: “No monument stands over Babi Yar.” Yevtushenko told the writer Solomon Volkov that he wrote poetry in two cases: when something really hurt his feelings or out of shame. In this case these emotions overlapped. The next day, Yevtushenko read his poem at a literary evening in Kyiv (Volkov 2018, 222–24). When he returned to Moscow, he published *Babi Yar* in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*.

Thus, Yevtushenko’s poem and Kuznetsov’s book effectively broke the silence over the Holocaust in the USSR and made Babyn Yar a symbol of it. However, research of the Holocaust remained forbidden in the Soviet Union until the collapse of communism.

Since access to Holocaust materials in Ukrainian archives was made possible in the 1990s, Western and Ukrainian historians have published several books and many articles about the Babyn Yar massacre. However, only a few focus on the collaboration of the local gentile population in the Holocaust of Jews in Kyiv. Among them, Karel Berkhoff and Per Anders Rudling discuss the possible participation of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-M) and its militant group *Bukovins'kyi Kuren'* (Bukovinian Battalion) in the execution of Jews in Babyn Yar (Berkhoff 2011, 5; 2012, 8–20; Rudling 2011a, 195–214). Oleksandr Melnyk's article analyses the Jewish pogrom in Kyiv, which was organized by certain local gentiles in the days of the Babyn Yar massacre, September 30–October 1, 1941 (Melnyk 2013, 223–48), and Tetiana Evstaf'eva's article "*Tragedia Babynogo Yaru u 1941–1943 rr.*" (The Tragedy of Babyn Yar in 1941–1943) describes several cases of betrayal, as well as rescue of Jews during the Nazi occupation of Kyiv (Evstaf'eva 2004, 354–86).

In the 1990s, Jewish prisoners' memoirs of the Syrets concentration camp were published: *Nothing is Forgotten: Jewish Fates in Kiev* by David Budnik and Yakov Kaper (1993), and *The Riddle of Babi Yar* by Ziama (Zakhar) Trubakov (1997, 2014). These works present important experiences of life in the concentration camp and accounts of the prisoners' uprising against the Nazis in Babyn Yar in September 1943.

Two books about Babyn Yar Holocaust survivors and rescuers were put together by Ilia Levitas, head of the foundation "Memory of Babyn Yar": *Pravedniki Babiego Yara* (The Righteous of Babyn Yar) (2001) and *Babi Yar: Spasiteli i spasennye* (Babyn Yar: Rescuers and Survivors) (Levitash 2001; Levitas 2005). These books contain the personal stories of Holocaust survivors and rescuers. Although they are not scholarly, the information collected by Levitas provides valuable sources. In 2001 and 2005, the years when the books were published, many Holocaust survivors and their rescuers were still alive, and it was important to record their stories before the generation was gone. Certainly, memories have their limits and some information in these books may not be completely reliable, but these books are among the main sources of information about the Babyn Yar Holocaust survivors which we have today.

A new book, *Righteous Among the Nations: Ukraine*, was published on the 80th anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre in 2021 (Ioffe and Esviukov, eds. 2021). It covers updated information about the number of righteous gentiles who rescued Jews in Ukraine, and stories about the Holocaust survivors and their rescuers. The 2019 work of Aleksander Kruglov and Andrei Umansky, *Babi Yar: zhertvy, spasiteli, palachi* (Babyn Yar: Victims, Rescuers and Perpetrators) contains some important documents on the history of Babyn Yar. However, the authors focus mainly on the Nazi perpetrators and the victims of the Holocaust in Kyiv and provide only two

stories of the rescue of Jews in Babyn Yar, which I will discuss further. Ukrainian historians have thus published several works where they discuss the rescue of Jews in Babyn Yar, but the motivations for the betrayal of Jews remain under-researched.

In this article I analyze the motivations for both, the betrayal and the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust in Kyiv, making use of, among other sources, information and insights supplied by Kuznetsov's book. I explore the role of popular anti-Semitism and Nazi propaganda in the betrayal of Jews in Kyiv, document the participation of local collaborators and auxiliary police in the murder of Jews, and show how some gentiles benefited from the denunciation of Jews or their murder. Analysis of the harshness of the Nazi occupation helps us understand why significantly fewer people participated in the rescue of Jews in Kyiv than in their betrayal. I explain the risks and challenges faced by gentiles rescuing Jews in Kyiv, and why most of them remained passive bystanders during the execution of Jews.

Historical literature does not pay sufficient attention to the efforts of Kyivan Jews who were trying to rescue themselves. Certainly, these efforts were often unsuccessful. However, since some sources assert that Kyivan Jews submitted passively to Nazi orders, it is important to emphasize that many Kyivan Jews did attempt to escape from the Nazis. Here I discuss how some Kyivan Jews tried to survive the Nazi occupation and provide several examples where their efforts were successful.

## 1 Betrayal

### 1.1 Individual Collaborators

From all accounts, it appears, that during the occupation of Kyiv, there were significantly more gentiles who betrayed Jews than those who rescued them. The motivations for betrayal varied: traditional antisemitism reinforced by Nazi propaganda, the desire to acquire Jewish property, to occupy Jewish apartments or to demonstrate loyalty to the Nazis. Betrayal of Jews was encouraged and rewarded by the Nazis and the Ukrainian police, while the rescue of Jews put the rescuers and their families in mortal danger.

Antisemitism exploded in Kyiv from the first days of the Nazi occupation. Poet Naum Korzhavin wrote in his memoir that the janitor of his apartment building, Mitrofan Kudritsky, so sadistically tortured Korzhavin's elderly Jewish family members during the first nine or ten days of the Nazi occupation of Kyiv that their execution in Babyn Yar was a liberation (Korzhavin 2005, 109). Korzhavin described

how Kudritsky organized “a personal Auschwitz in their home” for Korzhavin’s relatives:

Every day, every morning he came to our apartment... with one purpose, to commit outrages against them. He tortured these elderly people creatively, in many ways, beat them, forced them to clean the restroom in the yard with their bare hands and to do many other jobs that were humiliating and beyond their strength. He punished them if they did not fulfill his orders adequately. He was their master, and he enjoyed this situation. (Korzhavin 2005, 108–109)<sup>1</sup>

Kudritsky had appeared in Kyiv with his family in 1934. He had been “dekulakized”<sup>2</sup> and hated everybody who, in his opinion, lived better than he did. He was happy when people were arrested during Stalin’s repression. Kudritsky also hated the Soviet regime which, he believed, had ruined his life. He rejoiced when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union and when Nazi aircraft bombed Kyiv. But why did Kudritsky choose elderly Jews, who did not have any connection with the Soviet authorities, as his victims? For Kudritsky, the Soviet authorities were distant and unreachable, so he directed all his anger toward his Jewish neighbors. In addition to Korzhavin’s relatives, Kudritsky sadistically tortured two other Jewish families who lived in the building: an elderly couple and a mother with a child. Kudritsky outlived his Jewish victims but did not survive the war: the Nazis, whom Kudritsky had praised at the beginning of the occupation, killed him for stealing from them (Korzhavin 2005, 104).

The Nazis encouraged local gentiles to denounce Jews hidden in the city. Holocaust survivor Veniamin Liberman testified that on Khreshchatyk, Kyiv’s main street, on the fifth day of the occupation of Kyiv (September 24, 1941), he saw “a car with a huge megaphone making frequent stops; a loud voice was coming over the megaphone, shouting, ‘Report the whereabouts of communists, partisans, and Jews to the Gestapo and to the police! Report them!’” (Ehrenburg and Grossman 2003, 4). Similar calls on gentiles to inform the German authorities about Jews, partisans, and communists were posted around Kyiv and promised a reward for their denunciation. Kuznetsov writes:

Notices were posted on the hoardings saying that anyone who informed the German authorities about Jews or partisans in hiding, about important Bolshevik officials who had not reported for registration as Communists, **or about other enemies of the people**, would receive ten thousand roubles in cash or in the form of foodstuffs or a cow. (Anatoli 1970, 156)

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1 Unless otherwise specified in Works Cited, the translations from Ukrainian and Russian are mine.

2 “Dekulakized” in this case means that Kudritsky was deprived of his peasant property and perhaps exiled.

Kuznetsov recalls that many Kyivan Jews did not obey the Nazi order and did not go to Babyn Yar but hid in basements and storerooms:

In most cases the hidden people were discovered, because there were plenty of people glad enough to have the money or the cow. Near our market in Kurenovka, for instance, there lived a certain Praskovya Derkach. She would nose around until she found out where some Jews were hiding and then go to them and say:

“Aha! So there you are! So you don’t want to go to Babi Yar? Out with your gold! Let’s have your cash!”

They would hand her over all they had. Then she would make a statement to the police and demand another reward. Her husband Vasili had a horse and cart and they usually took the Jews off to the Yar on it. On the way Praskovya and her husband would be snatching clothes and watches off the people, saying: “You will not need these any more!”

They carted off sick people, children and pregnant women. (Anatoli 1970, 156)

In the interwar period, Kyivan Jews were quite assimilated, and without the help of gentiles the Nazis would not have been able to identify and kill many Jews hidden in Kyiv. According to Timothy Snyder, “[i]n Kyiv, Ukrainians and Russians helped the German Order Police find and register Jews before the mass shooting at Babyi Iar” (Snyder 2015, 181).

Kruglov and Umansky point out that some Kyiv gentiles detained Jews before the Babyn Yar massacre, and assembled them in one place before handing them over to the German police. During the mass shooting, these gentiles delivered Jews directly to Babyn Yar. Historians assume that these people’s main motivation was greed and the desire to get rich by taking the Jews’ property (Kruglov, Umansky, and Shchupak 2016, 241).

The Kyiv gentile population’s reaction to the massacre of Jews in Babyn Yar varied from compassion with Jews to satisfaction at their death. Kyivan Oleg Minskii recalled that the news of the Nazi shooting of Jews in Babyn Yar had reached the city by 11 a.m. on September 29 (Levitash 2016, 66). Some saw the execution of Jews as an opportunity to acquire Jewish property. He said that there were not many of them, “but their greed did not have any limits. Without shame they put on the still warm clothes of murdered Jews” (Levitash 2016, 66). In his memoirs, Minskii wrote that on October 1 and 2, 1941,

these people stood in front of the row of German policemen and soldiers on Makarovskaia and Melnikov streets and asked to be given a coat, jacket or skirt from the huge pile of clothes [which belonged to executed Jews] laid on the street. . . . Germans threw the clothes to the crowd. People from the crowd caught them in the air, pulled them from each other and asked for more. (Levitash 2016, 66)

This scene reveals simultaneously the poverty of Kyiv gentiles, who fought for used clothes, and their lack of compassion for the fate of the Jews.

The local population also helped the Nazis “cleanse” Kyiv of Jews in hiding, who had not obeyed the Nazi order and had not come to Babyn Yar on September 29, 1941. On September 30–October 1, 1941, a crowd of several dozen people participated in a Jewish pogrom in Podil (Melnyk 2013, 226; Kruglov, Umansky, and Shchupak 2016, 241).<sup>3</sup> Oleksandr Melnyk writes,

While protocols of the [Soviet] interrogation of defendants and witnesses leave little doubt that participating in the pogrom in one way or another were dozens of Kyivans, only the three most active perpetrators were brought to trial. (Melnyk 2013, 226)

Melnyk uses pseudonyms instead of the real names of defendants, witnesses, victims, and NKGB investigators. He explains his decision “by a combination of ethical considerations... and the possibility of false statements during NKGB interrogations” (Melnyk 2013, 223). However, Kruglov and Umansky, who describe the same pogrom in their 2019 book *Babi Yar: zhertvy, spasiteli, palachi* (Babyn Yar: victims, rescuers, perpetrators), use the real names of the perpetrators. To avoid confusion, I use the real names of the perpetrators and provide the pseudonyms in parentheses when I quote Melnyk’s article.

After the liberation of Kyiv by the Red Army, three people, Egor Ustinov, Nikifor Yushkov, and Venedikt Baranov, were charged with the murder of Jews during the pogrom in Podil on September 30–October 1, 1941 and with having betrayed Jews and gentiles hidden in the city to the Nazis. All three were sentenced to death and were publicly hanged in Kyiv on January 23, 1944. Other gentiles who participated in the Jewish pogrom in Podil did not receive any punishment (Melnyk 2013, 232, 244).

However, during his interrogation Yushkov testified that several dozen gentiles, including children, participated in the Jewish pogrom in Podil:

On 30 September 1941 at around 4–5 p.m. I was walking along Mezhyhirs’ka Street towards 33 Nyzhnii Val Street when I noticed a crowd of people heading toward Nyzhnii Val. ... In front of 37 Nyzhnii Val Street there sat a citizen of Jewish nationality. Children that surrounded her (10 in total, I do not know their names) hit her with stones, dispersed her belongings and otherwise abused her. On seeing this Grigorii (I do not know his surname), Ushakov [Ustinov], and myself approached the woman and started to beat her. I kept punching the old woman in the face until she fell to the ground. Grigorii, Ushakov [Ustinov], and I lifted her and hit her

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<sup>3</sup> Oleksandr Melnyk writes that the pogrom was either on September 30 or on October 1, 1941. However, one of the perpetrators, N. Yushkov, testified during the interrogation that he had participated in the pogrom and murder of Jews for two days. The Soviet investigation of the pogrom in Podil was in December 1943–January 1944, more than two years after the event—so it is possible that some eyewitnesses and perpetrators might not have remembered the exact date.

head several times against the lamp post. Together with Ushakov [Ustinov] and Grigorii we kicked the woman in the face and in the chest. As we beat her, we yelled “Iids sucked our blood for 23 years. Now it is our turn.” The crowd that gathered there cheered us on with jokes and shouts. (Melnyk 2013, 241–42)

According to eyewitness Evgeniia Beliaeva, these three perpetrators stopped tormenting the old woman, named Schwartz, only when they saw new victims: “an old Jewish man, an old woman and a young girl whom somebody had brought ‘from the lower numbers of Nyzhnii Val’” (Melnyk 2013, 242). Beliaeva also confirmed that many perpetrators participated in the Podil Jewish pogrom. During her interrogation, she provided “an extremely graphic and detailed account of the torture” of Jews. Beliaeva described “how Chusov [Yushkov] ordered his [ten-year-old] son and other children to bring sand, which he stuffed into victims’ mouths, or about how adult perpetrators instructed children to throw heavy rocks at Jews inside the grave in order to kill them before the burial” (Melnyk 2013, 242).

Ushakov (Ustinov) boasted to his neighbors that “he personally buried alive three Jewish women, that ‘he organically hated all Jews’ and would ‘happily exterminate their entire nation’” (Melnyk 2013, 229).

Ustinov testified during his interrogation on December 21, 1943, that he, along with several other gentiles, buried Jews alive in a garden in Kyiv. Ustinov stated,

We buried six or seven people total, some of them were still alive, they screamed and asked us not to bury them, but we hit them with shovels on their heads and buried them. A young girl about 20 years old and an old woman, who was dragged to the pit with a broken head, were especially screaming and begging us not to bury them. (Kruglov, Umansky, and Shchupak 2016, 241)

Yushkov, who participated in the murder of Jews in the garden, testified that the murders continued the second day with the participation of German soldiers. Yushkov said, “On the next day in the morning the janitor of the apartment building on 37 Nizhniy Val Street, whose name is Aleksei, dragged semi-alive Jews who had been beaten from apartment building 37 to another pit in the same garden, and Nazis shot the Jews in the pit” (Kruglov, Umansky, and Shchupak 2016, 241).

The torture and murder of Jews occurred openly on the city streets and in the gardens in daytime in front of their gentile neighbors’ eyes. Among many eyewitness testimonies of the Podil pogrom, only three people claimed that they were “opposed to the Nazi policies toward the Jews and openly castigated the ‘bandit’ Bulanov [Baranov] for his actions. In his turn, Bulanov [Baranov] responded with threats to bury them also, as ‘defenders of the yids’” (Melnyk 2013, 236).

During the pogrom in Podil on September 30–October 1, 1941, as in the pogrom of Kyiv in October 1905, a small group beat and killed the Jews, while a larger group robbed Jewish apartments and stole Jewish property, and an even

larger number watched the pogrom and cheered the crowd on “with jokes and shouts” (Khiterer 1992, 21–37; Melnyk 2013, 242). Thus, the behavior of the pogromists and bystanders had changed little since the 1905 pogrom. However, the presence of the Nazis in the city, in combination with the local anti-Semites, left Kyivan Jews almost no chance of survival. During the September 30–October 1, 1941, pogrom in Podil at least seven Jews perished who had not obeyed the Nazi order and had not gone to Babyn Yar on September 29, 1941.<sup>4</sup> They were tortured and killed by their gentile neighbors.

## 1.2 The Ukrainian Police and the Bukovinian Battalion

The Ukrainian police played a significant role in the identification of Jews in Kyiv and in their murder in Babyn Yar. The Nazis created a Regional Administration of the Ukrainian police as soon as they occupied Kyiv in order to use the assistance of the local population to identify Jews, NKVD employees, and communists. Only volunteers from the local population served in the Ukrainian police. The Nazis announced the creation of the Ukrainian police in the newspaper *Ukrains'ke Slovo* (Ukrainian Word) published in Ukrainian. The announcement invited Ukrainian men to enroll if they were younger than 35, at least 165 cm tall, had a minimum of four years of education, had no previous criminal charges, had not served in the NKVD, and were not members of the VKP(b).<sup>5</sup> People with higher education and former members of the Ukrainian National Army of Simon Petliura (*petliurovtsy*)<sup>6</sup> were appointed to positions of command in the police. Deserters from the Red Army, prisoners of war, criminals, and people who hated the Soviet regime volunteered to serve in the Ukrainian police. The policemen were often dressed in Soviet uniforms with yellow and blue stripes attached to their hats and had a white armband (*poviazka*) with yellow and blue stripes. They were armed with Soviet rifles (Melnyk 2013, 229).

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<sup>4</sup> Seven corpses were found in two graves during the interrogation.

<sup>5</sup> All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

<sup>6</sup> Simon Petliura (1879–1926) was a Ukrainian politician and publicist. He was the Supreme Commander of the Army of the Ukrainian National Republic (1918–1920) and President of the Directory of the Ukrainian National Republic. The soldiers of the Ukrainian National Army, the so called *petliurovtsy*, conducted many bloody pogroms in Ukraine during the civil war of 1918–1920. When the Bolsheviks conquered Ukraine, Petliura moved to Warsaw, and then to Paris, and headed the government-in-exile of the Ukrainian National Republic. A Jewish avenger Samuil (Sholem) Schwarzbard assassinated Petliura in Paris in revenge for Jewish pogroms in Ukraine during the civil war.

The Commandant of the Ukrainian Police of Kyiv City, Orlik, issued an order requiring that

all managers of apartment buildings deliver before midnight lists of **all Yids, NKVD employees and members of the VKP(b)** who lived in their apartment buildings, to the closest Commissariats and to the administration of the Ukrainian police of city Kyiv on 15 Korolenko Street, second floor.

**Hiding of these people will be punished by death.**

The managers of apartment buildings and janitors had the right themselves to deliver Yids to the Yids' [concentration] camp, located at the POW camp on Kerosinnaia Street. (TsDAHO U)

This document has no date, but its content and location among other Nazi orders written in the autumn of 1941 suggests that it was issued in September or October 1941, just before or immediately after the Babyn Yar massacre.

Ukrainian policemen who guarded Jews walking on their last journey to Babyn Yar made sure that they did not escape (Berkhoff 2011, 6). Nachmanovich writes that members of the Ukrainian police, Sirosh, Muzyria, Grigor'ev, Shcherbina, and Grishka (whose last name he does not mention), gathered 15 Jews in a basement on September 29, 1941, brought them to Babyn Yar, and handed them over to the Nazis. The Ukrainian policemen then helped the Nazis undress the Jews before their murder (Nachmanovich 2007, 257–58).

Dina Pronicheva was one of the very few Jews who escaped from Babyn Yar. She testified that “the auxiliary policemen readied the Jews for their murder by stripping them.” The Ukrainian policemen, according to Pronicheva, “chased the completely naked people one by one up a hill” (Berkhoff 2008a, 303). German and Ukrainian policemen beat Jews on the way to execution. After the end of the shooting “Germans assisted by non-Germans walked across the bodies of the victims; with flashlights they sought out survivors and finished them off” (Berkhoff 2011, 7).

Historians Karel Berkhoff and Per Anders Rudling assume that the *Bukovinskyi Kuren'* (Bukovinian Battalion) participated in the execution of Jews in Babyn Yar. Berkhoff writes about

new and newly found Ukrainian sources also named paramilitary and auxiliary police formations that were in Kiev at the time of massacre: a squad of what was then simply called the “Ukrainian police” and the Bukovinian Battalion. Both were created or commanded by activists of the Mel'nyk faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-M), a militant group dominated by western Ukrainians who saw themselves engaged in a struggle to free Ukraine from “Muscovite-Jewish gangs.” (Berkhoff 2008a, 303)

Several sources mention that the Ukrainian police and the Bukovinian Battalion, which had approximately 700–800 members, arrived in Kyiv in the first days of the

Nazi occupation. “Several newcomers took jobs in the city administration or went on to create police units in Vasylkiv, Bila Tserkva, and other places near Kyiv, but others joined Kyiv’s “Ukrainian police” (Berkhoff 2008a, 303). According to Per Anders Rudling,

The participation of the Bukovyns’kyi Kurin’ in massacres in Babyn Yar cannot be ruled out, as executions in Babyn Yar continued every Tuesday and Friday for the next 103 weeks, during which between 50 and 60 thousand people were murdered. After reinforcement by volunteers from Galicia and other parts of Ukraine, the Bukovyns’kyi Kurin’ had a total number of 1500–1700 soldiers by early November [1941]. (Rudling 2011a, 201)

According to SS *Reichsführer* and Chief of the German Police Heinrich Himmler’s order of November 6, 1941, the Ukrainian police were renamed the “*Schutzmannschaft*” (Auxiliary Police) reporting to the “*Ordnungspolizei*” (German police). In January 1942, “*Schutzmannschaft*” members received their police identification cards and began to draw a salary of 30 *Reichsmarks* per month plus provisions. They received special benefits: free local transportation, reduction of rent by half (the rest was paid by the City Council from the city budget), and free movement in Kyiv at any time, while other Kyivans lived under martial law. Most of the policemen were non-Kyivans (Dereiko 2004, 797–98). Ivan Dereiko wrote that in 1942 the total number of policemen in Kyiv General District was over six thousand. “About one thousand policemen were German, 200 Baltic German (*Volksdeutsche*) and the rest, about five thousand, Ukrainians” (Dereiko 2004, 799). So, the Auxiliary Police, formed from collaborators, played an important role in the establishment of the new Nazi order and in the discovery and murder of Jews, Roma, and other “undesirables.”

After the massacre of September 29–30, 1941, *Schutzmänner* delivered hidden Kyivan Jews and Jewish prisoners of war to Babyn Yar for execution. Dereiko wrote that one of the *Schutzmänner* testified that they convoyed columns of Jews from the concentration camp on Kerosinnaia Street to Babyn Yar (Dereiko 2004, 799; Kruglov, Umansky, and Shchupak 2016, 249).<sup>7</sup>

### 1.3 OUN-M and Pro-Nazi Ukrainian Press

The brutal Soviet policy in interwar Ukraine, the Holodomor, political repression, and suppression of the Ukrainian national movement created strong hatred among much of the Ukrainian population toward the Soviet regime. This explains why some Ukrainians welcomed the Nazi invasion and collaborated with the Nazis. Oleksandr

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to the Jewish department in the concentration camp on Kerosinna Street, Jews were held in other concentration camps in Kyiv.

Melnyk points out that of the 320,000 individuals charged with collaboration with the Nazis by Soviet military tribunals and other special courts between 1943 and 1953, “[a]bout 90,000 ... originated on the territory of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic” (Melnyk 2013, 224).

According to historian Paul Robert Magocsi, “[i]nitially, some Ukrainians welcomed the German invasion, because they hoped that with the end of Soviet Rule their country would enjoy a better life and perhaps some form of national sovereignty” (Magocsi 2010, 670). Thus, two factions of the OUN, the Banderites and the Melnykites, originally cooperated with the Nazis. However, the cooperation of the former was cut short when they declared an independent Ukrainian state on June 30, 1941. Ukrainian independence was not in accord with Nazis plans. As a result, the Germans arrested faction leader Stepan Bandera and other leading Banderites in July 1941, and held them in German prisons and concentration camps for most of the war (Magocsi 2010, 671).

At the same time, the Nazis tolerated the OUN-M faction (the Melnykites) longer because they offered the Nazis their cooperation in the struggle against the Soviet Union. Magocsi writes, “The faction leader, Andrii Mel’nyk, was joined by former officers from the army of the Ukrainian National Republic who on 6 July 1941 appealed to Hitler to allow them to take part in the ‘crusade against Bolshevik barbarism’” (Magocsi 2010, 672). The German military considered the cooperation with OUN-M on the occupied territories useful. The Nazis first supported the activities of OUN-M, especially their efforts of “cleansing” Kyiv and Ukraine of Jews. The German military also counted on the assistance of Ukrainian nationalists in their fight against the Red Army and Soviet partisans. However, the Nazi leadership “rejected on racially motivated ideological grounds... any serious cooperation with the local ethnic Ukrainian population, which it believed should be conquered and remain totally subordinated within Nazi Germany’s new world order” (Magocsi 2010, 671). Nevertheless, the OUN-M formed the Ukrainian National Council and continued to promote the Ukrainian national idea and culture, which clashed with Nazi plans. This is why the members of the Ukrainian National Council and Ivan Rogach, one of the OUN-M leaders and editor of the newspaper *Ukrains’ke slovo*, were arrested by the Gestapo and executed in December 1941–February 1942 (Berkhoff and Marco 1999, 149–84; Rudling 2011b, 3; Radchenko 2016, 2017, 215–39). Mel’nyk was kept under house arrest in Berlin until January 1944, and then taken with the other leading members of the OUN-M to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp (Yurkevich 1993, 709).

The members of both OUN factions considered Jews and other national minorities the enemies of Ukraine. OUN members participated in the murder of Jews and the spreading of anti-Semitic propaganda. The OUN-M newspaper *Ukrains’ke slovo* and other pro-Nazi Ukrainian press further fueled anti-Semitism by blaming Jews for the crimes of the communist regime and called upon readers to denounce

them. Immediately after the mass murder of Jews in Babyn Yar, on October 2, 1941, the newspaper *Ukrains'ke slovo* published an article under the title: “The foremost enemy of Ukraine – the YID!” (*Ukrains'ke slovo* 1941a) which claimed that Jews had brutally ruled Ukraine for 23 years and deserved to be killed. On October 9, 1941, *Ukrains'ke Slovo* published an article “Malen'kyi budynok” (The Little House), which stated that many Jews were still hiding in the city, “disguising themselves as Greeks, Armenians, Ukrainians or Russians and paying thousands of rubles for such documents and making diversions” (*Ukrains'ke slovo* 1941b). The article called on all Ukrainian patriots to report Jews to the “little house,” 48 Taras Shevchenko Boulevard.

Nazi propaganda depicted all Jews as Bolsheviks and exploiters of the gentile population. Nazis and their local collaborators also blamed Jews for organizing the Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932–1933 and falsely claimed that Jews themselves had not suffered from the famine. The newspaper *Vidrodzhennia* (The Revival), which was published under Nazi rule in occupied Ukraine, wrote on December 6, 1942:

Only one part of the population did not feel the famine. Those were the Jews. They calmly used the services of “Torgsin,”<sup>8</sup> in whose stores there was everything one could want, including produce. But it could only be bought with gold and foreign currency. And the Jews lacked neither gold, nor dollars. (Berkhoff 2008b, 166)

Similar publications, which blamed Jews for the famine, appeared in *Dnipropetrov's'ka gazeta* (Dnipropetrovsk Gazette) during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine (Berkhoff 2008b, 166).

Kyivan Valentin Terno “recalled seeing in Kyiv... in the summer of 1942 a feature film in Ukrainian called *Ostannii udar* (The last blow), about collectivization and the famine” (Berkhoff 2008b, 167). Terno described the film “as fiercely anti-Semitic, it showed corpses of famine victims and ended with the killing of a Jewish NKVD officer” (Berkhoff 2008b, 166).

Only a small percentage of collaborators faced criminal charges after the liberation of Kyiv by the Red Army. In Kyiv, 82 policemen were accused of collaboration, among whom 73 were Ukrainians, six Russians, two ethnic Germans and one Pole (Chornyi; Penter 2012 195–97). Many civilians who denounced Jews and stole Jewish property avoided punishment. In 1966, Kuznetsov wrote about Praskovya Derkach, who had denounced hidden Jews to the Nazis:

It is a curious fact that Praskovya continues to flourish to this day. She lives on Menzhinsky Street and has never been punished in any way, maybe because she did not betray any

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<sup>8</sup> The All-Union Association for Trade with Foreigners (Torgsin) functioned in the Soviet Union in 1931–1936. Torgsin stores sold food to foreigners and Soviet citizens for hard currency, or exchanged food for gold, silver, or precious stones.

N.K.V.D. agents or Communists, but just a few Jews. She is, of course, older now, but only in her body, not in her mind. The neighbours often hear her giving her views: “You think that’s the end of the war? Oh, no, not yet. The Germans will come back from over there, and the Chinese will come from over there—then we’ll give the Yids something worse than Babi Yar!” (Anatoli 1970, 157)

The Communist leaders of Ukraine were quite lenient regarding crimes of collaboration, especially if they were directed only against Jews. Vladimir Shcherbitsky, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine in 1972–1989, appealed to the Party Central Committee to keep secret information on the involvement of his countryman in the brutal slaughter of civilians (Rudling 2011a; Khatyn b 201–202). The request was received “with understanding,” and information about local collaborationists was classified as secret in the Ukrainian archives until the collapse of communism.

## 2 Rescue

Gentiles who rescued Jews put their lives in mortal danger in case somebody denounced them. This largely explains why only a small percentage of gentiles participated in the rescue of Jews and only a few hundred Jews survived in Kyiv during the Nazi occupation. Some Jews lived under bogus identities; others were hidden by colleagues, friends, neighbors, and gentile relatives. In several cases Jewish children were adopted by gentile families.

According to the Yad Vashem database, 144 gentiles from Kyiv received the title “Righteous Among the Nations” (Ioffe and Esviukov 2021, 34–35). The Ukrainian foundation “Memory of Babyn Yar” gave the title of “The Righteous of Babyn Yar” to 662 gentiles, claiming that they participated in the rescue of Jews during the occupation of Kyiv (Kruglov and Umansky 2019, 30; Levitas 2001, 6). It is important to note that in many cases the Ukrainian foundation awarded the title “The Righteous of Babyn Yar” solely based on the memories of self-identified rescuers or their children, without the testimony of survivors and in some cases without even knowing the names of the rescued (Levitas 2001, 8–255). Information about gentiles who rescued Jews in Kyiv was collected many years after the war, when the ban on research of the Holocaust was lifted. Thus, information about the righteous gentiles and the Jews whom they rescued is incomplete, yet it is certain that only a few hundred gentiles rescued Jews in Kyiv during the Nazi occupation.

Most often gentiles in Kyiv hid children who were Jewish or part Jewish. In several cases Jewish mothers, instead of taking their children to the place of gathering designated by the Nazis, left them with their gentile friends and relatives. Yet, most Jews had not known their fate until they arrived in Babyn Yar. Many thought

that they would be deported from Kyiv to some other place. However, from the first days of the German occupation of Kyiv, they were able to observe the rabid Nazi anti-Semitism and did not expect anything good.

Gentile rescuers often baptized Jewish and half-Jewish children and gave them new non-Jewish names. So, for example, Igor Ageev was baptized. He had a Jewish mother, Ida (née Belozovskaia), and a gentile father, Aleksander Ageev. Aleksander and his relatives hid his wife Ida, and five-year-old son Igor. But soon a danger appeared: when Igor was playing in the yard the janitor's children called him a Yid. So, the relatives baptized Igor and hung a cross over his bed (Levit 2001, 8–10).

Some gentiles who hid Jewish children in Kyiv were afraid of their gentile neighbors' denunciation, and sent such children to relatives in small provincial towns and villages, where there were fewer police. Thus, Valentina and Ludmila Sviridenko (born in 1937 and 1939, respectively) were rescued by gentile relatives and friends who lived in a rural area. Their mother was Jewish, Rebekka Yakovlevna Sapir, and their father was Ukrainian, Ivan Petrovich Sviridenko (Levit 2001, 15–16). The gentile family Belostotsky hid Ella Gershman (born in 1936), a grandchild of their friends, whose father was Jewish (Levit 2001, 21–23). Victor Radetsky, whose mother Klara Iorish was Jewish and perished in Babyn Yar, was rescued by his gentile grandmother in Uman. Victor was first hidden by his gentile relatives in Kyiv, but they were afraid of denunciation by their neighbors and so they sent the boy to his grandmother (Levit 2001, 27–28).

Another strong motivation for rescuing Jews was love. Some gentiles hid their loved ones: wives, husbands, girlfriends or boyfriends. Thus, Valentina Berezleva saved her Jewish boyfriend Veniamin Liberman for whom she was able to get bogus documents claiming that he was a Karaite. Later they escaped together from Kyiv where they feared somebody might denounce them. After the war Berezleva and Liberman got married (Levit 2001, 24–25).

Gentile Tamara Bozhkova had married a Jew, Abram Yakovlevich Rubinshtein, before the war. He was drafted into the Red Army and soon captured by the Nazis. Tamara received a note that he was in the concentration camp in the village Gogolevo. She went to the camp and bribed a policeman, who released her husband and another Jewish prisoner of war. Through the manager of an apartment building, she was able to obtain a false identification document for her husband, in the name Arseny Mikoian, an Armenian. But even with this document it was too dangerous to stay in Kyiv, where somebody could denounce them. So, Tamara and Abram escaped to the village Bol'shiaia Saltanovka and stayed with Tamara's distant relatives, who hid them along with another Jewish couple (Levit 2001, 32–34).

In several cases, Kyiv gentiles hid their Jewish colleagues. Thus, a number of people took part in hiding medical doctor Kuperman, who had worked with them before the war at the clinic on Shevchenko Boulevard. Kuperman moved many times

from one gentile family to another. She survived until the liberation of Kyiv and worked in the clinic for a long time after the war (Evstaf'eva 2004, 363). The Jewish woman E. Iskol'skaia worked as chief physician at the tuberculosis hospital in Darnitsa (then a suburb of Kyiv). During the Nazi occupation, her gentile colleague Shumilo helped her obtain documents for entering Kyiv (Evstaf'eva 2004, 363).

Philosemitic traditions often passed within gentile families from generation to generation. Thus, the Orthodox priest Alexander Glagolev saved Jews during the 1905 pogrom in Kyiv; his son Aleksei rescued Jews during the Nazi occupation. A professor of the Kyiv Theological Seminary and a priest, Alexander Glagolev was the religious expert who had testified at the Menachem Mendel Beilis blood-libel trial in 1913, when Beilis was accused of the murder of the Christian boy Andriusha Yushchinsky for ritual purposes. Glagolev gave expert evidence at the trial that Judaism does not include any rituals which require Jews to use blood in their food. On October 20, 1937, he was arrested by the NKVD. He was tortured and died in prison on November 25, 1937 (Glagoleva-Palian 2001, 311–38). His son Aleksei Glagolev was an Orthodox priest in Pokrov Church, in Podil. Aleksei lived in Kyiv with his wife Tatyana and three children during the Nazi occupation.

In early October 1941, the Glagolevs were visited by Mariya Yegorycheva, Aleksey's sister-in-law, who pleaded that they help Izabella Mirkina, her brother's Jewish wife. Mirkina was hidden in Yegorycheva's house, but it was too dangerous to remain there. Tatyana Glagoleva proposed that they switch the photograph in her identity card with one of Mirkina, which was successfully accomplished. Provided with the ID as well as with Tatyana's baptism certificate, Mirkina then left Kiev, but one month later she returned to the Yegorychevs' home. Her sister-in-law then approached the Glagolevs again, and they welcomed the Jewish woman into their home, introducing her to people as Aleksey's niece. In 1942, Mirkina's daughter Irina, who had been hiding in the Yegorychevs' home until then, joined her at the Glagolevs'. (Glagolev et al.)

Kruglov and Umansky describe two cases where Nazis supposedly helped Jews escape from Babyn Yar. In the first, Nazis Paul Worzberger and Johann Koller released two Jewish girls, seventeen-year-old Genia Batasheva and fourteen-year-old Mania Palti, who claimed that they were Ukrainians and had come to Babyn Yar out of curiosity. Both girls were blond and had blue eyes, so they did not "look Jewish," and the Nazis believed their story. Some gentiles claimed that their Jewish relatives and friends whom they identified in Babyn Yar were not Jewish, and the Nazis released them. It was probably not out of their concern for Jews that Worzberger and Koller released Batasheva and Palti and helped them leave Babyn Yar, but because they believed that the girls were Ukrainians and should not be executed (Kruglov and Umansky 2019, 31–32; Levitas 2005, 325–26).

The second case, which Kruglov and Umansky present, is even less firmly based. They cite the testimony of a member of Sonderkommando 4a, Richard Kerl, who

claimed that he was a guard on the road Jews walked to Babyn Yar and let a Jewish family, a mother with two adult girls, escape. There is no evidence that this story is true (Kruglov and Umansky 2019, 33).

In many cases rescuers were motivated by humanism and compassion for the Jews; however, sometimes the rescuers had to be paid. Arkadiy Moisevich Wiesbreim (born in 1869) had worked as a dentist before the war. He paid the gentile family, who hid him and his family, with gold crowns. Later, when Wiesbreim committed suicide, he left a note saying that he did not want to be a burden on his family (Levitash 2001, 201–202). His daughter Raisa and granddaughter Lidia (born in 1935) were hidden by the gentile Akulina Sukalo. But Akulina's husband Roman Sukalo was opposed to hiding Jews in his home and threatened to denounce them to the police. Raisa and Lidia moved to Akulina's gentile neighbor Polina. Roman Sukalo still continued threatening to denounce them, so Raisa and Lidia had to move three more times. Finally, in the spring of 1942, Raisa, Lidia, and Raisa's sister Berta settled in the village Matveikha in Kyiv District, where German soldiers seldom went. They ultimately managed to survive the war (Levitash 2001, 202).

If the Nazis detected hidden Jews, they severely punished their rescuers, as in the case of Vladimir and Pelageia Savitskii and Pelageia's sister Natalia Tkachenko, who hid their Jewish acquaintance Isaak Brodsky. Brodsky had been drafted into the Red Army at the beginning of the war and was captured, but two weeks later he escaped from a POW camp. Natalia Tkachenko obtained documents for him under the name of a Ukrainian, Konstantin Balatsenko. Brodsky had been living with these false documents in occupied Kyiv for over a year, when his acquaintance Shimans'ka recognized him on Glubochitse Street on January 17, 1943, and denounced him to the police. Brodsky was arrested and severely beaten by the police. He was then taken to the Gestapo and interrogated by Shimans'ka's husband, who worked there. After the interrogation Brodsky was sent to the Syrets Concentration Camp (Evstaf'eva 2004, 363). His rescuers Vladimir and Pelageia Savitskiy and Natalia Tkachenko were also arrested. Vladimir and Pelageia Savitskiy were interrogated, tortured, and sent to Germany for forced labor, but they escaped from the train on the way and secretly returned to Kyiv. Natalia Tkachenko was placed in the Syrets Concentration Camp (Levitash 2001, 216–17; Righteous Database). "There she encountered Isaak [Brodsky] again, who was enslaved in Unit 1005, which [had] the task of burning the bodies of those murdered at Babyn Yar" (Righteous Database). Brodsky was one of the few prisoners of the Syrets concentration camp who participated in the Babyn Yar uprising on September 29, 1943, and survived. After the liberation of Kyiv, Brodsky joined the Red Army; he was killed fighting in Poland in 1944 (Levitash 2001, 217; Righteous Database). Vladimir and Pelageia Savitskiy and Natalia Tkachenko survived the war and received the titles of the Righteous Among the Nations and the Righteous of Babyn Yar (Levitash 2001, 217).

Rescuers of Jews in Kyiv came from all social backgrounds: peasants, workers, and the intelligentsia. They also included people of different nationalities—Russians, Ukrainians, Poles and Germans. Gentiles who rescued Jews placed their own lives and the lives of their family members in mortal danger. They also needed to find food for those they were hiding, which was exacerbated by the fact that during the occupation of Kyiv, the Nazis continuously confiscated provisions from the civilian population: Kyivans were starving (this too is forcefully depicted in Kuznetsov's book). In most cases, Jews in hiding could not leave their rescuers' homes and find a job or any provisions for themselves. The brutality of the Nazi regime in Kyiv, when the majority of Kyivans suffered from shortages of food, fuel, and clothes, and could not freely move in the city due to martial law, also explains why only a few hundred gentiles rescued Jews in such a large city.

### 3 Jewish Resistance and Self-Rescue

Many Jews who survived in Kyiv relied on their gentile rescuers. However, in other cases Jews struggled to rescue themselves. Some did not obey the Nazi order to assemble near Babyn Yar but instead fled to their gentile friends and relatives. Often, these Jews lived with false documents in occupied Kyiv, frequently moving from place to place, or settled in some remote villages, where the Nazis did not often go. The Jewish prisoners in the Syrets concentration camp participated in an uprising against the Nazi guards and several of them escaped from the camp and survived.

In some cases, Jews were able to survive by fleeing Kyiv. Elena Borodiansky-Knysh survived Babyn Yar with her five-year-old daughter Ludmila. During the shooting she jumped into the pit with her daughter, and they were not hit by bullets. They waited among the corpses until the Nazis left and then escaped in the darkness. They were hidden by Elena's gentile friend Valentina Litvinenko for a month. However, it was too dangerous to remain in Kyiv because of the Nazi round ups and possible denunciation. As a result, Borodiansky-Knysh moved with her daughter to the village Minkovtsy in the Kyiv district and settled in an abandoned house. Their new neighbors, Mikhail and Luker'ia Grigorenko, provided them with food and clothing (Levitash 2001, 122–23).

Solomon Gorodetsky was hidden by Pelagea Savitskii and Natalia Tkachenko for a month during and after the Babyn Yar massacre. Natalia then obtained documents for him under the name of Konstantin Shirkatnyi, a Russian, and with the false papers he escaped from Kyiv, crossed the front line, and joined the Red Army. After the liberation of Kyiv, he visited the Tkachenko sisters to express his gratitude (Levitash 2001, 215).

The uprising in the Syrets concentration camp was a special case of resistance and self-rescue of prisoners of war, among whom there were many Jews (see Ionescu 2023 in this issue). When in August 1943 the Nazis realized that they might not be able to hold Kyiv for long because of the Red Army's offensive, they "rushed to hide every sign of the mass execution at Babi Yar. On August 18, 1943, they took three hundred prisoners from the Syrets concentration camp and shackled them in leg irons" (Ehrenburg and Grossman 2003, 11). The prisoners were sent to Babyn Yar and ordered to dig up and burn the executed corpses. There were people of different nationalities among the prisoners brought to Babyn Yar: Jews, Russians, Ukrainians, and Armenians (Evstaf'eva and Nachmanovich 2004, 222–321). Most of them were men, but there were also 13 Jewish women (Evstaf'eva and Nachmanovich 2004, 270). The prisoners realized that when they completed their job the Nazis would murder them so as to not leave any witnesses of their crimes. So, the prisoners began to prepare for an uprising. They brought tools to the dugout where they lived for opening their leg irons; metal and other heavy objects for attacking the guards, and keys for opening the lock on the gate. The prisoners found most of these items among corpses they had dug up (Evstaf'eva and Nachmanovich 2004, 363).

On September 27, 1943 Prisoner Yakov Kaper, a Jew, found the key to the lock of the dugout and during his lunchtime checked that it worked (Evstaf'eva and Nachmanovich 2004, 363). Then one of the prisoners, Vladimir Davydov (TsDAVO U a),<sup>9</sup> also a Jew,

found a pair of scissors in a dead woman's pocket. With those rusty scissors he unlocked his leg irons. Then the other prisoners did the same. At dawn on 29 September 1943, exactly two years after the mass murder of Jews in Kiev, Davydov and his comrades ran from the bunkers and raced toward the walls of their cemetery. Stunned by the sudden escape, the SS were unable to open fire with their machine guns right away. They killed 280 men. But Vladimir Davydov and 11 other men managed to climb the walls and run away. Residents in the area near Kiev sheltered them. (Ehrenburg and Grossman 2003, 11–12)

Different sources give different numbers of those who survived the escape, ranging from 12 to 18 men (Budnik and Kaper 1993, 42, 171).<sup>10</sup> Among them were Jewish prisoners Vladimir Davydov, Isaak Brodsky, Semen Berliant, Leonid Ostrovsky, Yakov Steiuk (Shteiuk), David Budnik, Efim Vilkis, Zakhar Trubakov, and Yakov Kaper (Budnik and Kaper 1993; TsDAVO U b).

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<sup>9</sup> The Soviet interrogation report of Vladimir Davydov made in Kyiv on November 9, 1943, stated that he was born in 1915 in Kyiv and was Jewish.

<sup>10</sup> *The Black Book* mentions 12 survivors. David Budnik in his memoirs said that 14 people survived the uprising. Yakov Kaper wrote in his memoirs that 18 people survived the uprising, but further in the memoir he mentioned that he did not know who survived because the prisoners ran in different directions in small groups.

During the uprising, the prisoners fled in different directions to make it more difficult for the Nazis to find them. None of them could have survived without the support of the local gentile population. Natalia Petrenko hid Davydov and Kharash. Feofan Vlasiuk hid Budnik, Vilkis, Kotler, Ostrovsky, Kaper, and Berliant in the pipe of the nearby brick factory. N. Kozlovskaya hid Doliner. Several other escaped prisoners hid elsewhere in Kyiv (Evstaf'eva and Nachmanovich 2004, 364). A little more than a month elapsed between the escape of the prisoners from Babyn Yar and the liberation of the city. By this time Kyivans knew that the Red Army was approaching, which may have encouraged some gentiles to help hide the fugitives.

Immediately after the liberation of Kyiv, the escaped prisoners reported the Nazi crimes in Babyn Yar and the Syrets concentration camp to the Extraordinary State Commission for Investigation of German-Fascist Crimes Committed on Soviet Territory. In addition, on November 11, 1943, Davydov "personally described the German crimes to Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev and showed him all the sites where the Germans committed the crimes" (Evstaf'eva and Nachmanovich 2004, 364).<sup>11</sup>

## 4 Conclusion

Today we know many details of the Babyn Yar massacre, and death and life in Nazi occupied Kyiv due to the brutally honest work of Anatoly Kuznetsov. Memories about the Babyn Yar massacre had deeply traumatized Kuznetsov, and in his nightmares he identified with the massacre victims. Kuznetsov wrote:

I just couldn't sleep. I would hear cries as I lay in bed at night—sometimes I was lying on the ground and they were shooting straight at me, in the chest or in the back of the neck. ... That nightmare pursued me, something between dream and reality, and I would jump up with the cries of thousands of dying people ringing in my ears (Anatoli 1970, 477).

According to Yevtushenko, Kuznetsov wrote in his autobiography, which was kept in his personal file: "The strongest impression of my life is how I was eyewitness of the Babyn Yar massacre" (Volkov 2018, 217). In order to tell the world the entire truth about the Babyn Yar massacre, Kuznetsov escaped abroad, where he was able to publish the full version of his book. Kuznetsov published several novels and many stories, but *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel* remains his main work.

At the end of his book, Kuznetsov raised many painful questions that have become pertinent due to the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine. He wrote:

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<sup>11</sup> Khrushchev was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine from 1938 to 1941. During the war he was a member of the Military Councils of several fronts of the Red Army. Khrushchev came to Kyiv immediately after its liberation with the troops of the First Ukrainian Front.

We must not forget those cries [of the Babyn Yar victims]. They are not yet history. They are the present day. What will happen tomorrow?

What new Babi Yars, Maidaneks, Hiroshimas, [Kolymas and Potmas], in what places and with what new, more advanced methods, lie hidden in the future, just biding their time? **And which of us now living is already perhaps marked out for them?**

**I wonder if we shall ever understand that the most precious thing in this world is a man's life and his freedom? Or is there still more barbarism ahead?** (Anatoli 1970, 477–478)

Unfortunately, we have recently become witnesses of new slaughters committed by Russian troops in Ukraine. Modern mass media allows us to see the events of the current Russian invasion of Ukraine almost in real time. It is quite symbolic that the Babyn Yar Memorial site suffered from a Russian airstrike at the beginning of the war. On March 1, 2022, five people walking to Babyn Yar were killed and the Kyiv TV Center located nearby was damaged, as were the grounds of Babyn Yar. President Zelensky wrote, “To the world: what is the point of saying ‘never again’ for 80 years, if the world stays silent when a bomb drops on the same site of Babyn Yar? At least five killed. History repeating” (Gross 2022).

This new political reality challenges us with new painful questions. Today, as during the Second World War, the enemy is strong, brutal, and insidious. It is so easy to be a bystander and so dangerous to resist. Russia has threatened Western countries with the use of nuclear weapons if they get involved in the war on Ukraine's side. However, how will history judge us if we stand aside as millions of people in Ukraine become refugees and hundreds of civilians are injured and perish every day? What future awaits Western civilization if it cannot defend its values? When will mankind learn the lessons that history teaches us?

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