

Trudy Gold | The History of Babi-Yar

- Good afternoon everyone and today we come to a very, very dark chapter in history. And for those of you who follow the programme, tonight Judge Dennis Davis is going to be talking about Shostokovich's Babi Yar Symphony. And on Saturday, Professor David Pima is going to be talking about Yevtushenko and the poem because, of course, Babi Yar was one of the most terrifying massacres in the whole of World War II. In a two day period, over 33,000 Jews were murdered. And you will recall one of the reasons we decided to include it in this particular series is, of course, we're all watching with horror, the blood lands of Ukraine. That poor bloody area of land, in the real sense of the word, and you will recall of course, that some bombs actually fell on Babi Yar. And President Zelensky mentioned that he had family there because of course, President Zelensky is born Jewish. So Babi Yar, one of the most horrific massacres in that terrible, terrible period of the war in the Ukraine. And of course this week we are concluding our series on Russia. And then we are going to be turning of course, as we keep on promising you, August will be light relief. I hope you'll find it light relief. And then in September we're going to look at the Baltic. And then after Yom Tovim, we turn to France. That's our plan. So can we have the first slide please, Judi, if you don't mind? Yeah. This is actually Soviet prisoners of war covering the grave after Babi Yar. I've been to Babi Yar. I used to teach in the Ukraine in this whole area and this is the memorial. There was not a memorial for a long time. And I'll be discussing why, but here you have a memorial that was at the site of Babi Yar. Now to put you into the picture, important to remember the absolute chaos at the end of the first World War in Eastern Europe. Can we turn to the next slide please, Judi? Yeah. This is an extract from a speech of President Wilson, November 1918. What happens in Eastern Europe is of course the Russian Revolution. A deal with Germany that pulls Russia out of the war. The influx of British, American and French troops to fight with the enemies of Bolshevism, the Whites. And it's at this stage that Petliura goes for independence in the Ukraine because of course Ukraine is part of the Soviet empire. Remember it's part of the Tsarist empire. Don't forget that it means borderlands. And now you have a nascent Ukrainian nationalism. And this is an extract from the speech of President Wilson, November 1918. And of course after the war, he comes to Versailles with his 18 Principles. And anyone with any kind of national aspirations, including of course the Zionists, were in Versailles. And this is what he said in his speech before Versailles. "Self-determination is not a mere phrase, it's an imperative principle of action which statesman will henceforth ignore at their peril."

Can we see the next extract please? This is from Robert Lansing the American Secretary of State. Is a diary extract of his in December, 1918. "The more I think about the president's declaration, the more

convinced I am of the danger of putting such ideas into the minds of certain races. The phrase is loaded with dynamite. It will, I fear, cost thousands of lives. What a calamity that the phrase was ever uttered. What effect on the Irish, the Indian, the Boers, the Muslims of Syria, Morocco and Tripoli. How will it harmonise with Zionism to which the president is committed?" Now this is of course we can look with hindsight at the mudlet, the end of the first World War, when the Tsarist empire is over. I'll come back to what happens afterwards. The Hapsburg empire is over, the Turkish empire is over and new states are going to arise. Self-determination of peoples. I'd like to turn to another extract, if you don't mind, Judi. This is Alfred Doblin, a Jewish writer. "Today's states are the graves of people. The more or less arbitrary formed nations of Europe were collective beasts that taught the masses, their subjects, the barbarism of nationalism rather than values." Because what is going to happen in Eastern Europe at the end of the Tsarist Empire, there are over 1236 separate pogroms in the Ukraine. Now this is absolutely an extraordinary figure and there's a quarrel, and I've mentioned this to you before, about the actual numbers of deaths. Some historians put it as low as 50,000. 50,000! Others as high as a hundred thousand. And if you're particularly interested in this area of darkness, Jeffrey Veidlinger has written a brilliant book on it. And I had the pleasure of interviewing him on Lockdown, last year along with Jewish Book Week. Anyway, think of the armies. You had the Bolsheviks under Lev Davidovich Bronstein, better known as Trotsky, the Polish army under General Pilsudski, the White army under, the White Russians under Denikin, the Ukrainians under Symon Petliura and of course there was also the black anarchists, all with conflicting aims. And by 1920 though, all hopes of Ukrainian independence was over. And what happens to the Ukraine? The dream of Petliura. It's split between the Soviets. The Soviets get the bulk, the Poles, the Romanians and the Czechs, and Odesa becomes a port of Soviet Russia. Can we go on please to the Treaty of Riga? What happens is this is a treaty between Poland and Soviet Union. Bearing in mind, there's an incredible loss of life. And within the loss of life, the Jews are, as it were, the major targets for all the groups. Just to give you the figures, this is Veidlinger figures. Under Petliura, there were 493 separate massacres. Independent Ukrainian war lords in the ravagement and the bestiality at the end of World War I, 307. 213 pogroms under Denikin. 106 from the Red Army, 32 from the Polish Army. The Jews were the major targets, but please remember, thousands and thousands of other people died in all of this. There was horror, there was starvation, there was lawlessness and there was famine. And on top of that, of course, you had the terrible pandemic. So the world is about as dark as it can possibly be. Who would've thought out of it, just over 20 years later, we would come to an even darker period, the Shoah. But anyway, in the end, Pilsudski's armies, the Polish Army, Poland regains her independence from Tsarist Russia. It's over. Trotsky tries to defeat Pilsudski. He fails, mainly because Stalin didn't help, that was always what he said. He kept regiments back and this really exacerbated the terrible conflict between them. But

Ukraine is going to be more or less swallowed up. And if we read the articles of the Treaty of Riga, article three, Russia and the Ukraine abandon all rights and claims to the territories situated to the west of the frontier laid down by Article two of the present treaty. Poland, on the other hand, abandons in favour of the Ukraine and of White Ruthenia, that's White Russia, all rights and claims to the territory situated to the east of the frontier. Each of the contracting parties mutually undertakes to respect in every way the political sovereignty of the other party, to abstain from interference in its internal affairs and particularly to refrain from all legislation, propaganda or interference of any kind. Now that means absolutely nothing to you, some of you will of course know, unless we look at the map.

And can we have the next slide, please? Yes! What happens is Petliura's dream of independence comes to nothing. And Pilsudski never forgave the Poles for letting him down. They felt that he was completely let down. He was actually imprisoned. Petliura escapes to Paris where he is at the centre of Ukrainian immigration. And he is assassinated in 1926 by a young Jew called Shalom Schwartzbard, who escaped punishment because he proved that Petliura's armies had been responsible for murdering 15 members of his own family. But something has to be said here, because I remember when I first visited Petliura's grave in Paris, I wasn't going to Petliura's grave. It was just that we were in a cemetery. I was with Patrick, we were looking, not in a morbid way, I wanted to look at the cemetery of some of the artists. It's quite extraordinary. The whole history of France is laid out in its cemeteries and Jewish cemeteries are in a portion of the main cemeteries. So it was very interesting. And I saw flowers at Petliura's grave and I felt very, very upset. But there's been a lot of research, and actually it does appear that Petliura did, let me just read you something he issued to his troops. These are his, the Ukrainian army. This is August the 26th, 1919. "It is time to realise that the world Jewish population, their children and their women were enslaved and deprived of national freedom just as we were. They should not go anywhere away from us. They have been living with us since time immemorial, sharing in our fate and our misfortune. I decisively order all of you who will be inciting to carry out pogroms, they will be expelled from our army and tried as traitors to the motherland. Let the courts try them for their actions without sparing the criminals the severest punishments", et cetera, et cetera.

Now, it was also Petliura who really lifted the level of Ukrainian nationalism. He was fascinated by language, by literature, because up to Petliura, you could actually make the case, "What on earth is Ukrainian nationalism?" But the point is, what happens is the bulk of Ukraine, the Ukrainian lands, is now seconded into the Soviet Union, which in 1921 is made into a Ukrainian Socialist Republic. Now this is important, it's under the Soviets, but it's made into a Ukrainian Socialist Republic with a small part of Ukraine going to the Poles,

the Romanians and the Czechs. And just to give you another piece of important information, Odesa was part of Soviet Russia, the great port, which is being shelled, that great port. In fact, I'm wearing a necklace I bought in Odesa. I've been to Odesa many times and I've mentioned this to you already. It was an extraordinary city, which was a third Jewish, it was an extraordinary city. And I just thought I'd wear this. I dunno why, I just, I bought it years and years and years ago and I just thought I'd put it on. I don't know. We do things sometimes, don't we? So the Ukraine, this is what happens to it. And can we go onto the next map, please? Yeah. And here you have the international borders. So you see Galicia, you see what's happened, Prussian partition, Poland, you see the reconstitution of Poland and Soviet Ukraine. We have to look at maps sometimes. And also what happens is that Lithuania, Latvia, which had also been part of the Tsarist Empire, they'd become independent states. But more about that when we look at the Baltic. So, Ukraine is swallowed up into the Soviet Union. Now, that should tell us a lot. Jews in the Ukraine. After the appalling murders, from now on, no Jew and of course many Jews left in that period, there was an upswing in Jewish immigration. But of course many of the countries were beginning to tighten their doors, including America. And what happens to the Jews in the Ukraine under the Soviets is that of course Zionists, their parties are driven underground. Just as what happened in the rest of the Soviet Union, you do not leave the Ukraine, you do not leave the Socialist Republic of the Ukraine because it is perfect. And it's the Yevseksiya, of course, that want to create a secular identity. And I'm going to look at some of the important centres of Jewish population. At the outbreak of war, there were over 2 million Jews, in the Second World War, there were over 2 million Jews living in the Ukraine.

Now the population. 154,000 Jews were living in Odesa. They made up 36% of the population. 140,000 in Kiev, they made up 27% of the population. 81,500 in Kharkiv, they made up nearly 20%, 62,000 in Dnipropetrovsk, of course, in the east of Ukraine, which we are talking a lot about. 98,000 in Lviv-Lvov, they made up 32% of the population. And of course, as we've already discussed, when we looked at Birobidzhan, the Soviets introduced ethnic passports. So Jews did have a J in their passport. And of course, in the Ukraine, you have that appalling catastrophe of the starvation of the peasant farmers of the Ukraine, which the Ukrainians refer to today as a genocide. And of course, many, many Jews also were affected by this. So the Holodomor, as it's called, it's thought that nearly 5 million people died. And some people, actually, some scholars actually claim it was planned and executed by Stalin to eliminate any thought of an independence movement. And others suggest it was a result of rapid industrialization. The point was in human misery, it was absolutely appalling. And I think it illustrates the cheapening of life in Eastern Europe. Now, and of course, Ukraine was the largest exporter of grain in the Soviet Union. Now since 2006, it's been recognised by Ukraine as a real genocide. You know, that term genocide was actually

created by a brilliant Polish Jewish lawyer called Lemkin. And it was his work that was one of the main reasonings behind the UN Declaration on Human Rights. Tragically he lost most of his family, but it was referred to as a genocide. And it's been recognised by 15 other countries as a genocide. Death by hunger, is what it means. And it was of course, according to the Ukrainians and correctly so, carried out by the Soviet Union and they very much take the case that it was a deliberate plot. Now also, Nikita Khrushchev was appointed head of the Ukrainian Communist Party in 1938. Don't forget also what happens in 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Soviet Union invades Poland from the west and the Nazis invade from the east. And what that meant was the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic expanded westward. And what happens is you have the Soviets moving now into areas of Poland where Jewish life had been continued. But it expands the Ukraine and it also, because so many of the political leadership were Jews, many of the Ukrainian population of that area, really, they thought all the Jews are communists, et cetera. So the Jew is very much seen as the *bête noire* by all these factions. And now you have the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. Now of course, an extra 2 million Jews become Soviet citizens. Approximately 250,000 escape or were actually evacuated into the Soviet Union prior to the Nazi invasion. One of the group asked me if there were so many murders, how come there were so many Jews in the Ukraine at the end of the war? And that's because many of them were in Soviet Ukraine to the east. And even those in the west, many of them were deported by the Soviets as undesirables. The bulk of them were murdered, but a million survived because it's going to be one of the largest Jewish populations. Okay, can we see the next slide please? This is General Jozef Pilsudski. Pilsudski had been the Polish general who if you like, saved Poland and becomes the head of the Polish state. Ironically, although he was an authoritarian, he was called by the Jews, "The Grandfather". And when he was buried in Krakov in 1936, they mourned for him because what came after his death in Poland was much worse than that which they experienced under him.

Now can we turn to the next slide, Judi? Here you see Stepan Bandera. Now Stepan Bandera is one of the major architects of Ukrainian nationalism at this period because of course what happens, as you all know, in June the 22nd, 1941, the Nazis break the Molotov Pact. And they spread into these areas and the Jews are now going to be under the control of the Nazis. So Stepan Bandera, he's born in Austrian Galicia to Ukrainian Uniates, they are Greek Catholics, the Uniate Church. As I've mentioned to you before, Ukraine religiously is divided into two. Now you have of course the imposition of communism, but with the collapse of communism, you've had a great flood into the churches. To the east, it's Russian, Russian Orthodox. To the west, it is Uniate. He's associated very much with Ukrainian nationalist organisations. He's their chief propaganda organiser. Remember, he is not living in Soviet Ukraine. He's active very much in going into the west of Ukraine. He smuggles himself in. He raises money from Ukrainian expats in Paris to fund and develop Ukrainian nationalism in

the west and in the east. In the west, remember, it's under Polish control. He directs activities, both against the Poles, those who have conquered what he believes is Ukrainian territory, and over the border in Soviet territory. He was arrested twice. He was tried twice concerning his involvement in a plot in Poland to assassinate the minister of the interior. He was convicted. He was convicted for treason. He was actually sentenced to death and it was commuted. And actually he was freed on the 13th of September, 1939. We're not sure if it was by his Ukrainian jailers or by the Nazis, because now of course the Nazis have taken the west of Ukraine. Poland. That's why I had to show you the maps. I remember Hugo Grimm in a very ironic talk, he said, "You know, I moved five times before I was five. Well actually I didn't, but it was taken over by different countries". Living as we do in Britain, which is surrounded of course by water. When you move into Europe and you see the changes of borders and how absolutely passionate nationalism was at this particular period of history. Now because eastern Poland has been occupied by the Russians, he moves to Krakov, which is the capital of the general government. Krakov under Nazi rule, of course, ruled by whom? Ruled by Frank, the governor of Poland. Frank, the double lawyer, PhD in law, Hitler's lawyer. Living at the beautiful Wawel Castle in Krakov and Bandera, the arch-Ukrainian nationalist goes there. And of course he works under the Germans revolutionary approach to Ukrainian nation building. He forms mobile groups, small mobile groups of young Ukrainian nationalists, between five and 15 members in each group, over 7,000 people. He was a real activist. And his dream is that they are going to move with the Nazis into the Ukraine and of course that happens after the invasion, Operation Barbarossa. And in the spring of '41, remember the invasion is in June, he holds meetings with the German intelligence regarding the formation of battalions and of Ukrainian nationalists who will work against the Soviets. Remember, they have been living under Soviet rule and now if the Nazis invade, he can cause an uprising. And of course, on June the 23rd, this is just after the uprising, 1941, the Nazis have invaded. He sends a letter to Hitler requesting Ukrainian independence. And with the arrival of the Germans in the area, he immediately demands, begs Ukrainian and announces Ukrainian independence. He pledges cooperation with the Nazis. I'm quoting, "Glory to the heroic German army and the Fuhrer Adolf Hitler". And of course this declaration tragically was accompanied by violent pogroms against the Jews. The Germans did not want an independent Ukraine. He is sent to Sachsenhausen. He is actually released in 1944. He settles in Munich and the end of Bandera, he is assassinated by a Soviet agent in 1959. It's a fascinating story and I'm hoping that Ellen Fry will talk about it because he was actually protected by something called the Gehlen Organisation, which was made up of ex-SS officers in Germany. And he also, by the way, was probably sponsored while he was in Germany by MI6. Okay. He was a violent anti-Semite. Not only was he an ultra nationalist and an anti-Semite, he was fascinated by violence. He wrote "Only war could establish a Ukrainian state". He was so anti-

communist and he was also a very religious Uniate. So he sees the Jews as Christ killers, he sees them as communists, he hates them. And this is a report that he himself wrote. He has his organisation of militia. He says, "We combat the Jews as the body of the Muscovite-Bolshevik regime". And this is what he wrote, "Ethnic Russians and Poles and Jews who are hostile to us, are to be destroyed in a struggle by means of deporting them to their own lands, eradicating their intelligentsia, which is not to be admitted to any positions or preventing any creation of intelligentsia and they must have no access to education. Jews are to be isolated. They ought to be removed from government positions to prevent sabotage. Jewish assimilation is not possible." His doctrine was very similar to that of the Nazis. And in fact, the German police in 1941 actually reported that the fanatic Banderas followers, I'm quoting, "Organises small groups were extraordinary active against Jews and communists". Because as the Germans conquered the various areas, including Kiev, and of course Babi Yar is a ravine near Kiev, they were almost holding back these Ukrainian militias that went on the march against the Jews. Now ironically, January 2001 was the, beg your pardon, 2009, was the hundredth birthday of Bandera. It was celebrated in several Ukrainian centres. A postage stamp was issued. In 2014, there was a torchlight procession of 15,000 in Kiev in his honour. Thousands rallied to his statue in Lviv. And in 2018, the Ukrainian parliament declared the 1st of January, Bandera Day. It's a public holiday. He's still an incredibly divisive figure. Now, January the first, 2022, hundreds of Ukrainian nationalists held a torchlight parade in his honour. And basically the message was he was the leader of a rebel Ukrainian militia who fought against communism in World War I. During the defence of Mariupol, and this is where it becomes so painful and so agonising because who cannot be moved by the terrible scenes of Russian annihilation in the Ukraine? But unfortunately, when you study Jewish history, it's inside-out history. And during the defence of Mariupol, a chant of "Bandera is our father. Ukraine is our mother. We will fight for Ukraine." This was at the steelworks. Now he's probably the most famous of all the Ukrainian national figures. And when Putin justified the war in his speech on May the ninth, 2022, he talked about the neo-Nazi Banderites. In April, 2022, in a survey about him, 74% of Ukrainians are positive about him. So he's still an incredibly divisive figure. But now we come to one of the darkest chapters, of course, in Jewish history and Babi Yar is such a symbol of it.

Now can we look at the map of the invasion, if you don't mind, Judi? There you see Operation Barbarossa, one of the largest land operations in the history of warfare. The German army enters the Ukraine and you see how it spreads out. Following the German army into battle, of course were the Einsatzgruppen. The Einsatzgruppen were a group of SS officers, it was divided into four groups each with 750 men in it. The majority of them had doctorates from the top German universities. How do I know this? Because their lives have been extensively studied, mainly by German historians actually. And one German historian

actually looked at 900 of the PhDs. He was interested in what these people will do. What kind of backgrounds did they come from? I think he hoped they would all be obscure scientists. And that's no insult to scientists by the way. In fact, he found that some of the PhDs were on aspects of the enlightenment. So they're following the German army into battle and the Einsatzgruppen are the action squads because it's the invasion of Russia that actually seals the fate of the Jewish population. We already know, of course, about the terrible treatment in the countries already occupied. We know about the ghettoization, but this is when it is decided that mass murder is the answer. And that mass murder at first is going to involve the killings, the actual death by bullets. So that is what is happening. So Kiev is occupied by the Germans by the 29th Corps and the Sixth German army on September the 19th, 1941. Of its Jewish population of 160,000, over a hundred thousand have managed to flee or had been mobilised into the Soviet army. That's why the numbers, when you look at the horror of Ukraine, because so many of them were either conscripted into Russia or managed to flee into Russia. And you will know, of course, that Menachem Begin had fled into Russia. What happened? Many of them were imprisoned in gulags, but in the end, many of them are going to survive. Now, shortly after the German takeover of the city between the 24th and 28th, the number of buildings had been blown up. Buildings that were used by the German military administration, not only were locals killed, many Germans were killed. Later on after the war, it was discovered that in fact the sabotage operation was the work of the NKVD, the Soviet security detachment that had been left behind in the city specifically to cause trouble. However, on September the 26th, a meeting was held amongst the German officers, and I'll talk about which German officers then, because that will dispel a few myths for you. They're going to hold a meeting and they blame the Jews, although we now know it's the NKVD and in retaliation, they're going to murder the Jews in the city. Now, who participated in the meeting? Major General Kurt Eberhard, SS Obergruppenführer Friedrich Jeckeln, who is the commander of one of the Einsatzgruppen and the Sonderkommando Paul Blobel. And what I want to do is to look at these characters before that, before we come to Kurt Eberhard, I must mention von Reichenau, who is the field marshal and most political of Hitler's generals. After 1933, together with von Blomberg, he made his fellow officers take the oath of unconditional obedience to the Fuhrer of the Third Reich. He actually negotiated an agreement with Himmler and the SS in February '33 and again in May 1934, which made possible the Night of the Long Knives. In May 1934, Himmler, head of the SS, destroyed elements of the SA. Anyone who had any idea of rivalry to Hitler, this was a Nazi general. And during the Night of the Long Knives, when the SS went against the SA, he kept the army in the barracks. And he said the army would not give succour to anyone persecuted by the regime. He becomes a general in 1935, commander of the Seventh Army, he publicly supported Hitler's war aims. You will know that many of the generals were actually against it, but he was not. And following Barbarossa, he's commanding the Sixth Army. And after the massacre at Babi Yar,

von Reichenau had been responsible to the order of the day to troops, this is October '41. "A necessity of a severe but just revenge on the Jews, subhuman Jewry." And he praised the Einsatzgruppen and he's praised by the Einsatzgruppen. He actually died of a stroke in 1942, January the 17th, 1942. The date is wrong. He dies in 1942. And it's absolutely fascinating because that is the date of the Wannsee Conference. But let's have a look at Kurt Eberhard. So you've got a meeting. Reichenau is the man mainly in charge, but the the next one is Kurt Eberhard. He took service in World War I. He rose to the rank of a brigade fuhrer. He then joins the SS. And during World War II, he is the commander of Kiev and he is involved in the planning and supervising of Babi Yar. He was captured at the end of the war, November 1945, by the Americans. He actually committed suicide in prison in Stuttgart. So these characters are the ones that we can pinpoint, of being responsible for the appalling massacre of Babi Yar.

Paul Blobel, can we see him? If you could go on the other way, please. Can you go on please? Judi. Go to Blobel next, please. Oh, that's it. Sorry. They're out of order. Because he is one of the greatest of the monsters. He's born in North Germany. He fought in the First World War. Because one of the things that has always fascinated me, what creates this unbelievable monstrosity? He studied philosophy at university. He studied law, political science. He received a doctorate in law and in political economy. He became a private sector lawyer. He had a practise in Dresden. He became the mayor of Rutenberg in Saxony. And in 1935, he is Lord Mayor of Wittenberg. And of course it's in Wittenberg, where Martin Luther first came to prominence when his nailing of his 95 Theses against the Catholic church was the signal for the German reformation. He joined the Nazi party back in 1931. He was in the SA in '33 and he joins the SS on the 10th of March, 1933. In 1937, he is the leader of the state police in Frankfurt. In March '38, he's the director of security in Linz, upper Austria, then appointed chief of the security police in Prague. 1939, he's transferred to Königsberg and oversaw the liquidation of Polish political prisoners. This man is a total ideologue with no humanity in my view. He has huge approval from Heydrich and he founded a concentration camp for deportation to the general government, where the Polish intelligentsia could be liquidated. Shortly before the invasion of Russia, he takes command of Einsatzgruppen C and was part of the organisation of the Babi Yar murders. He ensured, this is what I find absolutely mind-blowingly evil and I'm going to make that judgement, he ensured that all Einsatzgruppen personnel, including all the commanding officers, personally were involved in the shootings. Once he leaves this position, he becomes the director of Continental Oil in Berlin. He transfers from murder to oil. He's indicted in the Einsatzgruppen Trial in 1947. The case against him was stopped because he had Parkinson's and dementia. And in fact, he dies. But he was very much part, as I said, he also, in 1941, after his involvement in Babi Yar, he activated the first gas vans at Poltava in Ukraine. Because something, I feel like I'm disassociated from my body

when I'm teaching you, talking about this, because it should be unbelievable, tragically, it's not. There was a problem with the shootings. It wasn't efficient enough. Too many people, too many of the Einsatzgruppen were drinking too much. And as a result, they looked for a new method and he activated the first gassing vans at Poltava. He actually becomes an alcoholic. And that's why he sent off to look after oil. He actually develops the concept of the gas chambers. And this was all revealed, ironically, at the Eichmann Trial from Dieter Von Wisliceny who was an aide to Eichmann. He also, one of his last roles, comes back, one of his last roles was covering up the murders and the destruction of Hamburg and Sobibor. And this is Gitta Sereny, who of course interviewed so many of these monsters. She didn't interview him, but she related a conversation about Blobel that she had one of the chief of the church information branch, a man called Albert Hartl. And he told her of a summer evening in Kiev at a dinner he met Blobel who drove him to an event. And they were driving past a long ravine, Babi Yar, and Hartl said, "I noticed strange movements of the earth, clumps of earth rose in the air as if by their own propulsion and there was smoke. It was like a live volcano and it was burning, just beneath the earth. Blobel laughed. 'Here lies my 30,000 Jews'." I mean, how on earth do we deal with these kind of characters? Could we go back please to the other two, if you don't mind? Friedrich Jeckeln, and I'm giving you their biographies because they were human beings. He was born in Baden, he served in World War I, he was an engineer, joins the Nazi party in 1929. He was elected, he was actually a member of the Reichstag in 1932. Remember the Nazis came to power through the ballot box. In 1933, he's part of the SS, he's then a police leader and becomes an Obergruppenfuhrer. He was brutal. He was a fanatic. And he's in charge of the Einsatzgruppen killings in his district under Blobel. Now he was the one who developed the sardine packing, which horrified even some of the Einsatzgruppen, that is just packing as many people together to save bullets. I'm not going to go any further. By the end of August '41, he'd supervised the murder of 44,000 people in one month. He was awarded on January the 27th of 1942, the War Merit Cross. And he was captured by the Soviets and had a military trial. His last speech, "I have to take full responsibility for what happened within the SS, the SD and Gestapo. This greatly increases my guilt. I will accept my sentence in full repentance." He becomes a Christian. He was hanged on the third of February.

And the last character to bring to your attention, if I can bear it, is Otto Rasch. Let's have a look at Otto Rasch. Born in North Germany. Fought in World War I. Became a private sector lawyer, joins the Nazi party. He was one of the most cruel, sadistic characters that you can possibly imagine. He, again, was part of the Einsatzgruppen trials. So these are the people who decide in that meeting in Kiev, that they are going to, as a retaliation for the blowing up of buildings, they are going to work against the Jews. So can we go on please? The round up announcement. Friday, September the 26th, 1941, these announcements

appear all around the city. They're printed in Russian, Ukrainian and German, ordering all the Jews to assemble on Monday at 8:00 PM near the site of the synagogue. That morning, the day before Yom Kippur, over 33,000 people gathered, mostly women, children and the old, because the Soviets had already mobilised the men into the army. And this is a translation of the roundup announcement. "All the Yids of the city of Kiev and its vicinity must appear on Monday the 29th of September by eight o'clock. Bring documents, money and valuables and also warm clothing and linen. All Yids who do not follow this order and are found elsewhere, will be shot. Any civilian who enters the dwellings left by the Yids and appropriates the things will be shot." So basically, there's already a problem that the Ukrainian nationalists have turned against the Jews. And in fact, there are the most extraordinary reports back to Berlin by the SS that there's a problem that the Ukrainians, this also happened in Latvia and Lithuania, they are overzealous. The Germans want it done in an orderly, orderly way. They are marched. So what happens is they're marched under guard. Babi Yar, by the way, means ravine in both Russian and Ukraine. It's actually a system of ravines that once fed a tributary of the River Dnieper. And it's very, very beautiful there. Steep troughs, inland fields. It's very, very beautiful. And it's still crowded at weekends or it was before the war with picnickers, football players. To be fair, for a long time, nobody really knew what had happened there because of the Soviet coverup that I'll talk about in a minute. And Professor Pima will spend more time on it when he deals, of course, with Yevtushenko. The Jews enter the ravine, the area being cordoned off. And the people who actually led them in were the German police and Ukrainian auxiliaries. And it's in corporation with the German army. For a long time, the Wehrmacht tried to prove that it had nothing to do with the killings, but we're way beyond that in research now. And also to be perfectly blunt, because of the alliance between West Germany and the allies against the Soviets, the Cold War, nobody wanted to push it too far. And as of course, we know what happened, as they approached the ravine, they were forced to hand over all their valuables. They had to strip and advance towards the ravine in groups of 10. And at the edge, of course, they are gunned down by automatic fire. And the shootings were done by the SS, the SD and the Waffen-SS and the police, the German police. The squads were relieving each other every few hours. And as the day ended, the bodies were covered with a thin layer of earth. And according to official reports, because the Germans kept the records, 33,771 Jews were murdered. This is the report at the trial. "The victims were made to lie face down on the blooded corpses of victims who had already been shot. If they didn't do this willingly, they were beaten and knocked down. Then the gunners climbed over the wobbly mounds towards the victims and shot them in the back of the necks." We know that over the next two years, the Germans continued to use the site for mass murder. They murdered another 70,000 people there. Psychiatric patients, people they considered mentally or physically damaged, whatever that means, they murdered the Roma, they murdered Russian prisoners of war

because the rules of war. There's actually documents where they say that the Soviets are not to be accorded the Geneva Conventions. Himmler actually makes a speech in 1933 where he says to the SS, "We have still maintained our decency." Anyway, this is before the Red Army actually liberated Kiev. And in fact the Germans were the first to try and silence the memory. In fact, as I said to you, Paul Blobel returns to Kiev and his assignment with SS Dr. Max Thomas, who was the officer commanding the Gestapo in Ukraine, was to erase the evidence. And in the mid-August they did embark on the task of exhuming the bodies. And to do this, they used prisoners, including a hundred Jews from a nearby concentration camp. And this is why we know what happened, because the prisoners were housed in a bunker carved out of the ravine wall. They were treated the most horribly. Can you imagine having to do this? The iron gate was locked at night, it was guarded. And it begins on the 18th of August '43. And on the morning of the 29th, it took them a month, but there was no trace left of the mass grave. And on the morning of the 29th, the prisoners learned they were about to be shot. 25 managed to escape, to break out. 15 managed to escape so that's why we have so much information. Later on the Soviets concealed the site. They tried to fill in the ravine. Unintentionally, they set off a mudslide that killed at least 145 people.

Why did the Soviets do this? Because they didn't want to single out the Jews as special victims because the Ukraine is again part of the Soviet Union. So consequently, yes, there were many Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian perpetrators. In fact, it might interest you to know that of all the wanted war criminals in Britain after the war, they were all actually Ukrainian because ironically, many Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, fascists, they escaped to the West because at that time, all the West was interested in were you were a member of the Nazi party? Were you a member of the Communist Party? I beg your pardon. Those of you who have went to America, up until relatively recently, you were asked on your entry papers, on your visa papers, were you ever a member of the Communist Party? So this is all how so much of it, so much of the coverup, the full story was first told by a Soviet writer called Anatoly Kuznetsov, Babi Yar. And it was, but of course it's actually the, what really brings it to the world's attention is that incredible poem of Yevtushenko. And as I said, Professor Pima is going to talk about it. And tonight Dennis Davis is going to talk about the Shostakovich symphony. But it's not until 1976, that is actually a monument at the site, the monument to Soviet citizens and prisoners of war shot by the Nazi occupiers in what they call the Great Patriotic War. And I'd like to finish, please. I know I've dealt with the most dark, ghastly materials today, and I know it's painful to receive it, but perhaps knowledge does set us free. I hope so. And I just hope, you know, one of the things I find most difficult, and that's why I quite often make rash statements about Holocaust education, I just find that if only we have really learned the lessons of history. But let me finish by showing you an extraordinary piece by the great Vasily Grossman. There you have

Grossman. "There are no", this is in his "Book of Memories". "There are no Jews left in Ukraine." Not true actually, but that's another story. "The police murderously killed, everyone is killed. A million Jews in Ukraine." That is true. "This is not a death at war when armed and fighting. This is a murder of people, a murder of the home, family, book and faith. This is the annihilation of the nation that has been a neighbour to the Ukrainians for hundreds of years, sharing work, joy and sadness in one land. In every place, big and small, in every little town, in the city, all were killed. Not a single one left. There were 55,000 in a big city, then all 55,000 were killed and not a single one was missed." Vasily Grossman. Thank you very much for listening to what must have been a very painful presentation to receive. As I said, perhaps we can learn the lessons of history. Ironically, it's not really for the people listening, is it? But in an area now where the Ukraine, again, is being subjected to such terrible bloodletting. Hi Wendy, thanks for listening.

- I just wanted to say thank you for doing this presentation. I know how difficult it was for you and we've discussed it many times, going this route. So I just want to thank you.

- Thank you darling. We just asked, when you and I discussed it, we just felt that because of what's going on in the Ukraine, we really should do it. And ironically, out of it came the most beautiful poetry and the most beautiful music. And also, I do want to say, I still think the Jewish story is a story of extraordinary survival. Whatever happens, it's a story of survival. I hope you agree with that. All of you. Anyway, Wendy, shall I have a look at questions? I think Wendy's frozen. Yeah. Okay.

- [Wendy] Thank you, Trudy.

Q & A and Comments

- Thanks, darling. "In July, 1979, while on tour of USSR and also visiting Refuseniks, the tour guides would not take us to Babi Yar. I led a group of our tourists to Babi Yar. Plus I was given an assignment to bring a message to the local Jewish community to be at Babi Yar on the day that Elie Wiesel and his committee was to visit, a part of his research to help design the Holocaust Museum in Washington." That's very interesting, Stan. I was in Kiev just after communism collapsed. And I think I may have mentioned this in the previous talk. We were teaching Ukrainian teachers in Dnipropetrovsk, and also we are in Kiev for meetings. Now, what was fascinating, my translator was an ex-general in, an ex-colonel in the Russian army, remember Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, and he didn't know much about his Jewish heritage and he didn't know about Babi Yar and he cried. Can you imagine what it was like to have a Ukrainian colonel collapse?

Q: "How is Petliura spelled?"

A: Marty, PETLYRA.

- [Judi] PET, it's PET

- L.

- [Judi] LIURA.

- Thank you, thank you. Betty says, "The Jewish cemetery in Odesa is amazing. It's truly worth going to see." Yes, Betty, unfortunately, I don't know how much we can visit Odesa. Certainly at the moment it's absolutely impossible. It is an extraordinary city. And Judi is typing it for you, Marty.

David, this is from David Garfield. "You mentioned before about not leaving the perfect society. Do you know why they regarded themselves as the perfect society?" The Nazis, they were going to create the perfectly obedient Aryan body, physically fit with the perfectly obedient mind. They were creating the perfect Aryan race that would last for a thousand years.

Look, Tim, it's complete balderdash, race theory. But that's, and the Jew was the alien race. Other races were subgroups. The Roma had to be destroyed, homosexuals had to be destroyed. You know, Jehovah's Witnesses had to be destroyed. The mentally and physically handicapped have to be destroyed, including Germans, of course.

"Stephen Kotkin", this is from Abigail, "Has researched Stalin's claims that the Holodomor was started carrying out the communist ideology by force of will and communist ideologies." There's lots of theories about it. The point was a huge number of people, millions of people starved to death, in an area which is rich in grain. I mean, what do you think all the problem's about at the moment? I've been to the Ukraine, the soil is black, it's so fertile. The invasion of Poland by Germany from the west and by Soviet Russia from the east. Didn't I say that? That is what happened. With the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Russians come in from the east, the Germans from the west and then of course in June, 1941, June the 22nd, 1941, the Nazis break the Pact and they invade Russia. And that's why all these areas that have been under Russian control are now under Nazi control. And if you're thinking, that also applied to Vilnius, which had been independent. Latvia and Lithuania had been independent. So when the Soviets moved in, in '39 and 1940, the problems for the Jews were absolutely appalling because they were blamed as commissars, which of course was rubbish.

Q: "Where does the Jewish population in Ukraine come from?"

A: Well, many of them survived. Don't forget it was a huge number of Jews in the Ukraine. And some moved in from Russia.

Q: "What did you say Uniate is? Did you say it's to do with Greek?"

A: It's Greek Orthodoxy, but it turns to, as opposed to Russian Orthodoxy, and it turns towards Rome and they turn towards the West.

Q: "How many Jews were in the Red Army in World War II?"

A: It's a huge number. I think it's at least a quarter of a million. It could be more. Let me check that for you. Yes. Ukraine was the main.

Q: This is from Leon. "Ukraine was the major wheat producer for USSR. The appalling Stalin, in his policy, caused massive starvation of farmers in Ukraine. This did not cause starvation, elsewhere. Did this not cause starvation elsewhere? Where the wheat was no longer available?"

A: There was a terrible famine. The point is it hit most in the Ukraine because it was all exported from Ukraine. It was taken away from the peasant farmers. He's trying to break them. That's the point. The SSD is the Gestapo, branch of the Gestapo.

Oh this is from Sonya. Thank you very much, Sonya. "Never forget."

Q: "Do you know the numbers of native Ukrainian collaborators? Ukrainian police involved in the Babi Yar Massacre."

A: There were quite a few hundred, Clara. That I do know. You see, Bandera's group and other groups, they saw the Jews as hook-nosed commissars, the Ukrainian nationalists. The Jews suffered dreadfully in the Ukraine. But there were also Jews who hid Ukrainians. I'm going to tell you a story which was told to me by Felic Scharf. I don't know if it's ever been written down. A Ukrainian peasant hid in the outskirts of Kiev. He hid a very beautiful Jewish woman and her very beautiful two daughters. And the deal was, I will hide you, he fell in love with one of the daughters, provided you marry me. And after the war, she kept her promise. Her sister and mother made it to England. They were very sophisticated. I knew the daughter, the one who married a very wealthy English Jew. And what is fascinating, the sister who married the Ukrainian peasant stayed with him until he died. And then she came to the west. Fascinating stories.

Q: "Why did the Germans cover up the bodies?"

A: Because later on, as the war is advancing, remember they blew up Sobibor, they are trying to cover up their deeds. Later on, Himmler is

trying to negotiate with the Allies.

Q: "Did Ukrainians actually murder Jews?"

A: No, they murdered Jews in Kiev. But they were the police, they were with the police and they confiscated the possessions. It was actually the Einsatzgruppen and the German police who did the shooting.

Oh, thank you Carla. People are saying lovely things. This is from Amelie who says, "In order to face the future, we have to learn about the past." Yes, but I just wish we would learn more from the past.

Q; "How do I cope with the knowledge that you generously share with us?"

A: Jillian, I am very blessed that I have a group of friends, many of whom are involved in the work that I'm involved in. I mean, you've got my partner Jerry, who died, that was his field. And Robert Risterich was my other very close friend. And now I share it with my colleagues and with the support of people like Wendy. And they give me a lot of emotional support. And it sounds pathetic. And also remember Anita Laskovovich is one of my closest friends, as is Joanna Milan. And when you are in the presence of someone like Anita, who has such a moral force, it makes you, it reinforces it. And that's why I know I've said some pretty harsh things about Holocaust education, mainly out of frustration because I just find that people aren't learning the lessons. And if I can lighten it a bit, there was a very interesting conversation I had with William about the political situation at the moment. And he said, "If only the governments would listen to historians." And when you think of a historian who is lecturing to us, such as William, who's such a brilliant general historian and was in charge of the City Lit, who has done so much for education, why aren't they consulting people like him? It's fascinating. Why on earth don't they go to, why don't governments in the west go to the people with the expertise rather than look for political appointments? It's insane in my view. Thank you.

Q: "After a history of hundreds of years of brutality against Jews in the Ukraine, why are there still hundreds of thousands of Jews living there until recently?"

A: Brenda, you've got to remember it was under the Soviet Union for a long time. And under the Soviet Union, it wasn't easy to get out. And there's another reason, you know, you live in an area, it's your land and then there was a hope that Ukraine would become an independent democracy. Which is a very complicated story, which is another story. And also there were, I met quite a few Jews who had made quite a lot of money in the Ukraine post the collapse of communism. So there's a lot of stories. Why do people move?

Oh Stewart, I was wrong. Thank you. '41 to '45. The figures, I thought it was half a million in my head. That's why I said come back to me. Between '41 and '45, between 350,000 and 500,000 Jews served in various roles in the Red Army. During the first months of the war, a number of Jews, especially members of the intelligentsia, served in the National Guard, et cetera, et cetera. Thank you for that, Stewart. So that's what I love about our group. Also, there were quite a few Soviet generals who were Jewish.

Ann Fine is saying, "My father was a student and member in Kharkov." Yeah. "Have I read Charles King's book, 'Odesa'?" No. I will have a look at it. The book I've referred to is mainly Steve Zipperstein. He's the best historian I know on Odesa. But I'll have a look at that, Janice, thank you. Thank you. And Stewart is giving us the reference. It's from Yavisham, yeah, I love our group. Janice. "I was born two thirty four on September 30th, 1941. I was an adult when I became aware of the unspeakable way in which a baby must have died even as I was entering the world. You speak of survival, I feel a responsibility to live well the life she might have lived." That's very beautiful, Janice. That's very, very beautiful. Yeah, we have to survive for those who can't.

Yes, of course, Judi, Carol's saying, "The people who were lined up heard and knew what was going on, unimaginable terror and pain." Yes, of course it is beyond, it is unspeakable. You know, that's why some writers have said the only response to the Shoah is actually silence. But it can't be. We have to scream it from the rooftops. I guess what makes me really mad is there is so much evidence and yet anti-Semitism is on the increase again. And that actually makes me very, very angry.

And this is from Marilyn. "The amazing Moscow underground system was built by the Kulak starved. Depends on how you use your resources." Yes, Marilyn, because as I discussed when I looked at Stalin, the notion of morality is nowhere. You've got to remember that. There are people in this world who have no morality. Goldie, "History must be taught without personal feelings. But dispassionately and impassively, albeit with the facts and the images. The audience is wise enough to draw all the inferences and make their own conclusions.

"It's hard for you to say the word Holocaust. Murder killing. You should not do so. You should not do this." Goldie, I don't know what you mean. I find. If I was teaching to children or sixth-formers or adult or university students, which I have done for a long time, but I feel with a group such as ours, I reveal far more of my own feelings than I would in the class. Besides, I don't believe the Holocaust can be taught impassionately. I totally disagree with you. You cannot teach it impassively. I know how it's taught in schools now, and I'm very against the way it's taught, but that's another story. But I would say that when I'm teaching a group like you, I do reveal far more of my own feelings than I would've done right at the beginning

when we first met, because I feel we have a group now, and that's my view of it. "History must be taught without personal feelings." There is no such thing as objective history as well, Goldie, you must remember that. If you want to think about what I've talked about for the past hour, if all of you were to sit down and wrote about what you think I've discussed, including me, we'd come up with 20, probably as many different views as is possible because you receive information through the prism of your own experiences. I know if my clock is right, that it's quarter to seven in London. That's what I know. Rod. Thank you, Nanette.

Q: "With all the horrendous atrocities that have been committed against Jews, is it any wonder that Israelis would do anything today to protect Jews from being murdered and suffering a similar fate?"

A: Rod, that is a fascinating viewpoint. Israel saw itself as the victim of the Shoah, no question. The heir to the Shoah, no question.

Q: "Were none of the Ukrainian and Baltic collaborators tried for war crimes?"

A: Yes, a few. But you've got to remember in the Soviet Union, it's the Great Patriotic War, and we have to create a new society. And don't forget, in the cynical West, how many top Nazi. Look, they tried the major perpetrators. But Germany had to, West Germany had to live, they had to continue, and the majority of them, everyone was a member of the Nazi party. To have any authority in Germany, what you're going to do, sack them all? Even at Wannsee, a third of the characters died in their beds from SS pensions.

Thank you, Barbara. This is from Fay Katsman. "It will happen again because it's happened before." She's paraphrasing Primo Levy. Emily is praising the whole of our team. Yeah. I do have the most amazing colleagues and we all support each other and Wendy is a huge part of that. Thank you, Susan. Thank you. Thank you.

Q: "Will you give or gave a webinar on Rosenberg?"

A: Yes, I did talk about Rosenberg, but a long, long time ago. When we look at the Baltic, I might be able to weave him in somewhere, because of course he was a Baltic German.

Okay, Judi, I think we better, oh, I think.

- [Judi] Trudy, there's only a few more if you want to go through them.

- Oh, because we've got another present. All right. Okay.

- [Judi] Yeah, we can go through them quick. There's only a few more

left.

- Okay.

Q: "What do Ukrainians think of Jews today?"

A: Barbara, that's a very, very complicated question. I cannot give you a glib, quick answer. I would say that there's a lot of stereotypes, but I would say that there are many Ukrainians who deal positively with Jews, and please don't let this presentation in any way negate the horror of Putin in the Ukraine.

Oh, Molly, the group was the Einsatzgruppen. There were four Einsatzgruppen that followed the German army into Russia. They were the hit squads.

Thank you, Thelma. Thank you, Gloria.

Q: "You said 'We have learned the lessons, but not enough.' What do you mean?"

A: What do I mean, Erica? I mean that all the lessons of the 20th century, if well learnt, we could have created a more just society, but unfortunately, we're up against human nature. We don't know enough about, look, I've talked about some of these monsters. The reason I'm interested in many of these monsters is they're well educated, the Einsatzgruppen, so then I have to look at what we mean by education. And certainly we do not mean a dispassionate academic education. And please don't think I'm against academic education. Of course I'm not. But I'm also thinking about how do you revamp a system? Is it possible to do it through education? Or you might well say that our values are inculcated so young, I have this from psychologists. It is not my field, but I talk to psychologists and I sometimes have emails, and in fact, Mrs. Hellis has emailed me with some incredibly important information. I don't know if she's listening, but I'm truly grateful to her for the information she's given me on childhood and development. So it's such a big subject. How do you create the kind of just citizen that we want to be in our countries? How do we create a just democratic system? William's been talking about that.

This is from Abigail. "A Russian director has created a film about female Jewish Russian pilots in the Russian War effort. Quite astonishing." Oh, thank you for that, Abigail. If you know the name, let us know.

This is from Fanya Rafael. "My grandfather and other family members were shot by the Einsatzgruppen in Ukraine in the summer of 1941." There you have it, Fayna. That's your family background. What does one do with that? What does one do? Thank you, Renee. Thank you, Susan. Thank you. Thank you, Cynthia. Thank you, Barry. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all for being so supportive as well.