

Remarks at the Menorah Memorial at Babi Yar in Kiev

May 12, 1995

Thank you, Rabbi, to the people of Ukraine, and especially to the veterans of World War II and the children who are here.

Here on the edge of this wooded ravine, we bear witness eternally to the consequences of evil. Here at Babi Yar, almost 54 years ago, more than 30,000 men, women, and children were slaughtered in the first 3 days alone. They died for no other reason than the blood that ran through their veins. We remember their sacrifice, and we vow never to forget.

In late September 1941, the Nazi occupying army ordered the Jewish population of Kiev together, with their valuables and belongings. "We thought we were being sent on a journey," one survivor recalled. But instead they were being herded to the ravine, stripped, and shot down. By year's end, more than 100,000 Jews, 10,000 Ukrainian nationalists, Soviet prisoners of war, and gypsies had been exterminated here.

The writer Anatoly Kuznietzov was a child in Kiev during the war. He remembers the day the deportations began. "My grandfather stood in the middle of the courtyard straining to hear something. He raised his finger. 'Do you know

what?' he said with horror in his voice. 'They're not deporting them. They're shooting them.'"

Years later, Kuznietzov brought the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko to Babi Yar. And that night, Yevtushenko wrote one of his most celebrated poems:

Over Babi Yar there are no memorials. The steep hillside, like a rough inscription. I am frightened. Today I am as old as the Jewish race. I seem to myself a Jew at this moment.

These words speak to us across the generations, a reminder of the past, a warning for the future.

In the quiet of this place, the victims of Babi Yar cry out to us still. Never forget, they tell us, that humanity is capable of the worst, just as it is capable of the best. Never forget that the forces of darkness cannot be defeated with silence or indifference. Never forget that we are all Jews and gypsies and Slavs. Never forget.

May God bless this holy place.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:12 p.m.

Remarks at Schevchenko University in Kiev

May 12, 1995

Thank you very much.

I first would thank Olexiy Meleshchuk for that fine introduction. I thank Olena Sheveliova for her fine remarks and for representing the university students here. I thank the rector, Viktor Skopenko, for his remarks and for the honorary degree, which I will treasure and display in the White House.

I am delighted to be joined here by my wife and by ministers and other important members of our administration, by the mayor of Kiev and members of your National Government, and by former President Kravchuk. I am glad to see them all here, and I thank them for being here with me today. I am deeply honored to be the first American President to appear before the people of a free and independent Ukraine.

Today we celebrate the alliance of our peoples, who defeated fascism 50 years ago. We shared victory then, but the cost to your people of that victory was almost unimaginable. More than 5 million Ukrainians died in the conflict. I am pleased that now after all these years we can pay tribute to the extraordinary sacrifice here in the Ukrainian homeland.

It is fitting that we are meeting at this institution, named for Taras Schevchenko. More than 30 years ago, America recognized his passion for freedom by erecting a statue of Schevchenko in the heart of our Nation's Capital. Now, at last, America also honors this great champion of liberty in the heart of Ukraine's capital.

I am also glad that we are meeting here at this university because so much of your nation's