

Transcript: Babyn Yar Memorial: Is Consensus Possible? Panel discussion
Ukrainian Institute London, in cooperation with the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter
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Marina Pesenti: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to Ukrainian Institute London. I'm Marina Pesenti, Director of the Ukrainian Institute London, and tonight's discussion will be focusing on the commemorative practices around the Babyn Yar tragedy.

For those of you who [are] not very familiar with the background of this event, I would like to remind you that Babyn Yar used to be a ravine in Kyiv, the capital of today's Ukraine, which sadly became a site of a mass murder in 1941 as Ukraine became occupied by Nazi Germany. In the space of two days, 34 [thousand] Jews of Kyiv were killed here. In the subsequent months, many other groups of citizens were also killed here, including Ukrainian nationalists, communists, non-Jewish civilians, Roma people, as well as the patients of the psychiatric asylum in Kyiv.

The tragedy of Babyn Yar was very much forgotten and silenced during the Soviet period, and now there are major efforts being made to create a major museum on this site. In 2016, a privately-led initiative supported by the wealthy businessmen of Jewish origin from Ukraine, Russia, and the United States set up a new institution called Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre. And the plans are to construct a major museum, a landscaped park, and to have a study centre integrated within this project.

A basic historic narrative was developed, which is a 200-page document setting up the context for the events. It was developed by a group of internationally acclaimed historians and led by Karel Berkhoff, a Dutch historian and one of the leading specialists on the history of Holocaust in Eastern Europe, as well as the history of the Second World War more generally.

Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre went through a major transformation at the end of 2019, when quite unexpectedly a prominent Russian film director Ilya Khrzhanovsky was appointed as the project's creative director. He announced of the plans to create psychological experiments, immersive experiences, and to have simulations of ethical choices as part of the exhibit. His plans drew major criticism from the Ukrainian artistic and intellectual community, and they signed an open letter to the government of Ukraine, demanding Mr. Khrzhanovsky's resignation, but also asking for another narrative, an alternative narrative developed by Ukrainian historians from the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences to be the baseline for the future project. There are also voices inside Ukraine saying that a major commemorative project relating to the history of Holocaust by Bullets is being controlled by wealthy Russian businessmen with links to the Russian leadership. And so, this is seen increasingly in the context of the hybrid warfare which Russia unleashed against Ukraine a few years ago. So, today's panel will be aiming to answer several questions: What are the key elements of the narrative for the future museum, and how the story of the Babyn Yar tragedy should be taught? And secondly, what are the prospects of establishing a multi-stakeholder engagement for the project to make sure that the interests of each group [are] taken into account?

We have assembled a very strong panel today representing several sides of this discussion. Today with us we have Yaakov Dov Bleich, who is Chief Rabbi of Ukraine and a member of the Supervisory Board of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre. And we also have Ruslan Kavatsiuk, who is the Deputy CEO of the project responsible for science and education. Karel Berkhoff, of whom I spoke earlier, and Yana Barinova were part of the team till late 2019 when they resigned, protesting against the appointment of the Russian filmmaker Ilya Khrzhanovsky. Karel was former chief historian and chair of the Scientific Council of the project, and Yana was Chief Operation Officer.

Last but not least, we have Anton Drobovych with us today, who is representing a state institution—the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, or National Remembrance, responsible for shaping policies of memory in Ukraine.

We would like to engage with you and to hear where you are listening from, and in a second there will be a pop-up window on the screen where we will be asking you that question. We will be able to display the results practically straight away.

This panel will run for one hour and 30 minutes, and we will start with short presentations with from each speaker, and then we will have a discussion followed by Q&A. I also would like to say that this event is supported by the Ukrainian Jewish encounter, a Canadian foundation, a philanthropic foundation supporting a better understanding between the Ukrainians and the Jews.

Finally, I would like to say that we would be very grateful for any donation that you would like to make to Ukrainian Institute London. You can see the relevant link in the chat window. We are a charity, and this would help us to run a program of events for you.

So, without much ado, I would like to pass the floor to our first speaker, Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich.

Rabbi Bleich: First of all, thank you very, very much. I want to thank Ukrainian Institute London for putting this webinar together. I think that it's very, very important in light of the importance of this entire project. This is a project that obviously has generated a lot of interest in the Jewish world and in Ukrainian society, the Ukrainian Jewish community, and throughout the world. The history of Babyn Yar—as I think Marina was trying to say—for the years of communism, so many years everything that happened at Babyn Yar was really kept to a very, very low flame. Even after the meeting started happening in the '60s and this Soviet monument, which many people have called grotesque, at Babyn Yar was put up, I can recall 1990, which is the first time I was in Babyn Yar.

We met at the meeting—I think this is an important historical perspective—in 1990 we met, and there were many, many, many thousands of Jews that came to Babyn Yar, in 1990. After the main meeting was finished, a small group of us broke off and went over to where the monument of the menorah, where the actual Babyn Yar is and where the actual killings took place. We must have been a group of around 20 people, but when we got there suddenly, out of nowhere, we were circled by plainclothes KGB officers holding batons. Again, this is 1990; I'm an American kid; I had just come to Ukraine less than a year ago. And suddenly here we are. I was really, really, so to speak, frightened by what I was seeing. But it just shows to what extent the communist government was willing to, I would say, intimidate people from taking Babyn Yar and really bringing it out there and presenting it to the people as to what it really was, which was a tragedy not only that was the Jewish community of Kyiv wiped out, but it was a tragedy, I think, for Ukraine and for, indeed, the entire world, since that was the first mass killing during World War II, which took place in Babyn Yar. So, this is the historical perspective in 1990.

I recall in 1991 the visit of George Bush, the President of the United States who visited Ukraine. It was the first time in many, many years that a president visited Ukraine. It was on the eve of Ukrainian independence and I'm sure many people remember the "Chicken Kyiv" speech which was given in the parliament that day. So, that was another sort of historical perspective in Babyn Yar, when the President of the United States came to visit it. Just to put it in perspective, the Ukrainian government at that point, which was not independence, didn't even have the money to buy chairs for the people that came to the ceremony in Babyn Yar, when George Bush was there. Just to give you an idea of what was going on.

In 1991, already when it was the 50th anniversary of Babyn Yar and Leonid Kravchuk was the President of Ukraine after they had already declared independence, that was hosted at the end of September, actually the beginning of October by the time it happened, because it could fall on a Jewish holiday, so at that point

people came from throughout the world. That was already, sort of, the first Ukrainian ... independent Ukraine giving momentum to the memorialization of Babyn Yar.

So, from that background to come where we are today to be discussing, having gone through the transitions from the Soviet communism to independent Ukraine and seeing how independent Ukraine is developing as a democratic society—coming to today's discussion where we're discussing already consensus, civil society, democracy, and the democratic workings of independent Ukraine; how to present this historical narrative and perspective; how to try and build consensus within the democratic society of Ukraine today—I think that all this is very, very, very ... it's the proper timing, and I'm very happy that so many prestigious people are on this panel along with me, including Yana who I've worked with from the very, very beginning and Karel who I think we will work with until the very end, because basically his historical narrative has been, I think, monumental, the way it was written and put together. And, of course, to hear also other representatives, people who were there from the very beginning and who are still with us now—I think that all this is very, very, very important.

Now just a few words of the vision, the vision the way I see it. Again, as someone who's been living in Ukraine as an American, I think it's very important, as an American, as a rabbi, as a Jew, as someone who's been involved in Babyn Yar since 1990. You know, I've been involved very, very much in all of the meetings and all the happenings and everything that's going on. I think that what we are seeing now here, the vision of this Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre as not only a Ukrainian centre but a world centre—this is the way I see it. I see it as something that's much larger than just Babyn Yar and Kyiv, etc. I think I see it as a world centre to really memorialize and study and disseminate the view of the Holocaust. What happened there? The Holocaust, again, it's not a Jewish monopoly, of course. I think the Holocaust [cannot] be monopolized by any one individual ethnic group. However, the Jews did suffer tremendously, and as we know, when it has been said that not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims, right?

I think that that's important for the perspective, important for the Ukrainian perspective: Ukraine as a democratic society, coming out of the shadow of the communism, of the occupation of the Germans, coming into the development of a democratic society. And where a democratic society is, there are many different opinions. Democracy is the right for all to be equal, but it's also the right for all to be different. It's important for us to remember that there is a right for people to have divergence on ideas in a democracy. So, you're never going to get a consensus in any democracy on anything, but the democratic society means that we are able to fit as many people as possible under this umbrella, that all are at least traveling in the same direction. They're all looking to the same direction.

I think that's the most important challenge for consensus within a democracy. I must point out that within Ukrainian society as democracy takes hold, it gets stronger and stronger. It allows people to respect other opinions as well. The Ukrainian society—and I think this is the value of what Karel has done—what I'll call the Berkhoff narrative. It not only has Ukrainian historians but international historians, coming together, putting something together that may not make everybody happy, but it's not going to make everybody upset. But it's going to bring out as much as possible—the facts, the historical facts. Will there be questions? Yes. Will there be tough points? Yes. They will definitely be there. To react to these questions, Ukrainian society is going to do soul searching. There will be some people that say: no, we will never agree. Some people will say: we really do agree. But as a society, I think, that it's important for Ukraine to come together, to be able to face up to [the] past, what happened, to be able to say what we think was bad and what we think was good ... I'm not talking about condemning individuals and movements and all of that. I'm not getting into that. I'm just saying as a society to be able to say that things happened; we want to put a memorial down here which is going to be a sign for this generation and future generations to bring together Ukrainian society, the world democratic society, and to be able to build on that consensus to do something bigger, much bigger and larger and greater than just a Babyn Yar monument or something, or a Babyn Yar museum.

That's my vision of it, and I am passionate, by the way, about this vision. I'm sure and I'm confident that the role and the obligation of memory and memorial for all of civilization is so great and so big that this will happen. I'm confident this will happen. And there's an old question that Shimon Peres would ask. When in Israel they would ask the question: Who is a Jew? And he would always say that the one who is a Jew is the one whose children and grandchildren will be Jewish. The Jewish people in our tradition will always promise that we will be eternal. We've survived so much. If you're worried, try and be a part of it. I think that anyone that can be a part of this historical monumental work should just grab on and do whatever they can to make sure that it happens. Of course, it has to be controlled; it has to be done the right way, but this is a monumental work. I think that's going to be really something that's going to be much larger than any individual and much larger than any single issue that may come up.

Marina Pesenti: Rabbi Bleich, thank you very much. I would like to pass the floor to Karel Berkhoff, who is Senior Researcher at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam and one of the leading experts on the history of Holocaust in Eastern Europe. As I mentioned, he led a group of historians at the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre which developed a base historic narrative for the project. Karel, the floor is yours.

Karel Berkhoff: Hello, thank you for organizing this. I think my task in these brief minutes is to say how I came to the project and why I left. Just to get that out of the way, I was involved from an early stage because of my expertise on Babyn Yar, and I had a good feeling about these plans. So, I took the leap and as of February 2017 I was the chief historian. I indeed chaired the Scientific Council and with 15 colleagues from various countries, including Ukraine, helped develop the basic historical narrative.

This narrative is definitely not only about Babyn Yar as anybody who looks it up will see. It's about Ukraine and its neighbours, and it's not only about Jews, definitely not. Besides this work, which was completed in October 2018 and now what also exists in Ukrainian, I developed a couple of projects of applied research. For instance, geolocation and visualization of Babyn Yar: where did it actually take place; where were certain photographs taken, and so on.

Then, in October and November of 2019, I was shocked to find a sea change in the direction and management of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre. As you have said already there came a new person and a new post which did not exist before—artistic director—and almost immediately began what I can only describe as a purge. A purge of people that I trusted, including one of us, two of us here actually, which meant that I was appalled by the ease with which it was apparently possible to say to people: “We don't need you anymore.” I myself also felt that my position was no longer considered very important. Evidently, the position of chief historian was abolished. Then I took notice of certain proposals made in September, I believe, of last year. Those proposals were very concerning to me and they remained so, because even as late as December, the new CEO reiterated in an interview that these plans were basically going ahead, involving virtual reality, deep fake technology, total immersion of the visitor. And here I'm recognized a conflict with something that's very close to me and important to me and many others, namely a conflict with the International Memorial Museums Charter. So, this has been very concerning for me, and all the more so because what remained absent was an explanation for this turn of events. That's why I decided after some hesitation—I had a residual loyalty to the project that I really loved—I decided in early March of this year to send a letter to the chair of the Supervisory Board explaining why I felt I could no longer publicly support this project. I think I'll leave it at this.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much, Karel. And now I would like to pass the floor to Anton Drobovych, who is head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, which is a state institution responsible for the policies of remembrance in Ukraine. I hope that Anton will shed some light on how the agency of the Ukrainian state in this project could be strengthened, as well as provide some background on the history of Babyn Yar commemorative project overall.

Anton Drobovych: Okay, thank you. Dear friends, firstly let me pay my respect to all participants of this discussion and the audience who is watching it online or is going to watch the record. This location in Kyiv is associated with many tragedies but became known around the world as a symbol of the Holocaust by Bullets. Here, in two days in the fall of 1941, the Nazis shot 33,771 Jews and for several years continued killing different nationalities: Jews, Roma, Ukrainians, and those belonging to different groups—undergrounders, nationalists, people with mental disease and political opponents of the Nazis. In general, researchers say that Babyn Yar itself as a ravine and the area around it became a grave for 40,000 to 100,000 innocent people. However, for a number of reasons, mostly notably because of the unwillingness of the Soviet authorities to tell the truth about the Holocaust and other tragic events to their citizens, this place has not been properly memorialized for more than 70 years, and no museum has appeared there. Only an independent Ukraine made it possible—a very important detail. Monuments, alleys, and information displays appeared here, shedding light on this history of the tragedy and names of its victims. Currently, our state is completing the construction of the memorial museum of victims of Babyn Yar, even though we are resisting Russian tricky military aggression since 2014, face a difficult economic situation, and like others suffer from COVID-19. Ukraine does everything possible to [perpetuate] the memory of the Holocaust victims and others World War II victims, to restore the erased or falsified memory of those events in the Soviet Union, and to protect history from political manipulations and ideological distortions. We understand that these are difficult and terrible pages in mankind existence book, and that is why they need to get all possible attention—to this place, attention to this situation. So, I hope that in years, in one year, we will be able to invite the whole world to the opening of the state memorial museum of the victims of Babyn Yar. This event will be a new stage in the work of the National Historical and Memorial Preserve “Babyn Yar”, which has existed since 2007. It will finally get museum and exhibition spaces, not just a memorial park with open-air thematic alleys that we have now.

But today within this event we will discuss another project—BYHMC, Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre, is a private initiative supported by, among others, Mikhail Fridman, German Khan, Victor Pinchuk, Pavel Fuks, and Rabbi Bleich, who is present here today. This project started to create another memorial solution in Babyn Yar, a memorial complex dedicated to the Holocaust victims.

About cooperation with the state. I suppose Ukraine is a democratic and based on the rule of law state and supports public organizations and foundations that do not violate the law and act in the interest of society. In particular, this applies to BYHMC. In addition, as a country working to restore historical justice, its authorities will always help disseminate information about the crimes of totalitarian regimes and condemnation, especially when it comes to the Holocaust, the Holodomor, or other genocidal practices. Currently, considering the degree of destructive numbers of scandals surrounding the BYHMC project, there is no reason for the state to somehow engage in these activities of this initiative publicly now, by this day. Although earlier, when the previous team worked at the BYHMC, cooperation with the authority was close—joined scientific competition with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the involvement of the Ministry of Culture representatives as a jury of the architectural competition, and the creation of a wonderful project, Lapidarium, within the National Historical Memorial Preserve “Babyn Yar” in which the tombstones, *matzevahs*, of old Jewish cemetery were restored. Such cooperation is possible in the future, but, firstly, it is necessary to restore true trust between society and this project.

I suppose, I think [there] exists another way and not only this private project. For example, the Ukrainian state completes the construction of the state memorial museum of the victims of Babyn Yar next year, and then the state may decide to create an even larger, larger project on the territory of the National Historical Preserve “Babyn Yar”, which would cover tens of hectares of the protected area. I’m sure that for this purpose the state will invite everyone to join forces. If the BYHMC will show good results by that time, if it speaks up trust with the society, it will be able to become one of those who will join the creation of a major

national project with global impact. Before that, no one prevents them from [indistinct] results. I sincerely wish them success, because the declared goal is truly noble.

Marina Pesenti: Sorry, I hope you can hear me. Anton, thank you very much for your contribution. I understand that there were some problems with the quality of the line as well, but I hope that mainly it was okay. I also would like to say that we now have the results of our poll, which will show the geographic scope of our audience. As you can see, 22 percent are listening and watching us from London, four more percent from the UK outside London, 21 from Kyiv, 20 from the USA, nine percent from Canada and more to come— 12 percent from the EU, nine from Israel, and three from other countries, which is truly a global scope, which demonstrates how interesting this topic is for so many stakeholders in so many countries.

I would like to pass the floor now to Yana Barinova who is the former Chief Operation Officer of the project and she is currently an advisor to the mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, on cultural and humanitarian issues. Yana, the floor is yours.

Yana Barinova: Greetings, everyone. While the origins of the Babyn Yar memorial project go back many years and it did get a slow start in 2015, we have picked up a significant momentum and were at an important crossroads. We had the right leadership; we had the political support; we had adequate funding, and we were especially fortunate to have strong support from Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko who has made this project one of his top priorities. But also, we had external challenges and some existential questions that we needed to answer ourselves. Among these are: how do we uniquely define ourselves as the Holocaust memorial centre? How do we best serve to the larger Holocaust education community? How do we best utilize the physical space of the future centre? How do we work with incorrect perception of our mission? So, in 2015 I took on this challenge of creating a world-class Holocaust memorial centre in Kyiv. Why was this necessary? To me and for many Ukrainians, coming to terms with our past is an important step towards developing our own national identity and securing our democratic future. And the fundamental challenge facing this project from the start is how to balance a very public planning process with the memorialization of the tragedy that is highly local, distinctly national, and essentially global. In order to navigate a success path through all these considerations and conflicting pressures, we were forced to develop a planning process that would be both transparent and inclusive, because there are so many forces with different perspectives about the right way to tell the story of the Babyn Yar tragedy. We understood that we must listen to all various parties and take into account multiple points of view, and this process of decision-making involved building a consensus. So, we began by staging public hearings, listening sessions, expert meetings, roundtable discussions in which representatives of many diverse groups those who understandably feel that they have some ownership and belonging to the project's content could come together and be better informed about our working assumption and contribute to a shared vision on this undertaking.

I understood our mission to be this: to deliver a memorial centre that could be an agent of reconciliation and that could catalyze transformations in this country, in Ukraine. This tragedy involves multiple contexts: the pan-European Holocaust tragedy, the tragedy of Ukrainian people who faced Nazi aggression against the USSR, the site also of destruction of memory about these crimes, and the history of resistance to totalitarian ideologies. The complexity of this subject matter was a real challenge for the prominent scholars who have [for] years conducted research in this area. In the early stages of planning, we met with some public apprehension, and we had many challenges that we needed to address sooner rather than later. I'd like to summarize them quickly. We had resistance from Ukrainian Holocaust scholars who feel they are not being given a voice. The land plot we have selected to build the centre has become controversial in the minds of local residents. There was a growing perception that this project is somehow a political instrument of Russian government. The concept itself presented a huge challenge: What should be shown to the visitor? The story of the Babyn Yar murder? The story of the Holocaust in Babyn Yar? Maybe, the story of the Holocaust in Ukraine or the story of the Holocaust in Eastern Slavic republics of the former Soviet Union?

From the above-mentioned narratives, we could try to make any of the above museums, and this is unbelievably difficult task. So, continuing that line from other perspective, we asked ourselves: How and where do we fit into the international system of existing Holocaust centres? In other words, is there a way how we can refine our mission, vision, and values not to support organizations in Israel, the United States, and other countries, but also enhance their purpose? Is there a larger picture we can contribute to? How do we best engage our stakeholders? It's another huge challenge. We recognized that our stakeholders are more than just our donors. We also included internal and external scholars, neighbours of the memorial park, the huge network of NGOs, foundations, exhibit designer[s], media, and, of course, government and larger Ukrainian citizenry. Also, there was a fear that interest in the Holocaust is driven by competition among victims and that the focus on the Jews might obscure the other victims of Babyn Yar. Others were concerned that the Holocaust would be used inappropriately as the filter for the contemporary political environment in Ukraine, implying that the underlying motivation has little to do with actual interest in the Holocaust. Those are big institutional questions, and we spent a lot of time to understand how effectively manage all these challenges that have, in a way understandably, arisen.

Our desired results were [to] encourage and welcome public debate, improve sense of inclusion rather than a position, build trust with the stakeholders by increasing our transparency, encourage involvement of ministries, universities, and scholars. There were key principles that guided my approach. First, the idea of the Babyn Yar project is being created from the inside out. The story, the narrative came first and the building plan, the exhibition plan, everything else follows from the initial narrative. The memorial should be not only about iconic architecture, but about something culturally specific and inherently symbolic for the society. Also, the Babyn Yar narrative journey will offer more than just a case in intolerance—it's about trust; it's about understanding; it's about our common future. To conclude my comments, Babyn Yar could become the largest site in Ukraine which trains visitors to defend basic human rights and to retain their humanity under any circumstances, anytime, and anywhere. Commemoration of Babyn Yar is important signal of Ukrainians' commitment to reconciliation and cooperation internationally. I would like to thank you also for organizing this event because it's very important. Thank you.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much, Yana. Before I pass the floor to our last panelist, Ruslan Kavatsiuk, I would like to remind you that we would be very grateful for any donation that the audience could give us, which would help Ukrainian Institute London, which is a charity, to run a program of our events. Thank you for that. Now the floor goes to Ruslan Kavatsuk, who is Deputy CEO of the current makeup of the team [at the] Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre, and he is in charge of science and education projects. Ruslan, the floor is yours.

Ruslan Kavatsiuk: Thank you. Good evening, Marina and colleagues, and participants, and attendees. I simply would want to say that this project is based on two pillars: the scientific knowledge and the artistic way of communicating this knowledge in the museum. My role, as you just said, is, in particular, to support historians and our team to continue their work and develop what they started under leadership of Karel Berkhoff, as well as new projects and research. At the moment, I'm happy to say that we have 15 projects with more than a dozen scientists working. And most of them were hired by Karel, Yana, and Anton. I'm pleased to say that we're now working on synergy between these two pillars. We're trying to establish the joint working groups that deliver results, and we already have first results. For instance, Karel was referring to the project that began last year under his leadership—the geolocation and 3D modeling of Babyn Yar—and this year we've connected to the team that was working on this project prominent scientists with a team of IT, 3D designers who've worked together and got very high dynamic performance. I just want to share that it is a real pleasure to see how this team—and their meetings—discusses the usage of new technologies and methods and how this speeds up and leads to a better joint result. We're all beneficiaries of this new knowledge. Now we know the exact location of the shootings that happened in September 1941. We're

working in a way to already try to establish a link to that on the site, which looks at the moment, as we all know, completely different.

I'm sure of several things. This museum should be built, and I hope it will become a kind of landmark, a business card of Kyiv and Ukraine as a whole. I want to believe that there will be some time passing by, and we will all be proud to say that at a certain stage we all have contributed to making this memorial as good as possible. I think that criticism that we hear was partially justified. On the other hand, it revealed the lack of culture of dialogue, I would say, and respect for the dignity of other people. I'm grateful for this discussion to Ukrainian Institute London. Dialogue, I think, it's not about always agreeing with each other, but I think that it's about seeing and hearing a living person from a position that is different from yours. I think this is sometimes missing in the discussion that we all witness. As an example of more objective criticism, I recommend everyone to read the article of honorary president of the Ukrainian PEN club Mykola Riabchuk. He was critical of the memorial and rather tough, but at the same time he would analyze the mechanism of biased attack on the memorial that we all witnessed. The project has the potential to bring together very, very different people who might have never spoken to each other otherwise. I think that there is still room for interaction with everyone who is not indifferent, and I'm ready to make first steps. I've been doing this for the last past seven months in dialogue with different participants, and this circle is expanding.

We have international tragedy, hence the international Supervisory Board, and it represents Jewish, Ukrainian, international communities that together are building the memorial. I don't think this project competes with any other project, and I cannot imagine that it will not be built. I think this would basically be the worst-case scenario, because it would undermine Ukraine's reputation. I believe that as we now continue and we're now already in the face of practical implementation of the project, we have already three dozen projects that were presented last month to the Supervisory Board. The video of this meeting is public—everyone can see how this happens, what kinds of questions we have, how we approve things, and what exactly are the projects that we're working on—not some ideas or rumors, but the truth. I think it's important that we base our discussions on facts and what this project is really about. I invite everyone to stay tuned and find a way to participate. This project is inclusive. I think this project for myself is the project of new Ukraine. I believe that Jews, Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, Crimean Tatars are one Ukrainian people and one Ukrainian nation, and this project, Babyn Yar memorial, is the place to demonstrate our ability to unite for the joint future despite very different backgrounds and history that often shows our past divisions and what comes out of them. This is what I strongly believe, and this is what pulls me up when things go wrong, and this happens sometimes. This is why I am here and I will be here until my help and participation delivers good results. I think it's good to be part of a solution, and I invite everyone to join this cause.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much, Ruslan. Now I would like to start the discussion and, as I said, I would suggest that the first block of questions will be related to the actual narrative that we build around Babyn Yar and how that narrative will one day transform into the museum's exhibit. My first question will be to Karel Berkhoff if I may. In fact, the question will be twofold. As you mentioned, the Babyn Yar museum should not be just about the tragedy of the Jews who died there, but there are many questions to be asked: what story exactly we are talking about, and how many groups, which groups we are including into this narrative. And the second question, which inevitably would come up, and I would just read one of the questions that we have got from our listeners. Somebody called Itzhak Goldberg who says: Why aim to enhance and expand and include more victims so as to dilute the importance of the initial murder of the Jews, whose murder started it all as a ravine and a site of murder? So, if you could possibly comment on that, and then we will also ask other panelists to expand on the issue.

Karel Berkhoff: There are many definitions of the Holocaust, and the one that was chosen in the narrative is a narrow one. That means we define the Holocaust as the extermination of Jews, but that doesn't mean that there is no space for discussion of non-Jewish victims of the Nazis and their allies. This is sometimes

surprising, I've noticed. Often people believe that if there is a label "Holocaust" on a museum or memorial centre, by definition, non-Jewish victims will be sort of placed second rank or sort of will be considered less important to know about. But in the actual fact, I think most, maybe even all, Holocaust memorial centres in the world say something about them. So, here we are not doing anything original, except in the fact that we are saying much more about them. There's an entire large section in the narrative about non-Jewish victims. And the reason is that these victims suffered in the same geographical space, not necessarily in the Babyn Yar ravine, but we're talking here about Ukraine and its neighbors. They suffered in the same geographical space, in the same time frame, often with the same huge numbers of casualties. If you think about Soviet prisoners of war, it's just appalling how quickly and massively these people were murdered. So, it's only natural that if we talk about the Holocaust, we will give it a broader context and explain what happened to other people. I think this can only help the cause and draw in people who may not initially have a real interest in the Holocaust, but they will want to know more about: look, my grandfather was a prisoner of war. I want to know. And it's a fact that in Eastern Europe there is not a single good memorial site for these victims. So, I was very happy that this project from the very get-go decided to give plenty of space to these victims. I really hope that this will continue. I hope this sort of answers the question.

Rabbi Bleich: Can I can also make some intervention to answer this question? Please if you allow. I think that, again, from my perspective having lived in Ukraine so many years, it is so important to understand that Ukraine has not been teaching history of the Holocaust for 70 or 80 years. The children that grew up in Ukraine under communist times and even under independent Ukraine—there is an issue that they feel detached very much from what Karel described as the Holocaust in the narrow sense. By including other victims and by bringing out the event that not only Jews were killed in the Holocaust, not only Jews were killed in the geographic place of Babyn Yar, not only Jews were killed throughout Ukraine, we are getting an emotional involvement of people, of Ukrainians. You know, Ukrainians have to understand [that] the Holocaust was a tragedy not only for the Jews. It was a tremendous tragedy for entire country of Ukraine. They have to understand it. As I said in my opening words, not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims. Okay, we understand that the Jews have a special place here in the narrow definition of Holocaust, but I think that it is very important, taking into consideration the Ukrainian perspective, of trying to make, as Yana said, a place that will study the Holocaust in Ukraine and how it affected Ukraine. I think that the narrative as it was presented—I said this before and I'll say it again—it is very important that it be inclusive much more so than the Holocaust museum in Washington, much more so than Yad Vashem, which is Israel. We are in Ukraine. We are in Eastern Europe. We are in a place that was clouded and shrouded from any real meaning to the Holocaust. It is very important, much more important here for this museum and the narrative to be an inclusive narrative so that everyone understands that this museum, this centre is not only about Jews; it's not only about Kyiv; it's not only about Babyn Yar. It's about all of us, about mankind, and about oppression, and about suffering, and about killing—something that speaks to every single individual living in the space of Ukraine and Eastern Europe today.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much, Rabbi Bleich, for this comment about the inclusive narrative. I'd like to address the question to Anton Drobovych if I may. I think the audience should be made aware of the fact that there was an alternative narrative, which was developed by the historians of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. I don't know to what extent it is fair to say that these two narratives are in competition, but maybe Anton could highlight some of key elements of this new alternative narrative, which, I understand, is sort of the approved narrative of the Ukrainian state.

Anton Drobovych: Thank you, but first of all, what is my take on the narrative proposed by the BYHMC. I have a couple of thoughts. I don't have any extreme concerns about the narrative that Dr. Karel Berkhoff and other scholars from Ukraine and around the world worked on at BYHMC. Even now, where I sit here in the state office, but even now I don't have any extreme concerns about it. There may be a few minor factual

inaccuracies or some flaws in the translation into Ukrainian, because it was originally written in English. There are a few places where you can more successfully present historical material in terms of rhetoric or style, but, in general, it is a high-quality document, and it is difficult to find any analogs in most countries of the world. However, I want to make it clear that all this applies to a special document called basic historical narrative, which was created on the initiative of Yana Barinova by the previous team of BYHMC. It was the basis of the concept of development of the memorial centre, but how the final narrative of this new team under Ilya Khrzhanovsky will look like, what concept they will create in the future, whether they will operate by this historical document, and how they will express it in the exhibition are completely different questions. Because now we have a basic historical narrative, and this is a project of the old team, and we don't have any concept of BYHMC. Maybe, when a new team of BYHMC creates some concept, maybe it will be more clear for our society, but now we don't have any, in the conceptual sense.

About Ukrainian official narrative or about these texts. You have a question about Ukrainian narrative, but we don't have [a] document like basic historical narrative. We have a concept of Babyn Yar memorial museum. It's a memorial museum of the victims of Babyn Yar. This concept was created in 2018 in the National Academy of Sciences. This is one concept. And we have the second concept, created in 2019. This [is the] concept of complex memorialization of Babyn Yar. It's a museum and location around, but this is not narrative. This is a concept of territory and concept of museum. In general, we have general lines—one line about Holocaust, one line about other victims, and one line is about next story, after World War II. For example, about Soviet silence about Holocaust or about the Kurenivka tragedy in 1961. This is the logic of this concept, but this isn't narrative in the sense that Yana or Karel input in the basic historical narrative by BYHMC.

Marina Pesenti: Okay. If I can ask a follow-up question, which I think is really important when we talk about the narrative. It's a question about the complicity of Ukrainians in aiding the Holocaust. Unavoidably, this question will arise and arose already in the course of the discussions. Your institution under the previous directorship very much drove the line to elevate the status of the members of the nationalist underground formations of the World War II period, such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, who were elevated as fighters for the liberation of Ukraine. These are all very complex questions because we know that these formations collaborated with the Germans for some period of time, but then they were fighting against the Germans and for extended periods of time they were fighting against the Soviet control of Ukraine. Sadly, some members of these formations are known to aid the anti-Jewish actions organized by Nazis on the territory of Ukraine. In your recent interviews, it transpired that the Institute of National Memory is now revising the stance on these issues. How do you think the question of collaboration should feature in the narrative of the Babyn Yar commemorative project?

Anton Drobovych: We must say the truth about collaboration, about collaboration in Ukraine, about collaboration in Poland, about collaboration in France, about collaboration in the Netherlands, and other countries. Because in all of these countries, when Nazis [captured] these countries, in all of these countries [there were] bad people who collaborated, who killed the neighbours. This is true. This is [the] bad truth of our history, of European history. Close to your question, I do not see significant contradictions between the narratives of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance and this narrative. Our institute invested many efforts to talk about things that had been silenced and distorted by Soviet propaganda, including the nationalist underground, which was at war with both the Nazi and the communists. I would like to remind you that Ukrainian underground organization active in World War II was recognized as [criminally] immune. At the same time, I want to emphasize that perpetrators who helped the Nazi kill innocent people and pursue criminal racial policy acted in Ukraine as in other Nazi-occupied European countries. Such people are defined by the international tribunal as criminals and should be convicted. And there are no exceptions whether they were patriots and fighters for independent Ukraine or not. This refers to all other countries—

France, Poland, Netherlands, Russia, etc.—where the same principle of condemnation should be applied to collaborators. It is also important to note that both institutions, the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, the museum, and even BYHMC till last year have always emphasized the fact that Ukraine is [among] the top-five countries of Righteous Among the Nations, people who risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazis. This is a similar position for all of these institutions.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much. There's actually a huge number of comments coming into our questions section, which we will be asking a little bit later as we open for the Q&A. Just one very last question that I would like to address to Ruslan Kavatsiuk, if I may, on the issue of narrative. Yana Barinova mentioned in her presentation that the concept that was being developed as she was the chief operating officer was very much to be in dialogue with other Holocaust museums all around the world and that Babyn Yar memorial was trying kind of to fit this picture in some way. What is the direction that the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre is taking now? Are you trying to fit [in] that picture? Are you in dialogue with other Holocaust museums?

Ruslan Kavatsiuk: Thank you. Yes, I will respond to your question, and I would like to comment on the questions raised by Anton in his remarks regarding the BYHMC. Yes, we are in dialogue with other Holocaust institutions in the world. As a matter of fact, we have recently signed an agreement of cooperation with Yad Vashem, and now we officially develop a number of projects in education, archives, and other parts of potential cooperation fields. I think this is a major breakthrough and a major important milestone for us. First but not last, we stay in dialogue with other institutions, and we are working on developing joint projects, as we do now with Yad Vashem.

Coming back to the narrative, it is important to say that we should avoid any manipulation, because the narrative stays the same despite anyone saying differently. It is important that most of its authors and the scientific council stays with the organization and guides us through this process of implementing the narrative in the artistic projects, because it is our work, our scientific part of the project to guide artistic part of the project through their projects that they develop and do it together in synergy. It is highly important to understand that there is no room for changing narrative and what is also important it is to understand that there is leadership of Supervisory Board in BYHMC. There is head of the Supervisory Board, Nathan Sharansky, who leads this organization. There is strong involvement of Supervisory Board members who help and support projects. And it is also important to understand that the CEO is Max Yakover and the artistic director is Ilya Khrzhanovsky. It is manipulative to say, Anton, that Ilya is leading the project. Ilya is visionary and artistic, and we hope that he will deliver exceptional result and exceptional concept. It is important to say that we expect the museum to be built in mid-2020s, maybe four or five years from now. I would like to ask as you plan to open a new museum next year: Do you have a concept? I don't think you can present it to us right now. Can you? Please do.

Anton Drobovych: Please, link [is] in chat. Concept of museum [existed before] 2018. The national museum has a concept, a [draft outline] of the exposition and blocks. But this is not exhibition concept because it's next step. But [this is a] concept of historical logic. Yes, we have. Maybe not brilliant, but it's very good concept. And now Academy of Sciences has debates, and I suppose [it] goes to 40 reviews from many countries, from many scientists. And if you open link in chat, you can find this.

Ruslan Kavatsiuk: What you mean is narrative, right? You have reviews to the narrative.

Anton Drobovych: The concept, not narrative.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much. I think we would like to move actually to the second part of our debate, which will be about the issues of governance, participation of the Ukrainian state, and the funding. I would like to showcase the experience of our Polish neighbors, who actually built a museum of Jewish history. Those of you who have been to Warsaw probably have visited this museum. It's a major museum

called POLIN. We prepared a special slide which hopefully will inform our discussion further. There's a bit of a text on the slide. Very quickly, I will sum up. It actually took many, many years for the Poles to develop and build this museum. The idea was voiced in the 1990s by the Jewish community in Poland and then, in 2005, an agreement was signed. And here I note that the key stakeholders in this process were the city of Warsaw, the Ministry of Culture of Poland, and the Association of the Jewish Studies, which, I understand, is an NGO in Poland. The museum was built in 2014, and now when we look at the funding, you will see that the cost of it was 330 million Polish zloty, which is approximately 100 million dollars at the time, about 120 million in today's terms. Two-thirds of this money was provided by the Polish state, the Polish Ministry of Culture, and the city of Warsaw. One-third—and that's another interesting detail—was raised by the Polish-Jewish community by appealing to the Jewish community worldwide. And that's very important precedent. On the basis of this, I would like to address my next question to Rabbi Bleich if I may. As you can see, Polish state authorities played a huge role in this project. As a member of the Supervisory Board of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre, would you support the idea of a bigger involvement of the Ukrainian state into this process?

Rabbi Bleich: Thank you very, very much. Great, great question. I just want to clarify one thing. I think it's very, very important. In the POLIN museum, the government only participated in the construction of the building and of the land. They did not participate at all in the content and the narrative. This is very, very, very important because in Poland, as we know today, that the government has changed. It is similar to the issue in Ukraine where every time a new government comes in, we get new history books in the school. It is very, very important to understand the perspective of what Ukrainian history and what Ukrainians see their own history as. This is very, very important. We welcome, we would love for the government to be involved and to have a representative, and this was from the very, very beginning when the president was still Poroshenko. He was offered and asked and invited to send in representatives to the Supervisory Board. However, understanding the lack of continuity in history in Ukraine, independent Ukraine, the fact that independent Ukraine is still trying to find its own place and its own narrative of its own history, we can put the Holocaust and what happened in Babyn Yar and entire World War II into that concept once that concept exists. But the Ukrainian government as the government has still not come forth with its own definitive history that is a "consensus". Again, I'm repeating that every single time there's a new minister of education, we get new history books in all of the schools.

Having said that, I want to address the fact that the government is now, in my opinion, doing a tremendous, tremendous project with the Babyn Yar actual museum of the victims. This is a great project which I think should be seen to the end by the government. I would like to understand how they expect to have it finished in one year when they only allocated 25 million hryvni, and they're still missing 60 million hryvni to get it done, and no money has been coming forth this entire year. All of the money that was allocated has not been given, which means that basically work has come to a standstill to the extent that 20,000 dollars, or 500,000 hryvni, which is needed now for one of the planning of the project, of the Aleia Pravednykiv [Alley of the Righteous Among Nations], the government can't even come [up] with that money.

It is very nice that the government has a plan, and I think it's important and BYHMC supports the government's concept of the museum of the victims of Babyn Yar. We very much think that it can complement the complete the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre, which is going to be a bigger centre. We would love to see that done. The government is now trying to finish the Holodomor museum. The government is now trying to build the Heavenly Hundred museum. The government is trying to work out its Ministry of Education and History. The government is building a Holocaust museum, but the government has not finished any of these things yet. So, we definitely would want participation. We don't want to be hijacked by the government. We don't want ... we don't think that it would be good if the government takes over this project. That would be a death for this project, no question about it. Just as in every any other

place, like in the United States Holocaust [Memorial] Museum, the government donated the land, the government appoints certain people from commission, but they don't control it. So, it's important in Ukraine, which is, again, a strengthening democracy. I'm an optimist. I believe in Ukrainian democracy. Everybody knows I'm a patriot of Ukraine and its democracy since the very, very beginning. However, to have the government come in—yes; to have the government participate—yes; to have the government find its niche where it wants to participate—yes. But to have the government take this over would be—I can't even call it abortion because the baby was born already by some of the people that are here on this panel—but I would say that would be killing the child before giving it a chance to develop the way it should.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much, Rabbi Bleich. I'm afraid I have to stop you there and pass on to Yana who is now the advisor to the mayor of Kyiv on cultural and humanitarian issues. We've seen from the Polish example how important the role of the city of Warsaw was in this project. Yana, can you imagine that the city of Kyiv having been more vocal in this process and allocating some money towards the project?

Yana Barinova: I would like to leave one more comment regarding POLIN experience. indeed, it's great from other perspectives as well—its composition of the board of trustees, or supervisory board, I don't remember exactly the name of this governing body. It is composed of 15 people: five people nominated by the government, five people nominated by the Jewish community—so, by NGOs, by community organizations—and five people nominated by donors. I think it's a great example when it's very well-balanced composition that ensures fair decision that provokes critical thinking within the governing body. And yeah, that ensures debates within the supervisory board or board of trustees. This is a very good example of public-private partnership. As we know, everything starts from the head, so the composition of this board is a very good example.

Regarding support of mayor and city administration, for example, in the very beginning it was a very expensive rental fee for the land plot. And now, one year ago or one year and a half ago, it was decreased. So, it's also a gesture of support by the city administration and by mayor of Kyiv. You can calculate it as financial support, let's say, because rental fee was simply huge—tens and almost hundred thousand dollars. Now, it [is] for free, almost for free. So, I think it can be considered as the big support from the city administration from financial point of view.

Marina Pesenti: I would like to pass it over to Rabbi Bleich, if I may, for a very short comment in response to what Yana has just said: having five representatives from the state, five from the civil society, and five from the Jewish community. Could it be a setup that the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre would consider working and moving along with?

Rabbi Bleich: Definitely. I want you to know that the governing board, as it now stands ... The supervisory board in POLIN that was given that composition was only done when it was finished, not when it was being in formation. It's very important to know. Yana, it is a beautiful and a very, very good balance, as you know, as you say. I think that now we have a balance in the Supervisory Board that can be strengthened. We are looking for more Ukrainian representation in the board. I think it's important to note that in the financing of the project as right now, nowhere more than 50 percent will come from outside Ukrainian sources. It is 50 percent coming right now, even from the composition of the donors; 50 percent is Ukrainian money, and I think that that's going to grow. I think there's a possibility to grow. But I definitely agree with Yana that this is a great, great example of balance: five, five, and five—the donors, the government, and the Jewish community. Just to remind you that the government has a very larger stake in the POLIN museum since they paid probably almost—I would say, more than half the money came from government sources. The city paid for the building; the Ministry of Culture pays for the maintenance, the way it works in POLIN, and the Jewish community paid for the content, for all of the things. So, they had it very, very clearly defined. If the government—and we would want it to come in and participate—I'm sure that the Supervisory Board would definitely be willing to sit down with government representatives to see what they want to give, how much

they want to participate financially and in other ways, and to see that, in correspondence to the amount and what they're doing, to try and see—to get them also such representation. But I definitely agree that is a good example.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much. A very good question to Anton Drobovych. You know, some Ukrainian civil society activists would say: but it should be the Ukrainian state setting the terms of this. It should be actually asking private donors to join and thinking whether they should join or not. Do you think that the Ukrainian state is in a position to be in the driving seat of the project, considering we've had these problems about funding and that the narrative is not yet complete? Can you actually see Ukrainian state taking agency in this process, as things stand right now?

Anton Drobovych: First of all, I have one comment about Rabbi Bleich. I agree in the aspect that narratives of the museums must be free, must be open [indistinct]. About the schools—that is not true—and the new books. And while the new Minister of Education comes that is [indistinct] that demonstrates that the rabbi does not understand deeply this area and education policy in Ukraine. In the education community, there is only one minister who comes to mind when we are speaking about the change of the schoolbooks—that is the pro-Russian minister Dmytro Tabachnyk. Education is a very conservative area and that is very complicated to bring any change to the schoolbooks. It is important that the schoolbooks are written by different authors and come to the education process based on the competition. This is a very important detail. We are not in Russia and even not in the Soviet Union.

About the second question, about engagement of some government figures in the Supervisory Board. Let me also remind you that even without having any formal relationship to the private initiative of BYHMC, the state will always have leverage when it comes to the large construction. And I see no reason why the president or government should send a representative to the BYHMC Supervisory Board, whether it is from my institute [or other]. There is no concept existing now. They have set aside the results of the architectural competition, which means that in the next three-five years they have no prospects to build something. No prospect. And not even speaking about the scandals and absence of any resonant product creator for the last nine months. If after maybe one year or a couple years, when they create good reputation and take trust from society, it may be ... think about some cooperation, but now it's not necessary. Why? Please, you have freedom, you have freedom of creating, please. Ukrainian society, Ukraine gives all opportunities for NGO[s], for funds to create something good. Please. And we support if you create some[thing] good, okay. But why should the president send a representative? I don't see this necessarily.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you, thank you very much. I now would like to conclude the formal part of our discussion, and before we open for a Q&A, we would like to run a second poll and give our audience an opportunity to answer a question: What is the right way to proceed with the Babyn Yar commemorative project? And there's a multiple choice of three. Please read carefully before you decide. Option one: Ukrainian state should be in full control and provide full funding. Option two: It should be a public-private partnership whereby the state will shape the concept of the future museum while donations from multiple private donors will be allowed. And option three: It is okay for this project to be privately funded and directed as it is the only way Ukraine will manage to have its first proper museum with focus on Holocaust. Please answer this question if you wish, and we will be able to publish the results straight away.

As we wait for the results, I would like to open the floor for the questions, and hopefully we'll get answers. There are many, many, many questions, and many of them come from our regular listeners and active supporters of Ukrainian Institute. I actually would like to ask one of them, who is Uilleam Blacker, the lecturer at University College London, to ask his question if he is on the line still. Uilleam, can you appear please and ask your question?

Uilleam Blacker: Yes, I'm here. Thank you very much for this really, really interesting discussion. Now, it's been so interesting to listen to all different multiple kind of perspectives on this, but I think the discussion has been on a really high level and it's really refreshing to hear, even though there are different perspectives. My question relates to these questions of governance that we've been discussing. And it's the development of this project in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. We know that disinformation is a key part of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy against Ukraine. An important aspect of that disinformation strategy is historical propaganda, manipulation of the past with a decided emphasis on World War II, the Great Patriotic War mythology, and the Nazi occupation of Ukraine is important in that. And it's been using that manipulation of that history in its kind of disinformation strategy against Ukraine in the context of its military aggression. So, in the context of that, I would like to ask the panelists whether they would agree that a site as important as Babyn Yar, which will and already has attracted a huge amount of international attention, should we treat that as, in some senses, a matter of national security? And in that context, shouldn't—you know, we've talked about the state involvement in the project of museum—but what about the state involvement in vetting, scrutinizing, carrying out due diligence on all the funders and all the partners that are involved in this project? Thank you.

Marina Pesenti: Well, maybe you could specify to who is this question. Who of the [panelists] should reply?

Rabbi Bleich: Can I try and answer it?

Uilleam Blacker: Any of them. I would like to maybe hear from the institute, from Anton Drobovych, but also from some of those who are still actively involved in the project, too.

Rabbi Bleich: I can start. I could start, if you want, as a member of the Supervisory Board. You know, one of the challenges of any country that's at war and especially this type of hybrid war where Russia has been attacking Ukraine in so many different ways—by the way, for so many years; it hasn't only begun with the open war, but for many, many years since Ukrainian independence, Russia has been attacking Ukraine—and it's the right of Ukrainians to have their own state, but it especially has stepped up with Putin and then even more so within the last five-six years. So, there were a lot of issues that Ukraine has to deal with as far as state security is concerned, such as shutting off flights here and there and back. So many things that are going on, and every day we find more and more propaganda and also more than that, but actual acts that Russia is perpetrating against Ukraine. I would believe that to an extent you're right that there is an issue that Ukraine has to have due diligence. I wouldn't say so much about the money, but other strings attached to the money. That's the most important question. Throughout Ukraine, even in the last six years, with the war and with the embargoes, we know that there still has been trade with Russia beneath the surface. We know that certain things are [going on] because they have to go on. There are still negotiations going on, etc. I would say that the challenge of trying to get involved too much in what private sector is doing—and this is what my colleague over here, Anton, keeps on repeating—is that Ukraine is still a very strong democracy. The democratic foundations of Ukraine—they have not declared a state of war in Ukraine. They don't want to do that. We want Ukraine to still develop its democracy and strengthen its democracy. So, I would say that there's a limit to how much. If there would be any real issue in question, the people like myself and other Ukrainians that are on the Supervisory Board would be the first to jump as well. Don't think that we're sitting there, and we don't see what's happening. We don't live in a vacuum. We live in Ukraine. We know exactly what's going on. We understand that there's war. We understand that the Russians will try and hijack any chance they can to attack Ukraine and to discredit Ukraine. I think that there has to be some sort of—and I'm sure the government has their oversight and their ways of seeing it—but then to come out and start saying “private enterprise”. The money is not coming from Russia. The people that have Russian passports, that are living in London, that are giving money, and they made money in Russia, and they are still connected to Russia, yes. But they're giving part of the money, yes. If all of the money was coming from Russia and if there were strings attached, it would be very, very bad, but it's not. There's an international board of people

that understand very well what the danger of propaganda is. We're on top of it. Don't think that we're not on top of it.

At the same time, we also have to continue living in the democratic society and to develop, strengthen the board, and strengthen democracy, and still be aware of what Russia is up to. So, I think that would be going a little bit far if the government started making rules and laws about building things and money coming from here. Don't forget there's still a lot of investment from Russia as well, for other projects as well.

Anton Drobovych: I have a comment. I have two things about this issue. First of all, about national security. They're also hiding the security risks for Ukraine. We have already seen that in the beginning of this year, Putin's Russia succeeded in bending the historical narrative about the Holocaust during Putin's speech at Yad Vashem. That has severely undermined the image of the memorial. Wherever the experts in Israel have blamed their government in selling the memory about Holocaust for political reasons. This story is [a] vivid example that there is nothing sacred for the Russian propagandist and [that it] is necessary to remain prepared to their attempts of manipulating with the memory. I believe that there is obvious for everyone two reasons of the vigilance of the Ukrainian society to the project financially supported by the Russian business. But the second point [is] from my perspective as a citizen and a person. I would like to notice that the initiative to create the memorial that will memorize the victims of Babyn Yar, as well as providing the financial support for this, is very honorable and has much to be admired. If we consider that the case of Mikhail Fridman and German Khan who have, I suppose, 15 percent of all of money. Honestly, they have extremely powerful influence for this project and for the Supervisory Board, honestly. That is also a very brave move from them if they decide to create an honest project and to tell in this project the truth about the Nazi crime and their supporters, about the Ukrainian Jews who have lost their lives, about the righteous who have saved the Jews, and about the cases when the Soviet system kept silence and tried to erase the memory about Holocaust. These are the cases that are totally not connected with the modern Russian propaganda narrative. This is our reality. There is an obvious trick that Putin may use their project in the context of the hybrid war so [as] to bend history and to punish the image of Ukraine. In this case the donors of the BYHMC will face a very complicated choice: either to say 'no' and to fight for the truth and the honest memory of the Holocaust—and that means to face the risk over their business in Russia or even their lives; no one has forgotten the English story with the polonium for Litvinenko and with Novichok for Skripal—or to say 'yes' and to turn the history of the of the biggest tragedy of the world Jewish community to the operetta in the propaganda interest of Kremlin. This is Realpolitik. This is a cruel time, cruel war. This is my opinion about it.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you, thank you very much. We now have the results of our second poll, and we would like to bring it on screen please. So, the Ukrainian state should be in full control of the project—3%. It should be a public-private partnership—60%. It is okay for the project to be privately funded—38%. Very interesting results.

We have many more questions and as a sign that our audience is truly global, I would like to bring up a professor from New York University. Her name is Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. I think she was also involved in the POLIN project. If I'm wrong, she will correct me. I hope she will be able to connect from New York and ask her question. Barbara, can you hear us?

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: Yes, thank you very much. I'm chief curator of the permanent exhibition at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and it's a project that I've been involved in since 2002. I've also been following the Babyn Yar project, and my question really has to do with the current plan for the permanent exhibition, which I did have the opportunity to read in the document, and I'm assuming that everybody on the panel has done so also. It has come under severe criticism, which I think is entirely justified. And I don't understand candidly how it is possible to take it seriously. So, I would be interested in

hearing how the panelists ... what they're thinking about what we do know, which is what has been put forward in the proposal, the current proposal that is guiding the Babyn Yar project.

Marina Pesenti: Is this a question to the representatives of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial?

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: Yes, I would like to put it to those who are working currently on that project, but I would also be interested in what those who were responsible for the previous project, which I thought was on a very good track—I would be very interested in their thoughts as well.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you, Ruslan or Rabbi Bleich, would you like to pick up this question?

Rabbi Bleich: Yeah, sure. I mean I'll answer just conceptually from on top, and then Ruslan will take over. I understand, Barbara, that you're talking about the project of what we're calling the "Holocaust Disney" that was leaked to the press, which never even came up as a serious proposal to the BYHMC. It was put up by Ilya Khrzhanovsky; it never got to the board because it was not realistic. It was not something that could have been done. As a guiding light now, there's no question about it—this has been discussed again, and again, and again, and again—the historical narrative will be the narrative that was written by Karel Berkhoff. There's no question about it. This has been said publicly, privately, repeated countless times. I do want to point out, but I think that this is very, very important that we understand what is the role of Ilya Khrzhanovsky in the BYHMC. His role as artistic director—and I'm addressing some of the criticism, although I agree with a lot of what has been said and criticized of that "Disney plan"—I want everyone to understand that history and historians are dealing with something that is much more rigid than what we call art. He was not brought in to rewrite the history, the historical narrative, or to change any of the history of historical narrative. That is the job of historians. His only job that he has is the artistic presentation. I mean you can agree with it or not agree with it, but I'm sure that this is what it is.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: Rabbi, listen to me. The artistic interpretation is ultimately the visitor experience. Right? Right. And we know, we know from him, based on his films, we know his fundamental approach. We know his goals; we know his aims. And you cannot trivialize his role. But also, who is the director of the project?

Rabbi Bleich: Let me just finish, please, what I wanted to say, okay? Again, I agree with you a thousand percent: the presentation, the way it's seen is what the experience of the visitor is going to be. But let's put it very, very clearly. If he will come with something that's not acceptable, it won't be accepted. He's not making decisions. He's making proposals. There are people that are making decisions that understand art, understand history, and also understand the responsibility of making sure that what happens ultimately is something that's not only palatable, but something that defines the history and does it in a way that will be unique.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: You know what you're getting. You know already. All right, anyway, it's hopeless.

Marina Pesenti: I think we will have to move on. Thank you very much.

Rabbi Bleich: We can argue about it. It's very hard to argue about facts. At this point, you're only arguing about someone's mindset, proposals, and opinions. It's very hard to understand how he can transform from a film director to a museum designer. I agree with you on that. However, the idea of the museum is to try and come with something that's unique—not to duplicate what's been done throughout the world—in its content and its presentation. We can come back to this once the concept

Marina Pesenti: I'm afraid I will have to stop you on that. We understood your point. Thank you very much. I would like to involve Yana and Karel at this point, because there was a question addressed to them. I will have to read it out because the author of this question, sadly, left the event. The question goes like this:

There was very little left from the original Khrzhanovsky's presentation in the latest presentation that he and his team made to the board in mid-June. I am wondering what Karel Berkhoff and Yana Barinova thought of that presentation. Did they feel that their worst fears were not realized, or do they think that they are still a threat, that the same sensationalism is still there? Or is it just a window dressing? A question to Karel and Yana please.

Karel Berkhoff: I find it very difficult to be specific about that. The position of Mr. Khrzhanovsky himself is not clear to me. I would like to see a[n] organogram or something that shows exactly the lines of authority, because it's not clear to me what he can decide. It's all very good to say that ultimately the Supervisory Board will condone or reject, but there's a whole process on the way that to my mind is not clear enough yet. The approach that Mr. Khrzhanovsky seems to favor is really different than the one that we had before. Before we had a clear focus on the significance of human rights, to give an example. It seems that it's really no longer a focus point anymore. The goal seems to be "let's bring in a lot of people". That's just not good enough for me, but as I said in the beginning, I find it difficult to be more specific, very specific in responding to this question.

Marina Pesenti: Yana, would you like to add something to that?

Yana Barinova: I think that Barbara is asking who is in charge and the current CEO. He was invited by Ilya Khrzhanovsky, and he came to the project later, even after a decision of former CEO Gennady Verbylenko and mine to exit the project. Our decision actually was based on that presentation. A I gave an interview to the *Levyi Bereg* (Left Bank) [LB.ua]—I shared the link with this chat—where I tried to explain this situation. I don't know what's going on now within the project. I don't know this team, and I even didn't see the last Supervisory Board meeting. Maybe, [the] team has changed their approach after the protest, because it's a national and international scandal. But we left the project exactly because of this new vision, let's say. Maybe, now it has changed under the pressure of civil society of Ukraine, but in the very beginning the situation was not like it looks now. We left exactly because of this presentation and disappointment.

Marina Pesenti: Thank you very much. I would like to pass the floor to Ruslan Kavatsiuk, and probably this will be one of the concluding remarks. There was a question to Ruslan from one of the listeners which says: The scientific part of the recent presentation board was excellent. How many of these initiatives have been in development before Khrzhanovsky came on board, and how many [directions are] out of his role?

Ruslan Kavatsiuk: Thank you. First of all, I would like to say that I will respond to the last question and then comment on the previous one. First, it is important to understand that we have two research institutes established with Dr. Vladyslav Hrynevych, a prominent Ukrainian historian, and Dr. Andriy Rukkas leading them. One institute is focused on Holocaust research; the other one is focused on territory and memory landscape of Babyn Yar research. Both these historians have been working with Karel on the narrative. Dr. Vladyslav Hrynevych was co-author of the narrative, and Dr. Rukkas was co-editor of the Ukrainian version of the narrative. So, we have the complete continuity of the scientific part of the project that I have the honor to support.

Responding to the question of projects, we have 15 projects at the moment. Four of them were started last year by Karel which we continue and strengthen, and 11 are new. They were initiative of the directors of the scientific institutes that we have. The two directors of the institutes together with their teams proposed new projects, and we have approved them, and we move forward. We have also, as I said at the beginning, some projects where we have synergy between artistic part and scientific part. It is also important that we all benefit from it. It is highly important to say about the so-called concept that is being discussed. It's a leaked, as Rabbi Bleich said, it's a leaked presentation of drafts that has been manipulatively presented as a final concept. This is untruthful information. It's important to understand that. What was presented a month ago are 27 projects that are being developed by the team. We have 50 people working on those projects, and we

have been working on them for the past seven months. They are not being developed by over a month. So, it is important to judge us based on what we do, on the facts, on what we actually are—not based on not very truthful information. That's what I would urge everyone. It does not help. I don't think anyone looks good when we do that. Thank you.

Marina Pesenti: Ruslan, can I just have a very quick follow-up question? Out of those 27 projects, which will be curated by Ilya Khrzhanovsky? What will actually the audience see when they visit the memorial?

Ruslan Kavatsiuk: First of all, there are 27 projects in the BYHMC at the moment being developed: 15 are research [projects] in the historical research institutes, and there are 12 artistic projects. There are also a couple that are overlapping, so there is a joint workforce. But it is important to say that there is basically almost fifty-fifty between artistic and scientific projects that we have.

Regarding what people will see in the museum: yes, these projects are already being developed as part of the concept that will be presented in four or five months by end of this year for public discussion so that everyone in Ukraine could see what is being planned, what will be done there. Everyone will have to participate or will want to participate. We will listen, and we will take that to the Supervisory Board, and the Supervisory Board will then, as Rabbi Bleich said, will then work on how to how to proceed. But it's important to understand that what is being done right now is basically leading to the concept. These projects are leading to the vision, to the concept that will be presented in four or five months. They are already basically part of it. And it's important to judge us based on that. I don't hear anything about our current projects that we have presented a month ago, but I hear about the presentation that was leaked half a year ago. This is disturbing.

Marina Pesenti: Maybe, you could respond to the concerns of the Ukrainian civil society—that will be my last question— that these 12 artistic projects which, I understand, will be curated by Ilya Khrzhanovsky: Will there be references to immersive experiences, to simulation of ethical dilemmas, to psychological experiments? Should we expect any of that?

Ruslan Kavatsiuk: I have shared in the chat here the link to the whole unedited video of Supervisory Board. Please do take time and look at that, and you will have all the answers. It's really important that we look at what we do and then comment on that. I really don't feel comfortable that we take time to read untruthful information, and then we do not take time to look at what is the gist of the project.

Marina Pesenti: Okay, thank you very much, Ruslan. I think we will probably have to wrap up at this point. We've been on air for nearly two hours. Huge thanks to each panelist for staying with us throughout and huge thanks to our audience for sticking with us and for asking so many questions.