

All the gaping mouths without a voice

by Michael Parker

(In homage of the 33,771 Jews exterminated by SS Troops in Kiev, Ukraine, September 28th, 1941)

"Mammy, why do they throw sand in our eyes?" a girl could be heard screaming from the 30-foot-deep ravine, Babi Yar. (*The Holocaust: A history of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War*, Martin Gilbert, Henry Holt and Company, Inc., New York. Page 203.)

It was late in the night of the second day of the grand extermination. The German SS soldiers were cleaning up, bulldozing dirt and lye on top of the dead and the living.

It was a gravedigger from the local cemetery who heard her voice. And though he knew death well, and though, possibly, like his other fellow-Ukrainians, he supported the Nazis' "resettlement of the Jews," maybe it was this innocent question from the mouth of a girl (who could be the age of his own daughter), that caused his heart to turn. And knowing as well as the backs of his dirt-engrained hands that he had witnessed things so terrible, he ran (stumbling, crying) back to his gravedigger's shack, opened up the cemetery's worn, leather-bound log book, and wrote down word for word the little girl's question.

Maybe, too, he questioned seeing her last moment on the ledge: her mother's arms tightly wrapping her into her naked body, her free hand holding her little head deep into her abdomen to shield her eyes from the machine guns, from that moment when they would jerk madly and petals of black-colored blood would blossom and burst from the bodies of her dad, brothers, sisters, and friends. She didn't want her baby to know they would fall like baby birds with weak wings from their nest to their death.

