



STEVEN SPIELBERG AND VICTOR PINCHUK
PRESENT

SPELL YOUR NAME

A USC SHOAH FOUNDATION INSTITUTE PRODUCTION

A Documentary Film by Sergey Bukovsky

DIRECTOR SERGEY BUKOVSKY PRODUCERS MARK EDWARDS DOUGLAS GREENBERG
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PRODUCTION SERVICES FILM PLUS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE VICTOR PINCHUK FOUNDATION

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SPELL YOUR NAME

Information Packet

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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The Testimonies featured in the film are those of:

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Leonid Serebriakov

Fenia Kleiman

Mikhail Rossinskii

Iurii Pinchuk

Mariia Zanvelevich

Bronislava Fuks

Mariia Gol'dberg

Evgenia Podolskaia

Polina Bel'skaia

Tsilia Shport

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Testimonies from the archive of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education

Inhabitants of former
Synagogue

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Executive Producers

Steven Spielberg

Victor Pinchuk

Produced by

USC Shoah Foundation Institute

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Associate Producer

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Film Editor

Anton Goida

Camera

Roman Elensky

Volodymyr Kukorenychuk

Post-production Supervisor

Maryna Shelyubska

Running Time

89 min.

Original Music by

Vadim Khrapatchev

Ukrainian Production Services

Film Plus Ltd.

SPELL YOUR NAME

SYNOPSIS

Produced by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, made possible by a generous grant from Victor Pinchuk, and in continued partnership with the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, *Spell Your Name* is a feature-length documentary about the Holocaust in Ukraine. Ukrainian film director Sergey Bukovsky crafted the film using Ukrainian and Russian-language testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation Institute archive and new footage shot on location in Ukraine.

Director Sergey Bukovsky takes the viewer on a journey of discovery as he and several Ukrainian students absorb the testimony of local people who escaped brutal execution and those who rescued friends and neighbors during the Holocaust. A collection of men and women share the details of their experiences, and we are afforded a glimpse of modern day Ukraine: the ethnic stereotypes that continue to exist and the manner in which Post-Soviet society is dealing with the question of how to memorialize the sites where tens of thousands of Jewish families and others were executed and thrown into mass graves.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SHOAH FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR VISUAL HISTORY AND EDUCATION

In 1994, Steven Spielberg established Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation to videotape and preserve testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses before it was too late. As of January 1, 2006, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation became a part of the University of Southern California's (USC) College of Letters, Arts & Sciences and adopted the name USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

The USC Shoah Foundation Institute has produced 11 documentaries that have been broadcast in 50 countries and subtitled in 28 languages, including *Broken Silence*, an international documentary series with five films in Spanish, Russian, Czech, Polish, and Hungarian; *Volevo solo vivere*, an Italian documentary; and *Spell Your Name*, a Ukrainian documentary. *Volevo solo vivere* was nominated for Italy's main national film award, the Donatello, in the category of Best Feature Length Documentary and it was chosen to screen in the Official Selection, Out of Competition, at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival. *Spell Your Name* has broadcast in Ukraine, screened at the United Nations in New York, and been invited to the prestigious international film festivals in Moscow and Jerusalem, among others.

With a collection of nearly 52,000 video testimonies collected in 32 languages and 56 countries, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's archive is the largest visual history archive in the world. The Institute interviewed Jewish survivors, homosexual survivors, Jehovah's Witness survivors, liberators and liberation witnesses, political prisoners, rescuers and aid providers, Roma and Sinti survivors (Gypsy), survivors of Eugenics policies, and war crimes trials participants. Currently, 55 Visual History Collections can be viewed at locations in 17 countries, and the entire archive can be viewed at four universities in the United States.

Using testimony from the archive, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute creates educational programs and products, including lessons, activities, screenings, and online exhibits. These programs and products are reaching nearly two million students in the United States and around the world.

Today, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute is engaged in the urgent mission to overcome prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry—and the suffering they cause—through the educational use of the Institute's visual history testimonies. The Institute relies upon a global network of partners to provide the general public with broad access to the archive, and develop and support educational programs and products based on the Institute's testimonies. For information about the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, visit <http://college.usc.edu/vhi>.

THE USC SHOAH FOUNDATION INSTITUTE IN UKRAINE

- The USC Shoah Foundation Institute began interviewing in Ukraine in October 1996.
- In total, 3,446 interviews were conducted in Ukraine and in the Ukrainian language outside of the Ukraine.
- The majority of interviews were conducted in the Russian language, as well as in Hungarian, Polish, Romani, Romanian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish.
- Interviews were conducted by 44 interviewers and videotaped by 31 videographers.
- Interviews were conducted in towns and cities around the country, including Kyiv, Odesa, Balta, Berdychiv, Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovs'k, Donets'k, Kharkiv, Mogyliv-Podilsky, Simferopol, Vinnytsya, Zaporizhyya, and Zhmerynka.
- The experiences represented in the interviews conducted in Ukraine or in the Ukrainian language include: Jewish survivors, Jehovah's Witness survivors, liberators and liberation witnesses, political prisoners, rescuers and aid providers, and Sinti and Roma (Gypsy) survivors.

A glimpse of the abyss; The Holocaust in Ukraine Steven Spielberg ventures into the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine

October 28, 2006

The Economist

The great, good and less good of Kiev gathered last week to honour an illustrious guest and an unlikely artistic collaboration. The guest was Steven Spielberg, and the occasion was the premiere of “Spell Your Name”, a documentary about the Holocaust in Ukraine. “I feel like I’m home,” said the director, whose grandparents emigrated from Ukraine. A group of elderly survivors and rescuers featured in the film blinked into the flashlights.

The A-list turnout included Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine’s president, his predecessor, Leonid Kuchma, and Viktor Yanukovich, whom Mr. Yushchenko defeated during the “orange revolution” of 2004 but is now awkwardly reincarnated as Ukraine’s prime minister. One attraction was Viktor Pinchuk, a canny tycoon (and Mr. Kuchma’s son-in-law), whose Jewish grandparents got out of Kiev in time. As well as financing the film, he is credited as joint executive producer, but says he always deferred to Mr. Spielberg. Cynics saw “Spell Your Name” as part of Mr. Pinchuk’s effort to launder his reputation and win new friends in the post-Kuchma era. Perhaps; but Mr. Yushchenko and the rest also attended because Ukraine’s wartime history is still sensitive.

A few days before the premiere, in the streets of Kiev, communists scuffled with members and supporters of wartime partisan groups, who fought both the Germans and the Red Army and still crave government recognition as veterans. But like the Cossack leaders also revered by Ukrainian nationalists, the reputation of some partisan groups is tainted by the killing of Jews. Official Soviet anti-Semitism is gone, but the unofficial kind lives on. Leonid Serebriakov, an octogenarian who appears in the film, says he still hears of nasty anti-Semitic incidents.

For many ordinary Ukrainians, the Jewish tragedy is just one part of a century of pain, not least Stalin’s 1930s famine that killed millions. There is also touchiness about Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazis. The film, which relies heavily on interviews recorded by Mr. Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation Institute, deals with that theme sparingly, balancing it with stories of Ukrainian heroism. It prefers impressionistic snatches of narratives to full-on horror, linking them with what Mr. Spielberg calls a “visual poetry” of Ukraine: melting ice, empty railway carriages.

One legacy of the Soviet era is ignorance. In the film, a student wonders whether Jews are recognisable by their earlobes. There is little trace of the Jewish civilisation that once thrived in the villages of western Ukraine—nothing, in some places, except the marks left behind by unscrewed mezuzahs, the little prayer-scrolls that Jews attach to their doors.

Victims commemorated at the sites of mass graves are often recorded only as “Soviet citizens”. At the Babi Yar ravine in Kiev, where tens of thousands of Jews and others were killed, several competing memorials have been erected. “Spell Your Name” circles around the Yar, with glimpses and allusions—something too big to be confronted directly.

Spielberg presents documentary about Nazi massacre of Jews in Ukraine

October 18, 2006

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine - Steven Spielberg on Wednesday presented a documentary about the Nazi massacre of tens of thousands of Jews at the Babi Yar ravine in Ukraine, several weeks after Ukraine marked the 65th anniversary of the tragedy.

The film by Ukrainian director Sergey Bukovsky, *Spell Your Name*, for which Spielberg worked as co-executive producer, contains the testimony of Jewish survivors who escaped brutal execution and those who rescued friends and neighbors during the Holocaust.

"The stories and experience of survivors in Ukraine need to be seen and heard by the people of the world, who may not know what happened in Ukraine during the Holocaust," Spielberg said at a news conference.

The massacre began in late September 1941 when Nazi forces occupying Kiev marched Jews to the brink of the steep Babi Yar ravine and shot them. More than 33,700 Ukrainian Jews were killed over 48 hours. In the ensuing months, the number of people killed at Babi Yar grew to more than 100,000, and included Roma, or Gypsies, as well as other Kiev residents and Red Army prisoners.

"I really believe that listening to the stories of Holocaust survivors from all around the world is going to change the world and already has in many ways," Spielberg said.

The film was produced by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, a Los Angeles-based organization founded by Spielberg in 1994.

With a collection of nearly 52,000 video testimonies from Jewish survivors, political prisoners and war crimes trial participants, the Institute's archive is one of the largest visual history archives in the world. "I could imagine making a film from every single one," Bukovsky said.

"This film is one of the steps forward to complete understanding of the terrible tragedy of mankind, which shouldn't happen again," said Anatoly Kerzhner, a historian at a Kiev-based institute who attended the presentation.

"This film is not only the memory of my people, this is the memory of my family, too," said Kerzhner, whose grandmother was shot dead at the Babi Yar ravine.

The premiere marked Spielberg's first trip to Ukraine, where his grandparents came from. "I was brought up in a home where grandparents only spoke Russian and Yiddish," Spielberg said. "I got out of the plane at the airport today and said: 'I'm at home!'"

THE TIMES

Spielberg calls home for poignant premiere

October 19, 2006

Tony Halpin in Kiev

His films have brought home the horror of the Holocaust to millions. Yesterday Steven Spielberg came home to Ukraine to launch a film about survivors of the Holocaust in his ancestral homeland.

The Hollywood director's grandparents all came to the United States from Ukraine, but Spielberg had not visited the country before last night's premiere of the documentary *Spell Your Name*, by the Ukrainian director Sergey Bukovsky.

Spielberg told *The Times* that he feared that the "epidemic" of racism would lead the world into a new era to match the mass slaughters of the 20th century. "Hatred comes from fear and we have experienced a century of fear and I fear that we are going into another century of heightened fear," he said. "Until we get to the bottom of what makes people so afraid of the differences in others, and what we look like, we are going to experience an even greater century of fear."

Spielberg's arrival in Ukraine came a month after commemorations marking the 65th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre in Kiev, when the Nazis murdered 33,771 Jews in two days. He said he had visited Babi Yar earlier in the day and placed stones at the memorials to those killed — a traditional Jewish act of remembrance. It and other massacres had happened, he said, because people had allowed them to. Tolerance was born of education through films such as *Spell Your Name*.

"It happened in the 20th century with the Armenians, it happened in Rwanda, it happened in Sarajevo," he said. "What is inconceivable to me is that as I look around at what technology has given us to shrink the world and make us better neighbours and friends, we often are not better neighbours and friends."

The 90-minute documentary records testimonies of Jews who survived the Nazi occupation of Ukraine. The \$1 million project was funded by Victor Pinchuk, a billionaire Ukrainian industrialist whose grandfather left Kiev with his family shortly before the Nazis invaded.

"My parents told me that they knew friends and neighbours who found themselves at Babi Yar," Mr. Pinchuk said. He had been inspired by Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* to approach the director with the idea for the documentary. Spielberg, 59, whose Shoah Foundation co-produced the film, said he was happy that it had given him an opportunity to visit Ukraine. "I grew up in a home where my grandparents spoke Russian and Yiddish. I kind of felt that I had a piece of Ukraine in my own home, especially around dinner time," he said.

A CELLULOID LIFE

- Steven Spielberg, born December 18, 1946, has won three Oscars and is the most commercially successful film director
- Wrote and directed his first large-scale movie at 16 while attending Arcadia High School in Phoenix, Arizona
- Applied unsuccessfully three times to the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic

Arts

- Attended California State University, Long Beach, majoring in English, but dropped out in 1969 to take a television directing contract at Universal Studios
- Finished his degree by correspondence in 2002, 35 years after starting

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The London Times Online

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ТелеКритика

(Telekritika)

The tombstones have faded into the landscape...

October 18, 2006

Sergey Trymbach, for Telekritika

With Steven Spielberg present, the documentary *Spell Your Name*, directed by Sergey Bukovsky, premiered today in Kiev.

For those of you who don't know, Sergey Bukovsky, 46, is one of the best documentary directors in the world. In addition, Bukovsky is one of many exceptional filmmakers of the Ukrainian school of cinematography that is represented by such contemporary directors as Alexander Koval, Murat Mamedov, Roman Shirman, Yuri Tereshchenko, whose works we can proudly present anywhere on the planet.

I will never forget that day in 1987, when, completely alone in the tiny theater of the UkrKinoChronica studio, I watched one of Bukovsky's first films, *Tomorrow is a Holiday*. It was a story about female workers in a state-owned chicken farm. Although the business was extremely profitable, the women had to live in a shabby, run-down dormitory, so similar to the coops of those under their care. This was a documentary with an important social message. The essence of the film, however, was not in the civil pathos of the director (though this was important as well), but in the enormous love for people that seemed to suddenly jump off the screen. The harsh critic in me suddenly collapsed, and I, who could not stand deceitful, Soviet-style documentaries, started quietly crying in the darkness of the theater (thankfully, I was alone with no one to watch). From that time on, I came to like documentary films in general, and films by Sergey Bukovsky in particular.

Then came *The Dream, The Roof, The Dash, To Berlin!, Red Soil...* The overall style of the director did not change, as he combined elegance and the ability to choose important details and cut unnecessary information in order to bring the audience into the world of images and into a well-documented reality. A few years ago, Sergey created a nine-episode series, *The War: Ukrainian Account* (Studio 1+1, winner of the National Shevchenko Prize), that included the remarkable quote, "Looking back with no anger, we preserve hope for the future." Unfortunately, films don't always have the therapeutic effect for everyone; still burning with rage are those whose purpose in life is war, those who see the world through the scope of the sniper rifle. They do not realize that they are aiming at the future of their own children and grandchildren.

And now there is a new film – strictly speaking, a commissioned film. The USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education has been working for years to preserve the memory of the horrors of the Holocaust, the genocide of Jews during World War II. Thousands of testimonies had been videotaped – testimonies of survivors, those who helped them survive, and those who preserved memories and the ability to project the past into our common future, the future that depends so much on what we remember, and how we remember it.

About five hundred testimonies were recorded in Ukraine (it was done awhile ago, in 1994-1998). This video footage was offered to Sergey Bukovsky for the purpose of creating a documentary about the Holocaust in Ukraine during the war (similar films have been produced in several other countries, particularly in Russia and Poland). Both Steven Spielberg, a renowned American film director (as far as I know, he is the main backer of this project), and Viktor Pinchuk, an equally well known businessman in our country, are the executive producers of this film.

Frankly, the task seemed hopeless to me, to some extent. Bukovsky was supposed to work with the footage that was made by someone else, some of it poor quality. This could have been sufficient to produce a decent TV show with a powerful public message. But how to make a film out of this, and avoid near-fatal clichés since everybody already knows a lot about the Holocaust? I thought Bukovsky made a mistake agreeing to work on this project. Why would an artist accept a garage-painting job if a painter's apprentice could do this?

All right, let's watch the film. Immediately we are immersed in a world that initially seems to be out of accord with our pre-existing knowledge of this sort of film. You see a long static image of the railway terminal, amazingly picturesque and likable. Bright, memorable images have always been at the core of Ukrainian cinematographic mentality. The directors of photography in the film are great – Vladimir Kukorenchuk (he's been working with Bukovsky for quite a while now) and Roman Elensky. But almost immediately you hear the narrative - those are real-life testimonies. "It is impossible to convince reasonable people that it actually happened," says a female voice. A simple thought pops into your mind - seriously, how can someone sitting in a movie theater or in front of a TV believe not just in the facts you hear (yes, facts...), but in the existence of real people that lived through hell, the *Gehenna*, the survivors. What was preserved in their soul and what died out forever?

We hear the voice of the author, Sergey Bukovsky. He is telling us that he is going to a little town (the name of this town will never be mentioned in the film), the population of which was destroyed during the war. We want to see this town, but... But in there, in that little town, "the tombstones have faded into the landscape..." This is an image created by words that is going to become a video and audio background for the movie (through the music by Vadim Khrapatchev and sound mix by Igor Barba). Everything stuck together, froze together, nearly dissolved in the fog of time; you can't tell a thing apart... How do you learn to feel the tragedy of those people when we are used to hearing breaking news every hour or so – this one is killed, that one is molested, hacked, burned... This has become a routine informational background noise that we no longer pay attention to.

Tombstones, destinies, words, and thoughts - all merged together; how do you untangle them? Hence the ubiquitous title image: people are asked to spell their first and last names – so that they could feel more deeply the texture of their own existence ...

Back in 1920s, Viktor Shklovsky introduced the term ‘distancing’. Bukovsky uses this device too, almost as if he is forced to do so. The ordinary must be made to look strange, different, with its own tight string inside. How can one achieve this? Quite simply – absorb the material that is alien to you and make it part of your own inner world. Have it sing inside you, make it speak, make it roll – letter by letter, frame by frame (several scenes in the film were made using the frame-by-frame animation) whereby human movements are segmented and seem to co-exist independently (computer animation courtesy of talented young artist Artem Sukharev). And only then apply it to others.

And this is exactly what the director is doing, abruptly, almost with no preparation, manipulating the material toward his own ends. It would seem fair to question how you, a person living in the 21st century and far-removed from the tragedy of the Jewish people, can relate to all this? And yet, suddenly there appears a schoolyard, and Bukovsky briefly speaks off screen about what this yard looked like almost thirty years ago, when he graduated from that school. Or in other words, he recounts his own personal biography, his personal history, something that in those distant Soviet times was considered irrelevant: only millions mattered – acres ploughed, sows fattened, men annihilated. In that country, being yourself was not encouraged. It was much safer to hide behind the million-strong masses ... So let us all, each and everyone, spell our names. Our own, those of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. Let us remember, let us sense our own selves.

It is not an easy task, for here they are again, those who have forgotten the past so soon and urge you from the grandstands to forget your name again and remember only that you are a “Soviet”, “Bandera”, “enemy”, “NATO henchman”, “Jew”, “Ukrainian”, etc. Forget, blend in the crowd, disappear again; these are the ‘terrible’ fruits of democracy: everyone has such a high and peculiar opinion of themselves. This is what Bukovsky is opposed to - tactfully, in a vague Chekhovian manner, barely unveiling his thoughts and feelings. Only later will we understand: his film is not about Jews, it is about people – people who you come to desperately love, following the author’s lead. At the same time, you understand perfectly well that you cannot love somebody just because this person happens to be Jewish, Ukrainian or Polish. A human loves and desires another human, not the plate with the ID number on their chest, not their nametag.

Next we see the footage of the folk festival of Malanka, a reminder of the traditional stereotypical perception that different ethnic groups have of each other: a Ukrainian is depicted in a certain way and a Jew in another. In spite of that, they have lived alongside for many centuries – maybe not in perfect love and harmony, but still together. So they lived until the Holocaust, until somebody else’s inhuman, diabolical will set about destroying the entire ethnos.

Then we see three present-day college students, retained by the creators of the film to do some clerical work – transcribe those same testimonies of the surviving victims and witnesses of the Holocaust. In another quite unexpected move, the author introduces these very young persons who have no substantial life experience – like a clean slate on which fall the bitter tears of the victims of this great tragedy.

Placing these girls practically at the center of the film composition is, to me, a stroke of genius. They do seem to distance our perception of genocide. One of the girls is asked how she feels about Jews. She responds bashfully that she has never judged people based on their ethnic origin. Only recently has somebody taught her how to identify Jews: they have peculiar earlobes. But she does not even want to think about it ...

Also, her father advised her “not to take to heart” everything she sees while transcribing the testimonies of the Holocaust victims. You never know how this will affect you, or your mental health. This line was kept in the film for a reason. The author is doing the exact opposite: not only does he “absorb them,” he populates his inner world with the events that happened sixty years ago. In one of the scenes, Bukovsky creates the following audiovisual image of such an absorption. Under the accompaniment of the train wheels, he makes us listen to a woman’s story. The camera draws back and we see the screen of a laptop in the compartment and see the landscape rushing by in the train window – everything has merged in the author’s mind: his “here and now,” his “there and then,” his own thoughts and feelings and the thoughts and feelings of a seemingly complete stranger... But no, sorrow can never be “somebody else’s.” This comes across in such a refined way and at the same time so clearly and explicitly as it can be done in the world of cinema. You feel it even more acutely, as contemporary screen culture is often at its extreme low with films that more and more resemble radio shows with endless talking and wheezing heads.

Another symbolic component of the author’s inner world is the small town, once populated by Jews (it was never named because it does not have a specific name; it represents a metaphorical space of a deserted, abandoned world whose soul has been ravaged and torn apart). Today the only thing left is the chilly, bone-cold building that once used to be a synagogue and was later converted by the Soviets into a residential building. All that is left of that time are two very old people, Zlata and Haim, who survived the Holocaust. It still lives inside them, but it is so deep that it cannot be verbalized. It is all around them – because the living conditions of Zlata and Haim, in democratic independent Ukraine in the 21st century, resemble the very ghetto we hear about in the memories of the Nazi victims ... And only at the end do we see their granddaughter – as a message to the future – as a silent prayer not to destroy people’s world, however strange and unusual it may seem.

And the landscapes in the film are all of springtime, of a very early spring, with crisp air and ice on the river just barely beginning to crack. Again this gives rise to the stray, almost involuntary thought, that maybe the winter of humanity will end one day, the ice flow on the rivers, the snow in the tree branches, the frost on the wings of human souls will melt ... And the sky will sparkle with diamonds, and all of us, my dear reader, will sigh with relief, when we hear the songs of angels, see how all earthly evil, all our

suffering is washed away by kindness and our life becomes quiet, soft, tender as a caress ... Dear God, did not Chekhov's characters dream of this over one hundred years ago – in vain? Will we always face darkness, and infinite stupidity, atrocities and mutual hatred, and as a result only new and never-ending horrors?

Having seen Bukovsky's film, you don't want to believe that. It was not by chance that the screen characters, and those once created by Anton Chekhov, rhymed in my mind. Goodness gracious, this is not a flight of fancy, a play on classical texts – I did gain that impression. The author plucked a string, and it resonated in the cloudy realms of time, in the distant past. It is to be hoped that I would not be the only one having such reaction. Art can truly have a healing power – especially when it is not the artists doing the healing but the pain itself.

There is no point in retelling the stories of the Holocaust victims and the people who saved Jews from violent death – you have to see and hear it for yourself. A million and a half Ukrainian Jews vanished in the ghastly Nazi meat grinder in the early 1940s. Just an image which surfaced in the memory of a witness: a pile of corpses with a baby on top, almost dancing in the blood and slime. Next, a submachine gun swath and the horrible scream of a person who was born but never had a chance to live. Or the story of how a Nazi soldier tore an infant from his mother's breast and splattered him on the nearest light pole ...

The murderers, what were they doing? Fighting evil? Killing Jews? They were savagely destroying everything human inside themselves. And nothing helped, not the great German culture, Goethe or Schiller, or Thomas Mann, or the remarkable cinematography of the 1920s. Will Sergey Bukovsky's film be of help? I would like to think so. Hatred is squeezed out, leaking drop by drop – such substance cannot be forced out by the bucket-load. Take a moment and spell your name ... Stop and crush the hatred rising inside you, force it out drop by drop ... Or it will gush out and drown every scrap of humanity inside you.

In the penultimate scene the author finally manages to reach his acquaintance on the phone, the historian Vitalii Nakhmanovich. They kept missing each other in the course of the film. The video testimonies are not perfect either – the film retains some of the technical faults as evidence of the difficulty in translating from one emotional language to another. People are different and their memories differ. Nakhmanovich was contacted over the phone, so instead of his face we see Bukovsky's. They talk about Babi Yar, the site of the massacres; is it true that they were separated: Jews here, Ukrainian nationalists, Gypsies, mental patients there? No, it's not true – they were all shot together, indiscriminately. And this is how they lie, inseparable. Probably we should not tear apart their memory either: render unto Jews the things that are Jewish, and to Ukrainians – the things that are Ukrainian ... Let us remember them as people, just as Sergey Bukovsky remembers them. There he comes, slightly hunched over, walking down the underground tunnel and listening to the person speaking with the voice of history itself, the same history that teaches us that history has never taught anybody a thing.

He walks along the tunnel, not knowing that darkness is already looming over his father Anatoly Bukovsky, a film director himself. Soon it will be forty days since his death and his soul will depart from the land of the living. May he rest in peace and be blessed for the son to whom he bequeathed his sensitive soul. May God grant peace to all departed – the last one hundred years were truly monstrous to mankind...

Remember your name, human! Speak it aloud - only, please, not in vain.

From «Telekritika». *Read our coverage of the premiere of Spell Your Name in Telekritika soon.*



Screenshots from Sergey Bukovsky's film. Cameraman: Vladimir Kukorenchuk.

ЗЕРКАЛО НЕДЕЛИ

(Zerkalo Nedeli)

“I STILL HAVE THE ADDRESSES...”

STEVEN SPIELBERG WILL VISIT UKRAINE FOR THE FIRST TIME TO ATTEND THE PREMIERE OF SERGEY BUKOVSKY’S FILM, *SPELL YOUR NAME*

№ 39 (618) Saturday, 14 - 20 October 2006

Oleg VERGELIS



Spielberg is expected in Kiev next week, on October 18. The celebrity is not only a guest of honor at the premiere of Sergey Bukovsky’s film, *Spell Your Name* — the world-renowned director, along with Viktor Pinchuk, is also the film’s co-executive producer. Spielberg and Pinchuk initiated the project as far back as 2004.

The film to be debuted is about the nightmarish “past” and the painful “present”. It is about the Holocaust. It is about the debris of lives that were ripped apart by World War II. It is about the abyss that constantly stares back at you after you take only one glimpse at it. Director Sergey Bukovsky talked to *ZN* about his work on the film, which, by all accounts, may become one of Ukraine’s main cinematic events of the year.

It is difficult to talk about the picture — watching it on screen is even harder. Often, one understandably wishes to either look away or down at the ground. This is because... on the whole, you must understand... This is a topic that does not lend itself well to the sing-song speech or to the rhythmic “clipped thoughts” (a frequent occurrence in documentary film today). There is a concentration of pain here. The film, however, has no staged vignettes and voice-overs. The author does not wish to “make it more painful”, as the viewer also becomes a participant. Time in Bukovsky’s film passes just as slowly as it did then — a half a century ago. When those telling the stories were young themselves, it seemed as if a day dragged on like a week, a week like a month, and a month like a year. The common feeling was one of “slow-motion” — and fourteen of our fellow countrymen who were whisked away from that absolute abyss, fourteen witnesses of the tragic events recall, half a century later, “how it was”: the ghettos, atrocities, arrests, executions, the massacre at Babi Yar, maimed children, the shattered souls. Hell.

The film is based on the interviews that were recorded by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education from 1994 to 1998.

“If I were to say that this has turned out to be the most difficult of all of my pictures, it would not be an exaggeration. It is the truth,” says the director. “Even in comparison with the nine-part documentary series *War. The Ukrainian Account*. Yes, this is very difficult material...you cannot simply watch it and then switch gears to something else. The people whose interviews you watch are with you all the time — they become your relatives, your neighbors. This, perhaps is due to the fact that the interviews were recorded not for a motion picture but for an archive — in order to preserve these very accounts, almost in an interrogation-like fashion. And still...all the time I spent attempting to insert any sort of ‘tricks of the trade’ collapsed like a house of cards. It was only during the editing process that I finally realized: the survivors themselves would not allow the use of a director’s gimmicks, because all of these ‘gimmicks’ would turn into ‘tricks’, into the banality.

The film is one and a half hours long. This is what is called the “grand format”, which is widely used in the West, but is almost unheard of in our country. The world of the nonfiction film, with its genre and stylistic diversity, is much wider than what is seen on our television channels. For example, Claude Lanzmann’s film about the Holocaust, “Shoah”, is nine hours

long, and you cannot tear yourself from the screen. Perhaps I have a warped sense of taste, but I love to watch meditative films, where I can view the slow procession of life.

I also can't shake the feeling that this is a kind of culmination... At the very least, it is the personal culmination of all my previous work in documentary film. After all, to be honest, for the last ten years, with rare exception, my work has been made-for-TV hackwork."

Will all of the survivors who were interviewed be able to see the film today?

Fortunately, many of them will. We even hope that Mariia Goldberg, Iurii Pinchuk, Zinaida Klimanovskaia, Leonid Serebriakov, and Irina Maksimova will be able to attend the film premiere in Kiev.

Some of the monologues in the film seem to have been intentionally cut short. It is ostensibly left to the audience to figure out the people's fates. Is this an intentional directing technique?

You must understand that each of these life stories could be made into a separate film, even into a feature film. Each story is full of tragedy and unexpected twists. It is impossible to include all of the material in a single documentary film, even if it does last for 90 minutes.

Here is one of the stories that did not make it into the film. Kievan Tatyana Chaika told it to us in Kiev, before our trip to Los Angeles. And we found it there, in the archive... It is a story about a family. It is based on the testimonies of a married couple, Maria and Petr Gutsol. A young Ukrainian man fell in love with a beautiful Jewish girl who lived in a ghetto. He decided to pass her off as his sister and obtained forged documents so she could be released from the ghetto. A Ukrainian policeman, Maria's former classmate, identified Maria, however, saying that she was not Petr's sister. The policeman and a German soldier arrested Petr and Maria and took them to the nearest police station. On their way, the German soldier killed the Ukrainian policeman and set the young couple free. They fled, hid, and wandered until they finally found shelter on the farm of a lonely matron. And from that moment on, even more unpredictable twists of fate began, bringing separation, reunion, and then another reunion, many years later.

And why are their fates "cut short"? It is designed to be just so. Everything in the film is intentional; do the individual outcomes not shape that of a people?

There are two silent characters in your film – Zlata and Haim Mednik, who live in a former synagogue. Why is there nothing in the film about them? Is there anything particularly cryptic behind the silence of these people?

They really do live in a former synagogue, which had been long ago converted into a large communal living area. They will not go anywhere else. They decided to live there. It seemed to me that Zlata and Haim are still living...in the ghetto. And there is no way out... In any case, I would like for the viewers to experience this feeling. Their silence is golden. It draws one in. To me, they seemed to be almost surreal people from the past. That is why we only used their photographs in the film. It seemed indelicate to me to break into their lives with our "hardware."

Why did you use the recordings of our countrymen's Holocaust stories that were made ten years ago?

That is not entirely the case. What happened is that I received a proposition from the Shoah Foundation to make a film based specifically on the testimonies that it had collected. This archive contains more than 50,000 interviews. 3,500 of these were recorded in Ukraine. My wife, Victoria Bondar – she is the project coordinator and editor, which is what we called the position before the chief editors, supervisors, and producers came to be – and I watched nearly five hundred interviews. And we selected 60 interviews. The shortest story was two hours long. The longest was eight. We even worked on the material at home in our apartment in Kiev. Among the testimonies selected were those not only of survivors of the Holocaust, but also of those who helped the survivors. At some point, I realized that the film had to be about the fact that if there is even one single person in this world who would help another escape death, then the world is not without hope. I talked about this with the Foundation staff, and they understood me. Douglas Greenberg, the Executive Director of the Foundation said, "Make your film. And make it the way you see it." To be quite honest about it, I was perplexed when I heard this. I had not received this type of proposal in a long time.

We worked on this project for exactly one year. We arrived in Los Angeles in September 2005, and on August 31st, which would be a month and a half ago, we put together, in movie-making tradition, bits of the plate that were broken on the first day of filming, and we finished our work. It is not easy to build a team these days, especially one made up of like-minded individuals. For six months, we worked 12-hour days in the editing room of Film Plus, Ltd., and had one day off a week. I am infinitely grateful to our small team, who wouldn't admit to their fatigue — Anton Goida, the two Marinas – Shelyubskaya and

Chaika, Igor Barba, Boris Peter, to our "American Frenchman", Mark Edwards, and finally, to the coordinator "of all issues", my wife Victoria.

Steven Spielberg is one of the founders of the Shoah Foundation (the translation of the Hebrew word *shoah* is "catastrophe"), is he not? In what ways did he directly participate in the production of this project?

We were told that even when filming *Schindler's List* in Hungary, many people approached Spielberg and told him about surviving, about the things they saw during the war. It was probably then that he got the idea to create such a foundation. They have a huge archive with an extensive system for searching. It is very well thought-out and easy to use. During our month of work there, we met researchers, teachers and journalists from Poland, Hungary, Germany and the United States. Then, in September of last year, the Shoah Foundation was still located at the Universal Studios. In January 2006, it became part of the University of Southern California. As far as I know, Steven Spielberg is not active in the daily operations of the Foundation but is involved in its strategic planning. However, the best thing to do would be to ask Spielberg himself – he will be attending the premiere.

Spielberg has never been to any of the major cities in the Former Soviet Union before, not even Moscow or St. Petersburg. Do you know why he chose Kiev? Is it only because of the premiere, or does he have any additional motives?

I don't know. The only thing that I can say is this: he saw our film. Douglas Greenberg told us about this on the telephone. Our entire film crew was ecstatic to know about that. We are very proud of this.

While you were working on the project, did any sort of differences arise on the American side? It is well-known that they are somewhat squeamish and politically correct regarding many issues, and this is an especially difficult topic.

There were nuances. At first, they reacted to some of the episodes with a "question mark." But the producer must always have a rebuttal. And they listened attentively to these arguments. The American side truly showed understanding and tact. We had lengthy telephone discussions and explained our positions to each other. It was nice to work with professionals. Douglas Greenberg, for example, is not only the Executive Director of the Foundation, he is also a history professor. Mark Edwards, our producer, has a wide world view, in-depth knowledge, and a very good understanding of filmmaking. He is a graduate of Yale University and of the film school in Los Angeles. We stood our ground on some topics, agreed on others, and accepted each other's observations. We called this a dialogue of cultures. At times we cried and other times we argued – and this is how the film was born.

About the director

Sergey Bukovsky was born in 1960 in Bashkiria. That same year, his parents – his father, film director Anatoly Bukovsky, and his mother, actress Nina Antonova, brought him to Kiev. Sergey Bukovsky studied to be a director in the film department of the Karpenko-Karyi State Institute of Theatrical Arts in Kiev. After completing service in the army, he worked for more than ten years in a documentary film studio in Ukraine. The 20-minute black-and-white film Tomorrow is a Holiday, made during the early years of perestroika, garnered praise from the critics and professional recognition.

During his 25-year film career, Bukovsky has made approximately fifty documentaries and television films, which have received awards at prestigious international film festivals. They include Marsh-brosok (1985), Tomorrow is a Holiday (1987), Sleep (1988), Roof (1990), Dislocation (1992), The Hyphen (1992), Landscape, Portrait, Still Life (1993), To Berlin! (1995), Vilen Kalyuta - Real Light (2000), Terra Vermelha - Red Land (2001), and the 9-part documentary series for television, War - The Ukrainian Account (2003, awarded the National Taras Shevchenko Prize of Ukraine in 2004). He graduated from the Karpenko-Karyi State Institute of Theatrical Arts (1998 – 2003).

<http://www.zerkalo-nedeli.com/ie/show/618/54737/>

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УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРАВДА

(Ukrainska Pravda)

Spell Your Fate

October 22, 2006, 1 p.m.

Dmytro Desiateryk

The premiere of the new documentary by Sergey Bukovsky, *Spell Your Name*, is one of those rare, at least in Ukraine, cases where a work of art causes a major stir in both the artistic community and society.

This is not only because Steven Spielberg co-produced the documentary. Rather, Spielberg acted as an archivist of sorts, because the marrow of the documentary is formed by interviews with survivors of the Nazi-occupied Ukraine. Their testimonies were recorded from 1994 to 1998 by the staff of the Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, established by Spielberg at the University of Southern California.

The subject of these interviews and, consequently, of the film itself, is the Holocaust in Ukraine, which for many is synonymous with the Babi Yar tragedy.

Besides, *Spell Your Name* is one of the few documentaries in modern Ukrainian filmmaking on the subject. The director's strong artistic drive is another significant component that makes this documentary stand out among others in its genre.

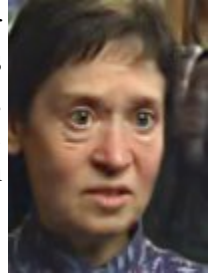
The testimonies used in the documentary are unique. Without a doubt, this material posed a major challenge for the director: hundreds of documentaries have been filmed on the subject, each one of them bone-chilling.

Any attempts of a fundamentally new artistic portrayal of those horrible events seem to be doomed to failure, and even when they are made, the result is seldom convincing.



Put simply, ethical considerations obliterate any aesthetics in such documentaries, and even the most earnest efforts of the author result in an unfortunate facelift. Can you name at least half a dozen movies about the Holocaust that were successful primarily as artistic works?

Add to this the essentially formal obstacle: in visual terms all interviews are rather monotonous – half-length shots of elderly people sharing their own stories. These interviews could be combined with standard documentary techniques, namely voiceovers of the director, familiar wartime footage shown hundreds of times, and staged episodes of average quality. The result would be yet another, even if well-executed, film in a long series of similar motion pictures.



However, Bukovsky did something altogether different, even paradoxical to some extent.

He used absolutely unknown and chilling footage made by a German cameraman in the summer of 1941, showing a mob of Soviet prisoners of war in a ravine under a bridge, clamoring for scraps of food thrown to them by local peasants.

With this sole exception, the director decided not to reconstruct or directly portray anything that the eyewitnesses of the tragedies reveal in their interviews.

On the contrary, Bukovsky emphasizes his own, as well as our position – that of contemporaries who view the past events from the modern perspective.



This technique, also known as “distancing”, is used in the documentary in an extremely subtle and accurate manner. Bukovsky keeps reminding viewers that yes, this is a recording, an archive video that we, people of the 21st century, watch separated by a span of time. Yet he is also interested in how we watch it.

For this very reason the author begins by telling his own story. He speaks about his yard and his school, the milk woman who would always stand at a street corner, about his old pigeon house, and about the trip to the past that he tries to embark upon but fails each time, because the houses are empty and the tombstones have faded into the landscape.

The documentary also features three assistants – young ladies who transcribe the interviews; the director simply keeps them in the picture, showing their reactions to what they hear, which impresses viewers no less than the archived testimonies.



The documentary switches to city landscapes, the interior of the present-day rail terminal in Kiev, and testimonies are interrupted by fadeouts. Bukovsky fills the documentary's visual space with this imagery of modernity.

At the same time, in certain nuances and touches, the director establishes – or reestablishes – the connection between our epoch and the time of the tragedy. He allows our view, or to be more precise, the view of those of us who care to watch, to penetrate into that merciless period of history.

To accomplish this, the director also uses authentic objects from the material world, which he handles as if he were a meticulous archeologist and which seem to transcend all time.

The same dilapidated tiny houses, crumbling walls and rusty locks, old lampposts, and rivers frozen over, beaten mud roads, leafless trees dominating the eternally snow-swept landscapes, dry grass outside the window of a railway car, the wires of the power transmission lines reflecting off the rail terminal windows, a gramophone recording of some long-forgotten song, a village festival (an old man and woman accompanied by the Devil, the Jew, the Hangman, and the Grim Reaper) of Malanka, a heavily clad woman with a bucket and a dog in tow, naive paintings on the walls of a provincial synagogue and another synagogue converted into a multi-family apartment, a lonely wind blowing debris through the streets of a deserted township...

Especially successful is a plot line which forms a kind of parallel storyline, depicting an old Jewish couple, ghetto survivors Zlata and Haim, and their granddaughter Mariyka. Throughout the entire documentary they don't say a single word, seemingly separated from the rest of the documentary with black-and-white and tinted imagery, as if taken from an old movie, and slowed movements that are more like photographic phases. They create the impression of century-old pictures. Speechless and thus subtle in a special way, they make the commentary for the main plotline even more impressive.



The film is perfectly organized in terms of dramaturgy. Bukovsky possesses a trait vital for any documentary director, namely the ability to build the plot without revealing its direction.

Quotations from the Old Testament are used in the film to clearly delimit the prologue – a story of the daily life of townships and the coexistence of Jewish and Ukrainian communities; the exposition – the arrival of the Nazis and the start of repressions; the culmination – blood-chilling scenes of mass executions; and the resolution – the liberation of those who survived the period of occupation.

Meanwhile, the finale is painful, owing to its sharp contrast: the hustle and bustle of the subway station built on the site of mass executions. Stores, crowds of passersby, young men with beers, boys kicking a ball and riding bicycles, and a voiceover conversation with Babi Yar historian Vitaliy Nakhmanovych, who speaks about the significance of behaving appropriately in such places...

And for some reason this bustling indifference to the place of mass extermination triggers a genuine tragic catharsis.

To forget this is tantamount to forgetting your own name, or even the ability to name things. It means to stop being human.

Bukovsky's documentary is a gifted and refined attempt at preventing the atrocity of namelessness.

Dmytro Desiateryk, The Day, featured in Ukrayinska Pravda

<http://ua.pravda.com.ua/news/2006/10/22/49429.htm>



The information agency

(UNIAN)

Spielberg in Kiev: Finally, I am home!

[19.10.2006 10:12]

Anton Zikora



Steven Spielberg stood before the Ukrainian public, accompanied by Leonid Kuchma's son-in-law, Victor Pinchuk, and director Sergey Bukovsky, the director of *Spell Your Name*. The premiere of the documentary, dedicated to the Jews who were annihilated during the war, took place in the capital's Oktyabrsky Palace on October 18. Nearly two hundred members of the press from several countries were expecting the world-renowned director. The entire Ukrainian *beau monde* was present at the screening: Viktor Yushchenko, Viktor Yanukovich, Alexander Moroz, Leonid Kuchma, et al.

The director of *Jaws*, *Alien*, *Jurassic Park*, *Schindler's List* and other masterpieces cheerfully strolled up to the podium and began the press conference without delay. Spielberg won over the crowd when he confirmed that his grandmother and grandfather on both his paternal and maternal sides were émigrés from Ukraine. "The presence of Ukraine was always felt in our home," the American said to the journalists. Viktor Pinchuk revealed that when Spielberg stepped off the plane, the first thing he did was exclaim, "Finally, I am home!" Kuchma's son-in-law also said that when they left the airport, they immediately headed to Babi Yar, where they laid flowers in memory of those who were murdered by the Nazis.



It was Pinchuk who came up with the overall idea for the film. Two years ago, he met with Spielberg in New York on the set of Spielberg's film *War of the Worlds*. "Steven Spielberg and I discussed the Holocaust, and he was able to tell me more about Babi Yar than I could tell him," said the oligarch about how *Spell Your Name* came to be. "At first, the idea was to make a feature film about Babi Yar, but we later came to realize that it had to be a documentary."

It must be said that Spielberg already had everything prepared for it. In 1994, after finishing work on *Schindler's List*, the director decided to film and catalogue the testimonies of the Jews who had suffered during World War II, thus creating the Shoah Foundation Institute ("shoah" is Hebrew for "catastrophe").



The organization gathered nearly 52,000 accounts in 32 languages and in 56 countries, including Ukraine. The Institute interviewed nearly 2,000 people there who had lived through the Holocaust, as well as those who had witnessed the bloody events.

The materials were given to director Sergev Bukovskv. who used them to make the film. This is the eleventh film project that the Shoah Fo *Translated from Russian by Mondial* 1. The Ukrainian director, who worked on the film for a year, said that *November 2006* ons: one, that the film be based on the testimonies, and two, that Bukovsky should make the film exactly as he wanted to see it.

Bukovsky, by his own admission, did just that. And Spielberg has praised the Ukrainian's work highly. "Bukovsky's documentary is one of the most brilliant films about the Holocaust of any that I have seen," he said at the press conference. And it stands to reason that the American film director's statements were not just polite compliments, as Jewish people are very serious when it comes to the painful topic of the Holocaust.

The film is absolutely worth watching. Although anyone who has studied in a Soviet school will find little new information in it, there is something else altogether – the tragic events are told by those who miraculously survived them. And this is something that cannot be acted out or imitated. Those in the film tell of the German occupation, about Babi Yar, about how they risked their own lives or were saved by local residents, and about their long-awaited liberation. One girl lived for three months in the attic chimney of a large house in an occupied town. A man who was taken prisoner was "snubbed" by his friends, who told the Nazis that he did not look like a Jew, saying, "all Jews look like him, but he does not look Jewish." The witnesses tell their stories with the characteristic Jewish accent. Their stories, as paradoxical as it sounds, also contain some humor.



There is no emotional strain in the film, no shouting, cursing, or tears – the people are composed, and that produces an even greater effect. When speaking about the film, Spielberg also mentioned the "visual poetry" used by the director to complement the stories of the Holocaust survivors. It is indeed so: there are many clips of reflection and meditation, and of the actions behind them. Many of the journalists did not like that, but

it is, as they say, for an acquired taste. At the end of the film, a witness to the terrible events speaks of human greed as one of the roots of war. The woman poses a question that could be addressed, among others, to Viktor Pinchuk himself: if you have a home, why do you need two?



Executive Producers Steven Spielberg and Viktor Pinchuk promised that the film *Spell Your Name* would soon be available for viewing by the general public in Ukraine.

Pinchuk also said that, in his opinion, a trilogy should be filmed about the tragedies that took place in Ukraine, in addition to the Holocaust, about Golodomor (The Great Famine) and Chernobyl.

At the press conference, a somewhat provocative question was addressed to Pinchuk: "Viktor, sir, is it your goal to teach tolerance, as does your film?" After pausing for a second, Pinchuk answered, "Which Viktor are you asking?" Those in the room turned their heads in the direction of the President and the Prime Minister, but Yanukovich was already gone by then.

After the film's screening, it was interesting to observe the VIPs discussing the film in the lobby: Yushchenko talked with Spielberg, the country's first lady spoke with Pinchuk, and Kuchma's daughter and Pinchuk's wife, Elena Franchuk, talked with Nestor Shufrich. Later, when the VIPs headed to the reception, a wall of security guards closed in around them, and the *beau monde* was effectively blocked off from the general public.

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Ukrainian *Beau Monde* Mingles with Spielberg (Photo Story)



The VIPs are taking their seats (view from above, left to right): Leonid Kuchma, Lyudmila Kuchma, Elena Pinchuk, Victor Pinchuk, Steven Spielberg, Viktor Yanukovich, Aleksandr Moroz.



Viktor Yushchenko and Ekaterina Yushchenko are watching the film.



Viktor Yushchenko and Ekaterina Yushchenko are watching the film (view from above).



Before the press conference that followed the premiere – the chairs on the stage are waiting for the film director and the co-executive producers (see above).



The press conference participants (left to right): Victor Pinchuk, Steven Spielberg, Douglas Greenberg, Sergey Bukovsky.



View of the press conference from the front balcony.



Viktor Yushchenko talking to the Holocaust survivors featured in the film in the premiere lobby.



Viktor Yushchenko speaks to Steven Spielberg.



Viktor Yushchenko and Steven Spielberg.



From left to right: Victor Pinchuk, Ekaterina Yushchenko, and Steven Spielberg.



Elena Pinchuk



In the premiere lobby



Svetskaya Khronika representative interviews Viktor Yushchenko.



Leonid Kuchma: “Good bye, dear friends!”

Photos UNIAN. More details about Steven Spielberg’s visit to Kiev *here*

Article link: <http://www.unian.net/rus/news/news-170245.html>