



25  **YEARS**
Preserving Jewish Memory
Bringing Jewish History to Life
 **centropa**



CENTROPA

25 YEARS OF
PRESERVING JEWISH MEMORY
AND BRINGING HISTORY
TO LIFE



**“The past is never dead.
It’s not even past.”**

William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun

I met my wife Lubov when we were teaching. I was teaching Russian, she taught Ukrainian. This was the early 1950s and antisemitism in western Ukraine was terrible. People there also really didn't like those who came from eastern Ukraine and considered us Russians. When they heard our accents they called us 'moscals.' As soon as Lubov and I married, her parents threw her out. "Both of you, go to the 'moscals,' they said.

Our daughter Larissa was born in 1950, then came our son Pavel. We decided it would do no good to tell them about the horrors the Jewish side of my family endured. How so many were murdered, including my grandmother just shot in the chest by a German officer. So that was our agreement: I would never speak of that side of my family, Lubov would only speak Russian with me. The Jewish topic began vanishing from my life.

In 1990 I had several hypertension strokes and realized that if I died there would be no stories about my family. So I wrote to Yad Vashem in Israel. They sent me questionnaires. When Lubov saw them she said, 'Our agreement still stands. You said our children are not to know.' But in 1995 when Luvov died of cancer, I said nothing.

By coincidence the next year my son Pavel went to work in Israel. He had friends there and they arranged a job as a sports physical therapist. He stayed for three years and came back filled with enthusiasm for the Jewish state. That is when I gathered my children and grandchildren together and told them everything. About my grandmother, about my cousins, aunts and uncles, all murdered. They cried with me and we talked for a very long time.

That is when Pavel went to the city authorities and changed his name from Kamyshan to Zilberberg. My grandson Anton, who was in university,

enrolled in Hillel here in Lviv. Anna has gotten involved in the arts. She studies, she paints, she is involved with the Sholem Aleichem Society.

I visit the local Hesed organization but I'm not religiously observant. I have kept the family name Kamyshan. After all, by giving me that name, my mother saved my life and the Zilberberg name has too many memories, very bad ones.

I have two dreams: I would like to go to Kharkiv, to this dreadful death site of Drobrytsky Yar, where my family was murdered, and I would very much like to visit Israel.

Dmitri Kamyshan did not live to visit Kharkiv or Israel. He remained in Lviv. His granddaughter Anna worked for the Babyn Yar Memorial in Kyiv until many of their activities stopped when the Russians invaded in February 2022. She has continued working on Ukrainian Jewish projects from England. Her brother Anton enlisted in the Ukrainian Army, where he has been serving for more than three years.

Dmitri Kamyshan was interviewed for Centropa by Ella Orlikova in Lviv in May 2002.

DMITRI KAMYSHAN was born in Kharkiv in 1927 and grew up in the home of his father, Anatoly Zilberberg. His mother, Olga Kamyshan, was not Jewish. When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Anatoly was drafted into the Soviet Army and fell fighting. Dmitri and the entire Jewish side of the family were taken to the ravine of Drobrytsky Yar. Dmitri managed to wriggle out through a hole in the fence while everyone else in the family was shot. Dmitri made his way home and his mother took him to the city registry office where a clerk changed the boy's family name to hers. Dmitri joined the Soviet army, and at war's end, he and his mother, haunted by the loss of their family, moved to Lviv, where Dmitri became a teacher.

CREDITS

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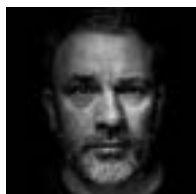
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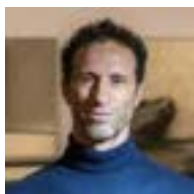
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At Centropa, we pride ourselves on working with excellent photographers.



Wojciech Wojtkielewicz lives in Białystok, studied photography in Warsaw and freelances for some of Poland's top news magazines.



Ouriel Morgensztern lives in Vienna. He was born in France, studied in the US, lived in Israel, and has been working throughout Europe and Africa.



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Vladimir Zivojinovic is a photo-journalist based in Belgrade.



Konstantin Gerasimenko is a freelance photographer in Odesa.



Maksym Levin (1981-2022) was a Kyiv-based freelance photographer. Maks carried out several projects for Centropa including video production. Maks was murdered by Russian soldiers in March 2022.



Taras Kovalchuk lives in Rivne and teaches Informatics in middle school. and private photographer.



Oleksandr Sichkovskyi has been photographing around the Chernivtsi region since 2013. He is currently serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.



Gabriel Khiterer is a digital creator and photographer in Vilnius.

Not pictured: *Boris Kaeski, North Macedonia*

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DEDICATION

THREE WITNESSES TO HISTORY. TWICE.

At times like these, we could all use some models to look up to. Three Holocaust survivors in Ukraine have stories to tell.



“On February 25, 2022, a former student living in St Petersburg offered to give me a room.”

“In the land of the aggressor? No thanks!” I said.

BASYA ABRAMOVNA was born in the district of Mohiliv-Podolsk in 1938. Her father was a kosher butcher, her mother a housewife. The family survived in a Romanian ghetto and in hiding. After the war, Basya married, had a son, and taught math until her early 80s. She has refused to leave Chernihiv, a city perilously close to the front lines.



On January 27, 2025, I told the entire German Bundestag: “Hitler wanted to kill me because I’m a Jew. Putin wants to kill me because I’m Ukrainian. We need your weapons.”

ROMAN SHVARTSMAN, one of eight children, was born in Bershada in 1936. During the war he lost two brothers while he survived in a German-Romanian ghetto. Roman moved to Odesa in 1955 where he studied engineering. He married and had two children. Since 2022, Roman has been head of the ghetto survivors association in Odesa.



“My grandfather was the Chief Rabbi of the entire Azov region. He and 37 members of the Borts family were killed in the Holocaust.”

ELVIRA BORTS was born in Mariupol in 1936 and spent 20 months hiding from the Germans. She married Nikolai Petrov, who served in the Soviet Navy. During the full-scale invasion that started on 24 February 2022, Elvira and her family were in hiding in Mariupol for 50 days before they were rescued. They relocated to Kyiv. Elvira died in 2024.

INTRODUCTION

Centropa was founded in 2000 with the goal of interviewing 100 elderly Jews still living in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia, digitizing up to 300 of their family pictures, and closing up shop by 2003. We ended up spending a decade interviewing 1,230 Jews still living in 20 European countries and digitizing 25,150 of their old family photographs and personal documents.

It all started one night over dinner in Budapest. Me on one side of the table, Eszter Andor and Dora Sardi on the other, each holding a baby in their laps. University students in history, Eszter and Dori had just watched their grandfathers' video interviews in which they had spoken of the hell they endured during the Holocaust. Dori's reaction: "Of course it's good he made that interview, but he has so many more stories than that. And that's not the only thing I want his great grandson to know about him," she said as she looked down at Miksa. "I mean, my grandfather has been swimming almost every day of his life. He even jumped ship in Haifa harbor so he could make aliya to Israel by swimming ashore."

I said that I had just produced a film for *ABC Nightline* about a Jewish soup kitchen in Arad, Romania and that when I visited elderly Jews in their homes, they opened up old family albums

and regaled me with stories as they pointed to pictures.

I asked Eszter and Dori if their grandparents had albums like that. "Tons of them!" Dori said, laughing. And does he tell stories about the people in them?" I asked. "He never stops!"

That is when Centropa was born. It is why it was born.

We were not founded as a Holocaust-specific project. We wanted our respondents to share their stories of an entire century, just as they lived it—from tales of indulgent grandparents in the 1920s to skateboarding great-grandchildren in the 2000s.

We never used video in those interviews. Instead, we sat at kitchen tables and in living rooms, held up tens of thousands of photographs and asked, "So, who do we see in this picture? Please tell me about them." And that is how we ended up with 45,000 pages of personal stories, some of which you can read in the following section.

Then we asked them to tell us as much, or as little, about the destruction of their world as they wished. And, usually by the third or fourth visit,



Rozsi Jakab, 93-year-old manager of the Jewish soup kitchen in Arad, Romania. July 1999

we asked them to tell us how they put their lives back together in the first postwar years, to speak about their families, and what their lives had been like since their retirement. This they did with grace and generosity of spirit. Everyone we spoke to had been born in Europe and had remained there.

One by one, as each of these souls has left us, they have taken with them the tales only they could tell. But at least we have preserved a few of their stories.

We are proud indeed that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, has acquired the Centropa archive, and the Museum has graciously allowed us to keep using these pictures and stories in our educational and cultural programs.

At its core, Centropa is all about the stories, and this 25th anniversary publication describes how

we built a home where twentieth century Jewish memory will live for a long time to come.

As Centropa's founding director, I began working on Jewish themes in Central Europe in 1985. Fifteen years later, I co-founded this institute. And now it is time for me to turn Centropa over to the capable team you will meet in these pages and I will return to what I've been doing for forty years: writing, photographing, and making films about Jews in Central Europe.

Edward Serotta

25 Years

**„There are only two or three human stories,
and they go on repeating themselves as
fiercely as if they had never happened before.”**

Willa Cather, O Pioneers!

5 LOVE STORIES

5 STORIES OF SCHOOL DAYS

5 STORIES OF VACATIONS

5 STORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST

5 DOCUMENTS



Everyone died on me!

This photo was taken in Prague in October 1941 on the day my sister Gertruda married Frantisek Kowanitz. They were in a rush because the deportations were just starting. Frantisek was sent to a work camp, my sister and I were deported to Terezin in December 1941. Our parents were deported later. Gertruda and Frantisek found each other in Terezin and even had a baby girl, Jana Ivana. Then the three of them were deported directly from Terezin to Auschwitz on the last transport in October 1944. My father, my mother, and I were also deported. I managed to survive. My parents didn't. Not long after the war I married and had two children. Every time one of my kids got sick I would panic and rush them to the hospital, telling the doctors, "They might die, they might die! Everyone died on me!"

Anna Hyndrakova's children, a boy and a girl, grew up to become academics and have children of their own. Anna worked in research in the Prague Jewish Museum and later conducted interviews with Holocaust survivors. Hermina Neuner interviewed Anna Hyndrakova in Prague in May 2003

I blurted out, “But I’m a Jew!” She said she was, too.

This is me with my wife Sophia and the picture was taken in Uzhhorod shortly after we married in 1946. We met while I was still a prisoner-of-war in Voronezh.

By 1945, the prisoners were free to roam around the town during the day and report back to the barracks in the evening. I could gaze into a house across the street from our barracks and I often saw a girl in the window. A big family lived there. It was an episode of a peaceful life. It was all about home and I had not had anything like that for years.

There was a river and a pump nearby where people came for water. We went swimming in the river and often saw the girl from that house. She came regularly and I worked up the courage to say hello. She was quite friendly so I asked if we could meet in the evening and go for a walk.

The only thing she knew about me was that I was wearing an old German POW uniform. But she said yes. We met, we walked and talked and it was like a holiday for me. We began to see each other more often. Her name was Sophia Belinskaya but after a few meetings she told me her mother said she shouldn't see me because I must be a German and might kill her. I blurted out, “But I’m a Jew!” She said she was, too.

Her mother insisted on meeting me, so I went to her house because she wanted to know if I could speak Yiddish. It was my mother tongue so we got along well from the beginning. I also spoke Hungarian, Czech, and German. I started coming over nightly.

On the 9th of May 1945, they told us in our camp that Germany had capitulated. I was desperate to find my family and Sophia and I decided to get married but postponed it until she could meet my parents and brother and sister. So I asked Ptashynskiy, the chief of the camp, who was also Jewish, to get some information about what had happened to Jews of Subcarpathia. He sent a request about my family and received a response saying that none of them had survived. They had all been deported to Auschwitz.



Our sentences did not end in May 1945 and it was finally in September 1946 that we were given our papers to leave. I was asked where I wanted to live. I said that I only wanted to go home, even though I knew that nobody

was waiting for me. My hometown was now part of the Soviet Union. All I knew was that I had been a Soviet prisoner from 1942 until September 1946. And the Soviets never tried to murder me or deport me, unlike the Germans and Hungarians.

I arrived in Velikiy Berezny and met with my neighbors who told me about my family being taken away. I needed to hear it from them. I then went and applied to get my family's house back and the authorities gave it to me. Immediately, I traveled to Voronezh to take Sophia to our home.

Henrich Zinger and Sophia had two children, one of whom married and emigrated to Israel. While in prison camps during the war, Henrich became a tailor and had his own small shop. After the war he took those skills with him. He worked in several large clothing stores and well into his eighties he saw private clients regularly.

“I have a father, a soldier, and now I don’t have to be afraid of anyone ever again!”



As the final days of the war were approaching, my unit found itself near Kielce. We celebrated the end of the war on May 9th but we had to wait before we were demobilized. That came in July, and on that night I met Krystyna Sobczyk. At first I didn't think even this beautiful woman could cheer me up because I had only recently learned that my family stayed behind in Drohobych in 1941 and had been murdered.

So there is this dancing party in Bokowka, that's where I meet her. The place is packed. The boys, the Russian soldiers, tell me, 'Don't even approach her, she refuses everyone.' But something in me stirs and I tell them: 'She'll refuse a guy like me? Elegant, spurred boots, dressed up, polished buttons, a decent haircut? I don't think so!'

I bowed before her and we danced until the whole room started applauding. At the end of the evening, I say to her, 'Kryisia, my dear, we're meant for each other, I feel it in my heart. I've had a lot of girls young and beautiful, but nothing compares to you.'

She says, 'Mietek, I'm a married woman! Haven't heard from my husband in months so yes, I'm worried. But I stay loyal to him.'

I was crushed. I continued to visit her and galloped over to her house on my horse. Each time, I professed my love, we spoke briefly and I

rode away, back to the barracks. Then one day, it was a month later, she tells me that there's a knock on her door. A man in uniform is standing there and says, 'Does Mrs. Sobczyk live here?' 'Yes.' 'Is she home?' And the messenger says, 'I regret to inform you, madame, that your husband died in the last weeks of the war and we only were able to trace you to this address recently.'

That day when I come over, I say, 'Kryisia, are we meant for each other?' And she says, 'Okay, Mietek, from today you live with me. You go nowhere else, you sleep nowhere else, this is where we'll live.'

Just then, Kryisia's six-year-old son, who had been listening, blurts out, 'Now I have a father! A military man with a mustache!' The boy never really knew his father. He had only just been born when his father went off to war. But now this lad had stolen my heart. And he ran out into the street yelling to everyone, "I have a father, a soldier, and now I don't have to be afraid of anyone ever again!"

But that was a long time ago and now it's been almost three years since my wife died. She was eighty-six. My friends from the unit came, the Polish-Soviet friendship people, the Baptists, came and buried her. Me, I still go to synagogue.

My son-in-law from Israel called and asked to read this psalm for my wife. Psalm twenty-three. And now every Saturday I read it and every other day I'm at the cemetery, I go to my wife to look, to talk. 'Kryisia, I have no one else to talk to.'

MIECZYSLAW NAJMAN, born in Drohobych in 1916, and was interviewed by Tomasz Kluz in Swinoujcie in November 2005.

The picture on my table tells a lot about them. Father was looking ahead of him ready to face the world, and mother looked as if she only needed him in her life.

These are my parents, my mother Capitolina Fiedelgolts and my father Lev Fiedelgolts. They're having a walk outside of Moscow in 1927, just after I was born and a year after they were married.

My father came from a religious family in Gomel, which is now in Belarus. My mother Capitolina was not Jewish and came from a wealthy family that lost just about everything in the revolution.

They met when father was practicing medicine and was in the last year of his internship. He was assigned to a tuberculosis sanatorium in a Moscow suburb. He tended to her and they instantly fell in love. But I have to say that my mother's feeling was even stronger than love—it was adoration, worshiping. I cannot even put it into words.

The picture on my table tells a lot about them. Father was looking ahead of him ready to face the world, and mother looked as if she only needed him in her life. It was always like that between them.

Father left his Judaism behind in Gomel. He had witnessed pogroms—truly horrible murders. So he welcomed the revolution of 1917. When the civil war was unleashed, father dropped his studies,



joined the Soviet army, then joined the Bolshevik party.

His faith never wavered, and considering what he witnessed in his youth, he forgave the party everything, even if he was skeptical of Stalin. Father did not live to see the breakup of USSR [1991]. I think he would have taken it hard. He died in 1983. Mother passed away earlier, in 1976. She

died from extensive myocardial infarction in the hospital. Even in her delirium she was reiterating: 'Levochka, I am going to cook soup ...,' and the last word she said was her husband's name. My parents are buried in the city cemetery in Moscow. There are a lot of Jewish tombs, probably every second tombstone is Jewish.

Yuri Fiedelgots and his parents were evacuated to the East during the Second World War. In 1948, he was arrested as an enemy of the people and was sent into the Gulag. His sentence was commuted in 1954 and he spent years in internal exile before being allowed to return to Moscow. He married Victoria Novik, an architect and they had one son. Yuri then worked on design and literary projects.

YURI FIEDELGOTS, born in Moscow in 1927, was interviewed by Ella Levitskaya in January 2005.

What if I want to live my life with you?



This is a photo of me and Lev Suslovich. It was taken in Moscow in the 1950s. I met Lev at the sanitary-engineering company where I was an engineer, and in the beginning I didn't think anything would come of our friendship. I was forty years old and I thought my life was over. That's because in 1937, I married a Cossak man while I was studying in Moscow. His name was Vanya and he had been good friends with a Frenchman. A few weeks after our wedding, Vanya and his friend were picked up in the Stalinist purges and I never heard from him again. In May 1941, I married a Jewish man, Izya Kogan, who went off to fight in June 1941. He also disappeared. My father and two of my siblings were shot in Babyn Yar, my mother was able to escape to the East but she died there of an infection. So, you can see: I was quite literally numb and had no expectations of ever finding happiness.

One day at work, Lev invited me to a sporting event at the stadium. I said I was not interested in such things.

He said, 'But what if I'm trying to court you!'

I asked, 'Why would you?'

He said, 'What if I want to live my life with you?' Lev Suslovich was very handsome and highly educated; I could talk with him about everything. But I told him that I wasn't interested in married men.

He asked, 'Who told you I'm married?' (Before that he had told me something about his daughter).

I asked, 'Well if you're single how come you have a daughter?'

And he said, 'Different things happen in this life.' Later he told me his wife had died and left him to raise their daughter. Lev courted me for two years before I agreed to marry him.

We lived together for twenty-five years until his death in 1978. He was always very caring and kind. So was his daughter, Natasha. Natasha's daughter Katya is like a granddaughter to me. She married a Jewish man, a physicist and mathematician. They live in France and come here twice a year to visit me.

After her husband died in 1975, Lubov Ratmanskaya returned to Kyiv where she worked in the Institute for Foreign Languages. She retired reluctantly at the age of eighty in 1989.

LUBOV RATMANSKAYA was born in a small town in the Caucasus in 1909. Her family moved to Kyiv, and she went to Moscow to study. At the age of ninety-two, Lubov Ratmanskaya was interviewed in her home in Kyiv by Yulia Smelianskaya in November 2001.

We three Jewish boys knew we had something to prove.



My class in the Rey gymnasium in Kielce. It could have been 1928 or so when I took this photo. I am second from right in the second row. First on the right is my best friend and future brother-in-law Mosze Baum.

I took all the class photographs, assembled the group, put the camera on a tripod, set the timer and ran to take my place.

I was in a class that numbered around fifty students; three of them Jewish, all with surnames that made up a tiny fragment of the landscape: Gringras, Appel, and Baum. As it happened, the three of us were top of the class.

There were some clever Poles, of course there were. We three Jewish boys knew we had something to prove. And we did. So, we acted as

tutors. Well, two of them did. They didn't come to me because I was always helping with our family's photo studio.

Julian Gringras died in 2009, and one of Centropa's most innovative teachers, Jacek Jaros, now works with Jakub Duszyński, Julian's grandson, who lives in Warsaw. Jakub now takes tours of the city with high school students who use Julian's stories as a guide.

JULIAN GRINGRAS was born in Kielce in 1911, where his father owned a photography studio. During the war, his parents and three siblings were murdered. Julian fled eastward into the Soviet Union and after the war he worked in Poland's trade ministry where he became deputy minister. Julian Gringras was interviewed by Hanka Grupinska in Warsaw in June and July 2005.



Mr. Kuhr [who was not Jewish] didn't want his children to attend the Catholic school, which had become very fascist.

The children of the Jewish school in Piestan, and this picture was taken in 1929, when I was seven years old. We were on an outing. The man on the right is the school principal, Julius Ungvar, and his wife, who went on all our trips. I can't identify everyone here, but these trips were great. Mr Ungvar would tell us we were going out into the "wilderness," as he called it, which was actually the forest a couple of kilometers outside of town.

In the back row in the center, that's Mr. Ungvar's youngest daughter, Sarika; I don't know what happened to her. The boy with buttons on his coat in the center is my brother Ervin. He died in Prievidza in 1994. Beside him is Karol Handler, then Dezko Steiner, the tailor's son—he has those white collars—and in front of him is a little guy. That's me. My brother and I are wearing identical coats.

Beside me is another non-Jewish student, my friend Vladko Kuhr, the forest warden's son. All the Kuhr kids attended the Jewish school because Mr. Kuhr didn't want his children to attend the Catholic school which had become very fascist.

The girls sitting bottom row, from the left: Jarmila

Reichmanova, beside her is Paula, who perished in Auschwitz. Beside her, third from left, is the younger Weis girl. I don't know her fate. Katka Kohnova, the little one in the center, survived and married Palo Knöpfelmahler and lived in Prague after the war. Beside her is Rota Rosenthalova, who was a big communist, and was murdered in Auschwitz, and Olga Weisova, who they also murdered in Auschwitz. There are others but my memory has faded a bit, I'm afraid.

Ota Gubic's parents owned a bookstore in Prievidza. During the war, he was sent to the Novaky labor camp in 1942. After the camp's liberation in 1944, Ota joined a ten-man Communist partisan unit. His mother survived, but his father died in hiding during the last days of the war. Postwar, Ota lived in Karlovy Vary, married a Slovak Jewish woman, and had two children. Both children went on to become teachers. Ota Gubic worked for the regional office of the Communist party, was thrown out for being Jewish, and spent his working life as a typesetter.

OTA GUBIC, who was born in Prievidza in 1922, was interviewed by Barbora Pokreis in Karlovy Vary in 2005.



We had no courtyard to play in, so during recess we just played on the street.

Here I am with my class in Tel Aviv. The year was 1935. Back then in Tel Aviv, there weren't enough schools for all the children because so many families were immigrating [to Palestine]. That's why the city rented houses to be used as schools. During my first two years, I was at the Bialik School, which was in a house between Berech Salame and Rechow Lewinski.

We had no courtyard to play in, so during recess we just played on the street. As there weren't enough classrooms, the school had to rent another house. So that's what the schools were like then. I learned Hebrew very quickly and I think we had twenty students in my class. The teachers in Tel Aviv were from all over. Like the kids.

We had lessons in Hebrew, math, writing, reading and biology. Biology was a very important subject. Later we began to learn English, but we had no religious instruction.

When my father heard that we had no religion lessons, he sent me to a school with a lot more religious courses and programs. It was Beit Sefer Tachkemoni on Lilienblum Street. Yet the school

was very modern, very different to what it is like in a cheder or an Orthodox yeshiva today.

Hillel Kempler, the youngest of five, was born in 1925 to owners of a kosher Berlin café, the Krakauer Café and Konditorei. In 1933, Hillel and his family fled Germany via Karlovy Vary, Budapest, Belgrade, Sofia, Istanbul, Syria, Lebanon, and finally to Palestine on a fishing boat. Once in Tel Aviv, they set up a restaurant in the Shrunat Shapria district. The entire family survived. After the war, Hillel Kempler stayed in Israel, married and had two children. He died in 2014.

HILLEL KEMPLER was interviewed by Tanja Eckstein in Tel Aviv in May 2010.

She was a great teacher and she was taken away in 1941 and murdered by the Ustashe.

I started to go to school in Zagreb when I was six. I went to the Jewish school, which was well known and experimental. We had religious studies and Hebrew lessons. The teachers were Martin Mozes and Greta Vajs. You can see her in this picture. She was a great teacher, and she was taken away in 1941 and murdered by the Ustashe. Martin Mozes was sent to Jasenovac and murdered there.



Some of my classmates survived and continued to live outside Yugoslavia after the war. Some of them are still in Israel. I do know the fates of most of them but let me tell you about one of them.

Duro Vajntraub is on the right, second row with those little white collars. His family were refugees from Germany, and they changed their name from Vajntraub to Vernic.

I sat with him on the same bench, until we fought and he beat me up. Duro hit me with his hat and in his hat there was some kind of steel rim. My head was bruised, and my hand was cut pretty bad, and I still have a scar. Blood started to flow, my teacher took me to the clinic where I was treated, the

wound was wrapped and closed, and I was taken home.

When my mother saw me with my head wrapped up, she almost died from shock. The teacher told her that the children were playing. Duro's father came with his elder sister. I was scared for him because I thought my mother might attack him.

They brought me a new suit because the old one had been stained with blood, a new shirt, and a box of sweets. They apologized over and over again.

When the Germans came in 1941 the Vernics fled in the same direction we did but they were captured somewhere along the way. The Ustashe saw immediately that this family did not know the language well and they were executed, every one of them.

Albert Eskenazi's father was taken away and murdered by the Croatian Ustashe, he and the rest of the family fled to the island of Rab in the Italian zone of occupation. When the Italians capitulated in September 1943, the Eskenazi family fled to the partisans. At war's end, Albert emigrated to Israel, served in the army, and returned to Yugoslavia in the mid-1950s.

ALBERT ESKENAZI was born in Slavonksi Brod in 1929 and grew up in Zagreb before settling, after the war and a stint in Israel, in Belgrade, where he worked as a journalist and a Jewish community official. He was interviewed by Ida Labudovic in May 2001.

Of course, calling me a bodyguard was a bit of a stretch.

This picture was taken in Tallinn in 1928 in the Jewish lyceum. All three kids in our family went there.

The headmaster, Samuel Gourin, is in the center of the picture. The dark-haired man in a dark suit to his right is the teacher of natural studies, Kosotskiy. He was loved by all students. His classes were always interesting. To his right is a teacher of junior grades, Khatskin.

Before attending school, I was fluent in three languages—Russian, English, and Estonian—then, while I was in school, they introduced modern Hebrew as well as Yiddish.

My father had been a successful timber merchant, but he died in 1930 when I was around five. Mother took over father's business and continued to do well. She took trips to France, Yugoslavia, Poland. Mother was a petite woman and suppliers wondered how she managed to succeed in what was a very masculine industry. But thanks to her, we lived well.

After my bar mitzvah I started getting involved with Betar, our very right-wing Zionist movement. Betar members were taught that praying mattered a lot less than learning craftsmanship, tilling the soil, and training for the military. Those were the people the new state of Israel would someday need.

In the summer of 1939, Vladimir Jabotinsky, the Zionist firebrand as he was sometimes called, came to Tallinn. Me and some other boys were assigned to act as his body guards. Of course, calling me a bodyguard was a bit of a stretch—an unarmed fifteen-year-old couldn't offer much security. But we were supposed to stay by Jabotinsky's suite at the hotel and call for help if needed. When I was on duty Jabotinsky was

leaving his suite and noticed me. He asked me in Ivrit who I was and shook my hand.

I was present when Jabotinsky took the floor at the Tallinn Philharmonic Society. The hall was full. Everybody knew that Jabotinsky was a great speaker and when his speech was over, he answered questions. Somebody asked if there would be war. Jabotinsky said that there would be no war, as everyone was simply too well armed,



Vava Polyak with her schoolmates and teachers

and this would act as a deterrent. Two months later, Germany invaded Poland from one side, the Soviets from the other, and they came for the Baltics.

A few days before Germany's invasion of the Baltics in June 1941, Simon Rapoport and his family were arrested by the Soviet NKVD and sent to Siberia, which saved their lives. Upon his return, he became a construction engineer and continued advising on construction projects well into his eighties. He married Ruth Refes, who had married before the war and had a son. Her first husband died, Ruth spent the war in evacuation, and she returned to Tallinn afterwards.

SIMON RAPOPORT, who was born in Tallinn in 1924 was interviewed by Ella Levitskaya in May 2005.

That scared him enough to get him to flee to Israel in the 1950s.



Here's a picture of my family on vacation in Brasov in 1929. My mother, Eveline Marcuson, is sitting; the three men of the family are standing. Back then, my little brother Octav never went anywhere without his scooter. Me, I'm sixteen here and am wearing a grown-up's clothes, a belt, and a watch. All very adult.

Then there's my father, Leibis Marcuson. He was born in Iasi in 1888, studied in Vienna at the Commerce Academy, and at home we had an enormous library of German literature. Father sold welding devices.

My parents divorced in the 1930s and several of mother's siblings emigrated to Israel. In her

eighties, she decided she should, too! She died in Tel Aviv, almost ninety.

My brother, who was very anti-Soviet and pro-Zionist, attended the Mathematics Faculty in Bucharest. The Ministry of Education was so impressed they wanted him to study in Moscow. That scared him enough to get him to flee to Israel in the 1950s, where he became a math teacher.

My vacations were a sort of mixture of biking or athletic trials and very intense readings, which were rich for a boy my age. I could read French well—actually, very well, if I'm allowed to brag. I could also read German and English.

In 1957, Gavril Marcuson married Cornelia Paunescu, a medical researcher and physician. Mr Marcuson spent his career as an editor and wrote several books on Romanian history and literature. He also translated French literature into Romanian and specialized in the works of Honore de Balzac, Louis Hemon, and Chateaubriand. Our interviewer, Anca Ciuciu, told us "Even in his nineties, his passion to read more and keep up with the world is what keeps him alive. He reads extensively, from literary works to the newspapers he buys every day from a newsstand close to his home."

GAVRIL MARCUSON was interviewed by Anca Ciuciu in Bucharest in November 2004 when he was 93 years old. Anca told us "Mr Marcuson lives in the center of Bucharest, where the architecture and gardens are reminiscent of the interwar years. On reaching the second floor, one finds Mr. Marcuson invariably dressed in a suit and tie and is surrounded by his books and his memories. His wife, with whom he was and is still in love, died in 2000, but she looks down, always smiling, from the numerous photographs in every corner of the room."

The children had beautiful blue & white uniforms and there were nearly a hundred of us.



I was born in 1928, my brother Karel, or Karlicek, in 1932. We went to Jewish nursery school and elementary school. We attended synagogue, kept kosher, and Mother prepared these beautiful meals for Shabbes. My father worked in a textile mill but, in 1930, he found out that they were looking for a superintendent at the brand new Maccabi sports field—Maccabi is the international Jewish sports club.

The job came with an apartment right on the grounds. I think it was the most beautiful field in the country. There was enough room there for soccer, handball, track and field, and there were tennis courts, too. There was also a restaurant, and lawns for families who would come during the weekend. The parking lot would fill with cars, they'd spread out blankets and play with their children.

You should have seen when we all gathered for big sports events. The children had beautiful blue & white uniforms and there were nearly a hundred of us. Summers were best of all. The campground was a half hour outside of town by tram, so kids

used to come, spend the day, and ride home in the evening.

After the war, Antonie Militka's father returned in ill health from forced labor. He lost both his legs and ran a small tobacco shop near their home. Her mother's health had been wrecked in her time in Terezin and she remained bedridden. After hiding during the war, Karlicek told the family he'd never hide his being Jewish again and at the age of sixteen he emigrated to Israel. Antonie worked as an engineer and when she retired in 1986 she began working in the Brno Jewish community, where our interviewer found her hard at work, twenty years later.

ANTONIE MILITKA was interviewed by Barbora Pokreis in Brno in November and December 2004. Antonie was deported to Terezin in April 1944. Her brother Karlicek, then twelve years old, fled the city and went into hiding. Her father was in forced labor, her mother was sent to Terezin. They returned after the war to find that friends, neighbors and complete strangers had hidden Karlicek. Antonie married, had one son, and went to work for the Brno Jewish community.

That's not my father! My father doesn't have such a scratchy face!



From left to right in this picture from 1951—and we are in a park not far from our home in Kiev—that's my daughter, my wife Lilia (nee Tombak), my sister Rosalia, her husband Yevsey, and my son.

In 1941, my wife and son went East into evacuation and I went to the front. We were able to stay in touch but in the fall of 1943, a massive German shell went off near me. I woke up in a military hospital and could not hear or speak. It looked bad for me until a doctor sent for my wife and son. I couldn't greet my son but I reached over and kissed him. He cried out, "That's not my father! My father doesn't have such a scratchy face!"

They remained with me for two weeks and I was released from hospital in March 1944. By that time, Kyiv had been liberated. After the war, we all lived in a small two-room flat and I returned to journalism. I will admit that I worked too much and wish I had spent more time with my family. But every minute with them was great. I was lucky enough to take them every summer to Crimea, which is this other picture.



Yakov Voloshyn married Lilia Voloshyna in 1949 and they had two children. He worked in several editorial offices after the war but spent most of his time as an editor at Kievskaya Pravda. He told Ella Levitskaya that by the time he retired in 2000, at the age of eighty-four, he wasn't only the oldest journalist at his newspaper but was the oldest working journalist in the city.

YAKOV VOLOSHYN, who was born in Uman in 1916, was interviewed by Ella Levitskaya in Kyiv in 2002.

She would choose books to get rid of and demand he take them to a book recycling plant.



This is me with my family on vacation by the seashore and we're in Odesa in the 1970s. From left to right: my father-in-law Elih Degtiar, my mother-in-law Sophia Degtiar, our older son, then me holding my younger son, and my wife Liana Degtiar.

We read a lot during our vacations and brought a great many books with us as we traveled by car. Reading was very popular: all four of us were reading newspapers, magazines, as well as fiction.

Not long ago, Liana and I thought about moving to Israel, so we knew we had to get rid of some of our books. Liana and our son had such fights! She would choose books to get rid of and demand he take them to a book recycling plant. But he would sneak them back into the house and he jokingly calls his mother a twenty-first century inquisitor.

Ivan married Liana Degtiar and they were both academics, as are their sons. Ivan wrote several math textbooks for children. Our interviewer, Natalia Fomina, who interviewed Ivan in 2004, said she had never in her life seen an apartment with so many books.

IVAN BARBUL was born Isaac Rybakov in the Romanian shtetl of Rezina in 1929. The Rybakovs were deported by the Romanians into the hell of Transnistria where Ivan's parents and three siblings were murdered. While Ivan was in a prison in Odesa in 1942 another twelve-year-old, Yefim Nilva, came up to him and said, "Let's be friends." The boys escaped several times. Yefim tended sheep while a farmer by the name of Ivan Barbul took in Isaac. The farmer took the boy to the police and registered him as his son under his own name. Ivan and Yefim kept up their friendship for more than half a century.

A young man in Poland wearing a yarmulke would have been unthinkable a few years ago!



This is a picture of me, my husband Kuba Ekert (the first from the left), and our friends. The photo was taken in a village near Warsaw in the 1990s.

After Communism was over at the end of the 1980s, there was this revival of Jewish life in Warsaw. I must tell you, I was rather skeptical. I remember when I learned that they were opening a Jewish school in Warsaw, I thought it was fake, strange, and at odds with the reality around us. But it turns out I was wrong.

Sometime later, at my friend's birthday, this handsome young man, a theatre director, was introduced to me. I started talking to him and all of a sudden I was dumbfounded: I realized he was wearing a yarmulke. A young man in Poland wearing a yarmulke would have been unthinkable a few years ago! I continue to meet people who came to feel some connection to the Jewish world; not always through the synagogue, not always through strict halacha, but sometimes they simply discover a sense of a community. Maybe

this school and Jewish youth clubs and Jewish courses in university are pointing to an enduring revival.

My husband Kuba [Jakub] worked as a volunteer in the Jewish Historical Institute where he collected materials. He was an engineer by profession but a historian by temperament. Kuba was always interested in the history of the Jews and was very knowledgeable. I couldn't fathom where he knew all that from. He's been gone a few years now and I miss him so much every day.

Noemi Korsan-Ekert was interviewed by Zuzanna Solakiewicz in October 2004 and again in May 2005, as she insisted on adding more stories to her original interview.

NOEMI KORSAN EKERT was born in 1921 in Lviv and survived the Holocaust with false papers. She was a well-known actress in postwar Poland. Her husband Jakub escaped from the Lviv Ghetto and after the war worked in the education ministry in Warsaw.

My son told me, “Mom, you’ll see, we’ll meet again. You’ll see, we’ll meet again!”

My son Erwin, fifteen-years-old, was very tall, 192 centimeters (six feet, three inches). When they came to take us away, a soldier admired his shoes, so he demanded them. Erwin went through the rail yards barefoot and never complained. After eight days in horrid conditions, they loaded us onto trains and deported us. And after three days, on July 12, 1944, we arrived in Birkenau.

The first thing they did was separate me from Erwin and they told everyone in which group to stand. There was such confusion in my head I couldn’t even comprehend it. I was standing there with my emotions numbed.

Then Erwin suddenly turned up, hugged and kissed me, and told me in tears, ‘Mom, you’ll see, we’ll meet again. You’ll see, we’ll meet again!’ He could think more clearly than I could. That poor boy, he tried to comfort me. This was a horror. I never saw my fifteen-year-old son again.

My son, who had been playing the violin for nine years, was planning to go to the conservatory, and his teachers had great hopes for him! He wanted to be an artist, a violinist. But nothing has become of him.

After nine months in concentration camps, Erzsebet Barsony was liberated from Bergen Belsen. She returned home and learned that her son Erwin had been taken into forced labor and chose to stay with an elderly man he knew from home. They were murdered together. Erzsebet remarried and worked in a fabric shop. She passed away while giving her interview. She was ninety-five years old.



ERZSEBET BARSONY was interviewed by Klara Lazok and Viktoria Kutasi in Budapest in 2004.

The question of why did I return and not someone else? This feeling of guilt, we've probably all got it.



ALENA MUNKOVA, who was born in Prague in 1926, was interviewed by Terezi Holmerová in January 2006.

Terezin was an amazing education for me. First of all, I wouldn't be the person I am now, but that's normal. Mainly I was introduced to values there that I would never have had the chance to know. For example, what friendship can do for a person, but not only that. How important the influence of art is.

There, the people that had come to Terezin, and they were professors, artists, all of them truly tried to convey what they knew. There's no way that could happen in a normal situation.

Everything was experienced intensely because you couldn't count on having time. I mean, you didn't have the feeling that time was uselessly running between your fingers. The intensity was also given by the fact that we were hungry—all the time. Between the hunger, the not knowing who was being put on transports to the East, that made everything so intense. I never experienced such intensity before, or since.

I was fifteen or sixteen then, and everything the children were doing there, whether they were drawing something, or writing, was full-on.

The entire leadership of the ghetto tried to do as much as possible for us. Because in their view the only ones that had a chance of survival were the children and the teenagers. In the end, it wasn't like that but that was the hope they clung to.

The question of, Why did I return and not someone else? This feeling of guilt, we've probably all got it.

Alena Munkova married a fellow Terezin prisoner and worked as a script writer and journalist after the war.

Then the partisans came for me one night just as the Germans were liquidating the ghetto.

In August 1939, Boris came to Vilnius from France, where he had been studying in a textile college. He was thirteen years older than me but took such an interest and was so kind we began going out together. We had a fabric shop, and things started to go well for us. For about a year.

Our calm, rich, and serene life ended in June 1940, when the Soviet army marched into Lithuania. Store shelves emptied, and our store was nationalized. On April 20, 1941, I gave birth to a boy.

Then came the Germans and we were forced into the ghetto. People were being taken away and shot, others beaten on the streets. Boris became the founder of his own partisan group.

We were living in the ghetto and on April 6, 1943, Boris came home and said that he would go to the forest early in the morning. He told me no details, he just said there was no other way out. He hoped that being in the forest he could rescue us: me, the children, his parents.

Boris said that his people would come to me and give me further instructions. He didn't even say goodbye to his parents, just kissed me and the children—our son Velvl and my niece Sofochka, who was like a daughter to us—and before dawn he left. Twelve people went with him. They headed towards Belarus. I never saw him again.

Then the partisans came for me one night just as the Germans were liquidating the ghetto.



I had the chance to go with the partisans and come back fighting or die right then and there with my son and my niece. I wasn't even allowed to kiss them goodbye, and we started running. I was shot in the leg; we kept going.

By the time we came back with the Soviets, I realized no one was alive; not Boris, not his parents, not mine. But I had a forlorn hope that my children had been rescued, and I started asking people who were living not far from the ghetto. But nobody had seen my son and my niece. I didn't lose hope and decided that I would go from one village to another and look for people who survived the ghetto—maybe they would know something about my kids. Nothing came of this. Nothing.

Chasia later met Mikhail Spannerflug. They married in 1945 and had two children. Mikhail died while the family was on holiday in 1967. Chasia, who had worked as an economist in a shoe factory, became best friends with Fania and Mikhail Brantovsky, both of whom, like Chasia, had been in the partisans. Although Mikhail Brantovsky died in 1990, Chasia and Fania remained active members of the Jewish community, especially after Lithuania gained its independence in 1990. Both spoke with school groups and visiting delegations throughout the year. They passed away in 2022.

CHASIA LANGBORD was born in 1921 in the Polish village of Zdzisciot. She was interviewed by Zhanna Litinskaya in Vilnius in May 2005.

We were surrounded by German soldiers who had us walk into the woods, stand by a ditch, and then they started shooting.

When, on June 22nd, Germany attacked the Soviet Union, Father was drafted into the army right away. As he was leaving, Father made Mother promise that we would evacuate. But she was against it. I guess it was about a week after his departure, as the Germans were fast approaching Riga, that Mother decided we'd better leave.



she stored potatoes and jars with all sorts of jam. She put a mat in the corner where I had to stay for days and nights like a puppy. I could not go anywhere, or speak out loud, as the neighbors were not supposed to know that she was hiding me.

We got on a train, four of us together. We reached the Matai station, and it was bombed by German planes. When the air raid started, we got out of the cars and stampeded in different directions. I got lost. It was all pandemonium.

Then men in railway uniforms came to collect the survivors. I was picked up and taken to another train—without my family. We were heading to some place in Ukraine, but at Zolotonosha station in Poltava oblast, we were bombed again. We rushed out of the cars to wait for the bombing to end.

We were surrounded by German soldiers who had us walk into the woods, stand by a ditch, and then they started shooting. I fell on the corpses. Maybe I fell out of fear, maybe I was just confused.

When it got dark, the Germans ordered local peasants to bury the corpses. One lady noticed that I was breathing. She picked me up and took me home. I lived in her basement until the liberation of Zolotonosha in 1944. That's three years.

That lady, who I would call my Aunt Galya, was taking an incredible risk. I lived in her cellar where

Aunt Galya often came to me to give me some food and to talk to me. I learned Ukrainian from her. She told me that when the Germans were attacking Zolotonosha her only daughter, who was my age, was killed by a stray bullet. Aunt Galya gave me the clothes and shoes of her daughter. I was crying constantly for the first few weeks and when I got better, Aunt Galya started taking me outside at night to breathe fresh air.

In early fall 1944, Aunt Galya came to me and said that Russian troops were now in Zolotonosha and the Germans had been forced out of the town. There was no reason for me to fear anything anymore.

Feiga was taken to an orphanage where she found her younger sister. In 1949, they were able to locate her mother. The two girls returned to Riga. Their father, the military surgeon, was killed on the very last day of the Second World War in Berlin. Their brother Moshe disappeared that day in Matai, never to be found or heard from again.

FEIGA KIL was born in 1935 in Riga, to Isaac Aizman and Feige-Roche Kil. Her father was a neurosurgeon, her mother a housewife. Feiga recalls growing up Orthodox and was but six years old when the family had to flee. Feiga married Yakov Kil in 1959. Ella Levitskaya interviewed Feiga Kil in Riga in 2005. Feiga is pictured here in 2022 with her grandson's family.



She would not have left her son behind - so she went with him to the gas.

From left to right, in the first row are: my brother Aron Akerman, my mother Helena Akerman, my sister Margarita Weiss (née Akerman) holding her son, Alexandr. Margarita was highly talented: she worked as a translator and an attorney. In the second row are me and my brother Samuel. I am the only one in this picture to survive.

In 1942, the Hungarians began to take young men into forced labor battalions. My brothers David and Hugo were recruited, and they perished that year. Aron decided to escape to the USSR. He crossed the border and Soviet border officials arrested him; he died somewhere in the Gulag in 1943.

In April 1944, the Hungarians gathered all the Jews of Mukachevo into a ghetto. We heard rumors that we were going to be taken to a concentration camp. They shoved us into trains and we traveled like this for about a week. We didn't get any food on the way.

When we came to the concentration camp, we didn't know what kind of place it was. Someone told me this place was called Auschwitz. My mother and I were to be separated so I hugged her and said, 'I'll see you soon!'

She was killed in the gas chamber the day of our arrival. I saw my brother Samuel when we were going to the washing facility. The boys were standing in a separate group, and he was shouting something to me. I replied that we would talk later.

Samuel died from diarrhea. Margarita also perished. She was young and strong and could have survived but she was there with her son, and little children were sent to the gas chamber immediately. She would not have left her son behind—so she went with him to the gas.

Tilda Ackerman married Ernst Galpert after the war. They had both come from Orthodox homes and decided to stay in the region postwar. Tilda worked in the town administration of Uzhhorod. Ernst became the chief engineer of a metals factory. The two helped rebuild Jewish life after Ukraine became independent in 1991 and stayed involved as the community rebuilt itself.

TILDA GALPERT, who was born in 1923 in Mukachevo, was interviewed by Inna Galina in Uzhhorod in 2003.



This is a photo taken at our wedding ceremony in the Zulfaris Synagogue here in Istanbul in August 1951.

I was born on November 6, 1927. I started my first job as an apprentice in shirt manufacturing at the age of 15. I worked in this place for 15 years and stayed in the business my entire life.

My cousin Rafael introduced me to Fani, who started coming to our house on Sabbath evenings. She and I married when we were both twenty-three. Rafael met us outside the synagogue and brought us all the way to Ehal Hakodesh. After the service and some photos, we went to Bomonti Beer Gardens with friends and family; we had a few appetizers, drank beer from barrels, sang and danced with my older brother and his friends' band. The next morning after breakfast, we went to Yalova Thermal Hotel (on the south border of Marmara Sea, close to the city of Bursa) to spend our week of honeymoon.

Our oldest daughter was born in June 1953, and she brought us a lot of luck.

A short while before her birth, business in the store started to work like clockwork, a specific clientele was formed, and I took the plunge and bought a tiny flat at Shishane (on the European side, where Jews lived together). In 1957, our younger daughter was born and business in our shop flourished.

LAZAR ABUAF was interviewed by Merry Schild in May 2005.



This is the receipt for the hotel where we spent our honeymoon.

My father went to high school in Czernowitz. When World War I began, he remained at the post office and wore the imperial uniform. He was in charge and in 1915, when the Russians were approaching, my father gathered all the papers, telegraph machines, and telephones, and purchased horses and two large carts. He loaded everything up and carried it all deeper into the country, to Seletin, which the Russians did not reach. For this, he was given this award by the Emperor. The order read, 'Awarding, on 23 March 1915, to Abraham Margulies from Czernowitz, post office and telegraph specialist, the Golden Cross for valor.' He also received a nice ribbon that read 'Franz Josef.'

Whereas my father was a high-ranking Austrian official before the First World War, afterwards he was a high official for the Romanian government, since Czernowitz, now spelled Cernauti, was in Romania.

Because he spoke and read so many languages, one of his jobs was to check the newspapers entering the country. When he came across an article that attacked the royal family, he simply blocked that newspaper from getting in. Back then, Romania was under a royal dictatorship, and they didn't want the people to find out that King Carol II had a girlfriend, Lupescu, especially because Prince Michael was still a child.

CAROL MARGULIES was interviewed by Ildiko Molnar and Julia Negrea in Targu Mures in December 2003.



This is the decoration order issued by the Emperor of Austria-Hungary, King of Bohemia and 'Apostolische König von Ungarn' to my father Arthur Margulies in 1915.



This picture of my father was taken in Czernowitz in the 1920s.



This is my wedding certificate from the ghetto.

This is the ketubah [Hebrew: traditional marriage contract] my husband and I received during our wedding in the ghetto in Bershad in 1942.

In July 1941, my family was taken to the ghetto: a few streets were fenced with barbed wire. Life behind those fences was terrible.

In the ghetto, a friend introduced me to Motia Gabis. I didn't like him but my mother adored him, and he was helping us with knitting and selling things. My friend Eva said, 'Why doesn't Beila marry Motia?' I was against it, but Motia said that if I married him I would never regret it, that he would care for me and we would have a good life.



Center: This is me, Beila Gabis, my husband Motia Gabis, and our children. Ternopol, 1968.

I said yes, not because I loved him, but because I felt sorry for him. He was so very happy and told everyone in the ghetto. A rabbi conducted the ceremony and wrote this ketubah on a page from a school notebook.

That ketubah came in handy. It was the only document to prove I had been in the ghetto and now I receive a solid German pension. I certainly couldn't manage with the pension our state pays.

BEILA GABIS was interviewed by Zhanna Litinskaya in Ternopil in 2003.



This is my identification card from the University of Sofia.

Since I was underground, I wasn't a regular student. I had fled to Sofia from my home in Bitola as I was wanted by the police. My parents and two brothers remained in Bitola. And they perished—my parents were deported to Treblinka, my brothers died in the partisans.

I did study medicine and in time I graduated as a pediatrician. I returned to Bitola in 1946 to find our house was destroyed and everything taken. But old neighbors wanted to give me back dishes, plates, clothes, and even furniture. But I couldn't take a thing. Couldn't be haunted that way. I moved to Skopje where I married Dzamila who is also from Bitola.

This photo (left) was taken in 2005. We have spent a lifetime sitting here talking and remembering. I retired in 1984. At first, I went to the clinic every day, then every second day, every third day and now I go once a week on Fridays. I go to bed early but stay awake and read for three hours every night. Right now, I am reading Nietzsche. Dzamila and I speak in Macedonian and in Ladino with each other. My children learned Ladino but they have

forgotten some of it. When they were little, we spoke to them only in Ladino but when they began school they started to forget. Now they speak it as if they are foreigners.



This is a picture of my wife Dzamila Kolonomos and myself on our front porch.

DR AVRAM SADIKARIO was interviewed in Skopje by Rachel Chanin in April 2005.

It says: “The transport planned to depart for Poland on Tuesday, 31 October 1939, will only leave in the next few days. Please prepare to be ready for IMMEDIATE departure as soon as you receive a new notification with the exact date of departure.”

My father and my mother Johanna Schischa [née Friedmann] were deported to the Opole ghetto in [German-occupied] Poland on 26 February 1941 and were murdered a year later in either Belzec or Sobibor concentration camp.

My father had asked a Jewish photographer in the ghetto to take pictures so he could send them to his relatives in Vienna.

I have a lot of letters that my parents wrote to Aunt Fany, Aunt Berta, and my grandmother. Aunt Berta gave me a little leather suitcase when I came back from England, and it included all the documents and letters she had collected before Aunt Fany and my grandmother were deported.

The last letter from my father arrived in December 1941. In May 1942, a deportation transport left from Opole to Belzec concentration camp, and in October for Sobibor concentration camp. I don't know which transport my parents were on.

LILI TAUBER was interviewed by Tanja Eckstein in Vienna in March 2003.



This is the notification from the emigration department of the Jewish Cultural Community in Vienna from 30 October 1939. It is my father Wilhelm Schischa's deportation paper.



This is a picture of my parents in the Opole ghetto in July 1941.



CAFÉ CENTROPA IN
VIENNA AND BUDAPEST
A SOCIAL CLUB FOR OUR INTERVIEWEES



President of the Austrian federal parliament Barbara Prammer with our seniors in 2008

They are the last of their kind, elderly Jews we met with over the years and who shared their life stories and pictures with us. After the Holocaust, every one of them remained in Europe.

Café Centropa began in May 2006, when Tanja Eckstein was finishing the last of her 70 interviews in Vienna and we invited our respondents to join us for a kaffee und kuchen. The American, British, and Israeli ambassadors underwrote the event.

After the ambassadors departed, our guests lingered on and as each of them made their way toward the exit, they asked, “So can we do this again next month?” We could and we did. Since then, we have met eleven times every year,

which means we have served either strudel and cappuccino, or festival meals at Hanukkah, Rosh Hashanah or Passover, one hundred ten times.

Not to be outdone, our Budapest office began holding events for our seniors there, and whether it is in Vienna or Budapest, we ask journalists and novelists, actors and playwrights, politicians and diplomats, to meet with us, read from their books, speak about their work, or perform a musical piece.

Even though our clubs are far smaller these days,, we still want to pay tribute to those who have shared their stories with us and we are now inviting their children to our events. They too have stories to tell, especially about growing up with parents whose lives have been so deeply scarred.



We owe a great deal to Café Centropa’s director, Tanja Eckstein, who is pictured here on the right. On the left is Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund, Austria’s Holocaust restitution agency. Hannah’s organization is Café Centropa’s largest donor.

Between them is Ida Beck, who was 102 years old when this picture was taken in 2024.

All photographs in this section were taken by Ouriel Morgensztern.



President of the Austrian Federal Parliament Wolfgang Sobotka with our seniors in 2024



State Secretary Alexander Pröll hosting a luncheon for our seniors and to honor recently released Israeli/Austrian Hamas prisoner Tal Shoham. In the top photo, Tal is sitting on the right. In the bottom row left is Peter Launsky-Tiefenthal, the Austrian government's hostage negotiator.. To help get Tal (an Austrian citizen) released, Peter came out of retirement and flew to Qatar, Cairo, and Washington. Bottom right (glasses on head) is Daniel Kapp, a Centropa board member and strong advocate for Israel. Daniel was also instrumental in Tal's release.



Scenes from Centropa's seniors events between 2009-2023. In the middle row, two students in the Vienna International School had just asked one of our seniors what she had thought of her teachers sixty years ago. They found out.



Austrian State Secretary Dr Karoline Edtstadler hosted a luncheon for us in 2024.

CAFÉ CENTROPA BUDAPEST



In these two pages, we see photographs taken at our events in Hungary over the last 19 years. On this page, our seniors are touring the synagogue in the southern city of Szeged. All photographs by Robert Bacsi.



Photographs from Café Centropa Budapest, 2007-2024.



Our first Café Centropa coordinator was Dori Sardi, who turned over the project to Dr Szilvi Cingel. Erzi Sandor took over for her in 2012. Andrea Koch is now in charge of our events for Hungarian Holocaust survivors.

CENTROPA'S COVID BOOK CLUBS

OUR COVID BOOK CLUB IN VIENNA

When Covid struck in the spring of 2020, we immediately put a halt to our monthly Kaffee und Kuchen meetings in Vienna and Budapest. For Holocaust survivors with few relatives to care for them, this was especially disheartening.

We have long been on friendly terms with Jewish-owned bookshops in Vienna and Budapest. And with no foot traffic for months on end, this hurt them badly.

Our solution: thanks to donors in the US and Austria, we were able to purchase 100 books each month for ten months and sent them to our club members and a few of their friends. Then the Vienna Jewish youth club went around the city delivering books and special packages for Passover.



OUR COVID BOOK CLUB IN PRAGUE



Thanks to the ever-enterprising Hermina Neuner, who conducted two dozen interviews for us with Holocaust survivors between 2002 and 2007, we reached some 25 elderly Jews in Prague during Covid and sent them books for ten months including five residents of Hagibor, the Jewish old age home.

OUR COVID BOOK CLUB IN BUDAPEST



Our office in Budapest, then led by Bori Pal, made it a point to purchase books from a Jewish-owned bookshop and we sent 25 books to our club members every month. Not only that, but Andris Schweizer, a theology student, visited our club members in their homes to set up zoom links so they could stay in touch with family and friends.

WHEN YOU DIGITIZE MEMORY YOU CAN:

- **create traveling and permanent exhibitions**
- **publish Illustrated books**
- **release podcasts**
- **produce multimedia and documentary films**
- **and create walking tour apps**

When Centropa was founded in 2000, the possibility of typing on glass on your phone was still seven years away and the idea of using that same phone to navigate city streets took even longer. Podcasts came into being a bit earlier but didn't take hold until the end of the decade.

Back in 2000, we could already cast an eye over the technology graveyard of ill-starred products that had passed their sell-by dates: One foundation spent millions of dollars in the 1980s and 1990s to create a library of Jewish-oriented films and sent them in elegant six-foot tall shelves to more than one hundred libraries. The problem: they were on videotape. DVDs haven't lasted that much longer; Blu-ray never got off the ground.

Yet all the technologies named above are but delivery systems; they are not content. And that leads us back to why we never wanted to hem ourselves in by using video in our interviews.

When you do that, your final product is—wait for it—a video. And try as you might, you cannot rub it like Aladdin's lamp and produce something else.

Since we have over 25,000 photographs and 45,000 pages of transcribed stories in our archive, we have been able to follow the newest technologies as soon as they're launched.

Some of the projects we've made are as old-fashioned as hanging a picture on a wall or publishing a beautifully illustrated book. Some could only have been made with the newest technologies, like turning our interviews into multimedia films and walking tour apps.

Digitizing the Centropa archive has allowed us to continue meeting the moment through both the oldest and the newest technologies, and we will continue to do so for years to come.

CENTROPA EXHIBITIONS: FAMILY ALBUMS YOU CAN WALK THROUGH



Love on a Paper Airplane was created from the stories and family pictures of Hungarian Jews who recalled their fathers serving in the First World War. It was shown in nine venues in four cities in Hungary starting in 2014.

Back in 2000, the idea of creating exhibitions based on our archive hadn't even occurred to us, but in 2005, we received a call from the German Embassy in Sofia. They told us that the centenary of Nobel Prize-winning author Elias Canetti (born in the Bulgarian city of Ruse) was approaching, and they had been looking through Centropa's online Bulgarian database. "So couldn't one just print your best pictures and add the stories that go with them?" they asked.

Our eyes widened. So began an exhibition program we have now implemented in Turkey, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland,

North Macedonia, Israel, and Bosnia. Two of the European Union's Capitals of Culture—the Romanian city of Sibiu and the Austrian city of Linz—commissioned us to create exhibitions for them, and the Spanish Foreign Ministry commissioned us to produce an exhibition on all our Balkan Sephardic communities.

Most of our exhibitions continue to travel to schools, libraries, cultural centers, and public spaces in nine countries, and a visit to a Centropa exhibition is like going through a giant family album—one that you actually walk through.



Our largest traveling exhibition:
A Ukrainian Jewish Century.
 Shown here in Babyn Yar in January 2025.



An exhibition of our **Balkan Sephardic stories** that traveled to seven cities in Spain in 2007.



Our exhibition for Linz, the EU Capital of Culture in 2011. A Centropa exhibition based on our Hungarian interviews that has been traveling around the country for nine years.



Our Turkish exhibition saw nine cities in 2007-2012.



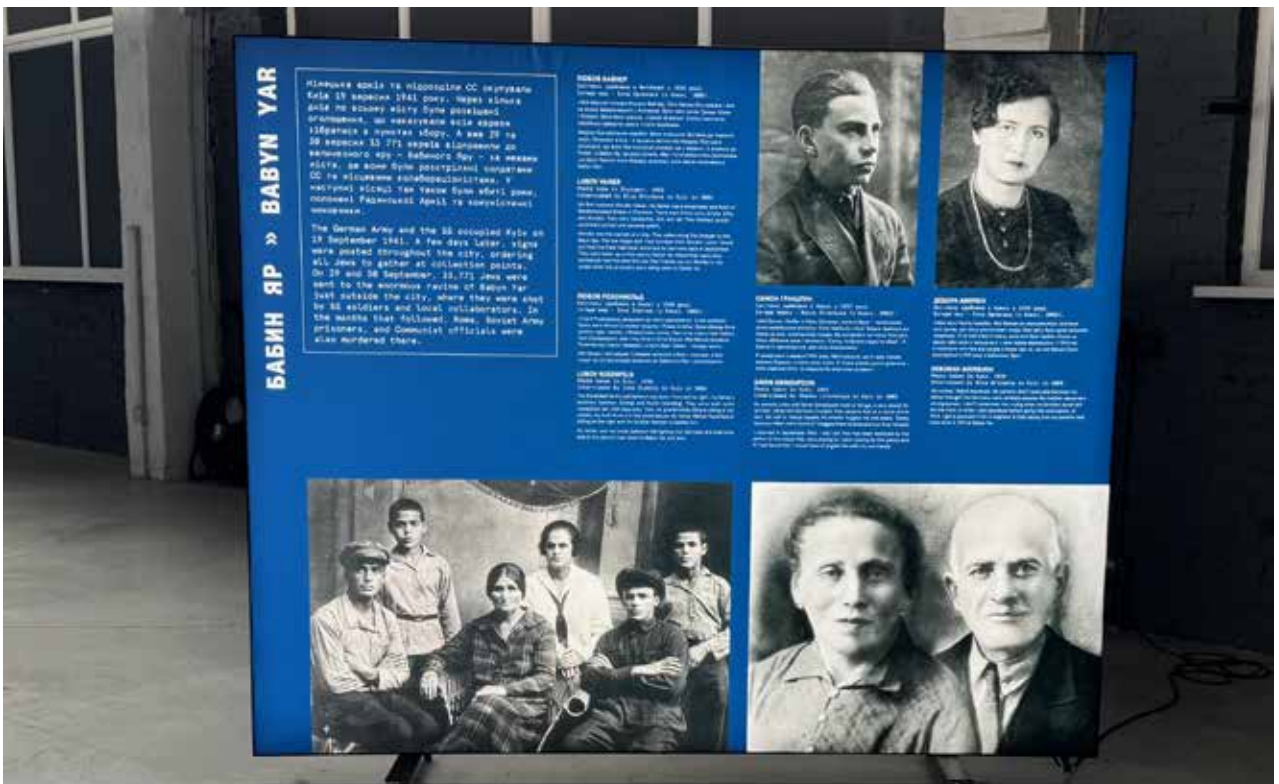
A Bosnian language exhibition visited 14 cities.

OUR TWO PERMANENT EXHIBITIONS



Ten Polish Cities/Ten Jewish Stories in Kraków’s Galicia Jewish Museum. This permanent exhibition shares stories about ten of our Polish interviewees’ lives before the Holocaust, during the horrors, and how they put their lives back together after the war—all in their own words and with the photographs that go with them.

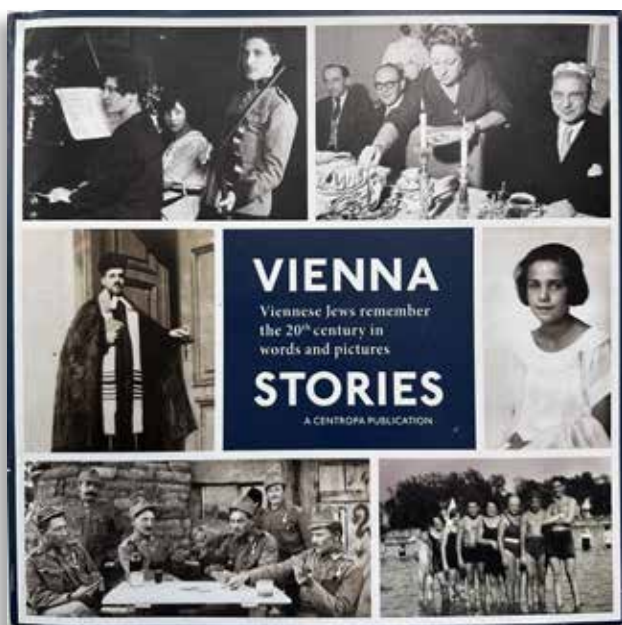
Tens of thousands of visitors have seen the exhibition since its 2021 opening and one visitor from London wrote, ‘I love the way you let the people in the exhibition tell their own stories. And nearly all of them remained in Poland after the war, which casts a very different light on how Jewish stories in Central Europe are usually told.’



25 YEARS, 25 PUBLICATIONS IN 8 LANGUAGES

THE CENTROPA READING ROOM

We publish several types of books in several languages. We have brought out exhibition catalogues in North Macedonia, Poland, Hungary, and Czechia and published a graphic novel in Ukrainian as well as English. Over the years we have released publications in Serbian, Romanian, and Lithuanian.



Our Centropa Jewish Sourcebooks are unique. They are divided by country, and then by categories such as At Work, In School, On Vacation, as well as detailed stories of how our respondents survived the Holocaust, either by fleeing, hiding, or by serving with the Soviet army or the Yugoslav partisans. Since they have become popular with teachers as well as the general public, our sourcebooks all have sections on important dates along with short biographies of regional personalities.

We published English and a German language editions of a book based on our Vienna interviews. *The Standard* newspaper called *Wie Wir Gelebt*

Haben “one of the best books of 2008,” and an accompanying catalogue for our exhibition in Linz in 2011 sold over a thousand copies.





The catalog we prepared for Linz, European Capital of Culture in 2009.



Macedonian Chronicle was published both in Macedonian and in English and was produced to commemorate the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Skopje in 2014.



A collection of personal stories written by Jews in Central and Eastern Europe on the 20th anniversary of the fall of Communism. Edited by Ruth Ellen Gruber.



Centropa Jewish Sourcebooks offer the general public as well as educators an overview of twentieth century Jewish history, culture, and family stories in six countries in which we worked. Our Polish and Hungarian Sourcebooks have provided us with a revenue stream in both countries.

Exhibition catalogs, graphic novels, and literary journals in Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian, Serbian, Ukrainian, and Romanian.



TÖRTÉNETEK
EGY CSALÁDI ALBUMBÓL

STORIES
FROM A FAMILY ALBUM

ZSIDÓ ÉLETTÖRTÉNETEK A 20. SZÁZADBAN
A CENTROPA KIÁLLÍTÁSA

JEWISH LIFE STORIES IN 20TH CENTURY HUNGARY
A CENTROPA EXHIBITION

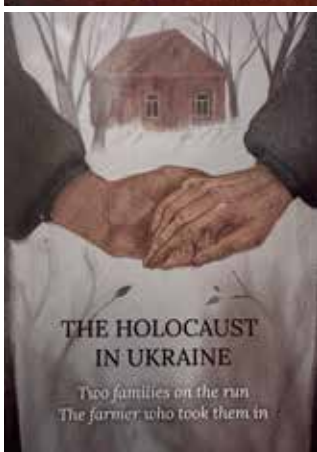
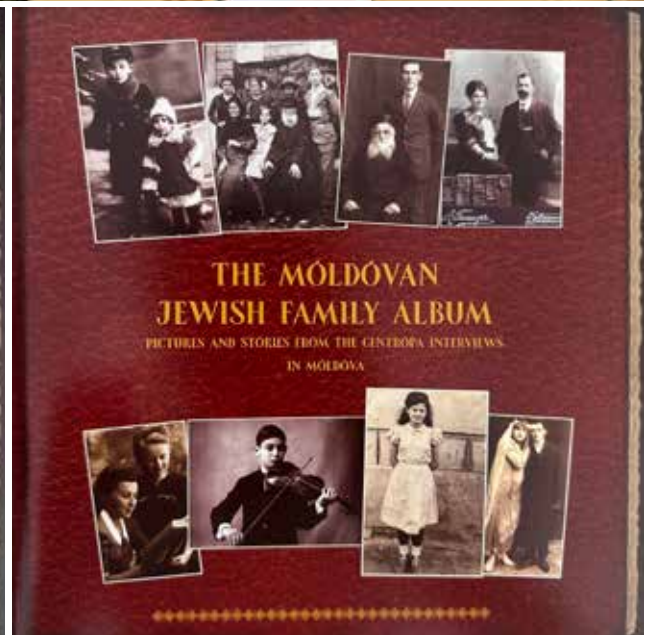
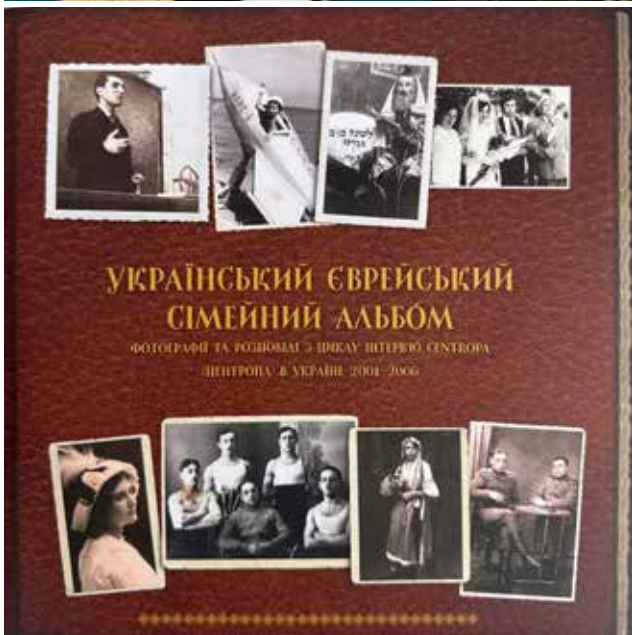




IZGUBLJENI SEFARDSKI SVIJET ZAPADNOG BALKANA

ŽIDOVSKÉ PŘÍČE IZ SPLITA, DUBROVNIKA, BEOGRADA, BITOLE I SARAJEVA

Ediția Centropa i Memorialnog centra Holokasta Židova Makedonija. Izložba je otvorena Međunarodni savez za spajanje na Holokaust te Konferenciji židovskih materijalnih poznavanja od Njemačke.



THE CENTROPA PODCAST

Our podcasts are short audio plays based on our interviews. For instance, Eموke Salzman interviewed a dozen elderly Jews still living in former shtetls in northern Romania. We chose three of the most compelling, edited those stories down to around twenty minutes, then hired first-rate actors to read them for us in English.

We did the same with our Kindertransport stories from Vienna, and we produced a season of podcasts based on personal stories from the

end of the Second World War. In those stories we listen to our interviewees (through actors) tell us about the liberation of the camps, about storming into Berlin, and going home to start life over.

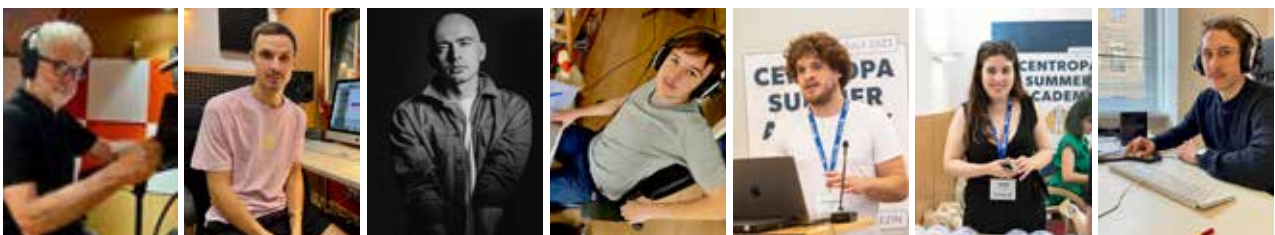
We have a total of 13 podcast seasons, and each one of them has episodes that take us through the 20th century—just as our interviewees lived it—from Lithuanian Jews telling us how they fled the Germans to Ukrainians sharing their stories of growing up in prewar shtetls.



Some of our podcasts are available in German, Serbian, and Ukrainian, although most of them are in English, and we draw from an enormous talent pool of actors in London. From left: Dame Janet Suzman of the Royal Shakespeare Company; Jason Isaacs of *White Lotus*, *Death of Stalin*, *Harry Potter*; Allan Corduner of *Defiance*, *The Woman in Gold*; Sara Kestelman, of the Royal Shakespeare Company; and Elliot Levey of The National Theater, and *Peaky Blinders*.



For the German language versions of our Kindertransport and Kristallnacht seasons, we have drawn from actors in Vienna's Theatre in der Josefstadt. From left: Adi Hirschal, Miguel Herz-Kestrenek, Soma Morgenstern, Viktoria Nikolaevskaja,



Our podcast writers, engineers and producers: from left, Edward Serotta is recording in Kyiv; Den Khrenov, our engineer in Kyiv; Oleh Teteriantnyk in London, and Moritz Boeswirth, Jonathan Schwerts, Tijana Zherajik, and Patrick Schmidt in our Vienna office.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS

We produce two types of films: documentaries and multimedia films based on our interviews.



The majority of Centropa’s multimedia films were produced first by Ulrike Ostermann and then by Wolfgang Els (photo on left). Wolfi also shot and produced our Kindertransport documentary. On the right is the team in Sarajevo that produced our award-winning film, *Bosnia Greet Ukraine*.

have gone viral on YouTube. The best example is our film *El Otro Camino: 1492*, which tells the story of the Sephardim who were expelled from Spain and found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. The film has been seen on YouTube more than 380,000 times.

Since 2011, our films have been selected by 27 international film festivals. No other Holocaust education provider can make such a claim and aside from film festival screenings, several films

Our 16-minute film *A Message from the Future: Bosnia Greet Ukraine*, won Best Short Documentary in film festivals in Palermo, Houston, and Berlin and was shown in ten film festivals.





Up until 2020, a group of Sephardic Jewish women in Sofia, Bulgaria, would meet once each week in the Jewish community center to sing songs, tell jokes, and share stories—in Ladino. Working with the award-winning directors Boris Missirkov and Georgi Bogdanov, we brought these spirited women, all between the ages of 83 and 92, to a sound stage and asked them to sit around a table and sing their favorite traditional songs. We mounted a camera on a circular track and filmed them in their element. This remarkable film was shown in three international film festivals and is still used in Spain and in Sephardic temples in North America today.

AUDIO WALKING TOURS AND WALKING TOUR APPS



As soon as we began interviewing back in 2000, we noticed some of our respondents remembered their childhood through specific addresses—where they went to school, the parks they played in, where dad’s shop was, and the synagogues they attended with their parents.

By 2010, technologies had developed to a point where we could geo-locate these stories into walking tour apps. That is what allowed us to move forward with audio tours in Ukraine, Germany, Poland, and Moldova.



Our most popular audio walking tour, by far, is about Teofila, or Tosia, Silberring, who tells visitors how she grew up pampered and spoiled in an upper-middle-class family in Krakow. Tosia describes her elegant flat, her doting parents, her brother Henryk (“he was so much smarter than me”), and the most handsome boy in the Hilfstein Jewish High School (it was that Rath boy, “absolutely gorgeous”). As they walk into the Temple on Miodowa Street, Tosia tells those listening to the tour that when Henryk was getting so many presents for his bar mitzvah she threw a temper tantrum and her father had to rush out and buy her a bright red scooter. Unspeakable horrors befell Tosia’s family, and those stories are also part of her audio tour.

5 CENTROPA TOOLS FOR THE CLASSROOM

When we started interviewing a quarter of a century ago, we had no intention of working in education, but the first lesson we learned was that teachers are a rather insistent lot. No sooner had our website launched in 2002 than we began receiving emails from the United States, Israel, and Europe, all asking what sort of educational programs we were offering.

The answer: none.

But we were curious enough to ask those who wrote in to tell us what drew them to Centropa. “Stories!” came the answer. “Stories from life that aren’t limited to the Holocaust.” That is when we began meeting teachers in these countries and asking them to help us design the kind of programs they knew their students would respond to, and what was missing from the content they were then using.

By working alongside seasoned educators, we soon developed five tools for the classroom:

- online access to over a thousand personal stories
- multimedia films based on those interviews

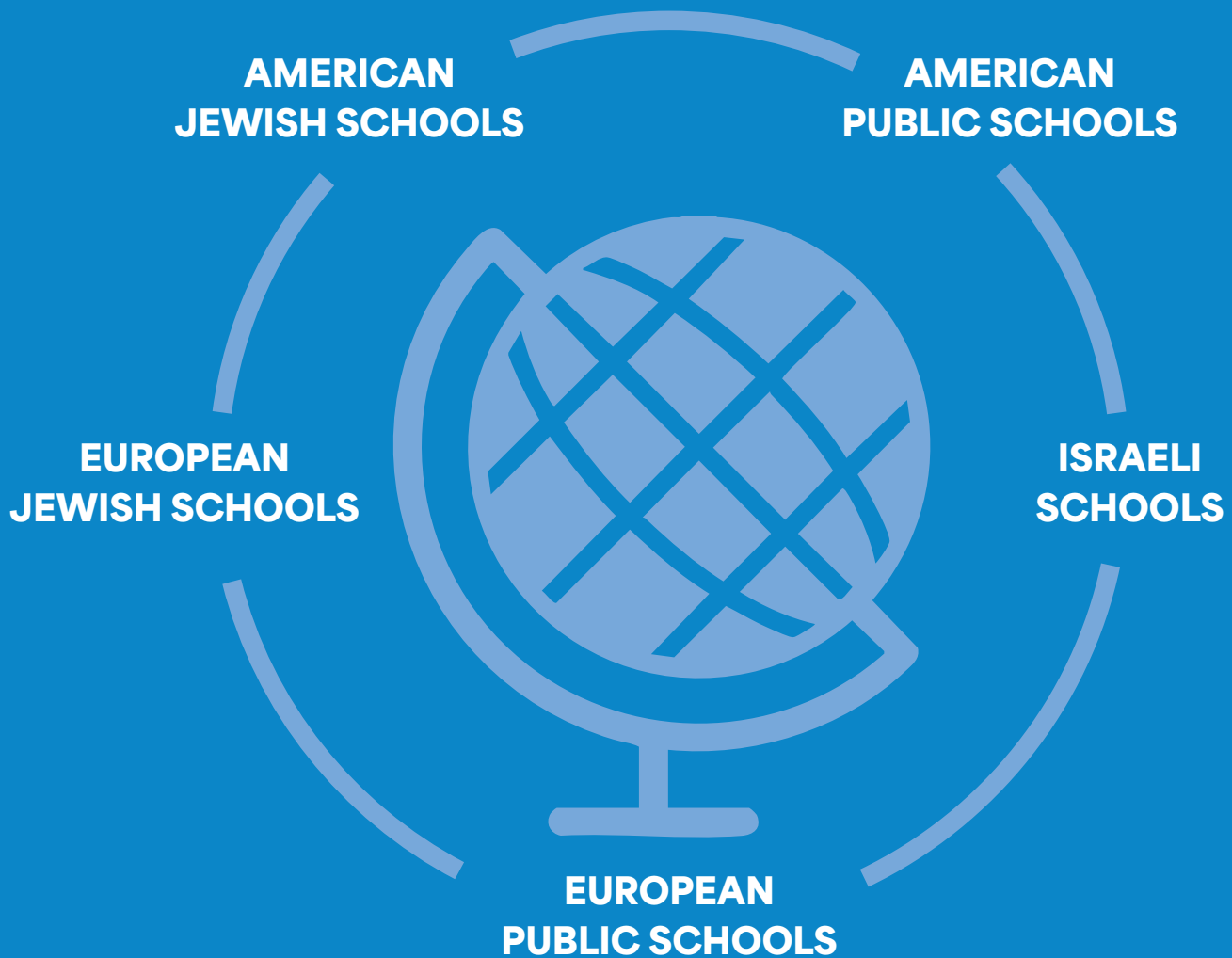
- traveling exhibitions teachers could bring to their schools (or set up in nearby libraries)
- thematic websites such as one devoted specifically to the Kindertransport, the war in Ukraine, or Jewish soldiers in the Soviet Army
- podcasts that focus on personal stories from the shtetls, or about a group of boys who created their own secret magazine, or Sephardic tales from the Balkans (and more).

With those tools now available at the click of a mouse or a swipe of a finger, we began holding afternoon workshops and weekend seminars. That’s where participants could brainstorm with each other on how best to use these stories in class.

That, in turn, led us to start holding international summer academies, to which we bring up to 70 teachers from 15 countries for eight days to the great cities of Central Europe. More than 1,100 educators have attended our Summer Academies, nearly 6,500 have attended our weekend seminars.

25 Years

5 NETWORKS AND 13 SUBNETWORKS



5 NETWORKS



US public schools

"I showed the Centropa video *So that Memory Doesn't Die* (from Poland) to my students today. It all seemed so new and foreign, but they had questions and concerns and wonderment. They also saw a story that is so much more than Holocaust. It is the story of redemption because this Holocaust survivor went back to her town to look for those who had helped her. My kids struggle with a world bigger than their own and to be honest, school is a struggle. But if my students can even begin to see themselves as more than just poor South Carolinians, and can imagine themselves as members of a larger world, then I have taught them something more important than any end of course exam can ever measure."

John Paul Puccinelli, Marion, SC



US Jewish schools

"Yes, Centropa is different, because it does not see itself primarily as a Holocaust educators' seminar. Centropa has a number of foci and Holocaust is only one. I think that if a person were coming to one of your summer programs just for Holocaust education they would be disappointed; Centropa provides so much more."

Shmuel Afek, New York



European Jewish schools

"With your films, websites and exhibitions, my students jump in with both feet (so to speak) and they really do believe that we European Jews have stories far beyond the Holocaust. I also love your student competitions because when I see what my own students have done, I've never not been surprised."

Cecilia Horvath, Hungary



European public schools

"I remember being informed that Centropa people were coming to Belgrade in 2012 so that you could ask us if Centropa had content we Serbian teachers could use. I was impressed that you came to ask! When you produced your film on the Kalef sisters two years later, I knew that I would finally have something I could show to students year after year, and that is what I've been doing. This is a Serbian story that tells of Serbia's Sephardim, their destruction during the war, and how a brave priest saved those two sisters. My students were entranced. And every year I show it, and we discuss it. No wonder it has been shown in so many film festivals."

Lidija Suica, Belgrade



Israeli schools

"The presentation at your summer program by two German teachers, Michael and Alan on "Zahor-Remember" can be used in several classes in schools all over Israel. I would use it for telling the story of the Holocaust because it is so deeply personal and it centers around two brothers from a small German town who miraculously escaped the horrors and then went on to have incredible careers in education and in science. That a teenage Israeli football star is telling us this story on film in Hebrew, German, and in English makes it even more relevant—and gives it enormous appeal."

Sophie Brantman, Hadassa-Neurim

THE FIVE THINGS WE LEARNED FROM TEACHERS IN THE US, EUROPE, AND ISRAEL

Stories are universal and stories connect us all

Although we have produced several documentary films, the heart of our educational program revolves around the multimedia films that highlight the lives of our interviewees. In these films, we meet our respondents as children in the 1920s and follow them into the 21st century. Students immediately realize they're not being lectured to; they are listening to someone (through an actor) tell them about what it was like to live on the front lines of history.



No one teaches a teacher better than another teacher

Teachers know what works with their students, and talk “teacher” in a way that those outside the classroom cannot. When they use our films or websites and find their kids engaged and full of questions, they are eager to sit with other teachers and share their lesson plans. That is why half of our seminars are given over to teacher presentations and sessions where they sit around the table and brainstorm about what works best for them.



Student-driven projects

Students learning passively is never as effective as having them create their own projects—especially when they get to use technologies they live on and through which they express themselves: blogs and reddit, videos and apps, TikTok and X. Do most teenagers today rush to school eager to study 20th century history and literature? Of course they don't. But do they want to create videos, tell stories, express themselves, work in teams, and enter contests? Of course they do. And that is where we come in.



Help students find their own true north

By the time a child reaches their teens, they begin to understand what morals and ethics are and those are the years they earnestly look for real life models. We understand that and Centropa has developed a myriad of projects, films, and programs that show how—against all odds—some people felt compelled to save someone's life during the Holocaust and how, 50 years later, Jews and Muslims stood side by side when Sarajevo was besieged, and how—right now—teenagers in Ukraine are preparing baked goods for soldiers holding off Russia's invasion on the front. Standing up for what's right. It's something we show, not tell. And the kids get it in an instant.



We don't believe in borders

Back in 2007, when we held our first summer program for American teachers coming to Vienna and Budapest, we marveled at how quickly Austrian and Hungarian teachers wanted to work with them and connect their students. Since then, we not only facilitate partnerships between schools, but our EU and German government grants help us bring together more than 200 teenagers from five countries each year to cities like Berlin, Krakow, Budapest, and Warsaw. And when teenagers realize their peers in Ukraine, Hungary, Israel, and elsewhere will watch the videos and walking tour apps they create—and that they can watch films made by those students—borders fall, stereotypes melt.



CENTROPA SUMMER ACADEMIES:

in 19 years, we've brought 1,190 teachers
from 21 countries to Central Europe.



Oranienburgerstrasse synagogue Berlin, July 2024



"You turn cities into classrooms—for teachers, you introduce us to survivors who still live in Europe, and we get to work with teachers from a dozen different countries."

Emily Witty (center) New York. Centropa Summer Academy 2010



Left: Rabbi Neal Scheindlin from Los Angeles and educator JoHanna Potts of Washington, DC, in the Czech town of Trebic in 2010. Right: Daphna Haran of Haifa speaking in Berlin in 2013.

FOUR OF THE MOST PERCEPTIVE COMMENTS TEACHERS HAVE TOLD US ABOUT OUR SUMMER ACADEMY

“The most significant thing I learned at Centropa’s Summer Academy was to keep an open mind. Before going to Berlin, I felt that I already knew a lot about the Holocaust, the Second World War, and the Berlin Wall—because I am a history teacher. The reality is I didn’t know enough, it is never enough. Speaking with educators, professors, and journalists from so many countries and backgrounds was an enormous learning experience that I can only hope to have again.”

Cristiano Alves, Newark, NJ, USA



“In addition to the huge amount of knowledge about Jews in Berlin and the Holocaust that I am bringing home with me, I learned an invaluable lesson: memory is in the small details. Small stones, names on walls, a small memorial in a courtyard – by having these reminders so close to everyday life, it almost dares people REMEMBER the victims and the reasons those memorials are there – and residents get to see them every single day and hopefully THINK about all that was lost. The tour of Jewish Berlin pushed me to the idea of a new task for my students: to design small memorials or signs connected to the history of the part of the city where they live.”

Anna Olenenko, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine



“This has been one of the most inspirational professional development programs of my very long career. Students often regard history as a „one-and-done“ event, with no connection to the present day or their own lives. Centropa provides teachers with resources to help students see that history is all about life and that although the great events may have start-and-stop dates, they produce a ripple that continues to impact us long after the actions have ceased. The fact that you use the story of Holocaust survivors in Bosnia in the 1990s helping a city stand up to hatred isn’t something anyone else offers and no teenager (or adult) cannot fail to be moved by.”

Kelly Stollings, Boone, NC, USA



“After having spent eight days with so many creative and innovative educators, I simply can’t stop thinking how much I would like it if some of the teachers I worked with would be the teachers of my future children.”

Tlalit Kitsoni, Tel Aviv, Israel





Teachers meetings with Holocaust survivors in Vienna, from 2010 through 2024.

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE FOR OUR TEACHERS



Top row: Sarajevo 2014, Budapest 2025. Second row: Berlin 2016. Prague 2019, Krakow 2015, Vienna 2019.

We held our first summer program for teachers in 2007 when we brought nine American teachers to Vienna and Budapest. During their visit they met and brainstormed with their Austrian and Hungarian counterparts. Following the trip, we heard how they were staying in touch with each other during the school year. We knew about educational visits to Europe, but we had not heard of teachers from different countries sharing ideas and forming partnerships. We decided to act.

The following summer we brought 16 teachers from four countries to Berlin. Bulgarian, German, American, and Romanian educators started working together. Then in 2009, 24 teachers from six countries came with us to Frankfurt and the Mosel River Valley. In 2010, our board member Daniel Kapp in Vienna secured \$60,000 from the Austrian finance ministry that allowed us to bring 50 teachers from ten countries to Vienna. And we have been expanding ever since, bringing together teachers, museum educators, and

curriculum specialists from three continents—all so they can explore the great cities of Central Europe, visit Holocaust-related sites with historians, and brainstorm with each other on how to bring 20th century history to life for their students. In Vienna, Budapest, and Prague, they have met Holocaust survivors.

Since the majority of our participants are history or social studies teachers, our eight days together covers a great deal more than the Holocaust. In Vienna, we tour great art museums; in Berlin, we discuss the Cold War with historians; in Sarajevo, we stand in the footsteps of the Austrian Archduke's assassin; and in Budapest, among other sites, we visit the memorial park to Communist-era statues.

There really is nothing like place-based education and it works even better when our Israeli, Polish, German, Ukrainian, and American teachers connect their students during the school year.



Top row: shoe memorial at the Danube in Budapest; Birkenau, 2015. Second row: Theresienstadt, 2016. Third row: Holocaust Memorial Berlin, 2008; Ravensbrück concentration camp, 2024.

HISTORICAL SITES AND MUSEUMS



Top row: Archduke Franz Ferdinand's car in Vienna, 2014; Klimt painting in Belvedere Museum, 2018. Second row: Fabian Ruehle at the site of the Berlin Wall, 2022; the Centrum Judaicum, 2013. Third row: Prague Jewish community center, 2013; Spanish synagogue in Prague, 2023.

TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER, FORMING NETWORKS



Photos this page taken in Mannheim, Frankfurt, Berlin, Terezin

THE CENTROPA JEWISH NETWORK



When Communism fell in Central Europe in 1989, there was exactly one Jewish school in the entire region: in Budapest, and it had 12 students in all 12 grades. A decade later there were a dozen Jewish community schools and by now there are more than 35 in Central Europe, the Scandinavian countries, the Baltics, Greece, Turkey, and the former Soviet Union.

All of these schools have been keen to hire the best teachers and climb the ladder of academic excellence. That is what parents are always looking for. But there’s another reason these schools are attracting so many students: antisemitism.

They want to send their children where they know they’ll be safe, and that is why Jewish schools have seen a spike in enrollment: Jewish schools in Greece have seen a surge in applications from Israeli families who have resettled in Athens and Thessaloniki. In Odesa and Kyiv, Jewish schools have proven especially welcoming to families that have moved from eastern Ukraine.

CJN—the Centropa Jewish Network—was launched in 2011 to meet the moment. Since then we have held 14 professional development weekend seminars for almost 400 teachers

working in 28 Jewish schools and these seminars have taken place in Berlin, Warsaw, Krakow, Frankfurt, Prague, Budapest, Istanbul, and Thessaloniki. Teachers from Helsinki, Amsterdam, Bucharest, Barcelona, Rome, and other cities get together once each year to brainstorm with each other, compare lesson plans and then race home to create joint projects connecting their students.

Dr Maria Lieberman directs the program with the able help of Eszter Rozsa and Sara Szilagyi. All three women hail from families that went through the hell of the Holocaust and are themselves deeply involved in Jewish life in Budapest, the largest and liveliest Jewish community in Central Europe.

Over the past few years we have added Israeli schools to our network and we partner with the National Library of Israel and its education team.





These seminars that bring Israeli and European teachers together are like magic. It makes us better teachers, expands our knowledge and experiences. It isn't that we learn how to use Centropa films and specific sites, it's that we learn side by side with teachers from Europe. Israeli teachers don't have this kind of opportunity. Thank you for making this happen!"

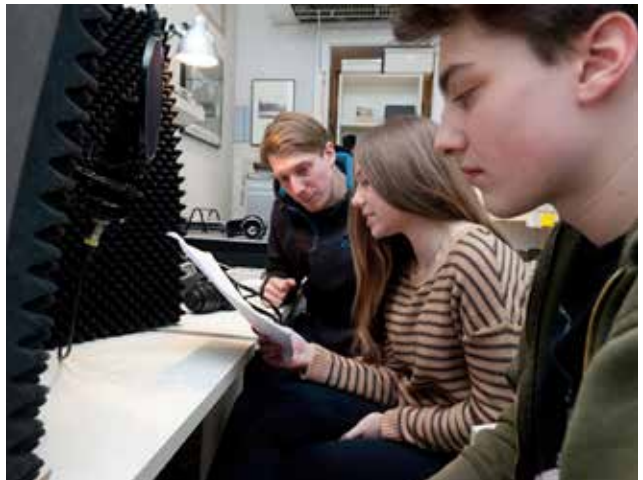
Orit Berlin, Amal Hadera School, Israel



"I used to think that students needed to know dates, events, names. But with your films, your special websites, your exhibitions, my students are first of all enchanted, and very quickly they get to see that European Jews had stories far beyond what others offer us: how they did sports, how they loved, married, where they traveled, what they read... I also love to take part in student competitions. These projects will be and are the significant keystones in my school."

Cecilia Horvath, Lauder School, Hungary





CJN seminars. Photos taken in Berlin, Frankfurt, Budapest and Vienna.

centropa

Preserving Jewish memory - Bringing history to life

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PAST SEMINARS

Taskbar area showing various application icons including Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, and Microsoft Word. The system tray on the right displays the date and time as 11:51 on 20/02/20.

lenovo

CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

In today's horrifically polarized world, here's a novel idea: build bridges, not walls. Cross-border programs for students and teachers in Europe and Israel. How Centropa is reshuffling the 21st century teachers and teens with a turbulent 20th century.



"My main goal for coming to this seminar was to find a teacher in another country I could connect with. And I did! Malte Knapp from Essen and I are now planning to twin our classes. First, we're going to have our students meet online and we're going to assign short readings by young German novelists and young Polish writers. Then we're going to use Centropa interviews to connect them to their countries' Jewish histories. Finally, the students in Essen will make a short video tour of the Jewish sites of their city and ours will do the same."

*Marta Wasilewska,
Bydgoszcz, Poland*

Just as today's teenagers do not rely on paper and pencils to express themselves, their teachers know that learning is hardly confined to the classroom. Teaching needs to be a lot more interactive and innovative than that.

With support from the European Union, the EVZ Foundation, the Claims Conference and the German Foreign Office, our boldest programs over the past decade have to do with bringing teachers from different countries together to brainstorm, then to follow up with their students—all while they walk together through Warsaw, Berlin, Krakow, Tarnow, Belgrade, and Budapest. This is far more than a Holocaust lesson. Our archive provides stories that show how Jews were our neighbors and were (and still are)

just like us. Kids today are smart. They know how to connect the dots. And when they tour a city, get to know Jewish families while using their phones and listen to their stories, they understand what "othering" does to our neighbors and to our societies. Which is where antisemitism flourishes.

In any given year, we have more than 300 teenagers from Serbia, Greece, Israel, Germany, Poland, and Ukraine meeting in different cities to listen to and create their own podcasts along with their own videos, websites and apps—all while they look for ethical models every teenager needs, especially in the fractious times we live in now. Following are a few of our most exciting cross-border programs.

GERMANS, POLES, AND ISRAELIS DISCUSSING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO RIGHT?



Photographs from youth exchanges in Berlin and Mannheim

You'd be amazed. Just bring them together, walk the streets (and along railroad tracks) where history happened, and then ask teachers from each country to describe how the Holocaust is taught in their country. Of course differences will emerge, since every country sees the Second World War through its own tragedies. This is where both teachers and students talk about facing the

past, as painful as that might be while creating a platform for understanding how others see history.

When we are in Berlin, we do not limit our programs to the Holocaust. Here is how one Israeli educator responded to a week in Germany's capital city.



“On the one hand, visiting the enormous Soviet War Memorial in Berlin helped me better understand the powerful subject of memory, of victory, and sacrifice—the scope of the war in the eyes of the Soviets. How one man's life is meaningless in the eyes of the many. On the other hand, at the Berlin Wall Memorial I learned quite the opposite, because the experience of being there focuses on the ecosystem surrounding the wall where these buildings once stood, and that the building of that hideous wall literally tore them apart. Yet no one who comes here does not understand the message: where walls are built, the human spirit will always look for a way to bring them down or at least dig under them.”
Amos Raban, Tel Aviv



Photos this page taken in Mannheim and Berlin by Shendi Copitman



Photos this page taken in Berlin by Wojciech Wojtkielewicz in 2024. Students from Greece, Serbia, Poland, Germany and Ukraine.

HOW EUROPEAN JEWISH CEMETERIES ARE BEING USED AS CLASSROOMS



The great Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe are gone now, wiped out by the Germans and their local accomplices and then culturally throttled by the Communists. In the Lithuanian town of Siauliai, pictured here, there are almost no Jews left to meet with school teachers and students, and the story repeats itself throughout the region, from the Baltic to the Aegean.

With few Jews to meet with and precious few synagogues to visit, there are, however, thousands of local Jewish cemeteries. While many are abandoned and forlorn, local town councils and

regional governments have come to understand that wherever possible, these cemeteries should be preserved. And they've been doing it.

The ESJF—the European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative—has been mapping and fencing cemeteries throughout Europe and over the past few years Centropa's Hamburg team, led by Fabian Ruehle and in cooperation with the Foundation for Jewish Culture, has organized seminars and field trips for teachers and students in Croatia, Serbia, Germany, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, and Lithuania.



"I realized how different it is to simply talk about something compared to actually seeing it. There is a certain spirit of the place, a genius loci, that enhances the entire experience. When students visit graves—tangible representations of the Jewish population—they gain a deeper understanding of what life was like in those towns previously and how integral the Jewish community was to the overall mosaic of the area."
Soňa Grestyová, Slovakia (pictured left)



“I learned so much—not just about Jewish cemeteries, but how to actually use them with my students! We have so many of them in the Chernihiv region. Sure, I have seen them before, but for the first time in my life, I was trained to work with epitaphs on Jewish tombstones. From now on, I am going to teach my students to respect and embrace our region’s Jewish heritage. And our first stop was the main Jewish cemetery. We were all especially moved by this grave: Zalman Isakovitch Kogan, who was born in 1896, died in 1962, and was a beloved father and husband. Now my students want to learn more about him and about our Jewish stories.”

Nina Avramenko, Ukraine (pictured right)



Pictured above left: in the Jewish cemetery in Krakow; right: in the Hungarian city of Szombathaly.
Bottom row: in the Jewish cemetery of the Croatian city of Karlovac.

CENTROPA'S BALKAN NETWORK:

bringing teachers and students together from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia



“Our students need to realize that there are other cultures living in their country. Having resources to show them and make them understand that diversity is important is of great value for teachers. I’ve been using the films and photos from the first day I was introduced to Centropa and my students love them. But other teachers and their experiences are what makes Centropa’s seminars amazing. We get to learn from each other and, in the end, we have developed lesson plans that we can use when we lack inspiration.”

Branka Dimevska Koceva, history and civic education teacher, Skopje, Macedonia



“I will use your movie *Survival in Sarajevo* with my eighth grade students when teaching about the wars in ex-Yugoslavia in the 1990’s. This topic is extremely sensitive, as you well know. But in this film we see Serbs and Croats, Muslims and Jews, all working to help their city. That is such a different approach and I believe my students will accept your message.”

Dragana Benic, history teacher at primary school “Kosta Trifkovic,” Novi Sad, Serbia





Centropa began working in North Macedonia and Serbia in 2011. With our partners in the Holocaust Museum of Macedonia and the Education Ministry of Serbia, we soon expanded into Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this region, we partner with the education ministries of Serbia, Croatia, and North Macedonia. In Bosnia, the education ministry of the canton of Sarajevo uses Centropa content throughout Sarajevo, Mostar, and Zenica.

We have three compelling stories to tell: that of the legacy of the Spanish-speaking Sephardic Jews of the Balkans, the story of the horrors of their destruction during the Holocaust and

how, 50 years later, Sarajevo's Jews tried to help everyone they could when their city was besieged by the Bosnian Serbs.

The ice is still thin when it comes to national narratives, yet we all should know by now that teachers are by nature an optimistic lot. We all know the story of Don Quixote charging at windmills; Centropa works with Don Quixotes all over the Balkans and they are not slowing down at all. That is why more than 320 teachers and curriculum experts have attended our seminars in Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Skopje, Bitola, and Rijeka.



We can only accomplish as much as we do in the Balkans because of our dedicated coordinators, all of whom answer to Fabian Ruehle and our Germany team. Pictured above, starting top left is Damjan Snoj of Slovenia, Tomi Simic of Croatia. In the second row, Jelena Krucicanin of

Serbia, and Daniela Sterjova of North Macedonia. Third row, Loranda Militec, a teacher-trainer in Croatia, Anna Kozemjakin of Bosnia, and Biljana Stojanovic, formerly of the Education Ministry of Serbia.



Holocaust memorial in Belgrade



To state the obvious, teenagers are very much at home on their phones and we have migrated several of our programs to apps so that students can create their own walking tours, listen to historical podcasts, and then explore their towns' Jewish history on their own. We have three traveling exhibitions about Jews in the Balkans and above we see student guides in the North Macedonian town of Prilep.

GREECE

a Jewish community almost wholly obliterated in the Holocaust



For more than a hundred years, the Molho Bookstore in Thessaloniki was a pillar of the city's cultural life, although few of its customers knew that the two most dramatic stories belonged to its owners, Solon Molho and his wife Renee Saltiel-Molho.

The 18-minute film we made about this family was narrated by their daughter, Nina, and it went

on to be selected by six international film festivals. *A Bookstore in Six Chapters* is now used throughout Greece, and Nina narrates the film in Greek, English, and Ladino.

We have now conducted ten seminars in Greece for more than 300 classroom teachers, in cooperation with the Jewish Museum of Greece and the Ministry of Education.



"Centropa films work because they don't use Jewish family stories to subtly criticize non-Jewish Greeks for not having saved them; they present the lives of Jewish families in ways that raise the students' interest and captures their attention. The films express the drama of the Holocaust without including violent scenes. Without excessive sentimentalism, your films offer students the space they need to develop their thoughts so as to overcome the stereotypes that have been built up in their minds. As a teacher, my main aim is to teach anti-fascism, of which antisemitism is an integral part. You help me do this."

Katerina Efraimidou, Thessaloniki





HUNGARY

turning Hungarian teenagers into stakeholders
in their country's Jewish heritage



“I used your exhibition based on your Hungarian interviews along with the ideas we created in the seminar. My students and I used photos and stories from your website. By the time we finished, my students used the sources of the website better than I ever did. They were showing me stuff but the most important thing about this: they wanted to look through your site. They were learning from it and finding that its graphics, its photos, and its films were talking directly to them. This is the best way to teach the Holocaust because it’s so much more than that. It’s Hungarian history, told in Jewish stories.”
Eszter Matus, Budapest





Centropa was founded in Vienna and Budapest in 2000 and thanks to the pre-Orban government, we received substantial funding to carry out our interviewing in Hungary and create a Hungarian language website. That put our content almost immediately at the fingertips of students and teachers which is why we made our first forays into education in Hungary and teachers from around the country gladly offered their advice and feedback.

Since 2005 we have held more than 30 half-day workshops and weekend seminars throughout the country for a total of 490 teachers. Working

together, we have created innovative projects and programs that students adore—and learn from.

Pictured above we see students tracing the steps of some of the world's most famous 20th century photographers, who just happened to be Hungarian and Jewish. Robert Capa, André Kertész, László Moholy, Nagy, Martin Munkácsi, and Imre Kinszki lived and worked here. All during the school year teenagers are learning about photography, art, Holocaust, and history and are invariably inspired to create their own projects.

MOLDOVA

an exhibition and films that bring 20th century Jewish history to teachers and students alike



In 2005, Centropa's interviewers visited a dozen elderly Holocaust survivors living in Chisinau (Kishinev) to hear from them about the city's bustling pre-war Jewish life, as well as how each of them survived unspeakable horrors carried out by the Romanians and the Germans during the Holocaust.

Our coordinator in Moldova, Ion Ungureanu, works closely with Irina Shikhova, a museum

coordinator, and together we have held nine seminars for some 240 teachers in Moldova.

Our traveling exhibition, A Moldovan Jewish Family Album, has been traveling to schools, libraries, and universities throughout the country. It is the first time that personal stories of Jewish families have been brought to life in this way.





Pictured above: high school students opening our Moldovan exhibition. Irina Shikhova, second row right, has been an invaluable resource to us—as has our coordinator, Ion Ungureanu, bottom row left.

LITHUANIA



"I want to thank you for the seminar and especially for the film you made on Ranana Malkhanova. Her story of surviving the Holocaust with her mother meant a great deal to my students, but the film gave us something unique: we got to follow Ranana all the way up until today. A remarkable woman who remained with us until just last year [2019]."
Name withheld on request.





Centropa began working in Lithuania in 2004, when our interviewers spent the next 18 months interviewing 29 elderly Jews still living in six towns and cities throughout the country.

We digitized nearly 500 of their old family pictures and transcribed 840 pages of testimonies. These interviewees, most of whom are no longer alive, were truly the last great Yiddish-speaking story tellers, although their interviews were conducted mostly in Russian and translated into English. They regaled our interviewers with stories of growing up in shtetls and big cities, fleeing from the Germans, and starting life over.

A US State Department grant in 2011 allowed us to create a traveling exhibition of stories and pictures taken from our Lithuanian database, as well as produce a multimedia film that told the story of Ranana Malkhanova who was saved by a Lithuanian family during the Holocaust.

Once we had an exhibition to send around to schools and a Lithuanian language film for teachers to use online, we began holding seminars in Vilnius, Kaunas, and other cities. Since 2013, we have held 16 seminars for 310 Lithuanian teachers.

We also brought 14 of our most innovative Lithuanian teachers to Centropa's annual summer academies over the past decade. They have become our best multipliers, continually bringing new teachers to our programs.

We owe a special debt of thanks to the Sholem Aleichem School in Vilnius, the Lithuanian Jewish community, and the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation in Lithuania.



CENTROPA IN GERMANY



We have been working in schools throughout Germany since 2010. And while students watch documentaries on the Holocaust, visit concentration camps and read relevant texts, we offer something unique. Michael Heitz, a history teacher in the town of Sinsheim in the state of Baden-Wurttemberg, had

already produced a film and published a book about two brothers, Menachem and Fred Mayer, who managed to flee from Nazi Germany. Both of their parents were murdered. After the war, the boys emigrated to Israel and the United States and had stellar careers in education and science.



To narrate a new documentary that Wolfgang Els produced for us, Michael asked one of the football (soccer) players in the Hoffenheim Academy. That 18-year old was Ilay Elmekies, an Israeli who gave us an impassioned reading in German, in Hebrew, and in English. We called the film *Zahor*, the Hebrew word for “remember”, and more than 100 teachers use the film regularly in Germany. It is almost as popular in Israel. Students love this dramatic film not only for its story, but also because a teenager is telling it to them. Since releasing the film in 2014 we’ve translated it into five other languages and *Zahor* has won several awards from the German Football Association.

KEEPING ALIVE THE STORIES OF THE LOST WORLD OF GERMAN JEWRY



Hillel Kempler, Berlin



Herbert Lewin, Osterode



Rosa Rosenstein, Berlin



Erna Goldmann, Frankfurt

They were born in the last years of what had been one of the greatest Jewish communities in the world, and they were lucky enough to flee for their lives while most of their families did not. These are some of the interviews we draw on for our

educational projects and programs in Germany. None of the four people you see above returned to Germany. Two made their home in Israel, two others settled in Vienna.

They have crisp British accents. But they were born in Germany and Austria. Our Kindertransport film



Top row: Hans and Kurt Goldschmid, Kurt Marx, Ruth Jacobs, Elisabeth Marcuse. Below: Gerda Svarny, Ruth Grant, Eli Abt



Between November 1938 and September 1939, around 10,000 Jewish children from Berlin, Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Vienna, Innsbruck, and Prague were taken to train stations by their parents and rushed to safety in England. Few of those children ever saw their parents again. In 2019, Centropa interviewed a dozen of the “Kinder” in London and in Leeds. The film was shot and edited by Wolfgang Els and was produced for the Claims Conference.



TEENAGERS THROUGHOUT GERMANY ARE TURNING CENTROPA'S JEWISH STORIES INTO THEIR OWN.



Germany is a federalized country with sixteen states and Holocaust education requirements vary in every one of them. As stated in the previous pages, we believe in empowering

students so that they will watch our films and read our online interviews, then use their own creativity to produce apps, graphic novels, and podcasts that they share with each other and their families.



In the previous pages, we've shown how we create student buy-in to our programs and that is because Centropa is entirely story-based. We also provide critically important historical context, and teachers turn to us because we introduce their kids to people like Menachem and Fred from Hoffenheim, Hillel Kempler and

Rosa Rosenstein from Berlin and others. We give history a personal face and a story, and that means the critical juncture for us is working closely with classroom teachers, because they are the ones who have to stand in front of their students every day and it is our teachers who open minds and touch hearts.



ISRAELI SCHOOLS

presenting an entire century of European Jewish life
to Israeli students



“Centropa makes history interesting for teenagers because you bring history to life in ways others don’t. Just mention Holocaust to my students and they are going to say, ‘oh no, not again!’ But your films make students watch and listen and they end up showing empathy for the people in them. The films are a trigger to start important discussions, and for them to create projects afterwards. I know that because as soon as I’ve shown your films, my students have wanted to launch their own projects to help the needy.”

Victor Gurevich, Givat Brenner Regional High School, Rehovot





Centropa began working in Israeli schools in 2011 and since then we have added over 80 public schools to our network.

We have conducted 21 afternoon workshops and weekend seminars for 230 teachers, and we have brought 120 Israeli educators to our international summer programs in Europe.

We also created two traveling exhibitions: one is based on our Polish interviews that has been

traveling Israel since 2012. The other is our newly printed Ukrainian exhibition.

We are proud indeed to be cooperating with the National Library of Israel and the Ministry of Education in our programs throughout the country, and we have now expanded our reach through a Hebrew language website and Hebrew language multimedia films.

POLAND

Holocaust education and Jewish heritage in what had been the largest Jewish community in the world



“The movie about Teofila Silberring made quite an impression on my students, and fellow teachers. Some even cried. Others took notice of the words Tosia’s father told her, “always keep learning, Tosia!” The idea that you have to be courageous and strong in any circumstance really affected the girls. What made the story so moving is that the film began long before the Holocaust and then took us all the way until 2010. And in that time, we watched as this spoiled rich girl (her description, not mine!) survived hell, and then went looking for everyone who helped her when she was in the ghetto, so she could help them. This is not the kind of story we’re often given when it comes to Jews in Poland.”

Jacek Jaros, Kielce





When Communism collapsed in Poland in 1989, the conventional wisdom was that with its industry woefully outdated and a huge percentage of its population living on smallholder plots, experts felt Poland would spend decades as an economic basket case.

So much for conventional wisdom.

Poland has been and remains the bright economic star of the region, a part of the European Union and a proud and forceful member of NATO.

Step into any public school in Poland today and you will find engaged, ambitious students and dedicated teachers—the backbone of Poland’s rise in the international academic PISA rankings. In fact, Poland’s academic levels are now higher than Germany’s and Israel’s in science, math, and reading.

It is no different with how Polish teachers and students are interested in learning about their country’s Jewish history. In our network, only Ukraine has shown a stronger commitment and

in both countries, we see teachers and students keen to learn about the Holocaust and also how Jews lived before the destruction.

Centropa has now conducted more than 30 half-day workshops and weekend seminars in Poland since 2011: in Bialystok, Warsaw, Krakow, Lodz, Lublin, Wroclaw, and Tarnow. More than 480 teachers attended and we have an active and committed network of some 190 Polish teachers. We have also brought 27 Polish educators to our international Summer Academies, and nearly all of them have established partnerships with high schools in Ukraine, Israel, Germany, Serbia, and the United States.

We have given Polish teachers the tools they need to bring Jewish history to life for today’s teenagers: multimedia films and podcasts in Polish; a traveling exhibition that has now been shown in 55 schools and libraries since 2012; and we have a permanent home with our friends in Krakow’s Galicia Jewish Museum that has become a Must See for Polish school groups visiting Krakow and nearby Auschwitz.

CENTROPA IN UKRAINE. DEFIANCE.



In this longest section of our 25th anniversary book, we pay tribute to Ukrainian teachers. We have conducted eight seminars since 2023 and although 188 teachers attended, nearly 700 wanted to come.

Several foundations play a major role in our work Ukraine: The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation of Los Angeles; the Kronhill-Pletka Foundation of New York; Bader Philanthropies of Milwaukee; the Jack Buncher Foundation of Pittsburgh; the EVZ Foundation of Berlin; and the German and Austrian Foreign Ministries. They make our seminars and exhibitions possible, they cover staff costs in Ukraine.

The Mandel Foundation of Cleveland has gone one step farther: they provide us with funds

to regularly support more than 150 Holocaust educators.

You are looking at one of them above. Maryna Megelbey was living much too close to the front to continue in-person lessons. Not only that, Maryna and her husband and in-laws are beekeepers and have loaded up their hives and taken off from one village to another, often protected by Ukrainian soldiers as they fled.

Despite being on the run, despite teaching online, despite having no fixed home, Maryna was awarded History Teacher of the Year in 2025 and she sent us the photo with President Volodymyr Zelensky.



“We teachers and staff miss our children very much. The lyceum seems to have frozen; an entire building is waiting for its students, for the wonderful loud noise they make in our hallways. Now it is silent.”

Liudmyla Pospelova teaches in Bohdanivka, a remote village of 2,000 that’s a four hour drive north of Odesa and it can only be reached by a ferry across the River Bug. 140 students are enrolled in her school, but they only meet once every ten days.

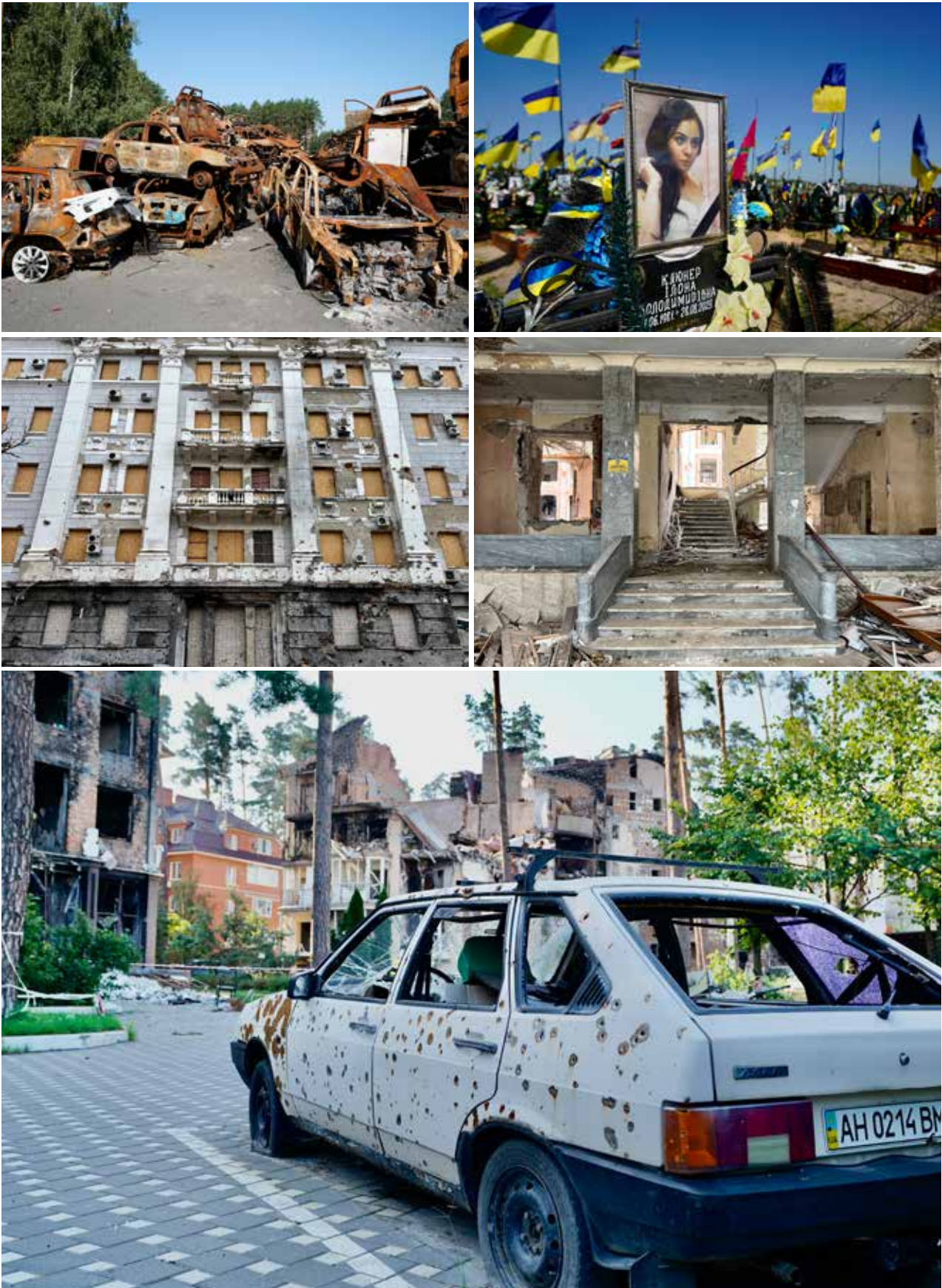


Bohdanivka was the largest site of mass murder in Transnistria in 1941 and 1942, and the shootings were carried out by the Romanian army. Liudmyla’s students hold memorial services there regularly, as otherwise, almost no one else ever visits the site.



Lubov Borts (top) is from Mariupol. When the Russians swept into the city in March 2022, she and her daughter Inna Zataloka (pictured below) went into hiding with Lubov's sister-in-law, Elvira Borts, a Holocaust survivor. Inna's son Mark was serving with the Azov Brigade and held out inside the Azov steel plant until May, when they surrendered to the Russians. After hiding for 50 days, a friend from Kyiv found a way into Mariupol and brought Lubov, Elvira, and Inna to safety. In September 2022, Mark was traded as a prisoner and I took this picture near a medical rehab center in Kyiv in December 2022. Mark now directs a drone school.

WHAT THE WAR IS DOING TO US.



Top row: Irpin/Bucha, where families fleeing invading Russians in February 2022 were machine-gunned in their cars, August 2022. Cemetery in Chernihiv, May 2024. Second row: Kharkiv, March 2023. Bottom row: Irpin, August 2022.

CENTROPA MEETS THE MOMENT. WHAT WE'RE DOING IN UKRAINE.



In the first weeks of the war, schools had not fully fitted-out their cellars. This was taken in a school in Kyiv in March 2022.

We began working in Ukraine in 2001, when Professor Leonid Finberg assembled a team of interviewers, coordinators and translators for our oral history project, The Library of Rescued Memories. By 2009, his assistant Marina Karelstein and her colleagues had interviewed 264 elderly Jews still living in nine cities and digitized nearly 3,000 of their old family pictures and personal documents.

After they completed those interviews, Fabian Ruehle, Centropa's European director (and our incoming executive director) took over. Fabian found the funding to take those interviews and turn them into thematic websites, multimedia films, and two traveling exhibitions, all of which were tailor-made for Ukrainian schools. Then Fabian set up a series of six seminars and between 2016 and 2020 and nearly 450 teachers attended. But we had to turn away another 400 due to lack of budget and space. Within weeks, schools began using our content and holding competitions on making the best videos, websites, and apps about Jewish history.

Then came Covid, followed by 2022. No sooner had the full-scale invasion of Ukraine begun that February than we were emailing our teachers to tell them we were thinking about them. We helped several of our teachers leave the country through Romania and Poland. A few weeks later, American donors sent us funds so we could make direct bank transfers to 150 of our most active Holocaust teachers—12 of whom live in what are called red zones, 10 of whom actually live in Russian-occupied cities. They had been fired for refusing to teach that the Ukrainian government was filled with Nazis.





Even in wartime, Centropa continues to provide Ukrainian teachers and students with what they need: multimedia films, thematic websites, walking tour apps, and traveling exhibitions. Since 2023, I have helped lead eight weekend seminars for teachers in Odesa, Lviv (twice), Rivne, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Kyiv (twice).

How do we reach so many teachers and why do they like Centropa so much? We start with our dedicated coordinators.

Pictured above is Andrii Koshelnyk, a history teacher from Kyiv. He is pictured here with his

wife Oksana, also a teacher. Andrii has been coordinating for Centropa since 2019 and when he was called up to serve in 2023, we kept him on our payroll. From the front or on leave, Andrii still oversees lesson plans and provides our teachers with feedback. As interim coordinator, we hired a highly innovative English teacher, Olha Taratula, who lives in Sambir. Olha has recruited and organized eight seminars since 2023, followed up with more than 240 teachers, and has been sending around the new version of our traveling exhibition to schools, libraries, and cultural centers throughout Ukraine.

Children under fire: Schools in Kyiv, Chernivtsi, Irpin, Lviv



Top row: high school in Irpin and Chernivtsi. Bottom row: elementary school in Irpin.

Photos taken between 2022 and 2024. Every child you see here has been living under the threat of invasion—and worse. They scurry into basements with their moms or with teachers. Often their dads are on the front lines. The city of Irpin was taken by the Russians in February 2022 and everyone fled. The Ukrainian army took back the city in May 2022. Some of the kids in the photo upper left told me they literally lost their ability to speak for several months. Keep in mind that Vladimir Putin wants to subjugate them or have them kidnapped (as he has with 19,000 other Ukrainian children) so they can be brought to Russia, brainwashed, and taught to love Russia and hate Ukraine.



At our seminars, aside from historical walking tours and lectures, much of the time is turned over to teachers who share their best lesson plans with each other. We also draw on the talents of Khrystyna Rutar of the Catholic University in Lviv (left, bottom row) and Olya Polyak of the NGO Insha-Osvita. They run workshops that help teachers adapt Centropa content in their classrooms. We also ask local rabbis to meet with us, like Moshe Koselnik in Ivano Frankivsk. At almost every seminar, we bring out our secret weapon: 85-year-old Tetyana Sukorkina, a Yiddish singer who travels with Olena Simieon, her pianist, and the two put on a terrific show for our seminar participants.

OUR US NETWORKS

public schools and Jewish schools



“Because of Centropa’s resources, my students don’t just learn history—they connect with it. They see the faces of Jewish families in the photo archives, they hear firsthand accounts of resilience and survival, and they engage with stories that challenge stereotypes and foster empathy. These experiences shape how they think about history, human rights, and the responsibilities of citizenship today.”
Stacy Steele, Lancaster, SC



In 2007, when Centropa began working in American Jewish schools, we thought only Jewish schools would use our Jewish stories. Dr Lauren Granite, Jewish history teacher in a Washington, DC, area day school, became one of our first educational advisors. She had so many great ideas that in 2010 we asked her to join our team.

Lauren added public, charter, and independent schools to our network, focusing on schools in low income areas. Today, we collaborate with school districts, museums, Holocaust education

organizations, and universities in 11 states and our programs reach teachers and students in 34 states through online webinars, conference presentations, and in-person seminars.

As you will read below, the US office also runs a student civics competition; Centropa’s cross-cultural Border Jumping program; a student interview/photography project; and Café Centropa: Teachers’ Edition, which year-round brings together teachers from each of our networks in online gatherings.

When we began working with public school teachers, they made it clear that our resources were different than any others. In short, they told us their students saw themselves in our stories and our stories made them care—as Mitch Bloomer, educator at the Holocaust Center in Maitland, FL, wrote:

“Centropa’s approach speaks to the larger truth students must grasp to understand the Holocaust, namely that the victims were human beings. Students care for Centropa survivors because their stories begin with childhood memories and continue into old age ... To learn about the European Jews as victims only, without regard to the richness and complexity of their lives, tends to dehumanize their memory. This, of course, is antithetical to the goals of Holocaust education.”

What most of us did not anticipate was the current rise in antisemitism. Centropa’s stories of prewar Jewish life cultivate empathy and humanize Jews, particularly for students who do not know and may never meet a Jewish person.



“Centropa has catapulted my ability to help students empathize with the tragic but resilient story of the Jews. This is a stepping-stone to shaping the mentality of my students—that it’s not enough to tolerate differences, we must celebrate them. The Centropa films help combat antisemitism in that they make students aware of Jews. A simple awareness may not seem like a big deal, but it is for my students who are predominantly Hispanic. In fact, most of my students don’t even know what a Jew is until they get to my class.”

Brittany Brown, 8th grade teacher, Greensboro, NC



THE MILTON WOLF PRIZE IN STUDENT ADVOCACY



In 1994, Zeyneba Hardaga, the first Muslim to receive a Righteous Among the Nations Award, was trapped inside the Bosnian war zone in Sarajevo. Cleveland businessman and former diplomat Milton Wolf moved heaven and earth to get Zeyneba and her family to safety in Israel.

She was a Muslim who saved a Jewish friend during the Holocaust, and he was not going to abandon her. That is the premise of the Milton Wolf Prize in Student Advocacy: See a problem? Get involved.

Since 2015, when we began the Milton Wolf Prize, 1,547 US students have learned to make a difference by identifying a community problem,

researching it, finding those addressing the problem, creating a presentation, and educating others. Students love doing a project on something they are passionate about.

“The main thing I learned was that just because someone is not the same as you based on anything like color, religion, looks, speech, or even where they are from you should always give a hand if someone is in need of help.”
N. Webb, 11th grade, Charleston, SC

“My students absolutely loved this project. they tapped into a new way of thinking that I don’t think any of our other projects this year allowed them to do. They learned about new parts of history, empathy, and advocating for those less fortunate. We live in a very fortunate area, and this project really opened their eyes.”
Megan Heckman, Ozark High School, Ozark, MO

CAFÉ CENTROPA: TEACHERS' EDITION



Café Centropa: Teachers' Edition participants meet at the Summer Academy. Left: Vienna, 2023: teachers from Israel, US, Greece, Poland. Right: 2025, in the Subotica synagogue in, Serbia, teachers from Moldova, Poland, Hungary, Israel, Serbia, Lithuania, Croatia, Ukraine, and the US.

During Covid lockdown, Lauren took a page from Ed's book: creating a social club, but this time for teachers who were learning to teach remotely and, like all of us, experiencing isolation. We call it Café Centropa: Teachers' Edition, and it has continued ever since for one reason: teachers love it.

Since 2020, 473 teachers in 15 countries have taken time from their weekends every couple of months to log onto Zoom and spend time with other teachers—getting to know one another,

comparing notes on teaching challenges, and often creating programs for their students.

“For me, meeting teachers from around the world who care about this subject is invaluable. I find it so gratifying to make connections, share ideas, hear how they build curriculum, compare and contrast educational systems, and possibilities for collaboration. I always learn something new from these exceptional educators. I also appreciate the ongoing connection with and support from Centropa, an organization that does meaningful work in our world which seems to move from one crisis to another.”

Gili Sherman, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago

BORDER JUMPING PROGRAM (CROSS-CULTURAL PROJECTS)

Centropa's Border Jumping program emerged in 2007 when Summer Academy teachers who loved meeting teachers in other countries wanted their students to meet and learn together.



Each year, US students learn with and from students in Europe and Israel via the Internet. Our goal: expand their worlds to open their minds—and they don't soon forget the experience.

“The Border Jumping Project is by far the best project the students complete throughout their middle school years.... many students stated that, despite being pushed outside their comfort zone, the project was very enjoyable.... my students gained a thorough understanding of the Shoah while connecting with Israeli teens. They made the connection between acts of kindness then in the lives of Holocaust survivors and acts of kindness in their own lives.”

David Castillo, 8th grade teacher, Los Angeles

25 YEARS OF CENTROPA'S STAFF



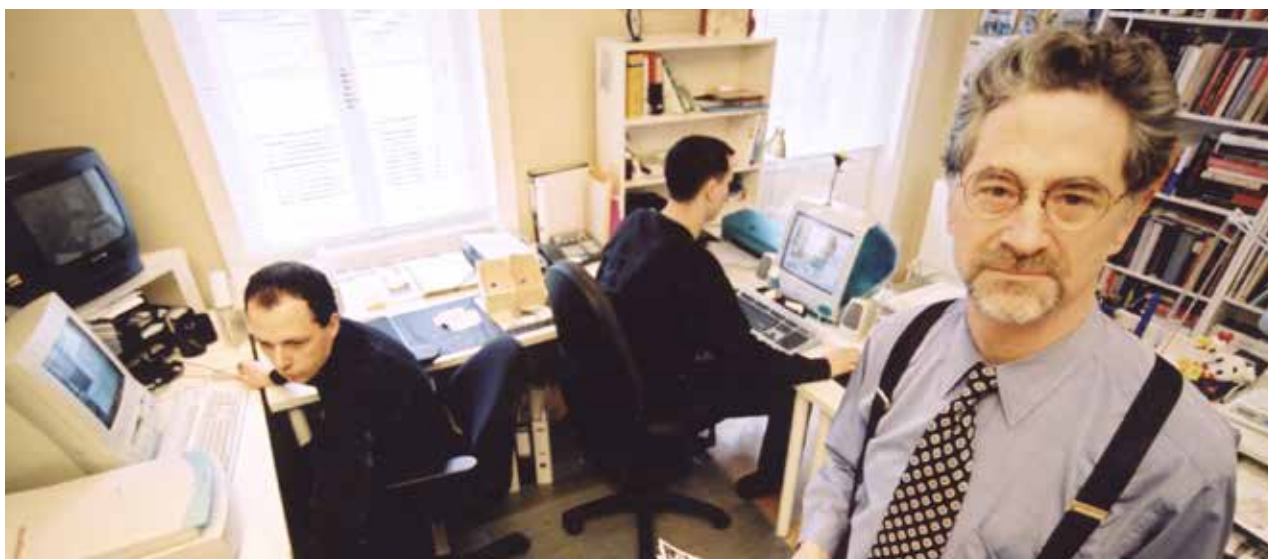
Centropa was founded in Vienna and Budapest in 2000 and since then we have opened offices in Hamburg and Washington. We began, however, with our interviewing teams in more than a dozen countries and by 2004 we were employing, part-time, 140 transcribers, translators, interviewers, editors, scanners and coordinators. Pictured above: our first interviewers' seminar,

which we held in Saint Petersburg in 2000. We brought together community activists, journalists and historians from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia Ukraine and Hungary along with historians from Hebrew University in Israel to help us develop an oral history methodology that we implemented with 1,230 of our interviews over the next decade.



In 2012: our director, Edward Serotta, toasting with Ouriel Morgensztern, Centropa's tech director from 2004 until 2016. Centropa was being given an award by the Federal Parliament.

OUR VIENNA TEAM THROUGH THE YEARS



Vienna office 2000

Dejan Petrovic, Boris Bojic, Edward Serotta



Vienna office 2007

Our Slovak, Hungarian and Austrian teams, 2007



Vienna office 2020

Edward Serotta, Denis Karalic, Veronika Doppelreither, Tanja Eckstein, Wolfgang Els, Jonathan Schers, Anna Domnich



Vienna office 2022

Jonathan Schwerts, Fabio Gschweidl, Patrick Schmid, Anna Domnich

CENTROPA'S VIENNA OFFICE IN 2025

Creative content production, administration,
Café Centropa for Holocaust survivors



Edward Serotta
Director



Jonathan Schwerts
Project coordinator



Peter Balla
Tech Director



Tanja Eckstein
Café Centropa



Veronika Doppelreiter
Our bookkeeper from 2002-2024



Paul Sommer
Bookkeeper



Yanina Blaustein
Assistant bookkeeper



Denys Vodotyka
Ukraine projects



Anna Domnich
Ukrainian Project Coordinator

Not pictured: *Nicole Javor, Bernd Renner*

HUNGARY OFFICE

The Centropa Jewish Network of European Schools,
Hungarian public schools, coordination with our Israeli schools,
Café Centropa for Holocaust survivors



Top right: [Eszter Andor and Dora Sardi, 2002](#). Left: [Dr Szilvia Cingel, Bence Lukas, Marcell Kenesei and Borbala Pal, 2019](#)
Botom left: [Erzebet Sandor, Andrea Benyes-Szöllősy Peter Balla, Borbala Pal, Sara Szilagyi, Valentina Hemera](#)
Bottom right: [Andrea Koch, Sara Szilagyi, Dr Maria Lieberman, Peter Balla, Andrea Jambor, Ezster Rosza](#)



[Mária Lieberman Ph.D](#)
Managing Director



[Eszter Rózsa](#)
Centropa Jewish Network



[Sára Szilágyi](#)
Hungarian public schools



[Andrea Koch](#)
Café Centropa



[Andrea Jámбор](#)
Bookkeeper



[Yahel Ox](#)
Coordinator in Israel

CENTROPA IN THE US



Dr Lauren Granite,
US Education Director

CENTROPA'S HAMBURG OFFICE IN 2025



Fabian Ruehle
Director for Europe, incoming Executive Director



Maximilian von Schoeler
European programs



Ninja Stehr
European programs



Estera Cotoarba
European programs



Shaina Cotoarba
European programs

FORMER TEAM MEMBERS



Nicola Andersson
Education Coordinator



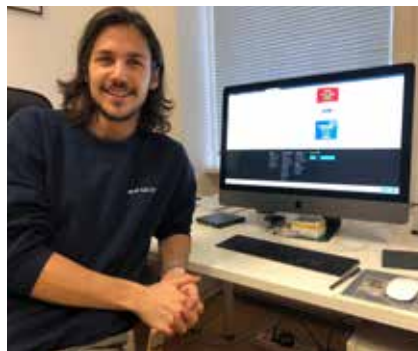
Johanna Blender
Education Coordinator



Katja Grosse-Sommer
Education Coordinator



Magdalena Farnesi
Education Coordinator



Fabio Gschweidl,
Programming



Moritz Boeswirth,
Podcast Producer and Narrator



Birgit Habenpeutner (sp)
Education Coordinator



Marie Schmidt
Graphic Designer



Wolfgang Els
Filmmaker



Denis Karalic, Bosnia
Archivist



Evgeny Gretscko, Belarus
Graphics



Patrick Schmidt, Germany
Podcasts, narration



Ouriel Morgenztern
Tech Director



Tijana Zherajikj
Podcast Coordinator



Ulrike Ostermann, Austria
Filmmaker



Alexander Schneidmesser
Academic coordinator



Snarky Wolfgang Els with ever-ironic
Ouriel Morgenztern (he's French)

INTERNS



Ethan Sample, Iowa; Shira Lister, Washington;
Anne-Sylvaine Godard, France



Leo Rubenstein, Estonia; Veronika Livshics, Latvia; Zhenia
Gretschno, Belarus



Alysha Zawaduk, Canada and
Dragos Parasca, Romania



Andris Schweitzer, Hungary



Alex Savits, New York with our tech
director, Ouriel Morgenztern



Jaquelyn Olsen, US



Miksa Gáspár, Hungary



Olivia Christman, Pennsylvania



Robert Cory Osmond, Canada



Emily Lalonde, Canada



Tamar Aizenberg, Illinois



Olivia Klasios, Canada



Jesse Steinman, Ohio



Ellen van Benschoten, New York



Matthias Verlooy, Austria



Callie Moss, South Carolina



Nikolai Duffield, Canada

Not pictured: Moritz Wein, Malwina Talić, Pavla Lukesova, Sherri Cohen, Alexandra Pekáčková, Alessandro Porrà, Caroline Shep, Murad Guliyev, Ruby Korotaev, Dasara Gashi, Szonja Deák, Sara-Jane Vigneault, Nina Andro, Péter Völcsei

SUMMER ACADEMIES

By 2025 we have held 18 Summer Academies for more than 1,100 teachers from 19 countries. Photos of those who organized a few of them.



Sarajevo 2011, Berlin 2013



Warsaw 2015; Vienna, Prague and Berlin, 2016



Budapest, 2017; Berlin 2022



THANKING THOSE WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Centropa began life in 2000 and over the past quarter century, more than 170 donors in 21 countries have provided us with nearly \$25 million that we have been using to carry out our twin goals: to preserve Jewish memory and to disseminate our findings to the widest possible audience.

We are registered as a 501c3 tax-exempt organization in the United States, a Verein in Germany, a Verein in Austria, and an Alipatvany in Hungary.

BENEFACTORS AND OUR FOUNDERS' CIRCLE

Our first donations came from the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation in Los Angeles. In Vienna, we received our first major grants from the Ministry of Art, Education and Culture and Austria's National Fund for the Victims of National Socialism. In the years that followed we received funding from the Future Fund of Austria, the Ministry of European and International Affairs, and the City of Vienna.

The Claims Conference has been supporting Centropa for a quarter of a century: first, so we

could secure interviews throughout Central Europe, then to support Holocaust educational programs in the lands where the Holocaust took place.

J. Ira Harris (z"l) and his wife Nicki were also among our first American donors, and the Jack Buncher Foundation of Pittsburgh helped sponsor our interviews in the early 2000s, then supported our European Jewish school network before expanding their grant program to include our work in Ukraine.

Here is an overview of our programs and who makes them possible.

EUROPEAN-WIDE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

During these years of heightened antisemitism throughout Europe, we have been receiving major support from the European Commission in Brussels, the EVZ Foundation of Germany, the German Foreign Office, and the Austrian Federal Chancellery. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have also made contributions.

CAFÉ CENTROPA

Our club for the Holocaust survivors we interviewed began meeting in 2006 in Vienna and Budapest. In Vienna, the program continues to receive funding from the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism, the City of Vienna, Daniel and Jasmin Kapp, the Austrian Future Fund, and Steve Koenig.

In Budapest, Café Centropa is supported primarily by the Claims Conference, with additional support from the Hungarian Jewish Heritage Public Foundation (Mazsök).

AUSTRIA

In Austria, the National Bank supported our 64 interviews as did the Ministry of European and International Affairs and the National Fund. Tanja Eckstein coordinated for us. More recently, our office in Vienna has produced multimedia films and podcasts and those projects have been underwritten by the Austrian Federal Chancellery, the Ministry of Education, and the Future Fund of Austria, with additional support from the European Commission in Brussels.

POLAND

We owe a debt of gratitude to the journalist Hanka Grupinska, who between 2001 and 2006 coordinated a team of seven interviewers who spoke with 67 elderly Jews, all of whom had remained in Poland. Those respondents provided us with 2,100 pages of stories and a thousand privately held photographs.

Tad Taube (ז"ל), who was born in Poland and remained committed to Jewish culture and history, made many of those interviews possible. Director of Tad's Polish programs, Shana Penn, has been enormously helpful to Centropa for more than 17 years. The Koret Foundation of San Francisco also supported our Polish programs.

Centropa's educational programs in Poland received grants from the US State Department, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and the International Visegrad Fund. The Kronhill-Pletka Foundation, along with the Taube Foundation, has been supporting our Polish educational programs for fifteen years. We also received grants from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture.

When we created Ten Polish Cities/Ten Jewish Stories—our first permanent exhibition in the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow in 2020—it was underwritten by the German Foreign Office, the Neubauer Family Foundation in Philadelphia, the Kronhill-Pletka Foundation in New York, the Taube Foundation in San Francisco, and Howard and Diane Schilit of Rockville, MD.

LITHUANIA

The 77 Interviews conducted in the three Baltic states were underwritten by the Claims Conference and the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation.

Lithuanian educational programs were made possible by the US State Department and later by the Claims Conference and the European Commission, as well as the US Embassy in Vilnius, the Good Will Foundation in Vilnius, and Anetta Kalk-Migdal of Mountain View, California.

HUNGARY

Major support for the 192 Hungarian interviews came from the now-defunct Ministry of Informatics and Communications, which made it possible for us to develop a Hungarian-language database and website. That, in turn, opened doors for us with Hungarian public schools. Both the US State Department and the American Embassy in Budapest have funded our programs, as have the German Embassy and Austrian Cultural Forum. Dora Sardi and Eszter Andor were our coordinators and were, in fact, co-founders of our interviewing program in 2000.

Centropa's educational and cultural programs received support from the Open Society Institute, the Natan Fund of New York, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. We continue to receive funding from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Gallic Fund of California, the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund, and the JDC Hungary Foundation. Additional funding over the years has come from the Hungarian Jewish Heritage Public Foundation (Mazsök), the Hungarian Jewish Social Assistance Foundation (MAZS) and the Hungarian National Cooperation Fund (NEA), as well as the International Visegrad Fund. We have also received support from the Ministry of Education, and the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ).

GREECE

Our interviews in Greece were funded by the EVZ Foundation of Germany and the German Embassy in Athens. Educational programs in Greece are underwritten by The Claims Conference, the European Commission, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, The German-Greek Future Fund, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. We

cooperate closely with the Ministry of Education and the Jewish Museum of Greece.

GERMANY

The cities of Frankfurt and Mannheim supported our interviews. Educational programs have been underwritten by The 1,700 Year Celebration of Jewish Life Foundation, the Central Council of Jews in German, the Adenauer and Ebert Foundations, along with the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, the Dietmar Hopp Foundation, the EVZ Foundation, the German Federal Foreign Office, German-Czech Future Fund, the GEW Teacher Union Hamburg, the Alfred Landecker Foundation. Additional support came from Im Dialog Hessen Nassau, Kulturstiftung des Bundes (Federal Cultural Foundation), the Lottery Foundation Berlin, and the Volksbank in Kraichgau.

IN BALKAN COUNTRIES

The 35 interviews conducted in ex-Yugoslavia were underwritten by the Claims Conference and the German Marshall Fund. Educational programs have been sponsored by the Claims Conference, the European Commission, the US Embassies in Serbia, North Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina; the OSCE, the Austrian Embassies of Skopje, Belgrade and Sarajevo; and the Ebert and Adenauer Foundations. Our award-winning film set in Bosnia was underwritten by the German Foreign Office, Bader Philanthropies of Milwaukee, and the Austrian Ministry of European and International Affairs. We work closely with the Holocaust Museum in Skopje, which also supports our seminars in North Macedonia.

The Spanish Embassies in Serbia and Bosnia made contributions to our Balkan programs as did Casa Sefarad in Madrid. In Serbia, we received further support from the Institute for the Improvement of Education and the Ministry of Education.

The 75 interviews our team conducted in Bulgaria were funded primarily by the Marc Rich Fund of Switzerland & Israel. Further support came from

the US Embassy in Sofia. Our interviews and cultural programs, including our award-winning film *The Ladino Ladies' Club*, were coordinated by Boris Missirkov and his team at Agitprop Films.

TURKEY

The 27 interviews conducted in Turkey that were coordinated by Karen Sarhon were underwritten by the Edmund J Safra Foundation of Geneva and the Viterbi Foundation of San Diego. Training seminars for teachers were sponsored by the German consulate in Istanbul and the Goethe Institute.

ISRAEL

We conducted only a handful of interviews in Israel, and they were sponsored by the City of Frankfurt and the Austrian National Fund. Our first seminar for Israeli teachers was sponsored by the German Embassy in Tel Aviv. Since 2012, our Israeli programs have been underwritten by the Nadav Foundation, the Blue Door Foundation of Switzerland, the Austrian Embassy, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Further support came from the Maimonides Fund.

THE CENTROPA JEWISH NETWORK OF EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

Special thanks to the Howard and Geraldine Polinger Foundation of Washington, the Jack Buncher Foundation in Pittsburgh, the Natan Fund of New York, the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund, the Alvin and Fanny B. Thalheimer Foundation in Baltimore, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. We received additional support from the European Jewish Fund/Kantor Foundation, the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ), Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, and the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

US EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Our first forays into education in America were focused on Jewish schools, and the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Howard and Geraldine Polinger Foundation, and The Covenant Foundation were our largest supporters. Special thanks to Diane Schilit of Bethesda, MD.

By 2014, we shifted most of our efforts to public and charter schools and focused on low income districts. Special thanks to the Milton A. and Roslyn Z. Wolf Family Foundation of Cleveland. Other supporters in the United States have included: The Righteous Persons Foundation, The Viterbi Family Foundation, the Erna F. Viterbi (z"l) Memorial Fund, BMW of Spartanburg, Francie Heller in New York, The Development Foundation of NCCAT (North Carolina), The Selden K Smith Foundation for Holocaust Education in South Carolina, the Wilf Family Foundation of New Jersey, the Winters Family Fund, and the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust. The Hanns Seidel Foundation supported a week-long program for bringing Centropa's staff, along with Bavarian teachers and historians, to South Carolina and North Carolina in 2018.

Further support for our US educational programs has come from Genine and Josh Fidler of Baltimore, Glazer Philanthropies in Los Angeles, the Goldsmith Family Foundation of Baltimore, Paula and Jerry Gottesman of New Jersey, inSIGHT through Education in Boca Raton, Irwin and Helgard Field of Los Angeles, the Jack Chester Foundation and Robert M. Russell Memorial Foundations of Miami, JM and Mindy Schapiro of Baltimore, Dr. Emile Bendit of Baltimore, Dr. Lawrence Pakula (z"l) of Baltimore, Sandra Brett and Dr. Richard Friedman of Charleston, SC, Risa and David Miller of Charlotte, NC. David Nathan Meyerson Foundation in Dallas, Richard and Ann Jaffe Foundation in La Jolla, Stephen and Wendie Ploscowe of Fairfield, NJ, Jill and Mike Quigley of San Diego, Alan Reinitz of Gaithersburg, and Anita Zucker of Charleston.

UKRAINE

Our Ukrainian team, led by Professor Leonid Finberg and coordinated by Marina Karelsteyn, conducted 264 interviews. Sponsors were the Jack Buncher Foundation of Pittsburgh, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation of Los Angeles, and the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation of Baltimore. Between 2016 and 2020 our educational programs were underwritten by the German Foreign office.

Once the full-scale invasion began in 2022, the following donors stepped in to help: The Mandel Foundation of Cleveland provided direct support to 169 educators throughout the country, TBonz Foundation in Charleston also provided support to families, while films, podcasts and websites were underwritten by Bader Philanthropies of Milwaukee. Our educational seminars were made possible by the Jack Buncher Foundation, the Gilbert Foundation, Raquel Flatow Haas and Michael Haas in Cleveland, Allan and Lynne Reich in Chicago, Anetta and Mark Migdal in Mountain View, CA, the Kronhill-Pletka Foundation in New York, Maureen Carter in Boca Raton, JM and Mindy Schapiro in Baltimore, Steve Koenig in Seattle, The German Foreign Office in Berlin, the Austrian and German embassies in Kyiv, and Ukrainian Jewish Encounter of Toronto.

Further support for our programs in Ukraine came from Stiftung EVZ, Berlin, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, and the Austrian Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs

CZECHIA

Our largest grant for the 43 interviews was provided by Ceska Sporitelna Bank in cooperation with the Jewish Museum of Prague. Support for seminars came from the Czech Foreign Ministry, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Austrian Embassy in Prague, and the Visegrad Fund.

ROMANIA

77 interviews were made possible by the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation and the Claims Conference. Ildiko Molnar and Anca Ciuciu coordinated. The David Berg Foundation in New York underwrote our documentation of 12 synagogues in northern Romania. Further support in Romania came from the Ministry of Culture, the Ebert Foundation, the Austrian Cultural Forum, and Raiffeisen Bank.

CENTROPA SUMMER ACADEMIES

As stated in this book, since 2007 more than 1,100 educators from 19 countries have taken part in our summer programs. Major funders have been the Austrian Finance Ministry, the German Lotto Foundation, the German Foreign Office, the Polish Foreign Ministry, the Claims Conference, the European Commission, the City of Mannheim, the Austrian Future Fund, the Austrian Finance Ministry, the Austrian National Fund, the German Lotto Foundation, and US embassies in Vienna, Sarajevo, Berlin and Budapest.

Since 2007, attendance by US educators was made possible by The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, the Paula and Jerry Gottesman Foundation through the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest, NJ, inSIGHT through Education in Palm Beach, the Houston Holocaust Museum, The Florida Holocaust Museum, the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust, The Frank and Shelly Weiner Holocaust Education Training Endowment of Greensboro, the Jewish Federation of Greensboro, The Milton A. and Roslyn Z. Wolf Family Foundation of Cleveland, The Alabama Holocaust Education Center in Birmingham, Renée Brachfeld and Mark Novak of Washington, DC, Jerry Scheer (T-Bonz Foundation) of Charleston, the Nevada Center for Humanity, The Jack Chester Foundation/Robert M. Russell Memorial Foundation, and Stacy and Todd Gorelick of Charlotte, NC.

GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

The friends who help us pay the rent, turn on the lights, and keep the heat and AC running

A special appreciation for those family foundations that have been providing general operating support for 20 years or more: JM and Mindy Schapiro of Baltimore, Ronne and Donald Hess of Birmingham, Diane and Howard Schilit of Bethesda, MD, Ken and Debby Miller and Shelly Weiner in Greensboro, NC, Alan Kluger and Amy Dean of Miami.

We are also indebted to the Neubauer Family Foundation of Philadelphia and the Viterbi Family Foundation of San Diego. The Meyerhoff Foundation in Baltimore provided some of our earliest grants for general operating support.

Other Baltimore-based supporters and family foundations: Jim and Hillary Jacobs, Shale Stiller and Ellen Heller, Sue Cohen (z"l), Dr Larry Pakula (z"l), Genine and Josh Fidler, Dr Emile Bendit, the Goldsmith Family Foundation, David and Sarah Shapiro (through the David & Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation), the Pearlstone Family Fund, Bruce Fleming, Alan Edelman, and Marvin and Esta Schein.

In Los Angeles and San Diego: Deborah Oppenheimer, Margie Simkin, Phil Aldin Robinson,

Teri and Ken Hertz, Robin and Neil Kramer, Irwin and Helgard Field, Steve and Deborah Lebowitz, Glazer Philanthropies, Bud (z"l) and Judy Levin, Ted Slavin, the Erwin Rautenberg Foundation of Los Angeles through the Jewish Community Foundation, Anita Hirsh, Jan Tuttleman Family Fund, Jill and Mike Quigley, Adele and Herb (z"l) Reznikoff, Jackie Woolf (z"l).

In the Bay Area: Harry and Carol Saal, Mort and Amy Friedkin, Dennis and Tracy (z"l) Albers, Alan and Susan Rothenberg, the Jewish Federation, George Sarlo, Joe and Sherry Felson, The Peleh Fund, Nancy and Stephen Grand (z"l) Philanthropic Fund, Steve Swire, and Fred Goldberg.

In Florida: Richard and Betsy Sheerr in Palm Beach, Amy Dean and Alan Kluger in Miami, Robert M. Russell Memorial Foundation in Miami, Maureen Carter in West Palm Beach, Betty Kane in Boca Raton, Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County, Leonard Wien Jr in Miami Beach.

In New York and New Jersey: Cheryl Fishbein and Phil Schatten, Jules and Lynn Kroll, the David Berg Foundation, Barry Savits (z"l), Darrell and

Felice Friedman, Jane and Morley (z"l) Safer, Ruth and Andrew Suzman of Scarsdale, Francie Heller, Mark and Jane Wilf, Pam Bernstein Friedman, The Beckman Family Foundation, Lynn and Jules Kroll, the Slingshot Fund, Sylvia Hassenfeld, Jewish Funders Network, Judy and Michael Steinhardt Foundation, Stephen Lowey, Roy J Zuckerberg Family Foundation, Daniel (z"l) and Ellen Shapiro, Daniel and Bonnie Tisch, Paul B Bernstein, Michelle Ores.

Chicago: Allan and Lynne Reich, the Leonian Foundation, David L Husman Family Foundation, the Klaff Family Foundation, Jewish United Fund, Max and Lynne Schroyer, Lois Zoller.

In the Washington, DC area: Howard and Diane Schilit, David and Edie Blitzstein, Alfred H. Moses, Massimo Calabresi and Margaret Emery.

In Philadelphia and Pittsburgh: Howard Rieger in Pittsburgh, Herbert S and Barbara Shear in Pittsburgh, Constance Smuckler of Philadelphia, Laura Solomon in Philadelphia, Stephanie and Michael Naidoff of Philadelphia.

In the Carolinas: in Charleston: Richard Friedman and Sandra Brett, Joe Engel (z"l), and Jerry Scheer; in Greensboro: Shelly Weiner, Debby and Ken Miller, and Marilyn Chandler.

Around the country: David Sarnat of Atlanta, Cedric Suzman of Atlanta, Donna and Barry Feinberg of Scottsdale, Genevieve Finseth in Minneapolis, Joshua and Alexandra Metzl Philanthropic Fund in Denver, Patricia Werthan Uhlmann in Kansas City, JD Golden of Houston, Michael Haas and Raquel Flatow Haas of Cleveland, Nancy Gossels in Wayland, MA, Gary Heldman of Cincinnati, OH, Ambassador Susan McCaw of Santa Barbara.

CENTROPA'S BEST FRIENDS

Over the years, our supporters and friends have gone out of their way to make connections and advocate for us.

Austria: A special thanks to Rita Dauber, Jasmin Kapp, and Chava Bugayer. Our most dedicated activist in Austria, indeed, in all of Europe, has been Daniel Kapp. When employed by the Finance Ministry, Daniel saw to it that Centropa's 2010 Summer Academy received one of our largest grants. Daniel also secured grants for us from Raiffeisen Bank International.

Thanks also to Hannah Lessing and Evelina Merhaut of the National Fund and Clemens Mayr-Harting, Antonio Martino, and Leo Czernin of the Federal Chancellery. In the Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs: Ambassador Ferdinand Trautmannsdorf, State Secretary Hans Winkler, Ambassador Eva Novotny, Ambassador Peter Launsky-Tiefenthal, Ambassador Martin Weiss, Ambassador Arad Benkö, and Ambassador Martin Pammer. In the US Embassy Vienna: special thanks to Alice Burton and Harald Lembacher. At the Zukunftsfond: Anita Dumfahrt, Herwig Hösele.

Germany: In the Foreign Office, Ambassador Claudia Busch, Ambassador Michaela Küchler, Ambassador Felix Klein, Ambassador Ralf Beste. At Stiftung EVZ, Ralf Possekel. At the Central

Council of Jews in Germany, Shila Erlbaum, and Lena Altman and Jan Wilkens at the Alfred Landecker Foundation.

Other countries in Europe: Loranda Militec in Croatia, Biljana Stojanovic in Serbia, Vasiliki Keramida in Greece, Zanet Battinou of the Greek Jewish Museum in Athens, Anitta Mordechai in Athens.

In the United States: Maureen Carter, Shelly Weiner, Margie Simkin, Neil and Robin Kramer, Alan Kluger and Amy Dean, Ilyse Shainbrown, Tom Ott and Peter Bingham, Richard and Betsy Sheerr, Janis Minton, Richard and May Ziman, Linda and Marty Blank, and Sean Ostrovsky.

American educators who made great efforts to advocate for us include Lee Holder; Brittany Morefield Brown; Douglas Greene; Julie Drake; Amanda Lepor; Liz Weide; Gili Sherman; Wendy Warren; and Laura Shaw Frank.

OUR BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

In the United States: Rabbi Andrew Baker, Washington; Marcell Kenesei, Budapest; Daniel Kapp, Vienna; Cheryl Fishbein and Phil Schatten, New York; Edward Serotta, Vienna. Our board advisor is Allan Reich, Chicago. Our accounting firm in the US is Bee Bergvall, and our legal advisor is Laura Solomon & Associates.

Austria: Edward Serotta, Anna Domnich, Jonathan Schwers, Roman Domnich. Our accounting firm is Halbwachs Schmitt & Partner Steuerberatung GmbH.

Hungary: Dr Andras Kovacs, Budapest; Dr Michael Miller, Vienna; Marcell Kenesei, Budapest; Dora Sardi, Budapest; Edward Serotta, Vienna. Our accountant is Attila Vásárhelyi.

Germany: Dame Helen Hyde (Chair), London; Hannah Lessing, Vienna; Jakub Nowakowski, Cape Town; Victor Sorensen, Barcelona; Amos Raban, Tel Aviv. Our accounting firm in Germany is BUSE: Rechtsanwälte Steuerberater Partnerschaftsgesellschaft mbB.





“The Nazis wanted to wipe out not only these people, but every trace of their existence. Here, then, is a project that uses new technology to provide a platform for the oldest Jews still living in Eastern Europe to help stake a claim for remembering, not forgetting.”

*New York Times, Vicki Goldberg,
19 September 2002*



“It is as simple as sitting next to an elderly woman on her sofa, flipping through her family album with her, and listening to her colorful tales of childhood, as well as the tragedies that came after. And what truly makes this different is the stories don’t stop there. It’s as if she feels the need to tell us about her children and grandchildren, and Centropa makes us willing listeners.”

*Joachim Riedl Die Zeit,
25 March 2004*



“I used your traveling exhibition based on Centropa’s Hungarian interviews. My students then took out their phones and used your website to explore it. It took them only a few minutes before they were much more adept at using your site than I was and they were showing me stuff—calling out to me, competing with each other. The main point: they wanted to do this. They were exploring, learning, leaning over to show the kid sitting alongside them what they were finding. This is the best way to teach the Holocaust because it’s so much more than that. It’s Hungarian history, told in Jewish stories.”

*Eszter Matus, Budapest,
February 2024*