



Credits

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Introduction. 2021.

PRESERVING JEWISH MEMORY IN A SECOND YEAR OF LOCKDOWN

This annual report—our twenty-first—describes what Centropa accomplished during the tumultuous year of 2021. While the year began with most of us hiding out from Covid-19, as the year progressed and vaccines became more widely available we began making our first steps toward meeting in person again.

It would be hard to imagine a content provider better suited to living in lockdown than Centropa. Our entire archive is online: award winning films, thematic websites, scores of great cooking recipes, and educational programs in nine languages. That is why teachers, especially, were drawn to Centropa.

To summarize this annual report:

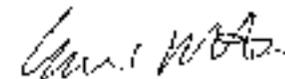
- 2021 was the year our social club for Holocaust survivors—Café Centropa—met only twice, as opposed to the eleven times we normally meet each year. We did, however, phone them regularly and sent them more than one thousand five hundred books.
- We produced our first podcast series, a medium we see as audio theatre, and to bring those stories to life, we hired actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company to read excerpts from Centropa interviews.
- It was a year when our teachers, keen to meet in Covid-free spaces, met with us in a half-dozen Jewish cemeteries in 6 European countries and created 92 innovative lesson plans on how teachers can use a Jewish cemetery in their coursework.

- And it was a year when students everywhere truly shone as they combined historical content from our website with the tech toys they love. We often watched, slack-jawed, as fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds created walking tour apps, online exhibitions, multimedia films, and civil society projects.

This annual report will highlight all these accomplishments and more, and we begin on the next page by paying tribute to the two hundred sixty-four elderly Jews we interviewed in Ukraine between 2001 and 2006. Very few of them are still with us.

As you will read in the stories we selected, Centropa's oral histories are not really about history, per se. Instead, you will read the stories of ten elderly Jews who will tell you what history did to them.

Thank you for reading this and please feel free to be in touch.



Edward Serotta
Director



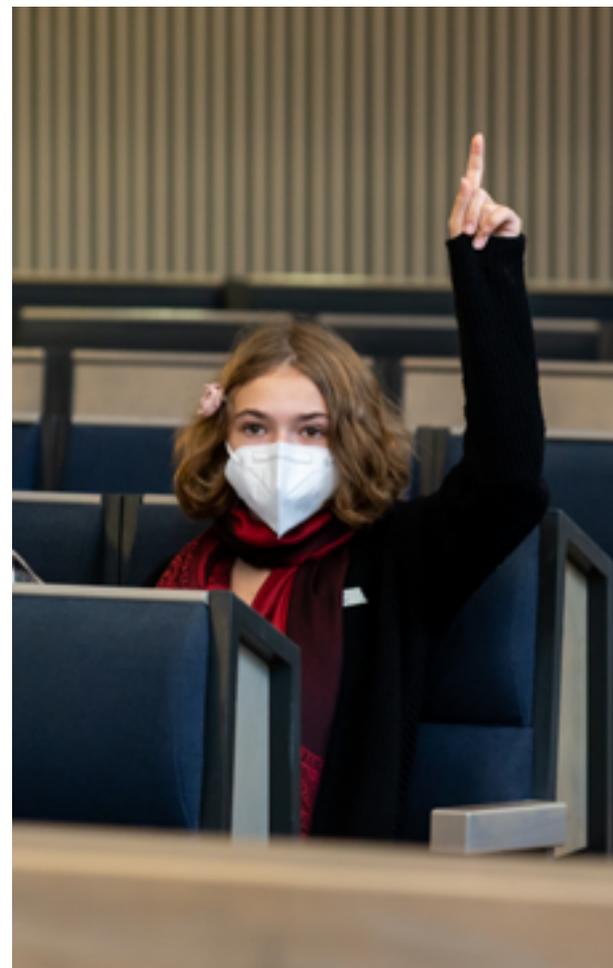
Prague

Looking after those who shared their life stories with us



Krakow

Bringing our interviews to life through new technologies, exhibitions, films, and books



Mannheim

Creating new ways to engage students in the lands where the Holocaust took place

THE CENTROPA ARCHIVE

The foundations we are built upon. Our tribute to Ukraine's twentieth century Jewish history



The Centropa archive is unique. We spent the decade of 2000 to 2009 interviewing twelve hundred and thirty Jews still living in fifteen European countries.

We did not focus primarily on the Holocaust. We did not use video in our interviews. Instead, we asked our respondents—all of whom still lived in Europe—to tell us stories about the entire century, just as they lived it.

Rather than use video, we digitized twenty-five thousand family photographs and transcribed forty thousand pages of stories. No one in the world has an archive of such depth and breadth.

In every annual report, we highlight a few of the stories and pictures we collected over the years, and for our 2021 annual report we focus on Ukraine.

In 2001, Professor Leonid Finberg, seated, offered to help organize Centropa's oral history project in Ukraine. Leonid called on the remarkable organizing skills of Marina Kar-elstein, standing just behind Leonid in the dark blouse.

Leonid and Marina led a team of interviewers, editors, translators, and transcribers. By 2007, Centropa's Ukrainian team had interviewed two hundred sixty-four elderly Jews—all between the ages of seventy-five and ninety-four—who were living in Odesa, Lviv, Kyiv, Kherson, Mariupol, Ternopil, Uzhhorod, and Chernivtsi. Marina's team also digitized nearly three thousand of their family photographs and documents, and our respondents told us stories about every one of them. You will find ten in the pages that follow.

Shtetl life

GRIGORY SIROTTA

Our family. In the upper row (from left to right) are my nephew Yasha, my sister's husband Pynia, my sister Etl, and me. In the lower row are my father David Sirotta, my nephew Misha Sirotta, my mother Sarrah Sirotta, my brother's wife Fira, and my brother Yasha Sirotta.

My parents were very religious and only spoke Yiddish, although father could communicate a bit in Ukrainian and Russian. We lived in the village of Zemikhovo. Around fifty Jewish families lived there, and everyone earned their living with crafts. Every Jewish home had its own workshop. And everyone was poor.

There was a synagogue in the center of the village, an Orthodox Christian church, and a Catholic cathedral. All these religious edifices were kept in absolute order and very clean. People of all nationalities treated them with care and respect. During my childhood I played with boys who were Polish and Ukrainian. Russian was our common language.

The brightest memory of my childhood is my sister Etl's wedding in 1922. The wedding was in our house. There were tables in our big room with wine, cherry liqueur, and vodka on them. There were strudels with sugar, honey, and nuts. It was the food of the gods! Of course, there was also gefilte fish. A klezmer brass band from Nova-Ushytsya played and everyone danced. I remember a waltz my brother Yasha and I danced together. He wanted to lead and so did I so we hit each other in the face and people had to pull us apart. Well, we were just six and eight years old then.

Grigory Sirotta was born in 1916 . During the Second World War, Etl and his mother perished in the ghetto in Nova-Ushytsya, and his brother Misha and his father died at the front. Grigory served as a cadet at the front until the end of the war.

Grigory Sirotta married Sophia Orlova in 1942, and they had two children. After the war, Grigory remained in the military (he was a lieutenant-colonel), and then worked in aircraft design. They lived in Lviv.

Grigory Sirotta, who was born in 1916, was interviewed by Ella Orlikova in Lviv in 2002.



The Holodomor, the Great Famine, 1932–1933

SARAH KAPLAN

In the first row, from right to left, are my mother Esther Grinberg, my son Izia Gershman, and my brother Avrum Grinberg. Standing are my first husband Shunia Gershman and me. The photo was taken in 1936 in Berdichev. How Shunia and I came together has to do with the Holodomor [NOTE: Stalin imposed the Great Famine on Ukraine in 1932 and 1933. Perhaps as many as four million Ukrainians starved to death].

Our enormous family gathered every night after synagogue in our dining room and nearly two dozen of us sat around the table for those wonderful dinners. Then came the famine of 1932. Food became scarce. It disappeared. And I began to see dead people just lying on the streets.

Just then, my mother's friend's son, Shunia Gershman, arrived from Moscow. When he saw that we were starving he cried, 'Let Sonia come with me, otherwise she'll die here.' Mother refused, but Shunia kept coming back and begging her, although I was completely unaware of it.

On his last day, Mother blurted out, 'You want to take her with you, then marry her!' He instantly agreed. I came home from school and was horrified to learn this. I mean, I was sixteen and Shunia was an old man of twenty-one.

We were married by our rabbi. I sobbed and we left for Moscow the following morning by train. When Shunia told his mother, she was aghast, but quickly understood he had actually saved me. She tried to make me feel at home and she absolutely did not let Shunia sleep in my bedroom.

After eight weeks, Shunia's Uncle Gedaliy came on a visit from Odesa. He asked me why I looked so sad. I told him and he immediately made plans to take me home. He telegraphed my mother and the next morning we went to the train station.

Shunia came running, begging me to stay, but I wouldn't hear of it. When I reached Berdichev, it was clear my mother was practically a walking skeleton and my younger sister had starved to death. Still, I was happy to be home and I walked the streets of my beloved Berdichev.



In 1941, Shunia returned to Berdichev, and this time he and Sarah became husband and wife. They had a son and while Sarah and the baby fled to Central Asia when the Germans took Berdichev, Shunia went to the front as a soldier, where he was killed. Almost all of Sara's family were murdered in the Berdichev ghetto.

Sarah married Zelik Kaplan in 1944. They started their own family, set up a barber shop in Lviv, and remained there until he died in 1997. Sarah passed away in 2007.

Sarah Kaplan was interviewed by Zhanna Litinskaya in Lviv in 2002.

The Great Terror, 1937–1939

EVGENI CHAZOV

My father was a colonel, a political deputy in a military unit in Krivoy Rog. My mother worked as a nurse in the division's medical unit.

In 1937, the arrests and show trials of the so-called 'enemies of the people' came. Men and women disappeared without trials or investigations. They were arrested at night. My mother told me that they didn't get together with friends anymore since a word said at the wrong time or a joke might have been fatal.

In 1939, my father was ordered to make an appearance in the division headquarters in Zhytomir. When he didn't come home, Mother called his unit, and they told her that my father was busy.

Two days later they summoned her. An officer on duty met my mother but then an NKVD officer asked her to follow him. He said he would show her to where my father was waiting. Instead, it was her turn to be interrogated. They tried to pressure her into slandering my father and acknowledge that he was an enemy of the people and a French spy, but Mother refused.

She went back to the hospital where she worked, but the chief doctor summoned her. She closed the door and said: 'Friend, if you want to rescue the children you need to get as far away from here as possible.'

Without telling anyone, my mother took my sister and me—I was just three years old—all the way out to Lysva Molotov (present-day Perm). It's in the Urals, three thousand five hundred kilometers from home, and she continued working as a nurse.

It was only in 1945 that an army officer appeared in the doorway of the little mud hut we lived in. My mother ran toward him, my sister wrapped herself around his neck, and I ran into the forest and hid as I had no idea who he was. My father found me, hugged me tight, and carried me back home.

They had stripped all his ranks away during his arrest but when the war started he was released and soon became a major. He got back his awards from the Civil War and was awarded an Order of Lenin and Order of the Combat Red Banner.



During the war, Evgeni stayed with his mother working as a medical employee in a training camp in Lysva.

After the war, Evgeni and his family moved to Lviv, and then lived in Ternopil. Evgeni graduated from the Faculty of Russian Philology in the Pedagogical College of Rivne, returned to Ternopil in 1960 where he worked as a teacher, and has lived there ever since. He married Ludmila Pristupa in 1967, and they welcomed their son in 1973. Evgeni Chazov was born in Ovruch in 1936. He was interviewed by Zhanna Litinskaya in Ternopil in 2003.

On the front

ASIA MATVEYUK

My father volunteered for the army in early July 1941. On 7 August, retreating Red Army troops were moving through Peresadovka and I was enlisted in a field engineering brigade. Didn't even have time to say goodbye to my grandmother Zisel, mother Freida, and sister Braina.

Because of my medical training I worked alongside frontline doctors. I was given a medical bag and a gun. Soon I became the pharmaceutical supervisor. At first, we did nothing but retreat, but for whatever reason I had no fear in battle. I dragged the wounded, applied bandages, and helped them as much as I could.

In late September 1941, we arrived in Kuibyshev and we rebuilt our decimated Red Banner Division #235. That took from November 1941 until March 1942. I was promoted to Chief of the regimental pharmacy. I slept in an earth hut under a single overcoat with Anechka Shulginova. I was young, slim, and even pretty. A few times I received unequivocal proposals from officers to share their beds and become their combat girlfriend, as it was called then.

I had trouble only once when a sergeant said in front of everyone: 'Don't touch Asia, she is keeping herself safe for Abram,' which was clearly an antisemitic taunt. I slapped his face good and hard right there. I should also mention that this guy got a good telling off from other officers that day.

I went with doctors and sanitary attendants to pick up the wounded at the front. I also became an agitator for German troops. Here I could make good use of those German lessons that my friend Martha had given me when I was young. I was in a vehicle with a loudspeaker where I was reading my announcements in German, calling soldiers to drop their weapons and come to our side. I would tell them about their wives and children waiting for them in Germany, but I usually didn't get that far in my prepared speech as they emptied their guns in our direction and we always had to retreat. But we did it again the next day.



During the war, the Germans murdered Asia's mother, grandmother, sister, and other family members. Asia Matveyuk served as a doctor from 1941 to 1946 on the 4th Ukrainian Front, then on the Northwestern and Ukrainian Fronts. After the war, Asia married Vasily Matveyuk in 1946 and had two daughters. She worked as the director of a pharmacy.

Asia Matveyuk was born in Novopoltavka village in the Mykolaiv region in 1919 and was interviewed by Zhanna Litinskaya in Kherson in 2002.

Wartime evacuation, 1941

ARON RUDIAK

My father Duvid Rudiak was born in 1897 in the shtetl of Zhabokrich, where he finished cheder and primary school, and my mother Ruchlia was born there, too, in 1900. They knew each other since childhood and decided to get married in 1923. They remained deeply in love with each other until the war separated them forever. My sister was born in 1924 and I was born in 1925. We moved to Odesa in 1929.

I remember that day distinctly, the day the war began on 22 June 1941. I was sixteen years old and was babysitting for Uncle Efim and Aunt Sonia's son. But right around noon my father burst in. 'Aron, get your things. The war's begun!' Just then, Sonia and her husband Efim rushed in. Father and I grabbed a tram. Efim was an officer in a military unit near Odesa, so later that day we all went to see him off at the railway station. By then the first bombs started falling.

Our father didn't want to hear about evacuation. Mother knew he wouldn't listen. On 27 July 1941, Father went to the military registry office. Despite his old injury, he came home wearing a uniform. We said our goodbyes and he promised us the Romanians and Germans would never occupy Odesa.

By late August, as the siege tightened, I pleaded with mother and said that no matter what anyone else in the family decided to do, we had to go. Finally, she agreed. On 29 August, early in the morning, we packed our belongings and went to the harbor.

Our ship was under fire several times—planes strafed us—but in a few days we arrived at Novorossiysk, 300 km to the east of Odesa. They hurried us from the dock to a freight train for cattle and we headed east. What a journey. The train made its way across the Northern Caucasus, Penza, Kuibyshev, Cheliabinsk, Sverdlovsk—that's Yekaterinburg today—until we arrived at Kustanai in Northern Kazakhstan, about 3000 km from home.

As soon as we got to Kazakhstan, I received a letter from our father. He sent it from the port of Mariupol on the Azov Sea. He said he was so very, very sorry for having told us to stay in Odesa so long and that he wished we had all evacuated together.



All I knew was that the fighting was fierce in Mariupol and soon I received an official response that my father, Duvid Rudiak, disappeared near Mariupol in October 1941.

At the age of seventeen, Aron Rudiak began serving in a division headquarters of the Soviet Army. He returned home to find his mother and sister, then took a job in engineering in the city of Ternopil, where he married and raised a family

Aron Rudiak was interviewed by Zhanna Litinskaya in Ternopil in September 2003.

The ones I lost

DIMITRI KAMYSHAN

This is Arkadiy Zbar, his wife (my aunt) Ludmila, and their daughter Valentina. This picture was taken in 1940. They had about one year left to live.

The Germans occupied Kharkov in October 1941 and set up the ghetto at the end of November. We didn't know where they were taking us. My grandmother—who had once been such a wealthy woman—was hoping we could ransom ourselves, so she took all her gold with her.

The Jews of Kharkov were walking along the main street of the town, and my mother, Olga Zilberberg—who was Russian, not Jewish—walked alongside us. Uncle Arkadiy was carrying little Valentina, and my mother begged him to give the little girl to her. But he refused, saying, 'She was born a Jew and she will die a Jew,' but we really didn't know what lay in store for us. Valentina was crying. She was freezing.

We walked and walked, leaving the houses behind. We came to some barracks with no heating or any other comforts. There were broken windows and doors, no stove, nothing.

Ludmila, Arkadiy, and Valentina huddled in a corner and were crying. I kept saying, 'Don't cry, it'll be fine.' I was all of fourteen when I said this.

A German soldier was walking by, and my grandmother stood up, walked over, and said to him in perfect German, 'These are people, you know, and it's impossible to live here.'

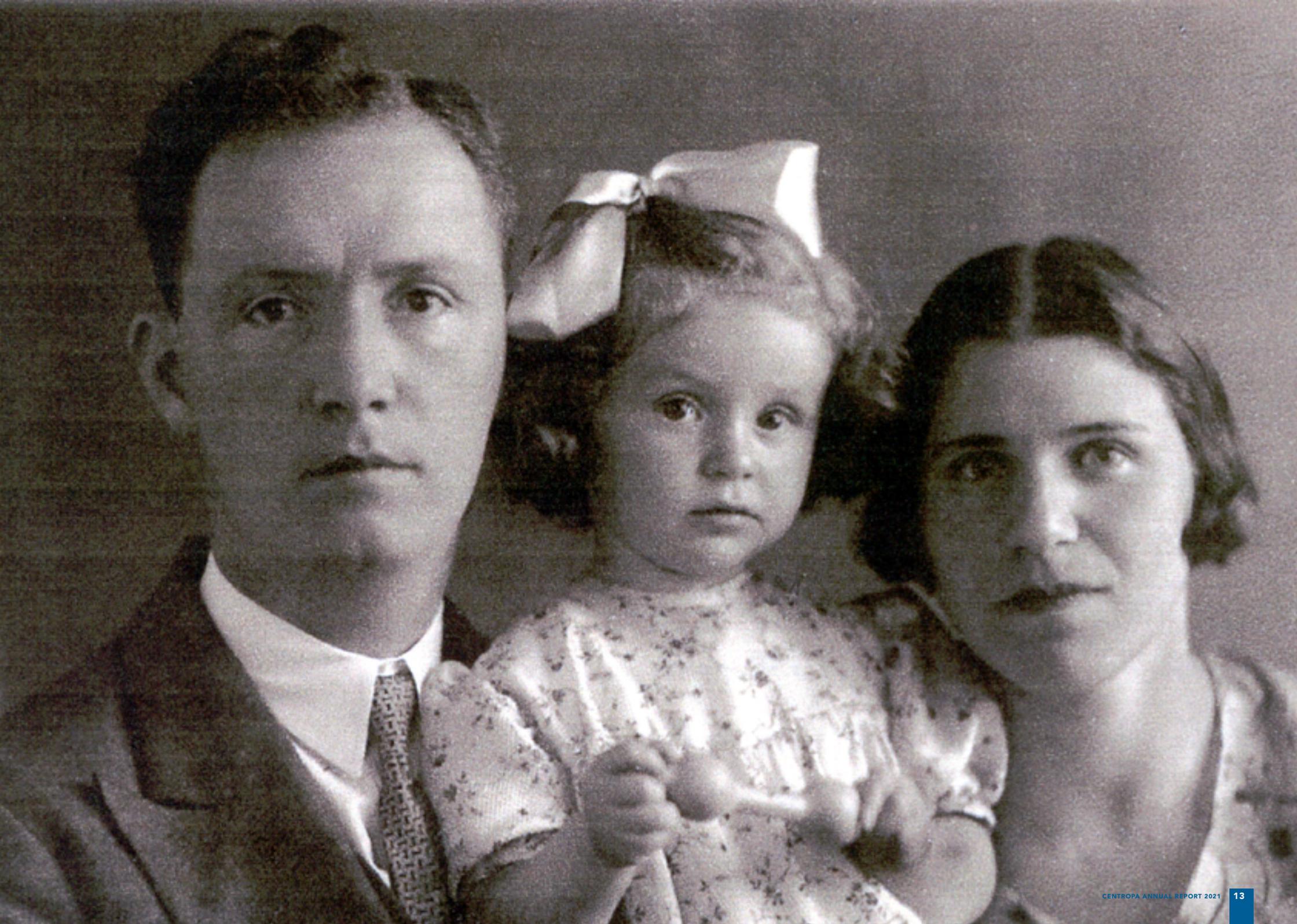
Without saying a word, he took out his pistol and shot my grandmother in front of me. And there she lay. I thought of that giant house, her elegant dresses, and how she would sweep through the house on the way into her waiting taxi that was taking her to the opera.

My aunt whispered to me, 'Dimitri, there is only death here. You need to escape when it grows dark.' And that night I went to the fence and, because I was still so little and skinny, I wriggled my way through.

I ran home to my mother. A few days later our friend Marfusha brought a note from my Aunt Ida, who was also with the family. Ida wrote, 'Olga, save Dimitri. We are dead. They shot Valentina.' None of them survived.

Dimitri Kamyshan served on the front lines during the war, married and moved to Lviv after the war, where he became a teacher. Dimitri Kamyshan, born in Kharkov in 1927, was interviewed by Ella Orlikova in Lviv in May, 2002.





Postwar antisemitism in the 1950s

MOISEY GOIHBURG

This is a photo of me in surgery. The photo was taken in Kyiv in the early 1980s.

At the beginning of 1953, when the Doctors' Plot flared up in Moscow, I went through a hard time. In February 1953, I performed surgery on an elderly man. All the other doctors had refused to touch him because they were afraid he wouldn't survive the operation.

Just when we were finishing the operation my assistant told me he had transfused the patient with the wrong blood type! This would have meant death! We quickly re-transfused the patient and by some miracle he survived. This awful mistake, which was not my fault, had serious consequences.

The chief doctor of the hospital believed it was his task to get rid of Jews. If the patient had died I would have been taken to court. But just before his release from the hospital the patient asked a nurse for my name, saying, 'I know there are articles in newspapers about doctors who poison people. I want to go to my granddaughter's school to tell children about this wonderful Jewish doctor Moisey Gohberg and that when all the other doctors refused to operate on me, he saved my life.' A few weeks later Stalin died, and the Doctors' Plot went with him.

Moisey Gohberg was born in Ivanovka village, Mohilev-Podolsk district, Vinnitsa province in 1921. During the war, he served in the Soviet army from 1943 to 1945.

After the war, Moisey Gohberg graduated from the Faculty of Military Doctors at the Moscow Medical Institute and worked as a urological surgeon and researcher at the Kyiv Onco-Urological Department. He and his wife Mara had one daughter. He retired in 1989.

Moisey Gohberg was interviewed by Zhanna Litinskaya in Kyiv in 2002.



The 1970s and 1980s

EVGENIA SHAPIRO

Growing up during the war and in the postwar years in Kyiv, I can say my parents didn't observe Jewish traditions. They were devoted Communists and everything about religion seemed to be a vestige of the past to them.

Still, like so many Jews of their generation, whenever they spoke with each other it was invariably in Yiddish. And I remember things started to change for them during the Yom Kippur War in Israel in 1973. Father had only recently gotten a shortwave radio and the two of them were glued to it during the entire war.

By the 1980s, Jews started leaving the Soviet Union—some for America, others for Israel. Mother sympathized with them and used to say that she wouldn't mind moving either, but my father wouldn't hear of it. When my mother's sister Alexandra moved to the US, my father shouted that she was a traitor and he never ever wanted to hear her name spoken in his house again.

But whenever she wrote letters to us from New York, he would read them over and over again.

And even though they never celebrated Jewish holidays, when it came to Soviet holidays, just about everyone who came to their flat was Jewish, and they spent the entire time talking about Israel, antisemitism, and books by Jewish writers.

Not long before she died in 1986, Mother let it be known she wanted to be buried in the Jewish cemetery. Then Father moved in with me and my daughter.

All through the 1990s, even while economically things got much worse, Jewish life in Ukraine began to revive, and father no longer had a bad word for Jews who were leaving. He watched every TV program about Israel and even started to muse a bit, saying that he would have done well if he had moved to Israel.

It was in his 90th year that he began to deteriorate rapidly. We cared for him at home, but in the last week of his life, he only spoke to us in Yiddish, a language we simply couldn't understand. And a few days before he died, he began reciting the prayers he was taught as a child, something we had never heard him do—ever.



Evgenia Shapiro was born in Leningrad in 1933, married, had a daughter and spent her working life as a manager on construction sites. Evgenia Shapiro was interviewed by Elena Zaslusvskaya in Kyiv in November 2002.

Perestroika, the 1980s and into the 1990s

YAKOV HONIKSMAN

When perestroika began in the mid-1980s, Jewish life began to revive in Lviv. In 1985, we organized a celebration of the writer Sholem Aleichem. The Communist Party leadership of the college reacted immediately. The Secretary of the Party asked me, 'Have you suddenly become a Zionist? You are demonstrating too much interest in Jewish life!'

However, the flow of time changes all attitudes and I have to say the attitude toward Jews began changing then, too.

This was the time I came to believe that Ukraine really must become an independent country to progress in its development, so I submitted my request to leave the Communist Party. They asked me, 'Why?' and I replied, 'because I disagree with the policy of the Party.'

In 1989, I became one of the founders of the Sholem Aleichem Society and I began to work on Jewish subjects. I didn't write about Jewish subjects before 1992, but in ten years I have written six books, ten brochures, and nearly two hundred articles.

I have come to the end of my life—it's my eightieth birthday soon—and I believe I have made significant accomplishments of late.

The Sholem Aleichem Society and Hesed Center are housed in the same building in Lviv. Many people are interested in Jewish subjects and attend our programs. I have found out several people I knew were actually Jewish. I had no idea!

While quite a few Jews here have left for Israel, my wife and I never considered it. I have too much to do here. In Israel, I would be just another pensioner. But I am a Jew born in Poland, I am a European, and I belong right here in Lviv.

Yakov Honiksmán was born in Lublin in 1922. The Germans murdered most of his family in the Lublin ghetto. He escaped into the Soviet Union and served in a labor battalion in Central Asia until late 1944. He graduated from the Faculty of History in Kuibyshev Pedagogical College and then worked as a professor of history at the Department of Political Economy in Lviv. Yakov Honiksmán married twice and had one daughter.

Yakov Honiksmán was interviewed by Ella Orlikova in Lviv in 2002.



2000 and after

NAOMI DEICH

Here's a picture of my former pupils at the sixty-fifth anniversary of the music school where I am now working. The photo was taken with an amateur camera in the concert hall of the school.

In 1962, I decided to change music schools and began to teach musical theory and literature to children and high school students. I never thought it could be so wonderful to teach children. I was dedicated to my work. And I am passionate about getting children to listen to music and understand it.

They also need to know the history of music and musical genres: songs and romances, operas and symphonies.

Now, at seventy-nine years of age, I still lead a very active life and teach twice a week. My friends and former students come for a cup of tea every now and then. We talk about music. Some of them are twenty, some are fifty years old. And there's a reason I can invite them over. A few years ago, a real estate company wanted to buy the communal apartment I was living in. They offered me a private apartment in the center of town and for the first time I realized how lovely it is not to have neighbors inside your home!

The Jewish community, through the Hesed Center, has been looking after me. They sent a social worker to me—they call them curators—and they sent me a television set!

I am very enthusiastic about the revival of Jewish life in Ukraine. I like going to concerts of Jewish music and exhibitions of Jewish artists. I read books about Jews and Israel, translated from Hebrew and other languages. Such books weren't available before we became an independent country.

The people at Hesed even spoke with me about visiting Israel, which is a nice idea but, to be frank, no one needs me there and I still give my piano lessons every week. I just cannot take time off!



Naomi Deich was born in 1923 and escaped with her family to Central Asia during the war. She and her brother both studied, taught, and played organ and piano. Naomi Deich did not marry.

Naomi Deich was interviewed in Kyiv by Elena Zazlavskaya in November 2002.

CAFÉ CENTROPA

The Centropa Book Club in Vienna, Budapest, and Prague

We are quite sure that Centropa is the only oral history institute with a social club. Back in 2006, we invited the elderly Jews we interviewed in Vienna to a *kaffee und kuchen* reception in their honor. Nearly one hundred people came, and by the end of the afternoon, someone asked, "Can we meet again next month?"

We could. We did. And we immediately began holding events in Budapest, too.

As we all know, fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors are still with us, but we have been seeing them as often as possible, while also sending them newsletters and, of course, birthday cards. We phone them every month, too.

When Covid struck in early 2020, we stopped meeting in person, and we stepped up our phone calls and newsletters. Beginning in December 2020, the German Ambassador to Austria Ralf Beste offered to send books to over one hundred of our seniors here in Vienna. And soon donors in America, banks in Austria, and foundations everywhere sponsored sending more than one hundred and fifty books to our seniors in Vienna, in Budapest, and also in Prague, where Pavla Neuner shopped for our books and delivered them.

Altogether, by the end of 2021 we had sent out a whopping one thousand five hundred books to our seniors. As for those who suffer from macular degeneration, we sent them some of Vienna's finest chocolates. No one complained.



Vera Szekeres Varsa in Budapest. We also sent András Schweitzer, a theology student, to visit our seniors and set up their tablets or computers for Zoom meetings.

Austrian Federal Minister Karoline Edtstadler hosting a Rosh Hashanah luncheon in the Federal Chancellery (the White House) for over one hundred members of Café Centropa.





Top row: Hannah Lessing, General Secretary of the Austrian National Fund, is with Café Centropa's Director, Tanja Eckstein, and they are visiting Ida Beck shortly after her one hundredth birthday. Right: students from the Austrian Jewish Youth Club deliver books and sweets to Chana Breiter. Bottom row: Eva Dombrowski and Dr Robert Rosner with their Passover deliveries.



Left: Elfi Stern with Peter Rosner at one of two outside events in Vienna



Right: Romanian-born Dragos Parasca with 99 year old Judith Reichard, who hails from the same village

Café Centropa Prague



Pavla Neuner is visiting Hana Hnátová on the left and Hana Tomková on the right in Hagibor, the Jewish old home in Prague, where we delivered nearly one hundred books during lockdown

Café Centropa Budapest

Café Centropa in Budapest is, we are sorry to say, much smaller than our group in Vienna; we have around three dozen Holocaust survivors still with us. But those who remain are vigorous and active and we have activities for them every month. In 2021, we traveled to Szeged to see one of Europe's most impressive synagogues, toured Budapest together, and a core group of our seniors continued to meet online and in person every month.



"It was so much better for me to hear survivors' own experiences than what I have been reading in a textbook. They know, they lived through these horrors. One of them showed me their yellow star. It was particularly moving; it gave me chills. I honor them for being able to stand up after all this time and talk about it. Thank you for the opportunity." Middle school student, Budapest

Exhibitions



Our exhibitions are comprised solely of photographs and stories taken from the Centropa archive, which we spent a decade collecting. Every one of those pictures, and the stories that go with them, came from private collections, and can be found nowhere else. In 2021, our Hungarian exhibition traveled to five cities and was seen in public libraries and in schools.

Responses to our Hungarian exhibition in Szeged, May 2021

“What a well-thought-out, unusual exhibition! It differs from others because it’s all about personal stories. I couldn’t stop reading them!”

Györgyi Sorós

“The photos are captivating and I think they achieved their goal because it helped us to see the diversity of Jewish life before the war and after it. I very much enjoyed the fact the pictures were divided into distinct themes like At Home, In the Army, Portraits, Holocaust, In School.”

Dóra Kovács

Relaunching our website

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Preserving Jewish Memory. Bringing history to life.

Centropa Films
Award winning films that bring history to life through documentaries and personal stories.
Guide to the Most Popular Centropa Films
All Centropa Films →

Centropa Podcasts
We are taking some of our most compelling interviews and turning them into audio theatre productions.
Listen to our podcast →

Centropa in the Heart
Café Centropa: our social club for the Holocaust survivors we've interviewed.
More about Café Centropa →

Centropa in the Kitchen
Dozens of mouth-watering recipes we've collected along with great ideas from Jayne Cohen and others. From classic Ashkenazi recipes to recipes from Turkish Jewish kitchens
Other recipes →

Centropa in The Balkans
Over 2,000 family photographs and 250 interviews conducted in Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Greece and Turkey
The Lost Sephardic World →

HOME

Our Archive: The Library of Rescued Memories

About the Centropa Archive →

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Biography Archive
We interviewed more than 1,200 Holocaust survivors in 14 European countries. Search their biographies by country, language, etc.

Photos & Documents Archive
Over 25,000 privately held family photographs and personal documents. Use our advanced search engine to explore photos by theme, category, country and other options.

Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine

Raniera Melnikowa - A World Destroyed, A World to Remember

Toufia Silbering - So That Memory Doesn't Die

The Window Showcase

Wacyslaw Wernyik - My Town, Of Zamosc

Jewish Life in Krakow and Kazimierz

Arnold Taborski - Jewish Soldier's Red Star

Jewish Witness to a European Century



With an archive filled with personal stories that cover an entire century, it was only natural that we would try our hand at podcasting, a medium perfect for storytelling.

We take our most compelling stories, edit them down to episode-length, and then hire first-rate actors to read them. Then we add music and sound design.

Our pilot season focused on 22 June 1941, the date when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Three of our interviewees, who were children then, tell us about running for their lives—and who their parents had to leave behind as they fled. These three stories are read by three British actors: Allan Cordaner has played in more than one hundred forty films while David Horovitch and Sara Kestelman spent years performing for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Centropa's podcasts in 2021: Where personal stories meet audio theatre

Samuel Birger, Jonava, Lithuania

Narrated by
Allan Cordaner

Samuel Birger tells the harrowing story of what it was like for his family to flee from their shtetl of Jonava as the Germans sped through the country and more than a few Lithuanians joined in what would become an orgy of killing. The Birger family fled by horse and wagon, by foot, and then by train—only weeks later they arrived in Tennessee. Living in wretched poverty, Samuel's grandmother starved to death while he and his three younger brothers fringed for jobs and food on collective farms.

You can read Samuel's Centropa biography and see his family pictures here.

Audio

English



Moses Chubat, Chisinau, Moldova

Narrated by
David Horovitch

Moses Chubat was but ten years old when the Romanian and German armies invaded Moldova. Barely escaping Chisinau, which was being set ablaze, Moses, his parents and grandparents fled by train, ship and wagon—all the way to Coblenz, 4,000 miles from home.

Read Moses Chubat's Centropa biography and view his pictures here.

Audio

English



Feiga Kil', Riga, Latvia

Narrated by
Sara Kestelman

Sara Asman was a housewife in Riga. His wife Tiber-Lyza remained at home raising four children. When war came, Dr Asman was conscripted into the Soviet Army. He told his wife to flee westward. She hesitated. And that would cost them all.

Read Feiga Kil's Centropa biography and see her pictures here.

Audio

English



CENTROPA IN EDUCATION:

Giving teachers what they need to turn students into stakeholders

Beginning in 2000, we spent a decade building an archive of Jewish memory. Halfway through our digitization in 2005, we met with teachers, asking them to help us create content they could use, based on our growing library of Jewish memory.

Working with this ever-expanding cohort of teachers, we have been producing films, building exhibitions, developing websites, and holding seminars, all so we can have a continual feedback loop. Which is why we keep adding schools, and over the years we have come to believe in three universals:

Stories are universal and stories connect us all

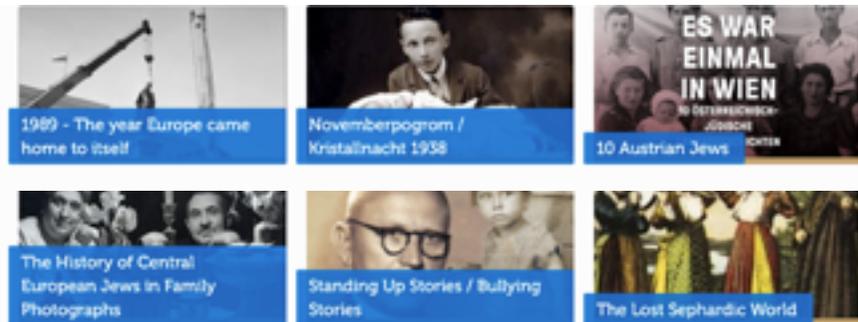
(which is why our multimedia films, exhibitions and thematic websites are so popular)

No one can teach a teacher better than another teacher

(which is why more than four hundred teachers ask to attend our seminars each year)

Students become highly motivated when they use the technology they love with the tech toys they live on

(which is how they produce content they can be proud of and share with their counterparts throughout our network)



Centropa Budapest

- CJN: The Centropa Jewish Network of European Schools
- Public schools in Hungary
- Outreach to Roma schools in Hungary
- Israeli schools

Centropa Hamburg

- Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia network
- Southeast Europe Network (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia, Greece)
- German schools
- Schools in Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Russia, Belarus

American public schools

Teachers in 20 states use Centropa, with significant numbers in:

- New Jersey
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Florida
- Texas schools (mostly Houston area)
- Maryland (mostly Baltimore area)
- California (mostly Los Angeles area)



All of us have heard and read about today's teenagers not knowing much about the Holocaust, or even caring to learn about it. That is not our experience. We have close to nine thousand teenagers in our various networks and here we see teenagers in the US and Germany expressing themselves with podcasts, films and walking tour apps—all of which they are making themselves.

Centropa Hungary

CJN: The Centropa Jewish Network of European Schools: Building Jewish identity and connecting students across the continent

A network of 36 schools in 23 countries that brings teachers and students in contact with each other.



Victoria Kadyuk with her students in the Kyiv Jewish school in October 2021.

Centropa Jewish Network. Accomplishments in 2021

For teachers

Workshops and Seminars online

One online seminar with 28 teachers from 14 countries working in 27 schools

In-person Seminars

19 Baltic Jewish school teachers in Vilnius (see next page)

For students

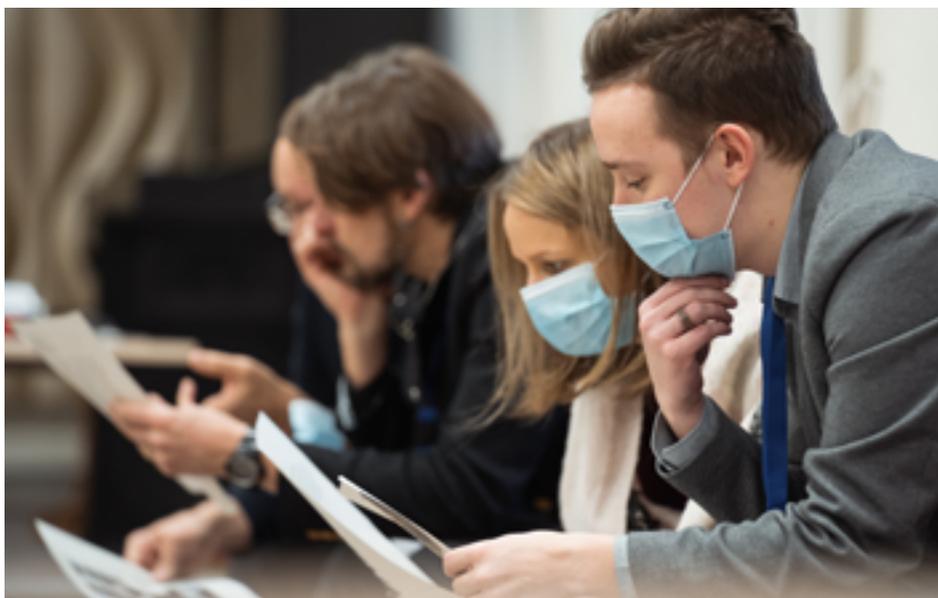
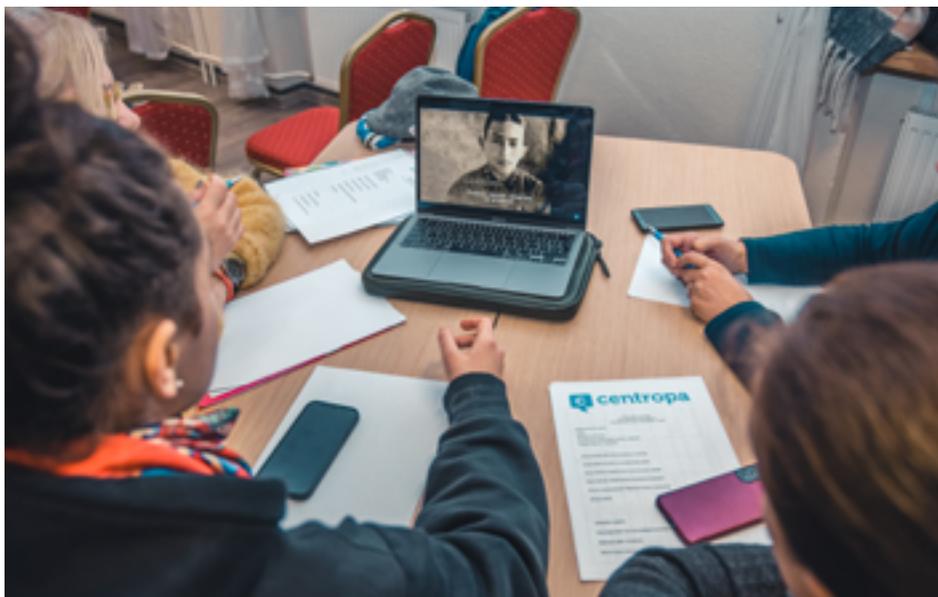
One in-person workshop

40 students from Frankfurt, February 2021

Online student competition on the subject of My Town's Jewish History

47 student projects submitted

7 schools in 6 countries took part with 54 students and 14 teachers



Since 2011, Centropa's Jewish School Network has been offering teachers and students their own platform and a peer-to-peer network that helps them share best practices and projects made just for them. We bring teachers from these schools together at least once each year to brainstorm with each other and connect their students. Pictured here are teachers working in the three Baltic states: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and we held a seminar for nineteen of them in December 2021. Our host was the Vilnius ORT Jewish school.

Public schools in Hungary and our program for Roma schools

While the current Hungarian (as well as the Polish) government continues to set the agenda for what is taught in public schools, Centropa's approach allows students and teachers to explore their towns' Jewish histories and the Holocaust in ways that no one finds controversial.

With a Hungarian language website, a half dozen multimedia films narrated in Hungarian, and an exhibition that has travelled to forty-five schools throughout the country, we also hold teachers' seminars and student competitions on Our Town's Jewish History.

Our Budapest office is now using a program our Ukrainian teachers developed a few years ago: we ask teachers to identify their schools' top students, who we then spend a day training to be docents for our traveling Hungarian exhibition. That way, when the exhibition appears in their school, those class leaders walk them through the exhibition and both sides profit from it.

"Centropa's competition gave the opportunity to interested students, regardless of their religion and age, to explore the life of the local Jewish community while researching Jewish cemeteries. It was a great feeling to see the enthusiasm of my students to research and create." *Dr. Andrea Tóth, Budapest*

Centropa's Common Ground program is now in its fourth year. Schools throughout the east and south of the country have a very high percentage of Roma students, and most of them feel shut out by society. That is why we bend the curve, so to speak, by bringing Roma students into contact with students in Hungary's top performing schools.

These students play music together and learn about each other's culture. In 2021, seventy-six teenagers and twenty-one teachers held cooking programs that went spectacularly well—as you can see in these images.

"The students got a taste of research methodology and saw for themselves that success can be achieved through persistent work. I am proud of them. They are inspired by the award, so we will continue to explore the past—we have already compiled materials on the history of the local synagogue that was demolished." *Péter Holopce, Megyaszó*

"The best experience for me was people-centricity in terms of both organization and training. I did not feel at all that we were participants in an educational program in the classical sense, but I rather felt that I'm part of a community, a safe space for discussions, brainstorming, and supporting each other's work." *Konrád Márta, Budapest*

"I really like the way that Centropa presents history through everyday life so you can bring it much closer to your students. I came across many good methods in the training. The experience has inspired me, and I'm happy with the new acquaintances I made." *Csonkáné Németh Klára, Siófok*

Hungarian public school programs in 2021

One in-person seminar
35 teachers, 11 cities
Lesson plans created: 8

Program for student guides in our exhibition
25 students trained

Hungarian program for Roma students

One in-person seminar for 21 teachers working in 10 educational institutions with 76 students taking part





Centropa's Hamburg Office



Centropa Hamburg is, by far, our largest office. Led by our deputy director, Fabian Ruele, we work on a yearly basis with more than four hundred and fifty schools—from Lithuania in the north to Greece in the south. To ensure that we produce meaningful content, we rely on a team of teachers in each country who work for us part-time as coordinators. It is they who recruit for our local seminars, follow up with teachers on their lesson plans, and provide us with the kind of feedback that helps us produce the kind of films, thematic websites, and traveling exhibitions that teachers need and students respond to.

Our office in Hamburg works in Moldova, Ukraine, Poland, Georgia, and Lithuania, and we have a separate program for schools throughout Germany. In addition, we have a network of schools in southeast Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, and North Macedonia. And we occasionally work in Czechia, Slovakia, and Greece.

In southeastern Europe: Serbia, North Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina





“We don’t have that much content on the Jewish history and the Holocaust in our country. But Centropa gives that to us and to our students. Your film set in North Macedonia can be used over and over again in our schools.” *Branka Dimevska Kotcheva, Skopje*

We have been working in schools in the former Yugoslavia since 2011 and we now have films, family stories, and exhibitions for each country. We also hold seminars for teachers in each country, as well as a regional seminar that meets once each year in the Holocaust Museum in Skopje, North Macedonia.

Croatia

40 teachers participated in our online Zoom webinars
11 students submitted projects and 10 teachers sent in lesson plans that we have been sharing with other teachers

Serbia

26 teachers working in 14 cities attended 2 in-person seminars
16 teachers from Serbia participated in our online Zoom webinars
30 students submitted projects and 2 teachers sent in lesson plans that we can now share with other teachers

North Macedonia

30 teachers working in 5 cities attended 1 in-person seminar
10 teachers participated in our online Zoom webinars
5 teachers sent in lesson plans that we can now share with other teachers

Public schools in Lithuania and Poland. Our EU supported program for using Jewish cemeteries as classrooms



As partners in a consortium with the Foundation for Jewish Culture and the European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative, we are now working with teachers and their students in several countries, but we enjoy the greatest participation in Lithuania and in Poland.

With close to one hundred schools in our Lithuanian network and nearly double that in Poland, teachers and students use Centropa's traveling exhibitions, websites, and our multimedia films to bring Jewish history to life.

While many, if not most, cities and towns in this region no longer have synagogues—or even Jewish communities—most of them have Jewish cemeteries. Thanks to the European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative, hundreds of these cemeteries are being fenced off and cleaned up. That means scores of them stand ready for teachers and students to use, and to learn about their towns' Jewish heritage.

Lithuania

In Lithuania in 2021, we held 2 in-person seminars for 60 teachers from 18 towns.

Poland

In Poland in 2021, we held 1 in-person seminar for 25 teachers from 15 cities and we held 1 online seminar for 32 teachers.





In September 2021, we brought 28 teachers to the Polish city of Tarnow where we toured the Jewish cemetery, visited the Jewish museum (now housed in a former synagogue), and discussed ways of using Jewish history in today's Polish classrooms.

Germany



In Germany in 2021, we held one in person seminar for fifteen teachers from eight cities and we held one online seminar for twelve teachers.

Centropa has an active network of some three dozen high schools in Germany, with many of them in the state of Baden-Württemberg.

We work in partnership with the Jewish community of Mannheim, which often hosts our teachers' seminars and invites students to visit and learn about the city's synagogue.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, our film *Zahor* is narrated in German and Hebrew by an Israeli soccer star playing for a German professional team. It has proven a great success with students in every school.



Germans and Israelis together

In September 2021, we brought fifteen Israeli educators to Berlin and Hamburg to meet with fifteen of their German counterparts. The idea was to brainstorm on which Centropa films to use in both countries, and what sort of projects students can share with each other.

One of our most popular films is *Zahor, or Remember*. A seventeen-year-old Israeli soccer star, on a scholarship in the German city of Hoffenheim, narrates a short film for us about two brothers who fled the city during the Holocaust. And since he narrates the story in Hebrew and in German (as well as in English), the film has proven a great success in both of these countries. Two Israeli teachers refer to the film below.



"I've used the *Zahor* movie. Teaching such a complex and important topic as the Holocaust to adolescents requires not only factual knowledge, but relevant materials and forms of work that would correspond to the "behavioral" and "educational" profiles of today's teenagers. Centropa (through your films) provide me with the opportunities to get my students acquainted with very complicated topics in a "simple" and meaningful way. Every time I show this film, they are fascinated by it, mainly because another teenager, an Israeli, is telling them the story." *Elena Yugova, Petach-Tikva, Israel*

"I loved the videos *Zahor* and the one on Rosa Rosenstein. Both are so relatable to teens! I used the *Zahor* film first. Many of the children I teach know this young football player, Ilay Elmkie, and were so excited to see him as the storyteller! For that reason, I'll use it again as an introduction to other videos and materials that might seem initially distant. The Rosa Rosenstein film is also great for teens since it seems they all want to go to Berlin." *Etelle Kalaora, Jerusalem, Israel*

Centropa in Israel



Centropa began working in Israel in 2011, and since we partner with the National Library of Israel and the Ministry of Education. We currently have twenty-seven active schools in our network.

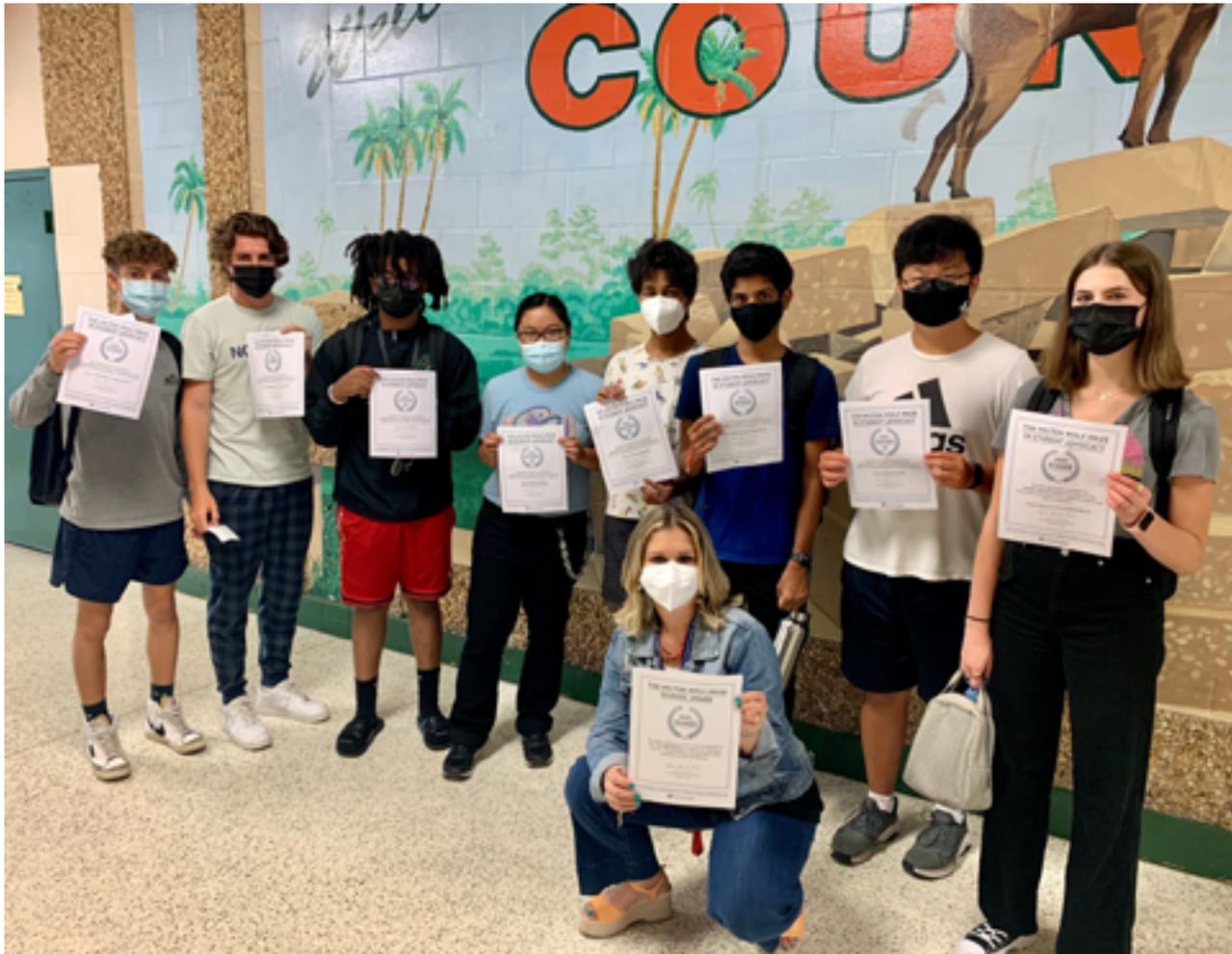
We offer Israeli teachers and students multimedia films narrated in Hebrew, a website in their language, and a traveling exhibition based on our Polish interviews. This exhibition, with pictures and stories that span an entire century, has been shown in nineteen venues since 2015.

This exhibition had never been shown in an elementary school before. Thanks to our coordinator Ettie Abraham, we brought it to the Ben Zvi school in Ness Ziona in April 2021. As you can see in these photos, we did not set the exhibition up to full height as it would have been too tall for the children.

“For Israeli teachers, Centropa is different. Instead of focusing on the lives that were lost, Centropa’s database of personal stories and videos teaches us about an entire life story, from childhood to old age. That is not something we see here. Several of these short films you make call for a student to act, to stand up for others. These are important lessons for all of us.” Amos Raban, Coordinator of Digital Pedagogy under the Chief History Inspector in the Ministry of Education



Centropa in American schools



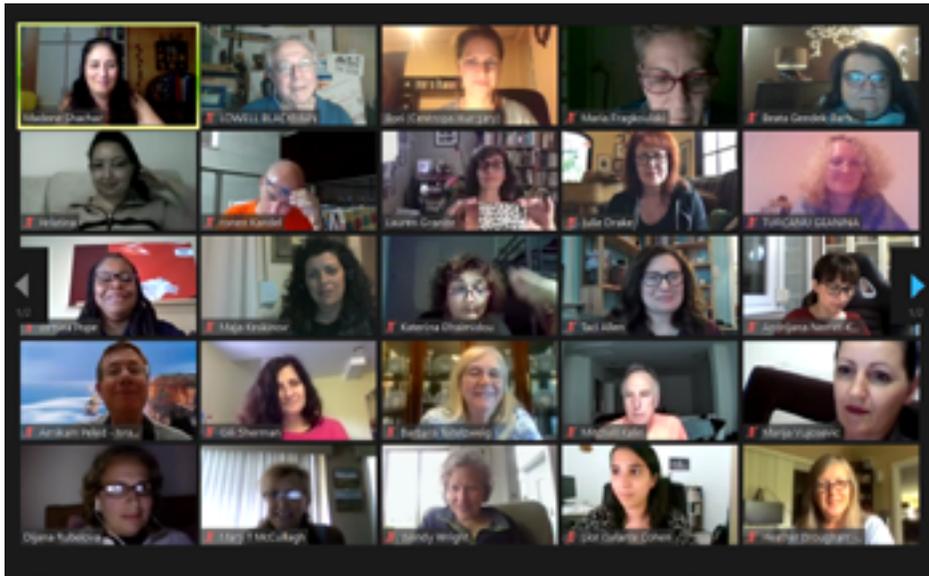
Our Milton Wolf Prize for Student Advocacy—named in honor of the Cleveland businessman who fought tirelessly on behalf of a Muslim Righteous Gentile caught in the siege of Sarajevo—continues to change young lives by showing them how they can make a difference. Students find a community problem, research it, create a presentation and educate others about it. One Los Angeles teacher wrote that in doing this project, “Students were empowered to become change agents.” We think that says it all.

In 2021, the US program continued to provide online professional development seminars and present at online professional conferences, expanding our network to teachers in 20 states, with ongoing concentrations of teachers in New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Houston, Baltimore, and Los Angeles.

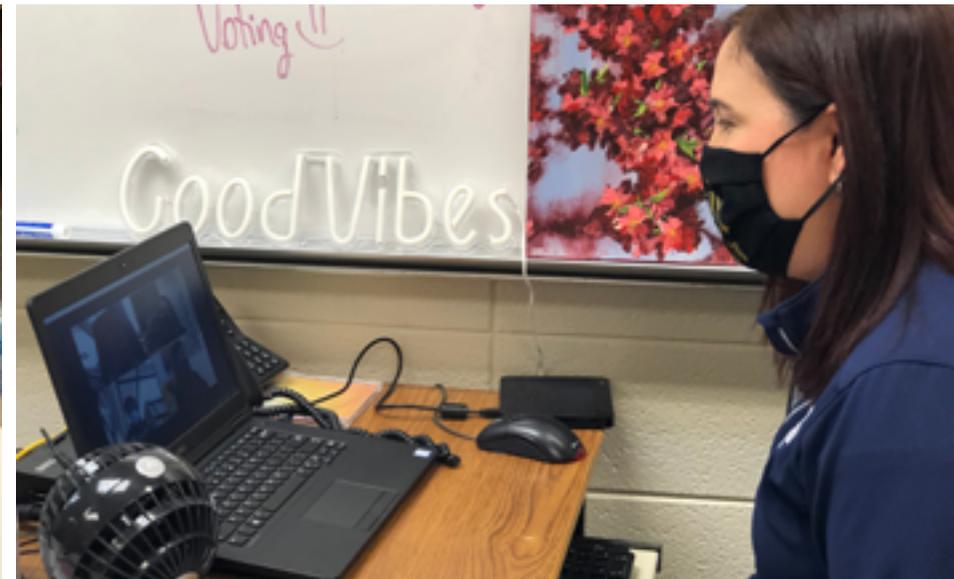
Partnering with museums, Holocaust centers and councils, universities, and Jewish Federations around the country, we stay in close touch with what’s happening in US schools so we can offer American public school teachers lessons they can use without spending too much prep time. For example, we created Google Classrooms—online platforms where teachers easily find all of the resources they need, including ready-to-use lessons, worksheets, and direct links to Centropa photographs, interviews, and films on a specific topics, such as Teaching Holocaust Herstories. Making access easy for teachers is critical these days.

US teachers love connecting their students to students in other countries, so two programs run from the US Office prove to be extremely popular with American teachers: Centropa’s Border Jumping Program, where students from different countries learn together, and Café Centropa: Teachers’ Edition, where teachers meet informally every six weeks to simply get to know one another on Zoom.

What we accomplished in American schools in 2021



<p>Online programming 12 webinar and 6 online presentations at professional development & Holocaust conferences to 285 teachers in 9 states</p>	<p>Café Centropa: Teachers' Edition 152 participants from 18 countries and 13 US states attended 7 online meetings</p>
<p>Milton Wolf Prize in student advocacy 36 students submitted 20 projects from 7 schools & 1 youth group</p>	<p>Border Jumping Program 47 participants from 15 countries completed 9 cross-cultural projects</p>
<p>Google Classroom 69 teachers joined our Teaching Holocaust Herstories Google Classroom, where they easily access/download Centropa resources about women in the Holocaust</p>	<p>Partners 12 partners from 9 states and Canada, including school districts, museums, local & state Holocaust centers and councils, universities, Jewish Federations invited Centropa USA to be part of their 2021 programming for teachers</p>



Centropa academic interns in 2021



Alexandra Pekáčková
Charles University, Prague



Alessandro Porrà
University of Cagliari



Anne-Sylvaine Godard
University of Ottawa
University of New
South Wales
University of Ca'Foscari



Caroline Shep
Universiteit Leiden



Jacquelyn Olson
Vanderbilt University



Murad Guliyev
Central European
University



Ruby Korotaev
Munk School of Global
Affairs – University of
Toronto



Dasara Gashi
Munk School of Global
Affairs – University of
Toronto



Andrea Jámbor
Jewish Theological
Seminary – University of
Jewish Studies, Hungary



Szonja Deák
ELTE University,
Budapest



Sara-Jane Vigneault
Munk School of Global
Affairs – University of
Toronto



Nina Andro
Maastricht University
College



Péter Völcsei
Corvinus University of
Budapest



András Schweitzer
University of Manchester

Centropa's best friends 2021

A huge thank you to all those friends and supporters who have made calls and connections for us in 2021

The Centropa all-stars

Cheryl Fishbein and Phil Schatten, New York

Rabbi Andrew Baker, AJC, Washington

Allan Reich, Chicago

Daniel Kapp, Vienna

Frank Spengler, Adenauer Foundation, Budapest

Shana Penn, Taube Philanthropies, Berkeley

Howard Rieger, Chicago

United States

Jacques Preis and Evelyne Salama, Chicago

Irene Pletka, New York

Betsy and Richard Sheerr, Philadelphia

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Alan Götz, Eppingen

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Rita Dauber, Vienna

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András Heisler, Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (Mazsihisz)
John Cillag and Éva Gerő, Gallic Foundation
Mircea Cernov, JDC Mozaik Jewish Community Hub
László Miklósi, Assoc. of Hungarian History Teachers
Márta Goldmann, Holocaust Memorial Center
Dr Mónika Kovács, Eötvös Loránd Science University

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Richelle Budd-Caplan, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

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Damjan Snoj, Slovenia
Jelena Krucicanin, Serbia
Tomislav Simic, Croatia
Daniela Sterjova, North Macedonia
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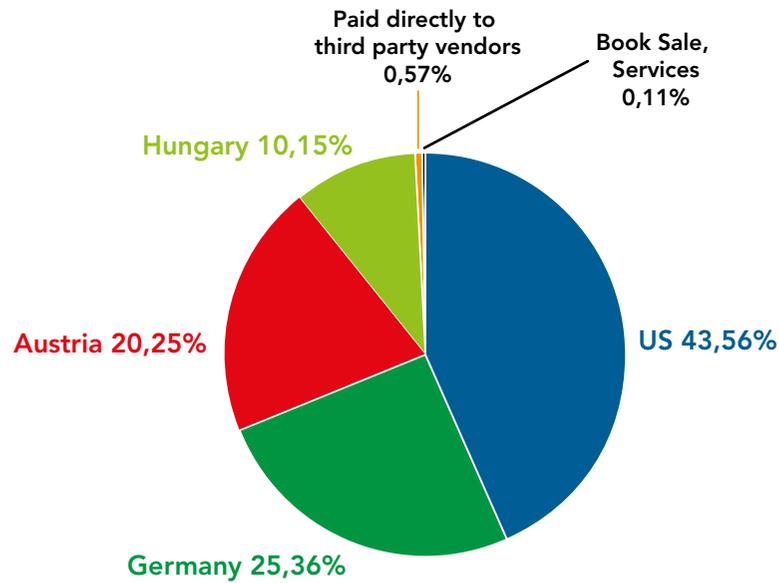
Financials 2021

Expenses 2021		
<i>Part I Educational programs</i>		
European schools		
Staff	€ 195.084	\$215,306
Honoraria for part-time coordinators in LT, PL, UA, MD, SRB, HR, BiH, SI, MK	€ 30.609	\$36,107
Website development-spent on all European programs	€ 17.166	\$20,256
Multi media content for European education	€ 11.676	\$13,778
Travelling exhibitions for EU educational programs: PL, HU, LT and Sarajevo	€ 24.667	\$29,107
Seminar costs, meals, seminar room, travel, hotel	€ 112.616	\$132,887
All European public schools	€ 391.818	\$447,441
European Jewish schools		
Staff	€ 30.753	\$36,289
Part time assistants	€ 27.650	\$32,627
Salary: Vienna team's time devoted to EU Jewish programs	€ 27.235	\$32,137
Website development	€ 6.232	\$7,354
Multi media content for EU Jewish schools program	€ 4.694	\$5,539
Travelling exhibitions	€ 13.097	\$15,454
Seminar costs	€ 31.211	\$36,829
European Jewish schools	€ 140.872	\$166,229
US educational programs		
Staff	€ 58.743	\$69,059
Salary: Vienna team's time devoted to our US educational program	€ 48.091	\$56,748
Website development--spent on all US programs	€ 29.171	\$34,422
Multi media content for US Education	€ 20.633	\$24,425
Seminar costs, meals, seminar room, travel, hotel, materials, preparation	€ 14.307	\$16,855
US Public schools	€ 170.945	\$201,509

Expenses 2021		
<i>Part I Educational programs</i>		
Israel		
Staff	€ 7.402	\$8,734
Website development - spent on Hebrew languages programs	€ 6.652	\$7,849
Multi media content for Israelis schools	€ 3.627	\$4,280
Seminar costs, meals, seminar room, travel, hotel, materials, preparation	€ 12.150	\$14,337
Israel educational programs	€ 29.831	\$35,200
Public History programs		
Technology Projects / App	€ 71.487	\$84,354
Centropa International Online Seminar	€ 16.239	\$17,971
Publications	€ 15.690	\$18,514
Website / server hosting English and German languages sites	€ 8.838	\$10,429
Public History programs	€ 112.254	\$131,268
Total PART I Educational Program	€ 845.720	\$981,647
<i>Part II: Community activities</i>		
Café Centropa: monthly events for Holocaust survivors, Vienna & Budapest	€ 88.962	\$104,975
Total Part II: Programs for Holocaust survivors	€ 88.962	\$104,975
<i>Part III: making Centropa work</i>		
Administrative expenses in Vienna, Budapest, Hamburg, Washington		
Rent and operating costs	€ 84.085	\$99,202
Legal and accounting	€ 21.946	\$25,650
Administrative salaries	€ 37.293	\$44,005
Capital investments	€ 33.588	\$39,626
Total Part III: Administration	€ 176.912	\$208,483
Total expenses	€ 1.111.594	\$1,295,105

Income 2021: \$1,713,353

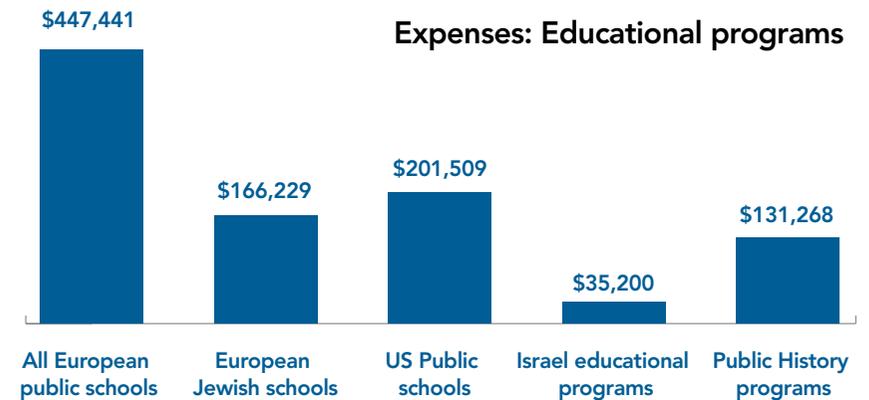
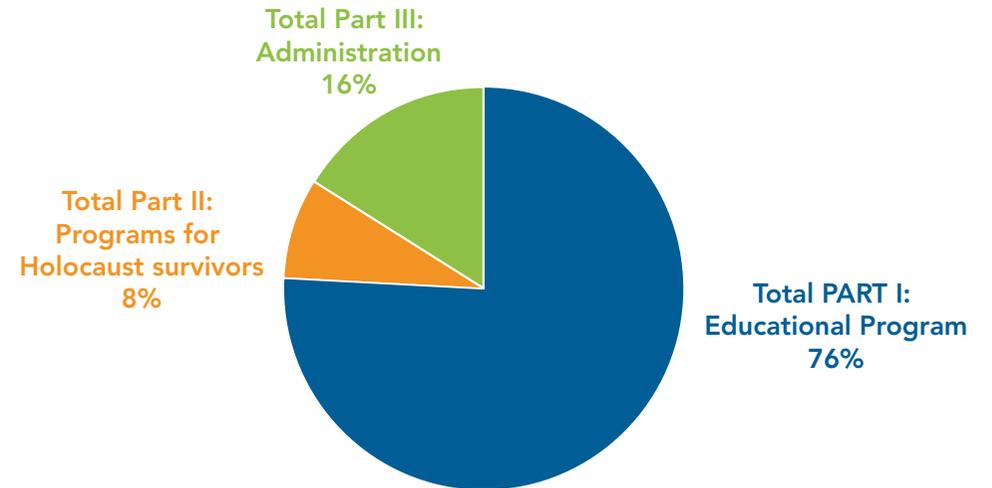
Where it came from



US	€ 640.347	\$746,185
Germany	€ 368.261	\$434,549
Austria	€ 294.033	\$346,958
Hungary	€ 147.393	\$173,963
Paid Directly To Third Party Vendors	€ 8.341	\$9,842
Book Sale, Services	€ 1.574	\$1,856
Total Income 2021	€ 1.459.949	\$1,713,353

Expenses 2021: \$1,295,105

How we spent it



Centropa Staff Vienna Office



Edward Serotta

Edward is a journalist, photographer, and filmmaker specializing in Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe. Born in Savannah, Georgia, Edward has worked in Central Europe since 1985. Between 1996 and 1999, he produced three films for ABC News Nightline. Edward has published three books – *Out of the Shadows*, *Survival in Sarajevo*, and *Jews, Germany, Memory*.



Veronika Doppelreiter

Veronika has been Centropa's stalwart bookkeeper since 2002 and we can barely get by a day without her. Veronika was born in Brazil and worked as a bookkeeper for El Al Airlines and other companies before coming to work with us.



Anna Domnich

Anna hails from a small town in the heart of the Russian Ural mountains. When she was 7 she moved to Dnipro, Ukraine, where she finished high school. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Master's degree in Management and Leadership from Lauder Business School, Vienna. At Centropa she works as a project coordinator and is responsible for administrative tasks.



Jonathan Schwerts

Jonathan was born in Germany and received his Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Sociology in 2018 at the University of Trier. Jonathan began as an intern at Centropa in 2018 and we asked him to stay on. He has been carrying out research in our archive as well as helping with our teachers' seminars.



Fabio Gschweidl

As Centropa's newest colleague, Fabio supports the team as our tech director. Fabio studies computer science as well as sociology at the University of Vienna. Born in Austria, Fabio is responsible for solving technical issues and operating our internal network, as well as administrating and fixing the Centropa website. Fabio has been designing and programming our specialty websites as well.



Patrick Schmid

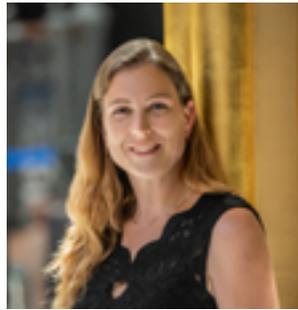
Patrick hails from Bavaria and is studying for his MA in political science at Vienna University. His great passion is audio, and Patrick hosts a radio hour in Vienna each week. Patrick narrates the German language versions of our podcasts, records our actors and produces the entire series.

Budapest Office



Borbála Pál

Borbála Pál studied sociology at ELTE (Hungary) and later received her Master's Degree in Nationalism Studies at Central European University. Her main research interests are Jewish identification and prejudices. She also volunteers for Haver Foundation, an organization that aims to combat antisemitism among Hungarian secondary school students. At Centropa, she coordinates the Centropa Jewish Network.



Andrea Benyes-Szöllősy

Andrea joined the Centropa team in 2014 and has been the financial administrator of the Budapest office ever since. Andrea has three sons and lives in a small town outside of Budapest.



Erzsébet Sándor

Erzsi Sandor started working as a journalist in 1994 and her first article was about the MNG-Holocaust exhibition. She worked 20 years at Hungarian Radio (Magyar Rádió) where she produced many shows about Jewish topics, including Centropa stories. Afterwards Erzsi started working in PR while she also wrote books; one of her books from this time is „Anyavalya.“ This story is about how her mom, aunt and herself tried to survive after the war. At Centropa, she is coordinating the Café Centropa Budapest programs and plans program for our interviewees.



Péter Balla

Peter received a degree in international business communication and economics. Fresh out of university he became retail store manager for an Austrian company in Hungary, then spent 5 years in the energy industry as an internal regulations and quality management specialist while his web developer hobby developed from side job to main job. He was a freelance web developer for 7 years when the Covid-19 lockdowns came, and even though it didn't change the way he worked, after a while he started missing going to an office and being part of a team. Peter has been working for Centropa for more than a year now as our tech director.



Sára Szilágyi

Sára studied Minority and Ethnic Studies at ELTE University in Budapest. She has been working in NGOs and education projects about social issues for many years. She really enjoys facilitating trainings with non-formal education methods and supporting young people in creating their own initiatives. She was part of different Jewish youth and educational organizations in Hungary and also the Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative. At Centropa she is the coordinator of the programs in Hungary.



Valentina Hemera

Tina graduated with an Events Management degree from the Manchester Metropolitan University focusing on cultural festivals and celebration events. As Part of her degree, Tina organised charity events for the university and as a member of the Jewish Society she organised balls and educational events. After completing her degree, Tina spent a year in Tallinn, Estonia, as a JDC Entwine Yesod fellow. At Centropa she is responsible for the Centropa Jewish Network, and our Hungarian and Israeli programs.

Hamburg Office

Washington Office



Fabian Ruehle

As Centropa's Director of European Education Programs, Fabian develops programs and runs seminars for schools all over Europe. Fabian joined Centropa in 2008, and worked in Vienna until 2014 before opening Centropa's Germany office. Fabian emigrated from East Berlin to West Berlin in 1988. He studied American History at Rutgers and the Free University of Berlin and earned a Master's degree. Before joining Centropa in Vienna, Fabian worked for the American Jewish Committee in Berlin.



Maximilian von Schoeler

Max studied Social Science at Humboldt University of Berlin, and earned his Master's Degree in Holocaust Communication and Tolerance at Touro College, Berlin. From 2009 until 2015, he worked at the Center for Digital Systems (CeDiS) for the online oral history archives „Forced Labor 1939–1945“ and „Witnesses to the Shoah“ at Free University of Berlin. Max coordinates Centropa's Trans.History project, and is responsible for social media and website content.



Magdaléna Farnesi

Magda Farnesi studied English and Polish philology and Jewish Studies in Olomouc, Czech Republic, and Central European History at the CEU in Budapest. She joined Centropa Germany in 2018 as Logistics Coordinator, and helps organize our TransHistory seminars in Ukraine, Germany, and Moldova, as well as our annual Centropa Summer Academy. Prior to Centropa, Magda organized exhibitions, concerts, and cultural events.



Katja Grosse-Sommer

Katja received a master's degree from the University of Amsterdam in 2017, and has also enjoyed studying history in Seattle, Berlin, Heidelberg, Stockholm, and Hamburg. She has been involved in projects including exhibits, publications, workshops, and seminars dealing with the Holocaust and remembrance of World War II in- and outside of academia. Katja is part of the Centropa Hamburg team as a project coordinator.



Ninja Stehr

Ninja Stehr studied History at the University of Hamburg with a focus on media, gender, and culture in the 20th century. After graduating with a Master's degree, she did a traineeship in a studio for exhibition design in Berlin, where she specialized in museum education and editing. In March 2020, Ninja joined Centropa's Hamburg team to assist our education programs.



Lauren Granite

Lauren has been directing our US educational programs since 2010. She has a doctorate in the Sociology of Religion from Drew University, and prior to joining our team Lauren spent more than a dozen years teaching Jewish history in colleges, day schools, and congregational schools. Working with teachers in multiple disciplines—from history to art to foreign language—Lauren designs US programming that includes professional development seminars, opportunities for teachers and students to work together across cultures, and making ready-to-use lessons and projects our teachers. Expanding our network of schools throughout the US, Lauren partners with public school administrators, museum educators, Holocaust councils, and others to bring Centropa to local, state, and national professional conferences.