

Ursula Reinhart-Döring, Jüdische Oberschule, Berlin



Centropa's first film produced by the award-winning Bulgarian Photographer's Association, is a story that begins in Istanbul in the 1850s and ends in Sofia today.

After the death of his wife, Matilda Albuhaire's grandfather traveled with his young son to the Black Sea port of Bourgas, where he opened a small shop in a town filled with Greeks, Turks, Jews, Muslims and Bulgarian Christians. Matilda became a teacher in the Bourgas and Sofia Jewish schools, and when war came waited with the other Bulgarian Jews for their deportation "to Poland," not knowing what awaited them there.

But Bulgaria's Jews were not deported, and the accompanying study guide provides articles describing this remarkable incident.

After the war, most Bulgarian Jews emigrated to Israel; Matilda remained, and after the fall of Communism, once again became active in her Jewish community.

Target Audience: ESL-students with an intermediate command of the English language. Some basic knowledge of WWII is required.

Educational Aims:

- Students learn about the role of Bulgaria in WWII.
- Students learn about the persecution of Jews in Bulgaria and how they were saved.
- Students learn about Dimitar Peshev the Minister of Justice.
- Students learn about Ladino.
- Students learn about the history of Jews in Bulgaria.
- Students learn about Forced Labor.

Length of Unit: 4-6 lessons **Length of lesson:** 45 minutes

Synopsis:

1. Introduction

Have one or two students prepare a presentation on Bulgaria in WWII.

2. Pre-viewing activities

Class discussion on push and pull factors for migration. Sharing of family legends.

Hand out vocabulary list to Matilda Albuhaire for students to memorize.

3. Viewing the film Matilda Albuhaire

Reviewing vocabulary, handout, note taking, comparing notes, discussion.

4. Post-viewing activities on Centropa study guide

Students work individually or in pairs doing research on assigned topics. This can be done by studying assigned texts or Internet links.

5. Students share their findings (jigsaw technique)
6. Homework
7. Handout: Summary

Appendix: Handouts: ready to print and use

1. Introduction:

Read about the role of **Bulgaria in WWII**. Prepare a presentation and a handout using the following text and a map. You find the complete text and pictures on:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005>



Bulgarian leader Bogdan Filov (standing) and German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop (seated, center) during the signing of the Tripartite Pact. This treaty formally aligned Bulgaria with the Axis powers. Vienna, Austria, March 1, 1941.

Between 1919 and 1945, Bulgaria was one of several kingdoms located in southeastern Europe, an area often referred to as the Balkans. In 1934, Bulgaria had a population of more than six million people. In that year, Jews constituted 0.8 percent of the total population, or roughly 50,000 individuals.

After Bulgaria's defeat in World War I, the Allies stripped the country of territory and placed restrictions on the size of the Bulgarian armed forces. King Boris III established a military dictatorship in the early 1930s and aligned the country closely with Germany, its World War I ally, hoping to restore the territories it had lost. The military dictatorship removed all restrictions on Bulgaria's armed forces.

In early March 1941, Bulgaria joined the Axis alliance* and, in April 1941, participated in the German-led attack on Yugoslavia and Greece. In return, Bulgaria received most of Thrace from Greece, and Macedonia as well as parts of eastern Serbia from Yugoslavia. Though Bulgaria participated in the Balkan Campaign, it refused to enter the war against the Soviet Union in June 1941.

**The belligerents during World War II fought as partners in one of two major alliances: the Axis and the Allies. The three principal partners in the Axis alliance were Germany, Italy, and Japan.*

PERSECUTION OF JEWS IN BULGARIA

Beginning in July 1940, Bulgaria instituted anti-Jewish legislation. Jews were excluded from public service, discriminated against in their choice of places of residence, and restricted economically. Marriage between Jews and non-Jews was prohibited.

During the war, German-allied Bulgaria did not deport Bulgarian Jews. Bulgaria did, however, deport non-Bulgarian Jews from the territories it had annexed from Yugoslavia and Greece. In March 1943, Bulgarian authorities arrested all the Jews in Macedonia and Thrace. In Macedonia, formerly part of Yugoslavia, Bulgarian officials interned 7,000 Jews in a transit camp in Skopje. In Thrace, formerly a Bulgarian-occupied province of Greece, about 4,000 Jews were deported to Bulgarian assembly points and handed over to the Germans. In all, Bulgaria deported over 11,000 Jews to German-held territory. By the end of March 1943, most of them had been deported to the Treblinka extermination camp in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Jews of Bulgarian citizenship were relatively secure from deportation to German-held territory. However, all Bulgarian Jewish men between the ages of 20 and 40 were drafted for forced labor after 1941, and in May 1943 the Bulgarian government announced the expulsion of 20,000 Jews from the capital, Sofia, to the provinces.

Also in the spring of 1943, the Bulgarian government made extensive plans to comply with the Nazi demand to deport Bulgaria's Jews. Significant and public protest from key political and clerical leaders moved King Boris to cancel these deportation plans.

Although Bulgaria was allied with Nazi Germany, for most of the war the Soviet Union maintained diplomatic relations with the Balkan nation. As Soviet forces approached in late summer 1944, however, the Soviet Union declared war on Bulgaria. In October 1944, Bulgaria switched allegiances and declared war on Germany.

In 1945, the Jewish population of Bulgaria was still about 50,000, its prewar level. Beginning in 1948, however, more than 35,000 Bulgarian Jews chose to emigrate to the new state of Israel.

Annotations to role of Bulgaria:

to constitute	to officially form a group
to strip	to take away something
to align	to publicly support a political group
to restore	to make something return to its former state
to prohibit	to forbid
to annex	to take control of a country or area
expulsion	the act of forcing someone to leave a place
to draft	to order someone to join the army
to comply	to do what you have to do or are asked to do
significant	important
clerical	being part of the church
to maintain	to make something continue in the same way
to switch	to change from doing or using one thing
prewar	before the war

2. Previewing activities:

Spark a discussion in class on the following question:

- What are the push and pull factors that make people want to leave their country?

Break up your class into groups of four and have them discuss the following assignments. Make sure that a secretary sums up the group discussion for presentation later later.

- What are family legends? Do your family have stories that are passed on?
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3. Viewing the film Matilda Albuhaire



<http://centropastudent.org/?typ=subtitel&fLang=ENG&movID=26&nID=78&q=m>

Centropa's film is a story that begins in Istanbul in the 1850s and ends in Sofia today.

Annotations to the film Matilda Albuhaire:

peddler	someone who walks from place to place selling small things
matchmaker	someone who tries to find a suitable partner for someone else to marry
trader	someone who buys and sells goods
to cart	to take something somewhere in a cart, truck
outing	a short trip that a group of people take for pleasure
merchant	someone who buys and sells goods in large quantities
to make ends meet	to have only just enough money to buy the things you need
forced labor	when prisoners forced to do very hard physical work
to cancel	to say that an event that was planned will not happen
Aegean Jews	Jews who live in a part of Greece
lecturer	a teacher in a university or college
retired	having stopped working
to gather	to come together

Ask the students to take some notes about the following points while viewing the film, so they have the information at hand for discussion following the viewing. (It might be necessary to show the film twice).

Tasks:

1. What is the legend in Matilda's family?
2. What do we learn about the great grandmother in Istanbul?
3. Why was the grandmother's surviving son called Mercado? Why did he have two first names?
4. Design a family tree of Matilda's family.
5. What made Bourgas so special? List the ethnic groups that lived in Bourgas.
6. What kind of store did her father have?
7. List the various Jewish organizations in Bourgas.
8. What has become of Matilda's students?
9. Sum up Matilda's career.
10. List the Nazi-rules that regulated Jewish life in Bulgaria after 1941. How did these rules affect their lives?
11. What happened in March 1943?
12. Why were people jubilant in the year 1944?
13. What happened to Jewish life after the war? What happened to Matilda's family?
14. Why was the year 1989 a turning point for Jews in Bulgaria?
15. List the clubs in which Matilda is active.

Have students share their notes and spark a class discussion.

4. Post-viewing activities: Centropa Study guide

Ask students to work in pairs and do research on the following topics, they should be prepared to share their findings with their classmates.

A. Dimitar Peshev

<http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/?en/saviors/diplomats/peshev/dimitar-peshev-s-biography>

Tasks: Give a brief account of Peshev's career. What was the turning point in his life? What were his measures to save the Jews? Why was he brought to trial?

Matilda Albuhaire talks about the deportation of her family being fortunately cancelled, while the Aegean Jews were taken to Poland. During the war, German-allied Bulgaria did not deport Bulgarian Jews. Dimitar Peshev, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Bulgaria and Minister of Justice during World War II, prevented the deportation of Bulgaria's Jews. Read a biography of Dimitar Peshev provided by The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.

Dimitar Peshev was born in Bulgaria in 1894. Although a man of democratic beliefs he initially supported the authoritarian government that ruled Bulgaria during WWII as well as the strategic alliance with Hitler's government. At the time he did not foresee the real goals of the Nazi government which he thought would bring prosperity to Bulgaria and its people. Even when the German government requested that its Bulgarian counterpart approve laws that would first convict and later sentence Jews, he initially saw it only a temporary measure rather than the beginning of the end for the Jews in Bulgaria.

Peshev's recantation began when a close Jewish friend of his youth arrived at his door requesting his help in saving the 8,000 Jews of Kyustendil, a town where he had spent his earlier years. This incident marked Peshev's turning point, the moment when he realized that the Jewish people of Bulgaria were in danger of perishing at the hands of the Germans.

Having decided to take action, he went to Parliament bursting into the office of Gabrosky, who was then the Bulgarian Minister of Interior. After a fierce argument, Gabrosky issued an order annulling the deportations of Jews from Bulgaria.

Then, he personally proceeded to corroborate with each prefect's office that the deportation order would not be executed.

Peshev's next steps would lead him to lose his post as vice-chairmen of Parliament.

In order to save all 50,000 Jews in Bulgaria from deportation he obtained the signatures of 40 members of Parliament and presented his government with a letter of protest in which he publicly denounced the idea of deporting all the Jews from Bulgaria.

Despite having been removed from office he was later brought to trial on charges of having supported the pro-German government and faced the death sentence. After one year in prison the court freed him after learning about his key role in saving the Bulgarian Jews. Dimitar Peshev died on 20 February 1973.

Annotations to Dimitar Peshev:

to foresee	to think that something is going to happen in the future
prosperity	wealth
to request	to ask for something in a polite way
counterpart	someone that has the same purpose in a different place
to convict	to officially announce that someone is guilty
measure	an action
recantation	To make a formal retraction of a statement or belief to which one has previously committed oneself
to perish	to disappear
to annul	to officially state that a legal agreement no longer exists
to corroborate	to provide information that supports someone else's statement
to execute	to do something that has been carefully planned
to denounce	to express strong disapproval of someone or something
trial	court
death sentence	the official punishment of death

B. Quick Explanation of Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) by Shelomo Alfassa 12/1999

You can click on the following link to listen to an MP3 sound clip of spoken Ladino and to read the complete text.

<http://www.sephardicstudies.org/quickladino.html>

Tasks: Why and when did Ladino become a Jewish language of its own? Why did two different dialects develop? From which languages have words been borrowed? Which events hastened the decline of the language? Where is Ladino still spoken by a bigger group?

Ladino, otherwise known as Judeo-Spanish, is the spoken and written Hispanic language of Jews of Spanish origin. Ladino did not become a specifically Jewish language until after the expulsion from Spain in 1492 - it was merely the language of their province. It is also known as Judezmo, Dzhudezmo, or Spaniolit.

When the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal they were cut off from the further development of the language, but they continued to speak it in the communities and countries to which they emigrated. Ladino therefore reflects the grammar and vocabulary of 14th and 15th century Spanish. The further away from Spain the emigrants went, the more cut off they were from developments in the language, and the more Ladino began to diverge from mainstream Castilian Spanish.

In Amsterdam, England and Italy, those Jews who continued to speak 'Ladino' were in constant contact with Spain and therefore they basically continued to speak the Castilian Spanish of the time. However, in the Sephardi communities of the Ottoman Empire, the language not only retained the older forms of Spanish, but borrowed so many words from Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, Turkish, and even French, that it became more and more distorted. Ladino was nowhere near as diverse as the various forms of Yiddish, but there were still two different dialects, which corresponded to the different origins of the speakers.

'Oriental' Ladino was spoken in Turkey and Rhodes and reflected Castilian Spanish, whereas 'Western' Ladino was spoken in Greece, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Romania, and preserved the characteristics of northern Spanish and Portuguese. The vocabulary of Ladino includes hundreds of archaic Spanish words which have disappeared from modern day Spanish, and also includes many words from different languages that have been substituted for the original Spanish word, from the various places Ladino speaking Jews settled. (...)

In the Ladino spoken in Israel, several words have been borrowed from Yiddish. For most of its lifetime, Ladino was written in the Hebrew alphabet, in Rashi script, or in Solitro, a cursive method of writing letters. It was only in the 20th century that Ladino was ever written using the Latin alphabet. In fact, what is known as 'rashi script' was originally a Ladino script which became used centuries after Rashi's death in printed books to differentiate Rashi's commentary from the text of the Torah.

At various times Ladino has been spoken in North Africa, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Israel, and, to a lesser extent, in the United States (the highest populations being in Seattle, Los Angeles, New York, and south Florida) and Latin America. By the beginning of this century, with the spread of compulsory education in the language of the land, Ladino began to disintegrate. Emigration to Israel from the Balkans hastened the decline of Ladino in Eastern Europe and Turkey.

The Nazis destroyed most of the communities in Europe where Ladino had been the first language among Jews. Ladino speakers who survived the Holocaust and emigrated to Latin America tended to pick up regular Spanish very quickly, whilst others adopted the language of whichever country they ended up in. Israel is now the country with the greatest number of Ladino speakers, with about 200,000 people who still speak or understand the language, but even they only know a very limited and basic Ladino.

It is important to note that Ladino is not modern Spanish, and also to note that just because someone speaks modern Spanish, this fact alone does not make them Sephardic.

Annotations to Quick Explanation of Ladino:

expulsion	the act of forcing someone to leave a place
to diverge	to develop in different ways
mainstream	the most usual ideas
to retain	to keep something or continue to have something
distorted	changed
diverse	very different
archaic	very old
to derive	to develop or come from something else
spread	increase
compulsory	something that is compulsory must be done
to disintegrate	to break up, or make something break up, into very small pieces
to hasten	to make something happen faster
decline	a decrease in the quality or importance of something
limited	not very great in number

For this part access to the internet is required!!

C. JEWS IN BULGARIA: A BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

The first Jews appeared in the Balkans as early as the 2nd century, after the conquest of their lands by Rome. This had been recorded on a tombstone found near the town of Nikopol by the Danube river. Click on <http://www.omda.bg/ENGL/history/jewshist.htm> to learn more about the history of the Jews in Bulgaria.

Tasks: Read the following sections of the article "Jews in Bulgaria": 'The Middle Ages', 'After the Banishment from Spain', 'In the Restored Bulgarian State' and answer the following questions: What is life like for the Jews in the Middle Ages? Who is Theodora? Who are the Sefarades? How does Konstantin Irecek describe the Jews in Bulgaria? What happened to the synagogue in Sofia and who was involved?

Annotation to Jews in Bulgaria:

conquest	the act of getting control of a country by fighting
medieval	connected with the Middle Ages
outcast	someone who is not accepted by the people
blasphemy	something you say that is insulting to people's religious beliefs
castigation	to criticize or punish someone severely
evidence	facts or signs that show clearly that something exists or is true
outrage	a feeling of great anger and shock
anathematized	cursed
concubine	a woman who has sex with a man who already has a wife
banishment	sending someone away permanently from their country
influx	a mass arrival or incoming
hostility	when someone is unfriendly and full of anger towards another person
to wane	if something becomes gradually less strong
without a trace	leaving without any sign of what happened
craftsman	someone who is very skilled
industrious	someone who works hard
pedler	someone who, in the past, walked from place to place selling small things
notables	important or famous people
indispensable	essential
consecration	To declare or set apart as sacred
fervent	believing or feeling something very strongly
token	something that represents s.th.

D. Jews in Bulgaria in forced labor

Matilda's family was saved from being deported however her husband died in a forced labor camp. Read an excerpt of Centropa's interview with Leontina Arditi where she talks about her internment in Bulgaria: <http://centropa.org/upload/studyguideextra/index9.html>

Tasks: How does the family learn about discrimination against Jews? What happens to the family and to the father? How do some people try to defy the Germans? What does life look like in Dupnitsa? Why are the two Russian women talked about, what happens to them?

Annotations to Leontina's interment:

maternal	relating to a mother
to be interned	to be put in prison or camp
cardboard	stiff thick brown paper
to sew	to use a needle and thread to make clothes
den	the home of some animals
to infest	if insects, rats etc infest a place, there are a lot of them
cauldron	a large round metal pot for boiling liquids
encounter	meeting
to expel	to officially force someone to leave an institution
sinister	evil, wicked
partisan	a member of an armed group that fights against an enemy
napthalene	a type of oil used for fuel or for making chemicals

5. Students share their findings.

This can be done by using the technique of a classic jigsaw: A communicative reading technique which promotes group cooperation. (Natalie Hess, *Headstarts*, Longman, 1991)

- Give out the study guide sections. Each student will get only one section, an A, a B, a C or a D. For A and B access to the internet is not necessary.
- Ask student to read their section, making notes of the important ideas and answering the questions. Then students should find other students who have tackled the same assignment. They should compare their notes and reach an agreement of its most important elements. During the next stage each student is supposed to be an expert on the material of the section.
- Ask students now to sit together with an A, B, C, and D. The task of this group will be to teach each other the content of their sections. A goes first, B goes next, etc. Students fill in the summary handout.
- Eventually bring the whole class together and discuss the content of the various texts.

6. **Homework: Students write a report on Jews in Bulgaria during WWII**

7. **Handout: (Jigsaw reading)**

Matilda Albuhaire

Jigsaw Reading

Summary Sheet

A. Dimitar Peshev

B. Quick Explanation of Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) by Shelomo Alfassa 12/1999

C. Jews in Bulgaria: A Brief Historical Account

D. Jews in Bulgaria in Forced Labor

Attachments: (worksheets ready to copy)

The film Matilda Albuhaire is a story that begins in Istanbul in the 1850s and ends in Sofia today.



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the language of the land, Ladino began to disintegrate. Emigration to Israel from the Balkans hastened the decline of Ladino in Eastern Europe and Turkey.

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without a trace	leaving without any sign of what happened
craftsman	someone who is very skilled
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pedler	someone who, in the past, walked from place to place selling small things
notables	important or famous people
indispensable	essential
consecration	To declare or set apart as sacred
fervent	believing or feeling something very strongly
token	something that represents a feeling

D. Jews in Bulgaria in forced labor

Matilda's family was saved from being deported however her husband died in a forced labor camp. Read an excerpt of Centropa's interview with Leontina Arditi where she talks about her internment in Bulgaria: <http://centropa.org/upload/studyguideextra/index9.html>

Tasks: How does the family learn about discriminations against Jews? What happens to the family and to the father? How do some people try to defy the Germans? What does life look like in Dupnitsa? Why are the two Russian women talked about, what happens to them?

Annotations to *Leontina's interment*:

maternal	relating to a mother
to be interned	to be put in prison or camp
cardboard	stiff thick brown paper
to sew	to use a needle and thread to make clothes
den	the home of some animals
to infest	if insects, rats etc infest a place, there are a lot of them
cauldron	a large round metal pot for boiling liquids
encounter	meeting
to expel	to officially force someone to leave an institution
sinister	evil, wicked
partisan	a member of an armed group that fights against an enemy
naphthalene	a type of oil used for fuel or for making chemicals