



International Interdisciplinary Conference

## **Persecution and Collaboration, Rescue and Survival:**

New Perspectives Regarding Bulgaria and the Holocaust  
80 Years Later

May 22-24, 2023

Monday | May 22, 2023

Edmond J. Safra Lecture Hall, The International School  
for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

9:30 Gathering

**10:00-10:30 | Opening Session: Greetings**

**10:30-12:30 | Session One: The Anti-Jewish  
Legislation and its Impact on the Life of the Jews  
in the Kingdom of Bulgaria**

Chair: **Dina Porat** | Yad Vashem and Tel Aviv University

**Shlomo Shealtiel** | Yad Yaari, Givat Haviva

*Visible and Hidden Motives of the Opponents of King  
Boris III Government's Anti-Jewish Policy*

**Moti Kanari** | Independent Researcher, Giv'atayim

*The Deportations of Foreign Citizens from Bulgaria*

**Zdravka Krasteva** | Sofia University "St. Kliment  
Ohridski", Sofia

*Legal Aspects of the Anti-Jewish Policy in the Kingdom  
of Bulgaria, 1941–1944*

**Steven Sage**, Independent Researcher, Rockville, Maryland

*Labor Camps and Ghettos in Bulgaria*

**Discussion**

**12:30-13:15 Lunch Break**

**13:15-14:45 | Session Two: "The Final Solution" in the United Bulgarian Kingdom**

Session in memory of the late pioneer researcher of Bulgaria and the Holocaust, Prof. Fred Chary z"l

Chair: **Angel Chorapchiev** | Yad Vashem

**Roumen Avramov** | Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia  
*Bulgaria and the Holocaust: Bifurcating Trajectories*

**Vasilis Ritzaleos** | Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini  
*The Persecution of the Greek Jews in the Bulgarian Occupied Zone in Greece, 1941–1943: The Case of Drama*

**Souzana Hazan** | Jewish Museum, Augsburg  
*Preparing the Section about Bulgaria in Vol. 13 of the German Documentary Series: **The Persecution and Murder of the European Jews by Nazi Germany, 1933–1945***

**Discussion**

**14:45-15:00 Coffee Break**

**15:00-16:30 | Session Three: Bulgaria and the Holocaust: History, Memory, Representation**

Session in memory of the late Nir Baruch z"l, a researcher of the Holocaust in Bulgaria and an activist for its commemoration

Chair: **Iael Nidam Orvieto** | Yad Vashem

**Dan Michman** | Yad Vashem; Bar-Ilan University  
*Research on Bulgaria and the Holocaust: The Broader Context*

**Nadège Ragaru** | Sciences Po University, Paris  
*The Role of the Immediate Postwar Trials in Bulgaria in Documenting the Fate of Bulgarian Jews*

**Jacky Comforty** | Researcher and Film documentary director – Bulgarian Jews, *The Learning Project*, Bloomington, Indiana  
*The Stolen Narrative of the Bulgarian Jews and the Holocaust*

**Discussion**

**16:30-16:45 Coffee Break**

**16:45-17:45 | Session Four: The Circumstances of the Survival of Bulgarian Jews- Scholarly and Memory Polemics. **A round table discussion****

Moderator: **Moshe Mossek** | Bulgarian Jewish Heritage Center - Jaffa; The Salvador Foundation Discussants:

**Lea Cohen** | Diplomatic, Independent Researcher and Novelist, Neuenburg

**Dalia Ofer** | The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

**Aharon Papo** | Attorney at law, Tel Aviv

**Shlomo Shealtiel** | Yad Yaari, Givat Haviva

**Yossef Conforti** | The Friendship Association (R.A) Bulgaria- Israel, Tel Aviv

The lectures will be accompanied by simultaneous Hebrew-English translation

Trasko, Bulgaria, 1942. Jewish forced labor.  
© Yad Vashem Photo Archive



Tuesday | May 23, 2023

Feldman Auditorium (Building 301), Bar-Ilan University,  
Ramat Gan

9:30 Gathering

### 10:00-11:00 | Opening Session

Chair: **Shimon Ohayon** | Director, The Dahan Center, Bar-Ilan University

Greetings: **Ino Izhak** | Chairman of the Union of Bulgarian Immigrants, Rishon Le-Zion

Keynote Lecture: **Menachem Z. Rosensaft** | World Jewish Congress; Cornell Law School, New York  
*The Holocaust in Bulgaria: A Global Jewish Perspective*

### 11:00-12:00 | Session One: What Can There Still be Found in the Archives? Unsolved Questions Regarding Bulgaria and the Holocaust, and Challenges of Future Research - **A round table discussion**

Session in Memory of Dr. Emanuel 'Emko' Margolis

Moderator: **Moshe Mossek** | Bulgarian Jewish Heritage Center - Jaffa; The Salvador Foundation

Discussants: **Roumen Avramov** | Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia

**Jacky Comforty** | Researcher and Film documentary director – Bulgarian Jews, The Learning Project, Bloomington, Indiana

**Angel Chorapchiev** | Yad Vashem

**Nadège Ragaru** | Sciences Po University, Paris

12:00-12:30 Coffee Break

## 12:30-14:30 | Session Two: Memory, Commemoration and Heritage

Session in Honor of Prof. Robert Arnove, Indiana University, Bloomington

Chair: **Yossef Charvit** | Bar-Ilan University

**Leah Cohen** | Diplomatic, Independent Researcher and Journalist, Neuenburg

*The 80th Anniversary of the Persecution and Salvation of the Jews in the Kingdom of Bulgaria: New Paths of Holocaust Revisionism*

**Michael Berenbaum** | Independent Researcher, Author, Museum Planner, Los Angeles

*The Educational Role of the Holocaust Memorial Museums and the Learning Lessons from the Holocaust*

**Yitzhak Lipovetsky** | The Friendship Association (R.A) Bulgaria-Israel, Tel Aviv

*The Monuments in Sofia and Tel Aviv Commemorating the Survival of Bulgarian Jews during the Holocaust*

**Rani Jaeger** | Hartman Institute, Jerusalem

*The "Holocaust Haggadah" as a Means to Internalize Holocaust Memory Among Bulgarian Jews*

### Discussion

## 14:30-14:45 Coffee Break

## 14:45-16:15 | Session Three: Rescue and Survival Initiatives and Activism

Chair: **Ora Schwarzwald** | Bar-Ilan University

**Orly Meron** | Bar-Ilan University

*Jewish Business Networks in Bulgaria between World War I and World War II*

**Moshe Ovadia** | Academic Center Levinsky-Wingate

*Bulgarian Rabbis and Their Actions to Save the Jews during the Holocaust*

**Jacky Comforty** | Bloomington, Indiana

*Documentary Film: The Demonstration Against the Deportation of the Jews of Sofia May 24, 1943*

**Discussion**

**16:15 - 16:30 Coffee Break**

## **16:30 - 18:30 | Session Four: Artistic and Cultural Representations of the Fate of Bulgarian Jews during the Holocaust**

Session in Memory of the Poet Chava Pinchas-Cohen z"l

Chair: **Jacky Vidal** | Bulgarian Jewish Heritage Center- Jaffa

**Shabtai Majar** | Poet, Tel Aviv

*Reading "The Second Generation" a poem by the late poet Chava Pinchas Cohen Z"L*

**Martha Aladjem Bloomfield** | Independent scholar and Artist, East Lansing, Michigan

*Reclaimed Voices: Paintings of the Bulgarian Holocaust*

**Edward McGlynn Gaffney Jr.** | Prof. emeritus, and Filmmaker, Los Angeles

*The Challenges of Historical Reconstruction of the Holocaust in the Balkans and of Making Ethical Judgment of the Past*

**Rena Shashua Hasson** | The Friendship Association (R.A) Bulgaria- Israel, Tel Aviv

*Simcho Isakov: The Poet and the Bulgarian Jewish Zionist Leader*

**Albert Cohen** | Actor, Tel Aviv

*Readings from Isaakov's Oeuvre*

**Discussion**

**The lectures will be accompanied by simultaneous Hebrew-English translation**

The fee to attend the conference at Bar Ilan University: 30 NIS

For Payment: [https://epay.biu.ac.il/shoat\\_Bulgaria](https://epay.biu.ac.il/shoat_Bulgaria)

For Information: [Dahan.center@biu.ac.il](mailto:Dahan.center@biu.ac.il)

Wednesday | May 24, 2023

Tel Aviv Cinematheque

## **The Holocaust in Bulgaria: Independent Documentary Film Marathon**

Filmmakers in attendance

### **09:30 Balkan Jazz - Jacky Comforty (76 Min.)**

**Balkan Jazz** tells the life story and music of Niko Nissimov and his Jewish friends from the Bulgarian Jazz band, "The Optimists". The movie charts their rise to stardom as a band in late 1930s Bulgaria. The beginning of WWII changed everything for them as Bulgaria joined the Axis powers. Anti-Jewish laws and restrictions brought the band to a halt. All men were drafted to slave labor camps, and the entire community was on the verge of extinction. Niko was saved by his friends at the last minute from a transport destined for the death camp of Treblinka.

### **11:30 The Immigration Boat Salvador - Nissim Mossek (82 Min.)**

**The Immigration Boat Salvador** tells the little-known story of the forgotten story of the illegal ship Salvador, which sailed from Bulgaria to Israel in 1940 with 352 passengers on board, but sank off the coast of Turkey. Of all the passengers on board, only 122 survived. Using archival materials and interviews with survivors, the director, Nissim Musk, tells the story of Salvador and the story of the immigration of the Jews of Bulgaria, and also dwells on the way the disaster was received among the Israeli population - being ignored.

### **13:30 Empty Boxcars - Edward Gaffney (83 Min.)**

**Empty Boxcars** tells the amazing story of the survival of over 50,000 Jews in World War II and the mass murder of 11,393 Jews from territories under Bulgarian control in Greece and Macedonia. The plot to murder all European Jews was marked 'top secret' but was brazenly public. Footage of the trains renders the crime visible. When the plot is exposed, Bulgarians from many walks of life, church leaders and labor leaders, lawyers and doctors, rose up in protest. Would we risk our lives to save someone in deep trouble? These courageous Bulgarians encourages us to think we must, and so we can.

### **15:30 The Optimists - Jacky Comforty (81 Min.)**

An award-winning film about the circumstances that led to the partial survival of the Jews in the Kingdom of Bulgaria during the Holocaust. **The Optimists** (named after the jazz band that operated in Bulgaria before the war and to which some of the interviewees in this film belonged) is the almost-unknown story about the survival of Bulgarian Jews at the hands of Christians and Muslims. The film won the Peace Prize at the Berlin International Film Festival. The "Jewish experience" award at the Jerusalem International Film Festival, CINE Golden Eagle award and best documentary at "Dreams and Hopes" film festival in the USA.

### **17:00-18:00 Reception**

### **18:00 Closing Session**

Chair: **Jacky Comforty** | Researcher and Film documentary director – Bulgarian Jews, The Learning Project, Bloomington, Indiana

Greetings: **Jacky Vidal** | Chair, Bulgarian Jewish Heritage House-Jaffa

**Ambassador David Cohen** | Chair, Salvador foundation

**Yitzhak Lipovetski** | Chair, The Friendship Association (R.A) Bulgaria- Israel, Tel Aviv

**Menachem Z. Rosensaft** | World Jewish Congress; Cornell Law School, New York

### **Premiere of *Monument to Love* by Jacky Comforty**

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/813353706>

Tickets for the closing event can be ordered at

<https://cintlv.pres.global/order/78811> or by phone \*6876

### **Discussion**



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Cover Photo:  
Thrace, Greece, March 1943, A woman and child boarding a deportation train.  
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