

The Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Center

THE HOLOCAUST: ANNIHILATION, LIBERATION, RESCUE



Booklet of the documentary exhibition

The exhibition *The Holocaust: Destruction, Liberation, Rescue* presents hitherto unseen historical documents and photographs that attest to the scale and particular characteristics of the Holocaust on the occupied territory of the Soviet Union. It was here that the total destruction of the Jewish population was set in motion with the murderous sweep of the SS Einsatzgruppen that followed in the wake of the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Ultimately the 2.7 million victims on Soviet soil accounted for almost half (45%) of the total Holocaust death toll. This exhibition represents an attempt to shed more light on the destruction and rescue of Jews on occupied Soviet territories.

The exhibition describes in detail the role of the Red Army and its medical personnel in the liberation of Jews in the ghettos and death camps for the first time. The first European ghetto, where prisoners survived due to the offensive of the Red Army, was located in Kaluga, 150 kilometers from Moscow. The city was liberated on December 30, 1941, and, four weeks later, a sudden offensive of Soviet troops saved 250 inmates of the Ilyino Ghetto who were already lined up for execution. In November-December 1941, after the liberation of Rostov-on-Don and Kalinin (Tver), the Jews of these oblast centers were saved (most of the Jews of Rostov perished during the second occupation in August 1942). 3,000 Mountain Jews of Kabardino-Balkaria were rescued in January 1943. About 50,000 Jews who were in the ghettos of the Romanian occupation zone in the Ukraine were liberated in March 1944. Almost 94,000 inmates of the Budapest Ghetto survived not only due to the help of Raoul Wallenberg and others Swedish diplomats but, above all, as a result of the liberation of the ghetto on January 18, 1945, during the fighting for Budapest. Tens of thousands of Jews were rescued by soldiers and medical personnel of the Red Army in concentration camps on the territory of Poland, Germany and Czechoslovakia: Majdanek (in July — August 1944, the Soviet documentary filmmakers and journalists were the first who reported for the first time about the inmates who were killed in the gas chambers), Gross-Rosen (February 1945), Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück (April 1945), Stutthof and Terezin (May 1945).

A special place in the exhibition belongs to the rescue of the inmates of the most notorious Nazi death camp — Auschwitz, where about one million people died, ninety percent of whom were Jews. Established in 1940 as a concentration camp near the Polish city of Oświęcim, since March 1942, it became the center of the destruction of the Holocaust victims. The lightening offensive of the Red Army forced the Nazis in mid-January 1945 to deport more than 50,000 inmates to Germany (many of them perished in this death march). Awaiting for certain death, about 7,000 ill and disabled inmates were left in the camp. The command of the First Ukrainian Front, having learned about the existence of the camp, changed the plan of the Vistula-Oder operation, which allowed to save the lives of the Auschwitz prisoners. It is symbolic that Fedor Krasavin and Mikhail Grishin, the Russians, Vasily Petrenko, the Ukrainian, and Petr Zubov, the Latvian, were the four division commanders who directly participated in the liberation of Auschwitz and its subcamps. Doctors who had experience of saving the inhabitants of besieged Leningrad from the dystrophy played a huge role in the rescue operation. The front-line journalists of the central Soviet newspapers and cameramen who filmed a documentary about Auschwitz and its liberation were the first to report on Nazi crimes to the international community.

Per the decision of the UN General Assembly, January 27 is commemorated as the International Remembrance Day of the Holocaust Victims. At that day in 1945 Auschwitz was liberated. 350 soldiers and officers of the Red Army were killed in the battles to liberate the city of Oświęcim and Auschwitz. Unfortunately, the history of the camp liberation and rescue of the prisoners is known much less in our country and abroad than the crimes of Nazi executioners.

That is why the exhibition shows not only the scale and horrors of the Holocaust, but also reflects on the fate of the liberators and prisoners whom they liberated and rescued, displaying letters, diaries, and memoirs. Among them are Otto Frank, the father of Anne Frank, who was liberated in Auschwitz and prepared her diary for publication; the famous Italian writer Primo Levi; the inmate of the Terezin, the head of the German Jewish community Leo Baeck. Doctor Lidiya Tikhomirova became a prototype of the heroine for the novel and the feature film Doctor Vera. Sergeant Nikolai Belyaev after the war became the vice provost of the Leningrad State University and one of the leading experts in the field of criminal law. The fate of General Fedor Krasavin, whose division liberated the extermination center in Auschwitz-Birkenau, for which he was awarded the Order of Alexander Nevsky, is astonishing. Right before and at the beginning of the war he spent four years in the GULAG. He was officially rehabilitated in 1968, twenty years after his death.

The presentation of the exhibition took place on January 25, 2016, in the State Duma of the Russian Federation with the participation of the leaders of the parliamentary factions. On January 20, 2017, it was opened in the Cultural Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov. With great success, the exhibition was shown at the premises of city administrations, museums, archives, libraries, and universities of St. Petersburg, Volgograd, Vologda, Voronezh, Kaluga, Rostov-on-Don, Taganrog, Tver and other Russian cities.

For showing abroad in 2017, the Russian Holocaust Center prepared a new, substantially expanded version of the traveling exhibition. The following persons took active part in preparing the exhibition: the president of the Holocaust Foundation, the co-chairman of the Center Alla Gerber, the head of the Center's Archive Leonid Terushkin (the curator of the exhibition), the researchers of the Russian Holocaust Center Maria Gileva (translation into English) and Svetlana Tikhankina (selection of documents, the compilation of captions). Schoolchildren and teachers actively participated in researching biographies of the liberators, natives, and residents of many regions of Russia.

The designer of the exhibition is Pavel Romanov (Moscow). The booklet design was made by Sofia Shahverdova (St. Petersburg, Russia — Columbus, USA).

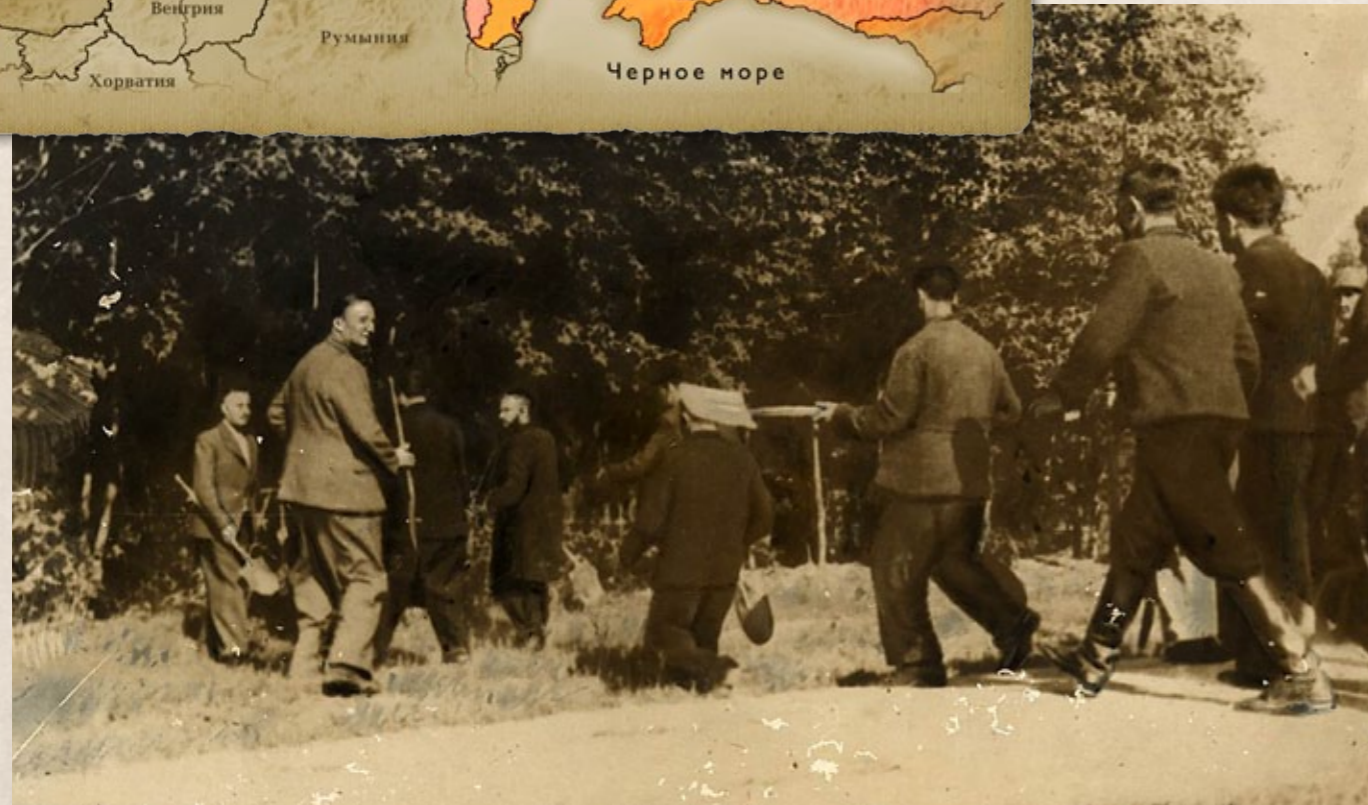
We extend our sincere gratitude to all of them, as well as to Professor Claudio Ingerflom (Argentina), Dr. Igor Kotler (USA), Dr. Marta Simo (Spain), Dr. Christina Winkler (Germany), archivist historian Dmitry Alekseev (Russia), for the help in preparing the exhibition in English and Spanish. Special acknowledgment goes to the leaders of 13 archives, funds and museums in Russia, Germany, France, and Ukraine, who donated their documents and photographs for the exhibition.

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THE HOLOCAUST IN THE SOVIET UNION



Map of the USSR as of June 22, 1941 indicating the number of the Holocaust victims in the Soviet republics



The Execution of Jews in Siauliai, Lithuania, July 1941. GA RF

After Germany's invasion of the USSR on June 22, 1941, the extermination of Jews, including women, children, and elderly as well as half-Jews began in the occupied territory. In the first weeks of the war local collaborators of Nazi occupiers conducted dozens of pogroms. All in all not less than two million seven hundred thousand people were shot, burned, buried alive, drowned in rivers and swamps, hanged. All of them were Soviet citizens. This is almost a half of all Holocaust victims.

German anti-Semitic leaflets and posters. 1941–1942. RHC

The destruction and persecution of the Jews was accompanied by an unprecedented anti-Semitic propaganda in many languages.



Children of Babi Yar. FBY, RHC

Babi Yar, Kiev. Sorting belongings of the murdered Jews. October 1941. FBY

Just during the two days of September 29–30, 1941 at about 34,000 Jews were executed in Babi Yar on the outskirts of Kiev. This place has become a symbol of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union.



THE HOLOCAUST AND THE RESCUE OF JEWS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



In the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) 44 ghettos were established and about 200,000 Jews were executed.

In the Kaluga Ghetto prisoners were marked with a five-pointed yellow star as a symbol of "Judeo-Bolshevism". GAKO



*The Kaluga Ghetto after liberation.
January 1942. GAKO*



Liberated by the Red Army on December 30, 1941, the Kaluga Ghetto became the first ghetto in Europe, whose prisoners had been saved during World War II. Only seven out of 155 Jews died there.

*A pigsty, where the Velizh Ghetto was placed.
TsA FSB.*

In the ghetto of Velizh (Smolensk Oblast), the inmates were placed in old houses and two pigsties. When the Red Army liberated a part of the city on the morning of January 28, 1942, collaborators burned the ghetto and shot prisoners. Seventeen Jews managed to escape. Collaborators shot all the rest. Several hundred prisoners were burned alive. Four Nazi collaborators were sentenced to death for this in 1960.

Upon the investigation a former collaborator identifies the place where several hundred prisoners were burnt. 1959. TsA FSB



Zmievskaia Balka Monument. 2014. RHC

Rostov-on-Don was the first regional center on the territory of the USSR to be liberated by the Red Army on November 29, 1941. About 30,000 Jews were saved. Nazis occupied the city again in July 1942. On August 11–12, 1942, at least 15,000 Jews were murdered at Zmievskaia Balka, a ravine on the city outskirts. This is the largest place of the Holocaust victims execution in Russia.



*Memorial to the ghetto inmates
and soldiers-liberators in the village of Ilyino
(Tver Oblast). 2013. RHC*



*Major Naum Kosin, native and liberator of Ilyino.
Participant of the Victory Day parade in Moscow on June 24, 1945. RHC*

On December 16, 1941, several dozens of Jews of Kalinin (now — Tver) were rescued due to the counterattack of the Red Army. On January 25, 1942 about 200 prisoners of the Ilyino Ghetto in the Kalinin Oblast were liberated. Due to the efforts of locals and the liberation of the Kabardino-Balkaria capital by the Red Army in January 1943, about 3,000 Mountain Jews were rescued in Nalchik.



*Emil Siegel near the monument on the site of the execution of Jews
in the city of Mineralnye Vody. In September 1942, more than 7,000
Jews were murdered there, most of them were evacuees from other
parts of the country. RHC*

Emil Siegel (born 1925) was rescued in Kislovodsk; the retired Guard Colonel and World War II participant, today lives in Israel. Siegel's and his parents names are on the list of those shot in Mineralnye Vody. Since 1945, he annually visits the place of the execution. In recent years, he has been the only remaining relative of the deceased

RESCUE OF THE SOVIET AND EUROPEAN JEWS



Map of ghettos and concentration camps liberated by the Red Army



Saved Jewish family with a Red Army officer. Chechelnyk, Vinnytsia Oblast. 1944. RHC

About 50,000 Jews survived in the Romanian occupation zone. Following the USA entry into World War II and the Soviet counterattack near Moscow, the killing of Jews ceased between the Bug and Dniester rivers. In March 1944, the Red Army liberated over 30,000 Jews there. In Chernivtsi (Bukovina) 14,750 Jews were rescued at the end of March 1944.

Cameraman Roman Karmen shoots in Majdanek. August, 1944. Sputnik

The Majdanek death camp on the outskirts of Lublin (Poland) was liberated by the Red Army in July 1944. The first indisputable evidence of the murder of at least 80,000 European Jews in gas chambers and crematoria was discovered there. Soviet director Roman Karmen shot a film about it.

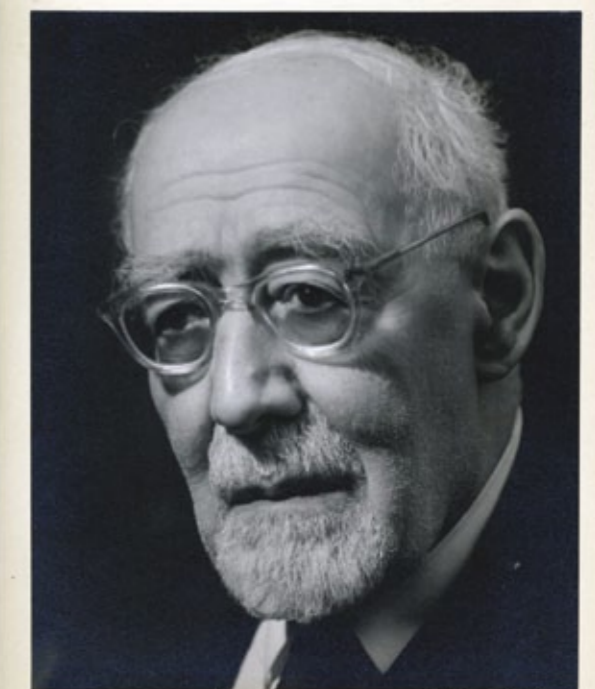


Liberated prisoners of the Budapest Ghetto. Photo by Yevgenii Khaldei. January 1945. GA RF

About 94,000 Budapest Jews were liberated by the Red Army on January 18, 1945.

Leo Baeck (1873–1956), president of the Reich Representation of German Jews. Liberated in Terezin. In the 1950s, he served as chairman of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. 1940s. LBI

The soldiers and officers of the 13th Guards Rifle Division of the Red Army played a decisive role in the defense of Stalingrad and liberated 11 068 prisoners in Terezin (Czechoslovakia) on May 8, 1945. Soviet doctors stopped the epidemic of typhus there.



LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ



Soldiers of the First Ukrainian Front in the battle for the city of Oswiecim. January 1945. VM

Auschwitz was liberated on January 27, 1945, during the Vistula–Oder Offensive by the troops of the 59th and 60th Armies of the First Ukrainian Front (commander Marshal of the USSR Ivan Konev). The units of the 100th Rifle Division under the command of Major-General Fedor Krasavin were the first who entered the camp. The division was a part of the 60th Army of Colonel-General Pavel

Kurochkin. Soldiers and officers of the 107th, 286th and 322nd Rifle Divisions took part in the liberation of 7,000 prisoners of Auschwitz and its subcamps. Members of more than 40 Soviet peoples participated in the liberation of Auschwitz. 350 soldiers and officers of the Red Army died in the battles for the liberation of the city of Oswiecim and Auschwitz-Birkenau.



Map of the battle for Oswiecim. January 1945. TsMO

From the diary of Lieutenant Vasily Gromadsky (1925–2013). January 22–31, 1945. RHC

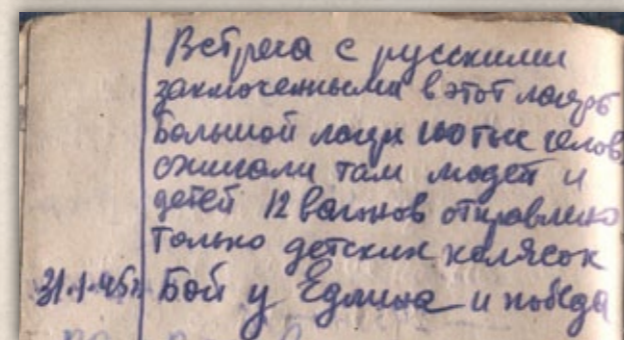
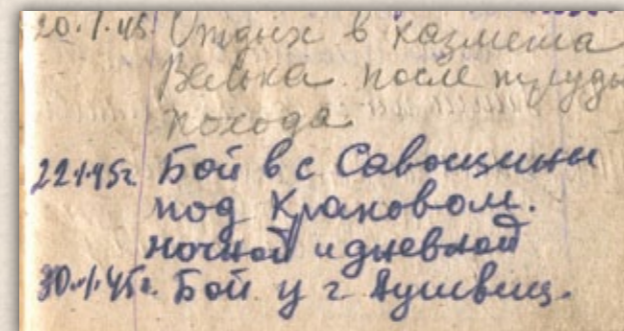
“Fight near the city of Auschwitz. Meeting with the Russians imprisoned in this camp. A large camp — 100 thousand people. People and children were burned there. Twelve freight cars sent only with baby carriages.”



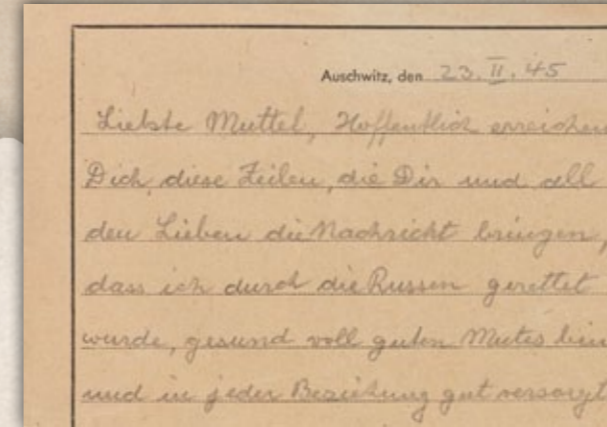
Group photo of the 100th Division's soldiers and officers, liberators of Auschwitz. RHC



Soviet soldiers and prisoners of Auschwitz. WMM



SAVED PRISONERS



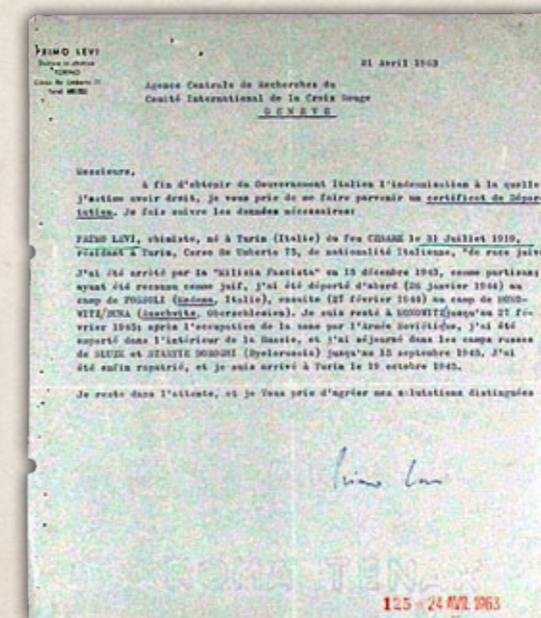
Otto Frank's letter to his mother in Basel dated by February 23, 1945 after liberation in Auschwitz

Auschwitz, 23 II. 45

Dearest mother, hopefully these lines reach you, to bring you and all beloved ones the news, that I have been saved by the Russians, that I am in good health and courage and that I am well taken care of. Where Edith and the children are, I do not know, we are separated since September 5th 1944. I only heard that they have been transported to Germany. One has to hope to set them back in good health. Please advise my brothers in law and my friends in Holland of my rescue. I long to see you all again and hope it will be possible soon. If only you all are well. When will I receive news from you? All my love and innermost greetings and kisses.

Your son Otto

Otto Frank and his second wife Fritzi Geiringer who was also liberated in Auschwitz. Amsterdam, 1953. © AFF



Primo Levi's letter to the Red Cross International Tracing Service (1963, in French) with a request to confirm his stay in Auschwitz. © ITS

From Primo Levi's letter:

[...] I have Italian citizenship and belong to the “Jewish race”. I was arrested by the fascist police on December 13, 1943 as a partisan, and after I was recognized as a Jew was first deported on January 26, 1944 to the camp of de Fossoli (city of Modena, Italy), and then to the camp of Buna-Monowitz (Auschwitz). I stayed there until January 27, 1945, and then [...] was transported to the territory of Russia and stayed [...] in Slutsk and the Staryya Darohi (Byelorussia) until September 15, 1945. Finally, I was repatriated and returned to Turin on October 19, 1945.



Primo Levi

During the war, Primo Levi (1919–1987) was a partisan and joined the Italian Resistance. He was imprisoned in Auschwitz since February 11, 1944 and liberated on January 27, 1945. Out of 650 deported Italian Jews in Auschwitz, only twenty survived. After the war, he became a poet, essayist and author of the book about Auschwitz *Is This a Man?* published in 1947.

Primo Levi. *Is This a Man?* (1947)
Diary entry dated January 27, 1945:

They were four young soldiers on horseback, who advanced along the road that marked the limits of the camp, cautiously holding their sten-guns. When they reached the barbed wire, they stopped to look, exchanging a few timid words, and throwing strangely embarrassed glances at the sprawling bodies, at battered huts and at us few still alive.
 ... four men, armed, but not against us: four messengers of peace, with rough and boyish faces beneath their heavy fur hats.



Primo Levi. *The Truce* (1963):

... it was easy to see in them, in each of those rough and open faces, the good soldiers of the Red Army, the valiant men of the old and new Russia, gentle in peace and fierce in war, strong from an inner discipline born from concord, from reciprocal love and from love of their country; a stronger discipline, because it came from the spirit, than the mechanical and servile discipline of the Germans. It was easy to understand, living among them, why this former discipline, and not the latter, had finally triumphed.

The Soviet commandant of the camp, Lieutenant Colonel Grigory Elisavetsky (in the front) and members of the Extraordinary State Commission inspect the barracks of Auschwitz. WMM

LIBERATORS. BEFORE AND AFTER AUSCHWITZ

Lieutenant-Colonel Semyon Bezprozvanny. 1940's. RHC

Semyon Bezprozvanny (1898–1945) — Lieutenant Colonel, commander of the 472nd Rifle Regiment of the 100th Rifle Division. Before the war, he was the director of the Bolshoi Drama Theater in Leningrad. Participated in the breakthrough of the siege of Leningrad. He died on January 26, 1945 in the battle for the city of Oswiecim. He was awarded the Order of the Patriotic War of the 1st degree (posthumously). In 2000, he was awarded the Cross for Merit — one of the highest decorations of Poland.



Magomet Tankayev (left) and commander of the 472nd Regiment of the 100th Rifle Division Nikolai Abazov. 1945. RHC

Magomet Tankayev (1919–1998) — Lieutenant Colonel, commander of the 460th regiment of the 100th Rifle Division. After the war, he was promoted to Colonel-General, First Deputy Commander of the Airborne Forces of the USSR. A street was named after Tankayev and a monument was erected to honor him in Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan.

Nikolai Abazov's widow Anastasia Abazova, a nurse of the 100th Rifle Division (on the left), and chairman of the Council of Veterans of the 60th Army Ivan Martynushkin at the opening of the exhibition "The Holocaust: Annihilation, Liberation, Rescue" in the State Duma of the Russian Federation. January 2016. RHC



Nikolay Belyaev. 1945. RHC

Nikolay Belyaev (1923–2004). Since 1942, he fought in the 286th Rifle Division of Leningrad as senior sergeant. After the war, he became Law Professor and headed the Department of Criminal Law, Leningrad State University. One of the leading Soviet lawyers.





Vasily Petrenko. 1943. RHC

General Vasily Petrenko at the ceremony of awarding him the Simon Wiesenthal Commemorative Medal. On the right — Rabbi Marvin Hier (Moshe Chaim), the dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Los Angeles, 1987. RHC

Vasily Petrenko (1912–2003) — Colonel, commander of the 107th Rifle Division, Hero of the Soviet Union (1943). After the war, he was promoted to Lieutenant-General, Professor of the Frunze Military Academy. Author of *Before and After Auschwitz* published in Russia and France.



Award list of F. Krasavin. February 1945. TsMO. Annotation to the Order for the rescue of 7,000 prisoners of Auschwitz

Fedor Krasavin. RHC

Fedor Krasavin (1896–1948) — Major-General, Commander of the 100th Lviv Rifle Division. Awardee of the Alexander Nevsky Order for the liberation of the prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Born in Yaroslavl province. Participant of the First World War and the Russian Civil War. Served in the Red Army from

March 1942 onwards. After the war, he became head of the Kazan garrison of the USSR. He was buried in the Arskoye cemetery in the city of Kazan. From July 29, 1938 to February 11, 1942 was imprisoned in the GULAG. Rehabilitated posthumously September 14, 1968.



SOVIET DOCTORS AND THE RESCUE OF PRISONERS

Lydiya Tikhomirova. 1944. TGUM

Lydia Tikhomirova (1904–1988). Doctor, Captain of the medical service. As part of the 100th Rifle Division she entered Auschwitz. The prototype for the heroine of famous writer Boris Polevoy's novel *Doctor Vera* (1965) and the eponymous film (1967).



Medical examination of Auschwitz prisoners by Soviet doctors. WMM



Soviet doctors conduct a medical examination of a liberated boy who was subjected to medical experiments in Auschwitz. WMM

4,500 Auschwitz prisoners received medical treatment upon liberation. Most of the prisoners were saved due to the experience of Soviet doctors who had treated patients with dystrophy in besieged Leningrad.



Margarita Zhilinskaya, head of the hospital (far left), Archbishop of Canterbury (center) and members of a foreign delegation at the ruins of a gas furnace in Auschwitz. Summer 1945. WMM

Margarita Zhilinskaya (1901–1982), major, medical service. She treated patients in besieged Leningrad. Head of the field hospital, where prisoners of Auschwitz were saved in 1945. After the war, she received a doctorate in medicine and worked in the psychoneurological hospital named after Ivan Pavlov.





The exhibition has received generous support of the Russian Jewish Congress, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and Moscow «Joint» branch.

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Photos, documents and drawings are collected from the following archives and institutions: Russian Holocaust Center Archive (RHC); Russian Armed Forces Medical Museum (WMM); the Russian State Archive (GA RF); State Archive of Kaluga region (GAKO); Tver State United Museum (TGUM); the Central State Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (TsMO); Central Archives of the Federal Security Service (former KGB) of the Russian Federation (TsA FSB); the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War (VM); Babi Yar Foundation (FBY), Ukraine; RIA Novosti (Sputnik); the Anne Frank Foundation, Basel, Switzerland (AFF); the Leo Baeck Institute (LBI) Berlin/Germany; International Tracing Service (ITS), Germany.

*Photo on the cover: Soviet doctors and rescued prisoners of Auschwitz (Oświęcim).
The end of January 1945. Sputnik»*

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