



JEWISH SOLDIERS & FIGHTERS IN WORLD WAR II

INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE | 2021

November 14-15, 2021

SCHEDULE & SPEAKERS

Presented by the Blavatnik Archive Foundation

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ARCHIVE

JewishSoldiersInWWII.org

Conference sponsors



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Sunday
14 Nov

11:00 AM
(EDT)

Opening Remarks (Day 1)

11:00 AM - 11:15 AM

Live Sessions

15 Minutes

Despite their vital contributions to the Allied forces, the very fact of the 1.5 million "Jewish soldiers" in World War II remains virtually unknown. However, serious scholarship, cutting-edge research, and the invaluable resources of archives and libraries have much to reveal about this under-studied history. When we consider the experiences of Jewish fighters, what can we discover? How can this consideration impact both scholarly and popular narratives of WWII? Our distinguished speakers will reveal important resources—and point to new ways of thinking—that expand our understanding of "the Jewish soldier" and, more broadly, the diversity of Jewish experience.

Tags

Conversation

Sunday
14 Nov

11:15 AM
(EDT)

SESSION 1: American Jewish Soldiers in World War II: Experience, Identity, and Legacy

11:15 AM - 12:00 PM

Live Sessions

45 Minutes

Deborah Dash Moore and Leah Garrett will discuss American Jews' participation in the Second World War and how military service shaped their sense of both American and Jewish identity. In their conversation, the historians will focus on the power of interviews, memoirs, and fiction to chronicle different aspects of the war experience, on the battlefield and the home front.

Tags

Conversation



Deborah Dash-Moore

Frederick G. L. Huetwell Professor of...
University of Michigan



Leah Garrett

Professor and Director of Jewish...
Hunter College, CUNY

Sunday
14 Nov

12:00 PM
(EDT)

SESSION 2: From the Red Army to the Israeli Army: Jewish Soldiers Around the Globe

12:00 PM - 1:15 PM

Live Sessions

75 Minutes

Examining the experiences of Jewish soldiers serving in armies around the globe, panelists will address stories of former Polish Jewish refugees serving in the Israeli Army in the early days of the state, Latvian Jews in the Red Army, and women in the Israeli Army. The panel will also discuss how Jewish soldiers responded to extreme situations of trauma and violence.

Tags

Panel discussion



Havi Dreifuss

Professor of Jewish History and Hea...
Tel Aviv University



Evgeny Finkel

Associate Professor of International...
John Hopkins University



Konstantin Fuks

PhD candidate, Department of...
University of Toronto



Nir Arielli

Associate Professor of International...
University of Leeds

Sunday
14 Nov

1:15 PM
(EDT)

Coffee Break (Day 1)

1:15 PM - 1:45 PM

Workshop

30 Minutes

Sunday
14 Nov

1:45 PM
(EDT)

SESSION 3: Who Were the Jews in the Red Army?

1:45 PM - 2:30 PM

Live Sessions

45 Minutes

During World War II, 440,000 Jewish men and women served in the Red Army. They came from various socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds and were of different ages and levels of education. Historians Oleg Budnitskii and Zvi Gitelman will discuss how to make sense of this demographic. What are the problems with "counting" Jewish members of the Red Army? Did being Jewish matter to the soldiers' performances as soldiers? How did it impact their overall experience in the army?

Tags

Conversation



Zvi Gitelman

Professor Emeritus of Political Scienc...
University of Michigan



Oleg Budnitskii

Professor of History and Director of...
National Research University Higher...

Sunday
14 Nov

2:30 PM
(EDT)

SESSION 4: Jewish Soldiers Through a Cultural Lens

2:30 PM - 3:45 PM

Live Sessions

75 Minutes

Thousands of Soviet Jewish soldiers fought at the front against German troops during World War II, and thousands more perished while fighting on behalf of the Soviet motherland. This panel will explore the ways in which Jewish fighters were commemorated, how their role and courage on the battlefield was re-imagined, and how cultural preconceptions of loyalty and cowardice shaped their portrayal.

Tags

Panel discussion



Marilyn Campeau

PhD candidate, Department of...
University of Toronto



Maxim D. Shraye

Professor of Russian, English, and...
Boston College



Elissa Bemporad

Professor of History and Ungar Chair...
Queens College and CUNY Graduat...



Evgeny Finkel

Associate Professor of International...
John Hopkins University

Sunday
14 Nov

3:45 PM
(EDT)

SESSION 5: Soundscape of the War: Yiddish Songs of the Red Army

3:45 PM – 4:30 PM

Live Sessions

45 Minutes

Drawing from a recently discovered archive of the Yiddish music created in the Soviet Union during World War II, this lecture-concert will focus on the ways in which Yiddish-speaking soldiers and their family members made sense of the war and the Holocaust as it unfolded.

Tags

Featured program



Anna Shternshis

Al and Malka Green Professor of...
University of Toronto



Psoy Korolenko

Poet, Linguist, Singer; Toronto and...

Monday
15 Nov

9:30 AM
(EDT)

Opening Remarks (Day 2)

9:30 AM – 9:40 AM

Live Sessions

10 Minutes

The conference will continue to highlight the vital contributions of “Jewish soldiers” to the Allied forces in World War II. The day will continue to focus on serious scholarship, cutting-edge research, and the invaluable resources of archives and libraries have much to reveal about this under-studied history. Our distinguished speakers will reveal important resources—and point to new ways of thinking—that expand our understanding of “the Jewish soldier” and, more broadly, the diversity of Jewish experience.

Tags

Conversation

Monday
15 Nov

9:45 AM
(EDT)

SESSION 6: Confronting World War II in Literature

9:45 AM – 11:00 AM

Live Sessions

75 Minutes

This panel will discuss the ways in which prominent poets and writers confronted the war of extermination in their literary work. The poets’ and writers’ personal experiences were transmuted into works of artistic genius that inspired generations of readers in America, Israel, and the Soviet Union. Among the authors to be considered are Chaim Grade, Avrom Sutzkever, Peretz Markish, and Itzik Kipnis.

Tags

Panel discussion



David Fishman

Professor of Jewish History
Jewish Theological Seminary



Hannah Pollin-Galay

Assistant Professor in Literature and...
Tel Aviv University



Mikhail Krutikov

Preston R. Tisch Professor of Slavic...
University of Michigan



Gennady Estraiikh

Clinical Professor
New York University

Monday
15 Nov

11:00 AM
(EDT)

SESSION 7: From Jewish Soldiers to an Israeli Army

11:00 AM – 11:45 AM

Live Sessions

45 Minutes

Historians Anita Shapira and Derek Penslar will explore the connections between Jewish service in World War II and the formation of the Israel Defense Forces. During World War II, 30,000 Palestinian Jews served in the British armed forces, gaining experience that they then brought to the battlefield in Palestine. During Israel's War for Independence in 1948, the IDF was bolstered by thousands of overseas volunteers, including the commander on the Jerusalem front, the American colonel Mickey Marcus.

Tags

Conversation



Anita Shapira

Former Ruben Merinfeld Professor in...
Tel Aviv University



Derek Penslar

William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish...
Harvard University

Monday
15 Nov

11:45 AM
(EDT)

SESSION 8: Daily Life and Strategies of Survival in the Soviet Union during World War II

11:45 AM – 1:00 PM

Live Sessions

75 Minutes

This panel will offer an in-depth exploration of the Jewish lived experience of World War II in the German-occupied and non-occupied territories of the Soviet Union. Panelists will focus on the impact of war and occupation on Jewish daily life in four unique contexts: the ghetto, Leningrad during the Siege, the partisan detachments, and as evacuees in Central Asia, the Urals and Siberia.

Tags

Panel discussion



Arkadi Zeltser

Director of the Moshe Mirilashvili...
Yad Vashem



Polina Barskova

Associate Professor of Russian...
Hampshire College



Anika Walke

Georgie W. Lewis Career...
Washington University, St. Louis



Eliyana Adler

Associate Professor of History and...
Pennsylvania State University

Monday
15 Nov

1:00 PM
(EDT)

Coffee Break (Day 2)

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Live Sessions

30 Minutes

Monday
15 Nov

1:30 PM
(EDT)

SESSION 9: Activating Museums and Archives

1:30 PM – 2:45 PM

Live Sessions

75 Minutes

The directors of preeminent institutions dedicated to history, education, and remembrance will discuss the unique contributions of museums and archives to public awareness and understanding of the past and its relevance. Their conversation will focus on the importance of surfacing lesser-known histories and connecting diverse public audiences to new research and scholarship.

Tags

Conversation

Monday
15 Nov

2:45 PM
(EDT)

SESSION 10: Archival Research and the Future of Holocaust Studies

2:45 PM – 3:30 PM

Live Sessions

45 Minutes

Archival centers and the research institutes affiliated with them play a central role in fostering scholarship in Holocaust history and Jewish experiences of World War II. This panel brings together the perspectives of the United States Holocaust Museum and Yad Vashem to discuss current avenues of research, the future of Holocaust Studies, and the challenges of the discipline. The issue of how to connect the history of the Holocaust with the stories of Jewish experiences in the army will be addressed as well.

Tags

Panel discussion



Lisa Leff

Director of the Mandel Center for...
United States Holocaust Memorial...



Dan Michman

Professor (Emeritus) of Modern Jewis...
Yad Vashem

Monday
15 Nov

3:30 PM
(EDT)

SESSION 11: The Search for Justice

3:30 PM – 4:45 PM

Live Sessions

75 Minutes

Soon after the end of World War II, hundreds of legal procedures were initiated against the perpetrators of the Holocaust—from the high-profile Nuremberg Trials, which took months to prepare and involved thousands of individuals, to local, often immediate events condemning collaborators, to the Soviet trials of Jewish leadership of the ghettos. This panel will examine the content and significance of these proceedings and the roles they played in building a post-war future in Europe.

Tags

Panel discussion



Francine Hirsch

Vilas Distinguished Achievement...
University of Wisconsin-Madison



Diana Dumitru

Associate Professor of History
Ion Creangă State University of...



Joshua Rubenstein

Independent scholar of Soviet and...
Harvard University



Mark Edele

Historian of the Soviet Union and its...
University of Melbourne

Monday
15 Nov

4:45 PM
(EDT)

SESSION 12: Songs from Testimony

4:45 PM – 5:30 PM

Live Sessions

45 Minutes

Drawing from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies (Yale University), Zisl Slepovitch and Sasha Lurje will present the songs that people sang during their oral history interviews to depict their lives and experiences in ghettos, in the Red Army, and under German captivity as prisoners of war.

Tags

Featured program



D. Zisl Slepovitch

Musicologist and Musician in...
Yale University



Sasha Lurje

Singer, researcher, and co-founder o...



Stephen Naron

Director
Fortunoff Archive, Yale University

Monday
15 Nov

5:30 PM
(EDT)

Concluding Remarks

5:30 PM – 6:00 PM

Live Sessions

30 Minutes

Our concluding remarks will highlight the ways in which the scholarly conversations we have hosted in the past two days represent not a culmination, but rather a new beginning—a reinvigoration of the study of the “Jewish soldier.” With this new beginning comes a challenge: How can we continue to advance scholarship and research—as well as broader public understanding in the U.S., Israel, Russia, Canada, and Europe—of the topics that have emerged here? In this parting session, we will offer new suggestions inspired by our speakers’ contributions, pointing toward “next steps” in the research and public presentation of the histories of Jewish soldiers in World War II and beyond.

Tags

Conversation



Elissa Bemporad

Professor of History and Ungar Chair...
Queens College and CUNY Graduat...



Derek Penslar

William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish...
Harvard University



Anna Shternshis

Al and Malka Green Professor of...
University of Toronto



Eliyana Adler
Associate Professor of History and Jewish Studies
Pennsylvania State University



Nir Arieli
Associate Professor of International History
University of Leeds



Polina Barskova
Associate Professor of Russian Literature
Hampshire College



Elissa Bemporad
Professor of History and Ungar Chair in East European Jewish
History and the Holocaust
Queens College and CUNY Graduate Center



Oleg Budnitskii
Professor of History and Director of the International Center
for the History and Sociology of World War II and Its
Consequences
National Research University Higher School of Economics,
Moscow



Marilyn Campeau
PhD candidate, Department of History and the Anne
Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies
University of Toronto



Deborah Dash-Moore
Frederick G. L. Huetwell Professor of History and Professor of
Judaic Studies
University of Michigan



Havi Dreifuss
Professor of Jewish History and Head of the Institute for the
History of Polish Jewry and Israel-Poland Relations
Tel Aviv University



Diana Dumitru
Associate Professor of History
Ion Creangă State University of Moldova



Mark Edele
Historian of the Soviet Union and its Successor States;
Deputy Associate Dean
University of Melbourne



Gennady Estrakh
Clinical Professor
New York University



Evgeny Finkel
Associate Professor of International Affairs
Johns Hopkins University



David Fishman
Professor of Jewish History
Jewish Theological Seminary



Konstantin Fuks
PhD candidate, Department of History and Collaborative
Program in Jewish Studies
University of Toronto



Leah Garrett
Professor and Director of Jewish Studies
Hunter College, CUNY



Zvi Gitelman
Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Preston Tish
Professor Emeritus of Judaic Studies
University of Michigan



Francine Hirsch
Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor of History
University of Wisconsin-Madison



Psoy Karolenko
Poet, Linguist, Singer, Toronto and Moscow Singer,
songwriter, translator, scholar, and journalist



Mikhail Krutikov
Preston R. Tisch Professor of Slavic and Judaic Studies
University of Michigan



Lisa Leff
Director of the Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust
Studies at USHMM; Professor of History, American University
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



Sasha Lurje
Singer, researcher, and co-founder of Berlin Yiddish music
festival Shtetl Neukölln



Dan Michman
Professor (Emeritus) of Modern Jewish History, Head of the
International Institute for Holocaust Research, John Najmann
Chair in Holocaust Studies
Yad Vashem



Stephen Naron
Director
Fortunoff Archive, Yale University



Derek Penslar
William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History
Harvard University



Hannah Pollin-Galay
Assistant Professor in Literature and Director, Goldreich
Institute for Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture
Tel Aviv University



Joshua Rubenstein
Independent scholar of Soviet and Soviet-Jewish History
Harvard University



Anita Shapira
Former Ruben Merinfeld Professor in the Study of Zionism,
former Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Head of the
Robinson Center
Tel Aviv University



Maxim D. Shrayer
Professor of Russian, English, and Jewish Studies
Boston College



Anna Shternshis
Al and Malka Green Professor of Yiddish studies and Director
of the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies
University of Toronto



D. Zisi Slepovitch
Musicologist and Musician in Residence, Fortunoff Video
Archive for Holocaust Testimonies
Yale University



Anika Walke
Georgie W. Lewis Career Development Professor; Associate
Professor of History; Global Studies; Jewish, Islamic, and
Middle Eastern Studies; and Women, Gender, and Sexuality
Studies
Washington University, St. Louis



Arkadi Zeltser
Director of the Moshe Mirilashvili Center for Research on the
Holocaust in the Soviet Union
Yad Vashem