

# Monument to Love

A film by Jacky Comforty



Created and Produced by Jacky Comforty; Inspired by: Ika & Bitush Comforty  
Research and Script: Jacky Comforty & Martha Aladjem Bloomfield  
Music: Stuart Rosenberg; Executive Producer: Robert Arnove  
Produced by Comforty Media Concepts

Funded in part by a grant from The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

**Monument to Love** features a journey Jacky Comforty took with his mother, Ika Comforty Ovadia, for over 25 years to research, document, and uncover the narrative of the Jewish people during the Holocaust in Bulgaria. As the journey progressed, Ika's personal story unfolded. She shared memories and read passages from her diary which revealed her observations, thoughts and feelings, as a young woman, facing a broken world, plunging into war. Kind acts of friendship she experienced contrast the cruel times and the dangers she and others escaped. Ika's story is an anti-war manifesto, confronting totalitarianism and supremacy, and erecting a monument to love.



*“Love is the greatest force in the world. It is stronger than religion, It is stronger than anything. If you love, you do. If you do not love, nothing will happen. With love, children are raised, with love, a bond is formed between two people. With love, we become parents to children. With love, we become teachers and students. With love, children are raised, with love, a bond is formed between two people. When you love something, you work all your life and give. You do not give? There is no life, no beauty. Without love, nothing happens. Period.”*

**- Ika Comforty Ovadia**



Some thirty-five years ago, I became interested in Bulgarian Jews, and the Holocaust. At that time, I was a young scriptwriter and director of comedy. I was close with my parents who were Bulgarian Jewish immigrants in Israel and supported my artistic aspirations. They once told me that, “There is one story you must tell, which is how we were saved during the Holocaust.” I had never heard the story before and at the time recorded this conversation on an audio-cassette tape.

The conversation with my parents began the process of learning, researching, interviewing and creating multiple documentation projects about the Holocaust and its effect all over Europe, and particularly in Bulgaria. Over the years, I conducted about 250 oral histories which I used to produce four full-length documentaries and a dozen short movies. “Monument to Love ” is a result of 35 years of collection and documentation. The richness of the story and the depth of the work are clearly visible in the film.

When I started to explore our heritage, the common notion was that there was no Holocaust in Bulgaria and that our people were saved. I interviewed hundreds of people, documented places and events, and collected archival films and photos. The story became more complex, and sometimes darker. I set out to document how they were saved. Yet, the stories people told were of resilience, resistance and survival and of friendships and kindness among common people, that were stronger than fascism, propaganda and hatred.

**- Jacky Comforty, Director**

For more information:

<https://the-learning-project.org/blog/monument-to-love>

### **Opening statements from Ika:**

*“Love is the greatest force in the world. It is stronger than religion, It is stronger than anything. If you love, you do. If you do not love, nothing will happen. With love, children are raised, with love, a bond is formed between two people. With love, we become parents to children. With love, we become teachers and students. With love, children are raised, with love, a bond is formed between two people. When you love something, you work all your life and give. You do not give? There is no life, no beauty. Without love, nothing happens. Period.”*

### **Director’s Statement**

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My mom was very supportive and active from the start. She collected photos and took notes for me, researched bibliography and documents, and provided a personal context. She joined me on two trips to Bulgaria in 1990 and in 1999. At first, I wanted to hear mostly about historical events. Her role as witness was marginal. Over the years we kept exploring other aspects of her story and our mutual interest in the education of young children.

At some late stage of our journey she even found her lost diary that provided a timely perspective. It took 30 years to film and tell this story. Through sharing voices and memories of those who survived the times, we construct a panorama of personal history, thoughts and diary entries, in response to the events of the time. We always were close, but the process of learning and our dialogue throughout the journey brought us closer, and helped us capture the essence of the story orally and the passing it on.

### **About the filmmaker:**

Jacky Comforty is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose groundbreaking films have been shot in the United States, Germany, Israel, and Bulgaria. With decades of experience in independent film production focusing on both models of inclusive education and Holocaust Studies, he has developed a multidisciplinary, multicultural, and multilingual approach to collecting oral histories and creating meaningful projects, placing emphasis on nonintrusive, non-scripted methodologies for documentation.

His credits include: *Balkan Jazz* (2013), *The Optimists* (2001), *In the Shadow of Memory* (1998), and *Through a Glass, Lightly* (1996). Among numerous other distinctions, Comforty has received the Berlin Festival Peace Prize, the Jerusalem Film Festival's Jewish Experience Award, a CINE Golden Eagle award, the American Association of Museums MUSE award, and the Chicago International Gold Hugo Award.

### **Awards and Grants**

- 2021 Grant from the Claims Conference for Monument for Love.
- 2019 Research grant from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for Monument to Love.
- 2016 Production grant from the Smithville Foundation for The Quest for Best
- 2016 Production grant from the Starseed foundation for [www.earlychildhoodmedia.com](http://www.earlychildhoodmedia.com)
- 2015 Initial grant from the Starseed foundation for [www.earlychildhoodmedia.com](http://www.earlychildhoodmedia.com)
- 2015 Preservation grant by the Eugene & Emily Grant Family Foundation for The Comforty Archives .
- 2002 Artist-in-Residence in Berlin, DAAD fellowship.
- 2002 Communicator Award, In the Shadow of Memory.
- 2001 Peace Prize, Honorable Mention at the International Forum of New Cinema Berlin International Film Festival, The Optimists.
- 2001 CINE Golden Eagle, The Optimists.
- 2001 Best Documentary, Hope and Dreams Film Festival, The Optimists.
- 2000, First Prize, Jerusalem Film Festival, The Jewish Experience, The Optimists. 1999 Karlovy Vary film Festival, In the Shadow of Memory.
- 1998 CINE Golden Eagle, In the Shadow of Memory.
- 1998 Fellowship, Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture
- 1998 Finalist, Jerusalem Film Festival, In the Shadow of Memory.
- 1997 CINE Golden Eagle, Through A Glass, Lightly.
- 1997 Gold Hugo, (Chicago International), Step by Step: Heather's Story.
- 1997 Bronze Apple, National Educational Media, Through A Glass, Lightly.
- 1996 Cultural Fund Grant, Evanston Arts Council
- 1995 First Prize, Arts: Artists, AAM Muse Awards, Through A Glass, Lightly.
- 1994 Production Grant, Illinois Humanities Council
- 1993 Media Award, Illinois-TASH for The Inclusion Series.
- 1993 Major Production Grant, Maurice Amado Foundation, The Optimists.

## Filmography

**2023 Monument to Love**

A documentary in-progress about my mother's survival story in Bulgaria during the Holocaust.

**2017 Multiple Intelligences and Hundred Languages**

An educational documentary about Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences and the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education

**2016-17 earlychildhoodmedia.org**

A new video documentation resource of early childhood education in Bloomington Indiana, to support training and learning for the global early childhood education community. The site has over 500 video clips and movies, and interviews.

**2015 edu-media-bg.com**

A new video resource to support training and learning for the early childhood education community in Bulgaria. The site has over 300 video clips and movies, articles, lectures and interviews.

**2014 Inclusionseries.org**

A new video resource to support training and learning about a variety of educational and human issues. The site has some 700 video clips.

**2013 BALKAN JAZZ. Comforty Media Concepts**

A documentary about two musician brothers and their friends, and how music, war, and luck and survival shaped their lives.

**2011 EDUCATORS' TOOLBOX. Sofia University and Comforty Media Concepts.**

Workshop with K-12 teachers about media literacy and classroom usage of media for education, communication, and documentation.

**2010 THE FUTURE IS NOW. Tufts University, Sofia University, and Comforty Media Concepts.**

Strategic plan for an Early Childhood Development Center in Sofia, Bulgaria, and a major documentation and research project focused on Best Practices in early childhood education in the United States and in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

**2010 TEACHER STEREOTYPES. Sofia University department of continuous Education.**

A new media projects comprised of interviews with teachers, directors, parents, students, and experts about teaching and being a teacher.

**2009 MISIKUN LESIKUY. Comforty Media Concepts, Ashalim JDC Israel.**

A two-year documentary project about an inclusion program of toddlers with special needs in a day care center in Ashkelon, Israel.

**2008 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE VARNA EXPERIENCE. Comforty Media Concepts.**

An educational documentary about inclusive education of all children into school and community. For an International Educational Conference organized by the City of Varna, Bulgaria, October 2008.

**2008**            *THIS IS MY BODY* and *TESTIMONY*. **Comforty Media Concepts, Ashalim JDC Israel.**

Two videos about people with disabilities who were victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.

**2007**    *PENKA'S SCHOOL OF LOVE*. **Comforty Media Concepts.**

A short educational documentary about a pioneer of early childhood education in Bulgaria. For the Fourth International Conference on Children and Adults, Adults and Children” organized by the Elisabeth Clarke & Penka Kassabova Association, Sofia, Bulgaria.

**2005**            *FRIENDSHIP*. **Comforty Media Concepts/Inclusion Press International.**

Educational documentary about the importance of friendship in the inclusion of children into community, society and school.

**2001**            *THE OPTIMISTS*. **Comforty Media Concepts/The Chambon Foundation.**

Independent documentary about the rescue of Bulgarian Jewry from the Holocaust. **Peace Prize winner at the Berlin International Film Festival** and **First Prize for “Documenting the Jewish Experience,” the Jerusalem International Film Festival 2000.**

**2000**            *INCLUSION HIGH*. **Comforty Media Concepts/Chicago Public Schools.** Documentary about the inclusion of students from 60 nations one Chicago high school.

**1998**            *IN THE SHADOW OF MEMORY*. **Comforty Media Concepts/The Collected Image.**

A documentary about living in the aftermath of Lidice, the Catholic Czech town destroyed by the Nazis during World War II for alleged Resistance collaborations. Funding made possible by Chambon Foundation. **CINE Golden Eagle, 1998. Karlovy Vary Film Festival, Jerusalem International Film Festival, Communicator Award, Bronze award.**

**1996**            *THROUGH A GLASS, LIGHTLY: THE ARTISTS COMMENT ON RECLAMATION AND TRANSFORMATION*. **Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago, IL.**

About the lives and work of three outsider-artists who collect what others discard, turn it into sculpture and paintings, and, through art, teach inner city youth to appreciate and care for their surroundings.

**1997 CINE Golden Eagle; 1995 First Prize, Arts: Artists Category, American Association of Museums Muse Awards; 1995 Bronze Apple, NEMN.**

**1995**            *UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM.*

54 hours of oral histories conducted with Bulgarian Jews and 58 photos from the *Comforty Collection* of over 5,000 photos for permanent archiving and future use in museum exhibitions.

**1995**            *ST. LOUIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM .*

30 Hour oral history project. Historical research, archival photo, and film research. Five videos and eight audio programs and their integration into this museum dedicated to Holocaust education.

**1992**            *THE FULL CIRCLE: Excerpts from Survivors’ Stories.*

Video programs integrated into the permanent exhibit of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and

Museum. Excerpts from oral histories with individuals who benefited from Hoover's famine relief efforts during the two World Wars, interwoven with archival film footage and photographs.

**1991-1997** *THE INCLUSION SERIES. Gold Hugo (Chicago International Film Festival), 1993 Media Award for Contributions to People with Severe Disabilities granted by Illinois-TASH* (The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, a leading, nation-wide advocacy organization.), for *The Inclusion Series*.

Ten part best-selling series, distributed to educational institutions internationally by Comforty Media Concepts.

#### **Inclusion Series: Best-Selling Programs**

**1996** *Step by Step: Heather's Story*. 65-minute documentary video for parents and educators about inclusion over time. This video provides a two-year, longitudinal look at a little girl with Down Syndrome who progresses from special education classroom to neighborhood school. **1997 Gold Hugo.**

**1993** *Families, Friends, Futures*. 23-minute documentary video for general audiences about the need for inclusion of young people with disabilities into both school and community.

**1992** *Inclusion: Issues for Educators*. 20-minute documentary video addressing inclusion from the perspective of teachers and administrators.

**1991** *Choices*. 30-minute documentary video profiling four individuals with disabilities and their inclusion into regular classrooms.

#### **Publications:**

- **Humanistic approach to working with children with special educational needs** / an example of a day care center in the town of Ashkelon, Israel / for Conference on Early Childhood Education at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2009. With Associate Professor Rayna Zaharieva, PhD.
- **Inclusion of children with special educational needs in US schools**, the "Management of secondary education" issue 5, 2008, pp. 67-74. With Associate Professor Rayna Zaharieva, PhD.
- **Issues concerning teachers about inclusion of children with special educational needs in American schools**, s.258-263. For the international conference "Humanity and pragmatism in education for the XXI Century", Varna, 2007. With Associate Professor Rayna Zaharieva, PhD
- **Including children with special educational needs – the experience in the American schools**. Online magazine "E-learning", June 2006/2007g., P 27-44. With Associate Professor Rayna Zaharieva, PhD.
- **MEDIA EDUCATION AND MEDIA LITERACY** – manual for teachers on understanding media critically and using new and old media in the classroom.
- [The Stolen Narrative of the Bulgarian Jews and the Holocaust](#) - 2021 Rowman & Littlefield. A book summing up 30 years of research and documentation, with Martha Aladjem Bloomfield.

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*Gabriel García Márquez  
Prize 2024*

**Monument to Love** by Jacob Comforty

**BEST INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FEATURE,  
BEST EDUCATIONAL FILM & BEST HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT**

“Monument to Love” is a documentary that many people should see, especially in this historical moment where, unfortunately, violence and indifference prevail in the world. The project, directed by the excellent Jacob Comforty, teaches the value of generosity towards others and would be a good idea to propose in high schools as a study subject, both for the quality of the film and for the ethical values it contains. We at the Gabriel García Márquez Prize 2024 were deeply moved by “Monument to Love” because it tells a story that somehow belongs to every human being. The project deserves not only significant festival recognitions but also a special award for human rights. We will suggest to the WILD FILMMAKER platform to establish a category dedicated to this genre of cinema. Additionally, we want to thank the WILD FILMMAKER team for selecting “Monument to Love” by Jacob Comforty; it brought us great joy to discover thi little masterpiece.

<https://wildfilmmaker.net/winners-sun-dance-in-paris-film-awards-2024/>



# Monument to Love

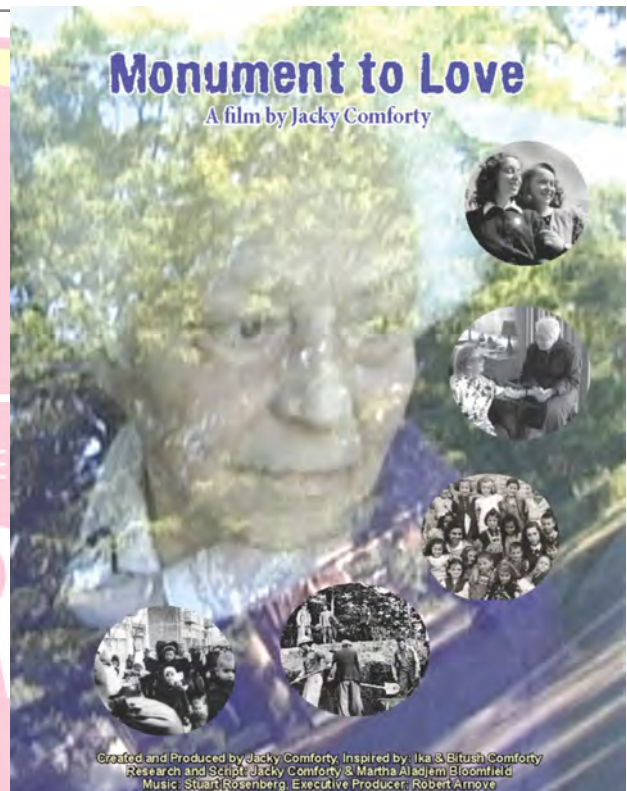
## Critical Analysis

★★★★★

Directed by **Jacob Comforty**

Written by **Jacob Comforty & Martha Aladjem Bloomfield**

Produced by **Jacky Comforty & Robert Arno**



"Monument to Love," a documentary film directed and written by Jacob Comforty and co-written by Martha Aladjem Bloomfield, stands as a testament to the power of personal narratives in preserving history, fostering resilience, and building bridges between generations. With an exhaustive journey spanning over 35 years, Jacob Comforty explores the Holocaust in Bulgaria through the lens of his mother, Ika Comforty Ovadia, creating a poignant and deeply moving documentary that transcends time and borders. The film unfolds as a layered narrative, weaving together Ika's personal journey during the Holocaust with the broader historical context.

Jacob Comforty skillfully combines oral histories, archival footage, and heartfelt conversations with his mother to construct a profound tapestry of resilience, friendship, and the enduring human spirit. The decision to include Ika's diary entries adds an intimate layer to the storytelling, offering viewers a direct glimpse into the emotions and thoughts of a young woman navigating the complexities of a broken world.

The director's extensive experience in independent film production, particularly in Holocaust Studies, is evident in the meticulous craftsmanship of "Monument to Love." Comforty's multidisciplinary and multicultural approach ensures that the film captures not only the historical events but also the nuanced emotions and interpersonal connections that define the human experience during times of adversity. At the heart of the documentary is the theme of love as a force that transcends religious, cultural, and historical boundaries.

Ika's opening statement, "Love is the greatest force in the world," serves as a guiding principle throughout the film. The emphasis on love becomes a lens through which the stories of resilience, resistance, and survival unfold. It becomes the driving force that binds people together and allows them to endure the darkest chapters of history. The film's title, "Monument to Love," serves as a metaphorical structure erected not in stone but in the collective memories and shared narratives of those who lived through the Holocaust. Through the lens of Ika's journey, Comforty constructs a powerful anti-war manifesto, challenging totalitarianism and supremacy. The documentary becomes a testament to the enduring power of love in overcoming hatred and darkness.

The choice of shooting formats, including 16 mm, Beta SP, Mini DV, and Digital, contributes to the film's visual richness. The inclusion of black and white footage adds a nostalgic and historical dimension, while the use of color enhances the emotional depth of the contemporary interviews. The multiple languages used (Bulgarian, English, German, and Hebrew) reflects the multicultural nature of the narrative, emphasizing the universality of the human experience. "Monument to Love" is not just a documentary; it is a heartfelt exploration of heritage, humanity, and the enduring lessons of history.

Jacob Comforty, along with Martha Aladjem Bloomfield, has crafted a film that resonates beyond the screen, inviting audiences to reflect on the transformative power of love, the importance of preserving personal narratives, and the collective responsibility to ensure that the stories of resilience are passed on to future generations. In doing so, they have created a cinematic monument that stands as a testament to the indomitable human spirit.



# Canadian Slavonic Papers

## Revue Canadienne des Slavistes

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CANADIAN SLAVONIC PAPERS/REVUE CANADIENNE DES SLAVISTES

### The stolen narrative of the Bulgarian Jews and the

#### Holocaust

by Jacky Comforty with Martha Aladjem Bloomfield, with a foreword by Omer Bartov, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2021, xxxiv + 370 pp., US\$46.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-7936-3292-0

#### Ildiko Otova

##### BOOK REVIEW

This book by Jacky Comforty (with Martha Aladjem Bloomfield) is at once a research project about Bulgarian Jews during the Holocaust and an intimate narrative brought to life in evocative prose. I feel I owe it to the book's author and to all those who left the door to their memories ajar to keep my review on the borderline between the academic and the personal. Here are the facts. At the end of 1940, the Bulgarian National Assembly adopted the Law for the Protection of the Nation; the Law imposed anti-Jewish measures and came into force in January 1941. These measures included, among other things, compulsory labor conscription for men and their forced imprisonment in labor camps. In compliance with its agreement with Nazi Germany, in early 1943 the Bulgarian government prepared for the deportation of the Jewish population. A group of parliamentarians, clerical leaders, and citizens exerted pressure to countermand this decision, however. On 24 May 1943, the deportation plan was put on hold and the majority of Bulgarian Jews survived. Those who escaped deportation were some 48,000 Jews holding Bulgarian citizenship from the so-called "old" territories, meaning those within the borders that had been in place prior to April 1941. In contrast, 11,343 Jews from the "new" territories – the lands of Yugoslavia and Greece occupied by Bulgaria from 1941 – did not hold Bulgarian citizenship and were sent to Treblinka and exterminated. Despite numerous documents available showing that the deportations were the responsibility of the Bulgarian state, the refusal to acknowledge these facts is striking. Not a single government or political leader has officially assumed responsibility for the Holocaust in Bulgaria.

In recent years, the fate of Bulgarian Jews and Jews from the territories under Bulgarian rule has sparked considerable research interest. Notably, the most outstanding studies originate outside of Bulgaria rather than inside the country. However, the events surrounding Jews' fate within Bulgarian territories have always been politicized. The dominant narrative of the rescue of Bulgarian Jews originated during state socialism. This could be seen as a cloaking device, in that the discourse about Bulgarian Jews covered the forced assimilation campaigns of citizens of Turkish origin. In the years following 1989 the rescue narrative came to dominate the Bulgarian state's attempts to construct positive images of Bulgaria in the world and to improve the self-esteem of Bulgarians. The more dominant this narrative, however, the more "stolen" the account of the Holocaust in Bulgaria becomes, especially in terms of asking from what or whom the Jews needed to be rescued during the war and what the fate of the deported turned out to be. The state purposefully deploys propaganda campaigns for its own exoneration, and these campaigns involve representatives from well-known scientific and academic institutions. These campaigns reached a climax during the recent commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the rescue orchestrated by the head of state, President Rumen Radev, and some heirs of King Boris III, royal courtiers, and individuals close to the former secret services of the Communist Party.

It is imperative to situate Comforty's work within these developments. Comforty endeavors to allow the survivors of the Holocaust in Bulgaria to honestly and frankly revisit their memories and to produce an unbiased counter-narrative that challenges

the state's myth-making machine, extends beyond the academic realm, and amounts to a vindication of the truth. Comforty's personal story is relevant here; Comforty is a descendant of survivors and a migrant child lost between Bulgarian and Hebrew and between silence and a lifting of the veil that covers the past. The inclusion of his own experiences lends additional legitimacy to his academic research. As the author himself writes:

The Stolen Narrative of the Bulgarian Jews and the Holocaust is about memories and forgetfulness and using hands and facial expressions to help tell a story, sometimes with limited language acquired as an immigrant or in a colorful, native language. Memories faded in front of our camera, constant dissonance and collision between public and private memory, official memory and propaganda, between post-trauma and amnesia. (xxviii)

As a filmmaker Comforty adeptly navigates us through the history of the Jews in the Bulgarian lands in order to tell us the story of who "we" are – of the ways the collective identity of Balkan Jews was formed. Ultimately, he compels us to confront Jews' fate during the dark years of World War II.

What is of most significant value in Comforty's book, though, are the stories of the people who survived. These stories acquire a new life through Comforty's text. This is the case with Rachel Israel Bali. Bali waited for the return of her husband, who was interned in a labor camp, with a child in her arms; her son met his father only at the age of two. We should remember, however, that the book is not only a story of survivors; it is also about those who resisted. Rachel's husband, Solomon Bali, for instance, was also a guerilla who resisted the regime. I am writing these lines in the days following October 7, when we had to encounter the truth that "Never again!" is actually happening right now. I believe the voices of those who fought evil in Comforty's book give us strength in these difficult times to deal with reborn menaces.

The research is also a vindication of rescuers who are genuinely worthy of praise because they lent a hand to friends and neighbors when they all lived together under the swastika. As such, the book moves us beyond the state propaganda machine that tries to decorate only the Communist leader Todor Zhivkov and King Boris III with the rescuer crown. For these reasons, this book represents a brave act of citizenship. It is an example of the kind of committed research we need, especially at a time when propaganda is becoming easier to disseminate and while post-truth is gaining ground.

Ildiko Otova

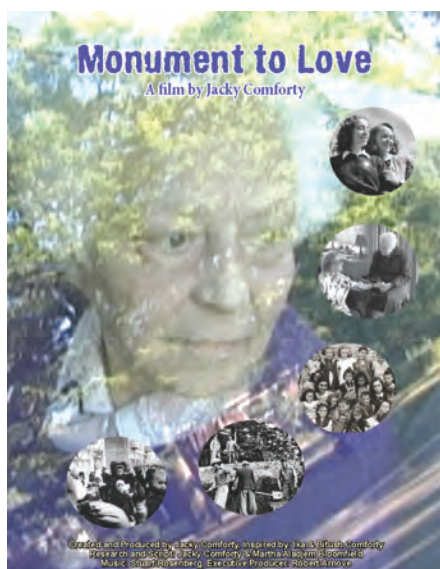
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# The Documentary ‘Monument to Love’ How Bulgarian Jews Escaped the Holocaust



by Elizabeth Ellis

For Bloomingtonian Jacky Comforty, the painstaking documentation of Holocaust history in Bulgaria has been a labor of love for the last 35 years.

Comforty is best known for *The Optimists*, a 2001 film documenting the escape of 50,000 Bulgarian Jews from deportation. His latest documentary, *Monument to Love*, is the first of a trilogy that will tell the survivors’ full story—as well as the tragedy of 13,000 who were deported. Topics explored include dehumanization, industrialization of death, the power of community, and the manipulative role of propaganda.

*Monument to Love* is a journey taken with Comforty’s mother, Ika Comforty Ovadia, who died in 2011. Ovadia kept a diary when she was 19 in 1939 that proves to be a treasure trove of information that she reads from over the course of the film, sharing her impressions of the war coming, Hitler’s rise to power, and reflections on the value of every human being despite cultural differences or disabilities. “I always felt [*The Optimists*] didn’t tell the full story—almost like a highlight film,” shares Comforty, who is also founder of The Learning Project, which documents children with disabilities in real-life situations.

“Through all these connections I was able to tell her story and summed up, more or less, the female experience of the war in Bulgaria,” says Comforty. “My dilemma was how not to make it a monument to my mom by an admiring son.”

*Monument to Love* premiered in May 2023 at Tel Aviv Cinematheque in Israel during an international conference Comforty organized entitled “Persecution and Collaboration, Rescue and Survival: New Perspectives Regarding Bulgaria and the Holocaust 80 Years Later.” The film has since garnered more than 50 awards at international film festivals.

Comforty says that while most of the Jewish population in Bulgaria survived, it was “despite the interest of the government to hand them over for deportation.” Because the Jews were so well integrated into Bulgarian society, they were able to mobilize personal relationships for protection.

“There were people designated to be a connection to this person or another person if something were to happen,” says Comforty. “It was those friendships that stood in the way of deporting the Jews because so many different people had close friends who believed they shouldn’t be persecuted for being who they are.”

Visit [the-learning-project.org](http://the-learning-project.org) for more information. ✨



(top) Comforty’s latest documentary, *Monument to Love*, is the first in a trilogy that will tell the stories of Jewish Bulgarian Holocaust survivors, as well as the tragedy of 13,000 who were deported; (above) a group of teachers that Comforty’s mother, Ika Comforty Ovadia, trained after they were deported to a Ghetto in the provincial city of Pleven in 1943. Ovadia is in the bottom row, second from the left. *Courtesy photos*



In addition to being a filmmaker, Jacky Comforty is also founder of The Learning Project, a not-for-profit organization that creates educational programs about acts of humanity, rescue, tolerance, and acceptance of minorities or disadvantaged persons. *Photo by Martin Boling*



(above, l-r) Ika Comforty Ovadia and her sister, Vicky, in 1943; (below) Ovadia kept a diary when she was 19 in 1939 that includes her impressions of the war coming, Hitler's rise to power, and reflections on the value of all human beings despite cultural differences.



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В края на месец декември 2023 г. научихме, че за най-добър документален филм на Международния филмов фестивал Zeal в Париж е избран филмът „Паметник на любовта“ на сценариста и режисьора Джеки Комфорти, който заедно със сценаристката Марта Аладжем Блумфийлд са спечелили и сертификат за отлични постижения на наградата за сценарий. През 2023 година „Паметник на любовта“ участва и в няколко други фестивали и конкурси. В началото на месец декември той беше включен в официалната селекция на Международните филмови награди на Източна Европа (EEMA) - месечен и годишен филмов конкурс с публична прожекция, който се провежда в Измир всеки месец.

Искрено се радваме на високите оценки, които получава

работни фрагменти от бъдещия филм имаме възможност да се запознаем по време на представянето им на срещата с Джеки Комфорти в Еврейския културен дом при гостуването му в края на май 2022 г. (виж „Еврейски вестник“, бр. 11 - 2022).

„ПАМЕТНИК НА ЛЮБОВТА“ е деветдесетминутен документален филм за продължително над 35 години пътуване на автора с майка му Ика Комфорти Овадия, посветено на проучването, документирането и разкриването на разказа за живота на евреите по време на Холокоста в България. Това е трогателен и дълбоко вълнуващ документален филм, който надхвърля времето и границите. Действието се разгръща като многослоен разказ, преплитайки личната история с по-широката исторически контекст. По време на пътуването Ика разкрива



## Джеки Комфорти с мощен антивоенен манифест срещу насилието

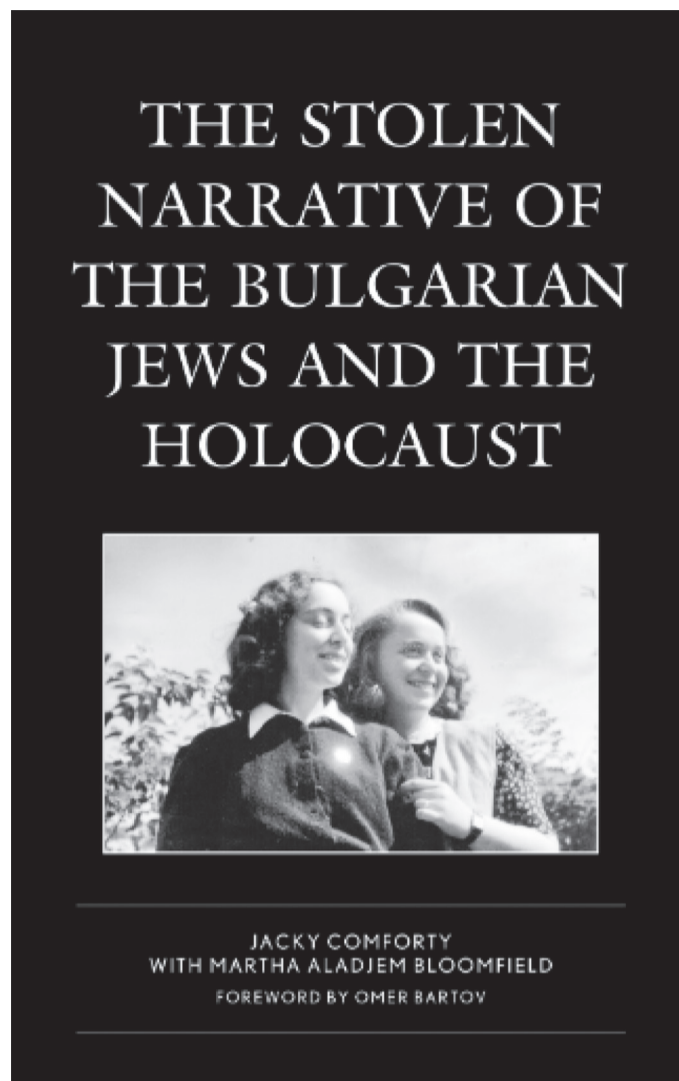


изводство намират проява в прецизната изработка на „Паметник на любовта“. Мултидисциплинарният и мултикултурен подход на Комфорти гарантира, че филмът улавя не само историческите събития, но и нюансираните емоции и междуличностните връзки, които определят човешкия опит по време на бедствия. В основата на документалния филм е темата за любовта като сила, която надхвърля религиозни, културни и исторически граници. Началното изказване на Ика, че „Любовта е най-великата сила на света“, служи като водещ принцип в развитието на целия филм. Акцентът върху любовта се превръща в окуляр, през който преминават историите за устойчивост, съпротива и оцеляване. Тя се превръща в движещата сила, която обединява хората и им позволява да преживеят най-тъмните периоди от историята. Заглавието на филма „Паметник на любовта“ служи като метафорична структура, изградена от колективните спомени и споделените разкази на онези, които са живели през Холокоста. През обектива на пътуването на Ика Джеки Комфорти изгражда мощен антивоенен манифест. Документалният филм се превръща в свидетелство за непреходната сила на любовта в преодоля-

ването на омразата, насилието и тъмнината.

Изборът на формати за заснемане, включително 16 mm, Beta SP, Mini DV и Digital, допринася за визуалното богатство на филма. Включването на черно-бели кадри добавя носталгично и историческо измерение, докато цветните кадри засилват емоционалната дълбочина на съвременните интервюта. Използваните множество езици (български, английски, немски и иврит) отразяват мултикултурния характер на разказа, подчертавайки универсалността на човешкия опит. „Паметник на любовта“ не е просто документален филм. Това е прочувствено изследване на наследството, човечеството и трайните уроци на историята. Джеки Комфорти, заедно със сценаристката Марта Аладжем Блумфийлд са създали филм, който отеква отвъд екрана, приканвайки публиката да размишлява върху трансформиращата сила на любовта, важноста на запазването на личните разкази и колективната отговорност да се гарантира, че историите за съпричастност и достойнство се предават на бъдещите поколения. По този начин те създадоха кинематографичен паметник, свидетелство за несломимия човешки дух.

Такива са високите оценки



на критиците и организаторите на международния онлайн филмов фестивал Zeal в Париж. Той предоставя платформа за изява на режисьори и професионалисти в индустрията от цял свят, които демонстрират творческо въображение при разказването на истории и технически умения, допринасящи за напредъка на кинематографичното изкуство. С богатата си програма той показва богатата палитра на световното кино и трансформиращата сила на филма да вдъхновява, забавлява и обединява. Универсалният език на киното създава празник на ар-

тистичността, разнообразието и безграничната креативност, обединява професионалисти и публика във вълнуваща общност, която споделя страстта към седмото изкуство.

Очакваме скоро да видим филма „Паметник на любовта“ и на български екран. Ще бъде много добре, ако това стане едновременно с излизането от печат на книгата „Откраднатият разказ на българските евреи и Холокоста“, върху превода и предпечатната подготовка на която се работи сега.

Емил Бехар



филмът „Паметник на любовта“ и сърдечно поздравяваме неговия създател Джеки Комфорти. Не само защото той е дълбоко свързан с историята и настоящето на България и българските евреи, но и защото този филм се появи във времето, когато отбелязахме осемдесетгодишнината от спасяването на българските евреи от депортация в нацистките лагери на смъртта и чрез него световната общественост има възможност да научи по убедителен и въздействащ начин истината за т.нар. „български случай“. Филмът е и естествено свързан с публикуваната през 2022 г. в САЩ книга на Джеки Комфорти и Марта Аладжем Блумфийлд „Откраднатият разказ на българските евреи и Холокоста“. С нея и с

своите спомени и наблюдения, а включените записи от нейния дневник добавят интимен характер на разказа, предлагайки на зрителите директен поглед върху емоциите и мислите на една млада жена, която се ориентира в сложността на един разбит по време на войната свят. Тя споделя за приятелства, които изживява в контраст с жестоките времена, и опасностите, които младата жена и близките ѝ са преживели. Джеки умело съчетава искрените разкази на майка си с други устни истории и архивни кадри, за да изгради многопластов разказ за устойчивост, приятелство и издръжлив човешки дух.

Богатият опит на режисьора в изследванията на Холокоста и в независимото филмово про-

**РЕГИОНАЛНА ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ НА ЕВРЕИТЕ „ШАЛОМ“ - СЛИВЕН**  
REGIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE JEWS "SHALOM" - SLIVEN

### ПОКАНА

Управителният съвет на сдружение с нестопанска цел „Регионална организация на евреите „Шалом“ гр. Сливен, със седалище и адрес на управление: гр. Сливен, ул. „Неофит Бозвели“, 26-3, на основание чл. 22 и чл. 33 от Устава на РОЕ „Шалом“ гр. Сливен, свикваме годишно отчетно-изборно събрание на 29.02.2024 г. от 18:00 часа в ресторант „Приказка“ гр. Сливен, ул. „Цар Самуил“ 1, при следния дневен ред:

**ДНЕВЕН РЕД:**

- Отчетен доклад за дейността на Сдружението през 2023 година и доклад за дейността на Сдружението за периода 27.03.2019 до 29.02.2024 г.
- Отчетен доклад на Ревизионната комисия на Сдружението за последната година и за мандата на комисията.
- Обсъждане и приемане на Годишния финансов отчет на Сдружението за 2023 година.
- Обсъждане и приемане на бюджет за 2024 г.
- Освобождане на настоящия Управителния съвет и Ревизионната комисия от отговорност.
- Избор на нови ръководни органи съгласно чл.21 от Устава на РОЕ „Шалом“ Сливен както следва:  
• Председател и Членове на УС  
• Председател и членове на Ревизионната комисия
- Промяна на адреса на управление на Регионална организация на евреите „Шалом“ - Сливен.
- Избор на делегат, който да представлява РОЕ „Шалом“ Сливен по време на Общия събрания на Организация на евреите в България „Шалом“ за следващия мандатен период.
- Други.

При липса на кворум на основание чл. 23 от Устава на РОЕ „Шалом“ Сливен и чл. 27 от ЗЮНПЦ събранието ще се проведе същия ден с един час по-късно при същия дневен ред. Поканват се всички членове лично или чрез упълномощени представители да присъстват на Общото годишно отчетно-изборно събрание на Сдружението. Писмените материали по дневния ред ще бъдат на разположение на членовете на Организацията на адреса на управление на дружеството от 17:00 до 19:00 часа всеки работен ден най-малко един месец преди датата на събранието и ще бъдат предоставени при поискване от всеки член или на лицето, което по закон го представлява или негов представител с изрично писмено пълномощно.

Управителен съвет на РОЕ „Шалом“ гр. Сливен  
03.01.2024 г.

# Monument to Love - Partial Award List

Festival	Project	Notification Date	Submission Status	Judging Status		
Hollywood on the Tiber Film Awards	Monument to Love	April 22, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Universal Cinema Festival	Monument to Love	April 15, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
International Academy Arthouse Fest	Monument to Love	April 15, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
New York Movie Awards	Monument to Love	April 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Casino Film Festival	Monument to Love	April 28, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
International Academy Arthouse Fest	Monument to Love	April 15, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Artist's Choice Awards	Monument to Love	March 31, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
World Cinema Awards	Monument to Love	March 31, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Chicago Cinema Awards	Monument to Love	April 8, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
The Dreamers Film Festival	Monument to Love	April 25, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Rome International Movie Awards	Monument to Love	April 1, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Milan Gold Awards	Monument to Love	March 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Frida Film Festival	Monument to Love	March 25, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
London Movie Awards	Monument to Love	March 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Paris Film Awards	Monument to Love	March 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
International Gold Awards	Monument to Love	March 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Florence Film Awards	Monument to Love	March 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Hollywood Gold Awards	Monument to Love	March 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
IF Indie Festival	Monument to Love	March 25, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Casino Film Festival	Monument to Love	March 29, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Saath Jiyo Foundation International Film Festi...	Monument to Love	April 30, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
New York Film Monthly	Monument to Love	February 29, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Accolade Global Film Competition	Monument to Love	March 4, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Madrid International Movie Awards	Monument to Love	April 11, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Bright International Film Festival	Monument to Love	February 18, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
Beyond the Curve International Film Festival	Monument to Love	March 9, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁
IF Indie Festival	Monument to Love	March 25, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	▼	📁



IF Indie Festival	Monument to Love	March 25, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
8 & Halfilm Awards	Monument to Love	March 27, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
SamhainBaucogna International Film Festival	Monument to Love	November 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Crown Point International Film Festival	Monument to Love	March 2, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Miami International Gold Awards	Monument to Love	March 1, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
MADH ISLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM AWARD...	Monument to Love	April 5, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
LENS FAME INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL	Monument to Love	March 29, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Seattle independent film festival	Monument to Love	January 31, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Lily Indie Film Fest	Monument to Love	May 31, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Medusa Film Festival	Monument to Love	January 31, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
NEW YORK CITY INTERNATIONAL FILM AWARDS	Monument to Love	January 30, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Red Moon Film Festival	Monument to Love	March 26, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Hollywood Hype International Film Festival	Monument to Love	January 28, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Chalachitra International Film Awards	Monument to Love	February 2, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Bestlov Film Festival	Monument to Love	February 1, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
New Jersey Film Awards	Monument to Love	January 30, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Silverlens Film Awards	Monument to Love	February 11, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Big Screen Blast Film Festival	Monument to Love	February 11, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
EVEREST MOVIES FILM FESTIVAL	Monument to Love	February 27, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Indobali international film festival	Monument to Love	February 11, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Humro Cinema Film Fest	Monument to Love	January 2, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Stingray International Film Festival	Monument to Love	January 12, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
FilmNest International Film Festival	Monument to Love	January 13, 2024	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>
Hollywood Blvd. Film	Monument to Love	December 31, 2023	<span style="color: green;">●</span> In Consideration	<span style="color: gold;">🏆</span> Award Winner	<a href="#">▼</a>	<a href="#">📁</a>

## Press Images



The Ovadia family 1941, Ika and her sister Viki, Luna and Jacque Ovadia.



Viki Ovadia with the radio just before it was confiscated, 1941.



**Ika Ovadia and Sara Alkalay, the Jewish students, who were admitted to the school for teachers affiliated with the American Kindergarten in Sofia, 1941.**



**Ika Ovadia Comforty revisiting Penka Kasabova, the director of the school for teachers, affiliated with the American Kindergarten in Sofia, 1990.**



**Ika and friends in the village of Boboshevo where she was sent to teach and was arrested for staying with the children after curfew in summer, 1942.**



**My father, Bitush Comforty, in a Labor camp in Belovo, 1942 (R) .**



**Ika and Viki Ovadia with the Jewish star shining in the sun, Pleven, 1943.**



**Ika, Jacque and Viki Ovadi in the yard of the house where they stayed in Pleven, 1943.**



**Ika Ovadia, with the Jewish star with a class of children she organized in the ghetto in Pleven where they had all been deported in summer 1943. In the top row from left is Julie Mory who shared her memories as a young girl.**



**Ika, Viki and three tenants in the house they shared in Pleven with Albert Vaena, Ika's partisan friend she knew from Sofia, September 1944.**



**Ika, going to visit her teacher's Alma Mater, the National College of Education. Evanston, Illinois, 2004.**