

## Georges Godkine

Photographed with his wife Janine

Wartime Experience: Prisoner of War in Germany

*Text written by his wife Janine*

Georges Godkine was Born in Kiev and arrived in France at the age of five. His father, a diamond setter, found work in Paris. At the age of twenty, When the war broke out , Georges volunteered to do his military service. Both he and his older brother wanted to do their duty. Georges was taken prisoner of war in Germany. The five years of captivity were very painful and dangerous because he hid his Jewish identity.

On several occasions, he lived through moments of great anguish with the fear of being discovered. For example, he was an interpreter and had the right to do some shopping in town for his commando. One day, while on duty, at the hospital, he saw haggard men clutching to the bars of the window. He approached and asked who they were. They answered "We are Hungarian Jews. They put us here two days ago without food or water." Overwhelmed, Georges found the pretext of having forgotten something in order to return to the camp. He assembled his comrades telling them that there were soldiers who were hungry. He took up a collection and purchased food for them. He will never forget the grateful eyes of those misfortunate ones.

Six months later, the Gestapo called him in and asked by what right he allowed himself to help the enemies of Germany. He defended himself as well as he could giving the excuse that Germans asked soldiers to be clean and it was in an attempt to be obedient that he acted in such a way.

The last year, there was no news of his family, and Georges did not know if they were alive or dead. His father had told him not to try to escape because he was safer as a prisoner of war. He was released on May 8, 1945 and returned to his parents who were hiding in the mountains near Nice. If the war had lasted one more year, there would have been no surviving Jews.

Returning from captivity, Georges had to start from scratch. From his trade as a radio engineer, he readapted himself to his father's profession as a diamond setter. He had a great deal of difficulty adjusting to his old apartment from which everything was confiscated. He didn't even have one photo of his youth.

George and Janine got married in 1949. It was a time of poverty but as the miraculous survivors of fate, they could never forget the horrors undergone by those who were not so lucky.

The "travail de mémoire" is indispensable so that the young people know what happened and be vigilant so that our descendants never see that again.

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## Des dossiers du Mémorial de la Shoah–Paris

Georges GODKINE

L'homme redevenait un peu comme une bête, un peu sauvage. C'était la lutte pour la vie. Si je commence à raconter toutes mes histoires, il y en a pour toute la nuit.

né à KIEV (RUSSIE) arrivé en France à l'âge de 5 ans.

Prisonnier de guerre en Allemagne pendant 5 ans dans des conditions pénibles et dangereuses. Interprète, il avait le droit d'effectuer des achats en ville pour son commando. Il lui arriva aussi d'aider de malheureux juifs hongrois parqués à l'hôpital, sales et affamés.

Démobilisé le 08/05/1945, il retrouve ses parents qui étaient restés cachés dans la montagne, près de NICE. Retour à PARIS pour retrouver un appartement entièrement spolié.