

HENRY BULAWKO

Active in the French Resistance, Henry Bulawko was arrested and imprisoned in several camps before escaping from a death march.

“In reality, I was born twice. The first time was November 25, 1918, in Lyda (at the time Lithuania)... On May 11, 1945, I was in Paris. And I was born for the second time.”

In the 1920s, Henry Bulawko’s family—parents and six siblings—came to France, where his father served as rabbi in synagogues for Lithuanian Jews. His father died in 1936, and all the children had to work to help support the family. After completing two years in rabbinical school, Henry had to quit his studies. He was a member of a Zionist/socialist youth movement and hoped to go to Palestine but was unable to get the necessary immigration certificate. He found a job assisting with the emigration of German and Austrian refugees. He also began his career as a journalist.

At the beginning of the Occupation he worked placing Jewish children with non-Jews, helping families move into the Free Zone, distributing leaflets, and conducting other initiatives against the occupying Germans and the French collaborators.

His sister Frida was arrested and deported with her husband and child. They never returned. Other family members managed to hide. Arrested in November 1942, Henry was interned in Drancy. In 1943, he was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where every moment was a struggle to survive. In January 1945, Henry was forced to go on a death march where with a few others, he managed to escape to an abandoned camp.

After the war, Henry made his way back to Paris, where he found his mother and most of his siblings alive. After regaining his health, he resumed his journalism career. He was instrumental in creating the organization of Auschwitz survivors in Paris and erecting monuments to the thousands who were deported from France.

Henry continues to bear witness and to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust, lecturing in schools throughout Europe. He has taken part in meetings in Germany, Austria, and the Soviet Union and participated in a televised debate with Mikhail Gorbachev. He has published books, mainly on the Shoah, Israel and Zionism. He has presided at commemorative ceremonies with political leaders such as French president Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. Among many other honors, Henry Bulawko has been awarded the Legion of Honor.