



ein museum der **wien**holding

## **Yevgeny Khaldei. Photographer of liberation**

As of May 12, 2021, the Jewish Museum Vienna is presenting “Yevgeny Khaldei. Photographer of liberation,” featuring works by Yevgeny Khaldei, who marched into Vienna as an official war correspondent with the Red Army during the city’s liberation. Experienced enough to know which photographs in Moscow were considered ideologically acceptable, Khaldei subsequently took the official liberation photo of Vienna from the Soviet perspective: a group of soldiers toting machine guns, with the red-white-red Austrian flag fluttering in the background. The exhibition shows a decisive moment in the history of Austria that has had an impact up to the present day.

## **The liberation of Vienna as a story in pictures**

On March 29, 1945, the Red Army reached Austrian territory while fighting the German Wehrmacht. The Battle of Vienna ended on April 13, 1945 after heavy combat and high losses incurred by both sides. Even in the final hours of the war, the SS continued murdering Jews in Vienna. The Jewish photographer Yevgeny Khaldei (1917–1997) came to Vienna along with the Soviet troops. He captured unique images of street battles, bomb ruins and soon of civil life. Hunger, housing shortages, but also the hope of a new beginning marked the spring of 1945. Khaldei’s photos showcase Viennese landmarks such as St. Stephen’s Cathedral, the Parliament, Heldenplatz, Belvedere Palace or Johann Strauss’s tomb in the Central Cemetery, always with Soviet soldiers in front of them. Khaldei’s colleague Olga Lander (1909–1996), who arrived in Vienna a few weeks later, took photographs of official events. After the Second World War, Khaldei found out that his entire family had been murdered by the Nazis. His mother had perished in a pogrom when Khaldei was just one year old. Yevgeny Khaldei, as well as the Jewish photographer Olga Lander, left behind impressive testimonies with their pictures, which document decisive days in Vienna’s history.

## **Photographing whatever was worth photographing**

Yevgeny Ananyevich Khaldei was born in what is now Ukraine in 1917, the year of the October Revolution. His mother was murdered in a pogrom when Khaldei was just one year old. At the age of twelve he got involved in photography, piecing together a camera out of his grandmother's eyeglasses and other aids. His career started in a steel factory, where he was supposed to photograph the so-called "best workers." In the 1930s, he traveled through the country and witnessed the famine caused by the forced collectivization of the peasantry, but his pictures focused on the socialist reconstruction. For four years he accompanied the Red Army as a war photographer for the news agency TASS. His Jewish origins were a driving force here, as evidenced by the episode when he photographed a Jewish couple in the Budapest ghetto and then removed their Jewish stars, telling them that he was also a Jew. Later he learned that his father and sisters had been murdered by the Nazis. He photographed the war crimes trials in Nuremberg, where he met the Hungarian-American photographer Robert Capa, who gave him a camera. In 1948, Khaldei was fired from the TASS agency – officially because of a lack of professionalism, according to his own statement because of his Jewish descent. Years later, Khaldei was rehabilitated and worked again for Soviet media such as "Pravda." His famous picture of the liberation of Berlin in 1945, which shows a Red Army soldier hoisting the Soviet flag on the destroyed Reichstag building, has a "flaw." Khaldei himself said that the soldier in the original photo was wearing two watches on his wrist. This detail was retouched for publication. Khaldei's credo was that he only took pictures of whatever was worth being photographed. He died in Moscow in 1997.

**"Yevgeny Khaldei. Photographer of liberation"** can be seen from May 12, 2021 to November 1, 2021 at the Museum Judenplatz (Jewish Museum Vienna). Appearing along with the exhibition, which was curated by Markus G. Patka and designed by Fuhrer, Wien, is a self-published, richly illustrated catalog in German and English that costs € 19.90.

The Museum Judenplatz (Judenplatz 8, 1010 Vienna) is open Sunday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (wintertime), respectively 5 p.m. (summertime). The Jewish Museum Vienna at Dorotheergasse 11, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Further information can be found at [www.jmw.at](http://www.jmw.at) or [info@jmw.at](mailto:info@jmw.at).

## Queries

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Photos and press material on current exhibitions can be found on the Jewish Museum Vienna homepage under [www.jmw.at/de/presse](http://www.jmw.at/de/presse).



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