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# INDIVIDUAL PROFILE CARDS



## Fanny Orenbach Aizenberg

Born 1916  
Łódź, Poland

Faiga (Fanny) Orenbach was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Łódź, Poland. The family moved to Brussels, Belgium when she was a young child, where her parents became active in the Jewish community. Fanny earned an art degree and designed clothing for the Royal House of Belgium. In May 1938, Fanny married Jacques Aizenberg, and less than a year later, gave birth to a daughter, Josiane.

Germany invaded Belgium on May 10, 1940. Jacques left immediately to join the military, and after Belgium was defeated, he evacuated to England. Although she was Jewish, Fanny soon became actively involved in the resistance movement, hiding refugees in her attic.

In October 1942, a few months after Fanny's father was arrested, Fanny put Josiane in hiding. Fanny and her mother, Rivke, also went into hiding, but the Gestapo discovered and arrested them in **1943**. They were beaten and taken to the Mechelen (Malines) transit camp. After 10 days in Mechelen, Fanny and Rivke were deported to Auschwitz.

Upon arrival at Auschwitz, Fanny and Rivke were placed in separate lines. Fanny never saw her mother again. Fanny found encouragement from a group of six women. Together, they endured beatings, forced labor in a grenade factory, cruel and painful medical experiments, and the many other horrors of Auschwitz.

In January 1945, the SS evacuated Auschwitz, sending Fanny and tens of thousands of prisoners on a forced march in frozen temperatures. After four months, Fanny and the other survivors were liberated near the Elbe River by the Soviet Red Army. A Red Cross delegation quickly returned her to Belgium, where she reunited with Jacques and Josiane.



## August Alzen

Born 1913  
Weiselstein, Germany

August was born on February 26, 1913, to Johann and Katharina Alzen, in Weiselstein, Germany. The Alzen family was Catholic, and August was the second of four children.

When August was in his early twenties, he worked as a general laborer. He was a member of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF), the German Labor Front, which had replaced traditional labor unions in Nazi Germany. Members of the DAF constructed resort complexes and ran pro-Nazi social, educational, and entertainment programs for non-Jewish Germans to enjoy.

On May 5, **1937**, August received a notice to report before the Hereditary Health Court. His appointment was at 11:45 a.m. on May 21 in the nearby town of Siegen. Even though August could successfully hold a job, the court determined that he was “feeble-minded” and ordered his forcible sterilization. He was also declared unfit to serve in the German military.

August’s father, Johann, was arrested in 1941 for “undermining German morale.” He was sentenced to 10 years in prison. First, he was incarcerated in Münster. Johann was then transferred to the Neuengamme concentration camp in May 1943, then to Natzweiler-Struthof, and then to Dachau in September 1944. Johann died in Dachau in January 1945.



## Joseph Berg

**Born 1896**  
**Dirmerzheim, Germany**

Joseph Berg was born in 1896 in Dirmerzheim, Germany. He was Jewish, and his ancestors had lived in Germany for 300 years. Joseph worked as a cattle dealer and lived in the small farming community of Lechenich, with his wife Klara and two daughters, Inge (born 1929) and Gisela (born 1933).

On the morning of November 10, 1938, the Berg family heard from a Christian neighbor who warned them not to go near the synagogue. Joseph quickly learned that Nazi antisemitic attacks were taking place throughout Germany. He sent Inge and Gisela to a relative's apartment in Cologne, where they joined 10 other relatives hiding in two small rooms. Joseph and his brothers fled by car to the Netherlands to avoid arrest. They were caught by Dutch police at the border but were allowed to live and work in an internment camp rather than being deported back to Germany.

Joseph worked with a distant relative, Herman Strauss, who lived in England. Strauss had been helping many family members escape, including Herman's brother, who got a job in Nairobi, Kenya. Joseph and his brothers paid for entry visas to Kenya and arrived on June 7, **1939**. Klara, Inge, Gisela, and seven other relatives arrived three weeks later, on June 26, 1939.

Joseph and his brothers settled in Limuru, a small town northwest of Nairobi. They bought a 300-acre farm and learned local farming methods. However, Joseph and Klara wanted to make sure their daughters could marry Jewish husbands, so the family immigrated to the United States in 1947.



## **Else Frankenstein Blumenstein**

**Born 1905  
Vienna, Austria**

Else Frankenstein was born in 1905 in Vienna, Austria and married Franz Blumenstein in 1927. They had a son, Heinz, and lived in Vienna, Austria, where Franz made children's clothing and Else ran a drugstore. After the Kristallnacht attacks in November 1938, Franz was arrested and imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp. He was released after Else paid a bribe to Nazi officials --and after he promised to leave Germany as soon as possible. Franz soon immigrated to Cuba, joining an older sister who lived there.

Else bought tickets for herself, Heinz, and Franz's mother Regina, on the *St. Louis*, which left Germany in May 1939. When the ship arrived in Cuba, however, authorities would not let them land. The passengers had unknowingly purchased their landing papers from a corrupt Cuban official, who had sold them invalid papers. Else could not leave the ship, but she could talk to Franz, who took a small boat out to the *St. Louis* in order to see his family for the first time in months.

After Cuban officials ordered the *St. Louis* to leave Cuban waters, American and Canadian governments did not permit the passengers to land since they did not have visas. The ship returned to Europe, where the governments of Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France each accepted some of the passengers so they did not have to return to Nazi Germany. Else, Regina, and Heinz settled in Amsterdam.

In November 1940, Else and Heinz received visas for the Dominican Republic, but they could not obtain permits to leave the Netherlands. After Nazi forces occupied the Netherlands, Regina was arrested and sent to Theresienstadt and then to Auschwitz, where she was murdered. Else placed Heinz in hiding with the Dykstra family in the village of Oosterbierum. Else also went into hiding, but in 1943 she was discovered. She was deported to Auschwitz and murdered. Heinz survived the war and reunited with his father in the United States in September 1946.



## Alessandra Bucci

Born 1939  
Fiume, Italy

Alessandra Bucci was born in Fiume, Italy, in 1939. She and her sister Tatiana, who was two years older, were half-Jewish--their father, Giovanni, was Catholic, and mother, Mira, was Jewish. Giovanni, a sailor, had been captured and was a prisoner of war in Africa.

As the Allied armies battled in Sicily in July 1943, Benito Mussolini, the prime minister of the fascist regime, was overthrown and arrested. Two months later, Nazi Germany invaded northern Italy and began to arrest and deport Jews.

On March 28, **1944**, Mira, Tatiana, Alessandra, their grandmother Nonna Rosa, aunt Gisella, and cousin Sergio were arrested. They were imprisoned first at the Risiera di San Sabba camp in Trieste, and then deported to Auschwitz, where Nonna Rosa was immediately sent to the gas chambers. The rest of the family received tattoos and became Auschwitz prisoners.

Alessandra and Tatiana looked very similar and were probably mistaken for twins. An SS doctor at Auschwitz, Dr. Josef Mengele, performed experiments on twins, and so the sisters were sent to a children's barracks and even allowed to bring Sergio with them. Mira was separated from her daughters, and Tatiana, who was seven, tried to care for five-year-old Alessandra and six-year-old Sergio. At one point, an SS officer asked the children if they wanted to see their mothers. It was a trick. The sisters did not move, but Sergio stepped forward. Alessandra and Tatiana never saw him again.

The sisters were liberated from Auschwitz in January 1945. They were taken first to Prague and then to England to a country estate, Lingfield House, with 30 other child survivors. In 1946, Mira and Giovanni discovered their daughters had survived Auschwitz. The family reunited in December 1946.



## Artur Czuczka

**Born 1889**  
**Vienna, Austria**

Artur Czuczka was born on November 2, 1889 in Vienna, Austria. He never married, and after his father's death, he took over the family's printing company and cared for his mother, Amalie. Nazi Germany annexed Austria in March 1938. After the Kristallnacht attacks in November 1938, Artur, who was Jewish, was imprisoned but released after promising to leave Germany.

Artur's brother Fritz immigrated to the United States with his family in 1939. Fritz and his wife, Lola, contacted the American Friends Service Committee (the Quakers), who took up Artur's case and tried to find someone who would act as his American financial sponsor. Amalie's health was bad, and Artur refused to immigrate without her. The German police ordered Artur to leave the country. He quickly forged a letter claiming that his immigration papers were due to arrive soon so he could avoid arrest.

Artur learned on January 31, 1940 that the Quakers had found a wealthy American businessman, Walter Borton, who would sponsor him--but not his mother. The cable arrived the day Artur's extension order expired, and he again promised Nazi authorities he would leave as soon as possible. In April, Borton agreed to loan the money for a ship ticket, but by the time the money arrived, ships no longer sailed from Nazi-occupied territory, and Artur would have to travel to the United States through either Portugal or the Soviet Union.

But Amalie's health worsened, and Artur did not want to leave her alone in Vienna. By the time she passed away from natural causes, it was too late for him to leave on his own. Artur was deported to Opole, Poland in **1941**. He managed to send several letters to Fritz from Poland, but soon the letters stopped coming. We do not know how Artur Czuczka died.





## Stanley Dabrowski

Born 1913  
Warsaw, Poland

Stanislaw (Stanley) Dabrowski was born on January 9, 1913 in Gliniojeck, Poland. The Dabrowski family were devout Catholics. After college, Stanislaw served briefly in the Polish military and then entered a seminary, planning to become a Catholic priest.

Nazi Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. The local Catholic bishop refused to ordain Stanislaw and the other seminarians who had completed their religious training, claiming that he did not want to be pressured because of the invasion. The bishop fled to safety in England.

In November **1939**, church authorities suspected that the Germans might interfere with the seminary. Stanislaw and another student stayed up at night to watch over the buildings. That evening, the Gestapo arrived and arrested Stanislaw and the other students and faculty. Along with 400 other priests and seminarians from his diocese, Stanislaw was imprisoned in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

Stanislaw was transferred to the Dachau concentration camp in December 1940. There, he lived in a barracks with other Catholic priests. They worked cultivating flowers that were used for medicinal purposes by Nazi Germany. Still, their imprisonment was difficult. They were given very little clothing and food.

Stanislaw Dabrowski was liberated from Dachau by the American Army in April 1945. Of the 400 priests on his initial transport, only 100 survived World War II. Stanislaw was ordained as a priest in the summer of 1945. He immigrated to the United States and served as a Catholic priest near Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



## Dorothea Diek

Born 1919

Danzig, Poland

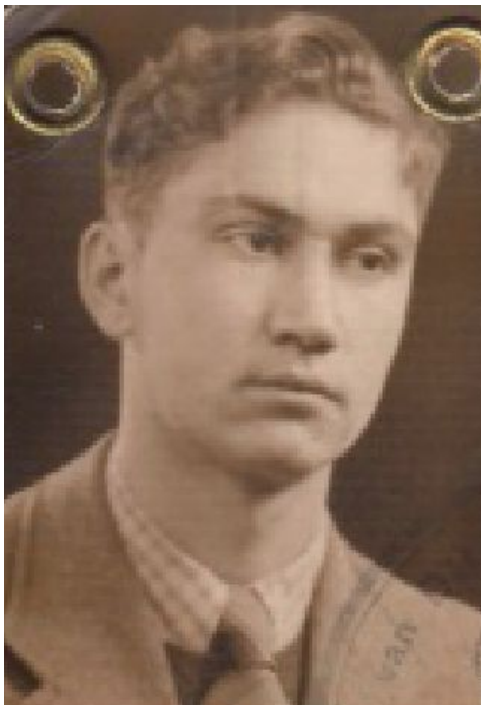
Dorothea was born in 1919 to Mandenga and Emilie Diek. Mandenga was born in Douala, Cameroon, a German colony in west Africa. He had immigrated to Germany in 1891 and built a successful business. Mandenga became a German citizen, one of the few Cameroonians to gain citizenship before the Nazi era. He settled in Danzig, which was then part of Germany.

Mandenga married Emilie in 1914. They had two daughters, Dorothea and her older sister, Erika. Although Emilie was born in Germany and was white, her daughters were German citizens only because Mandenga had obtained German citizenship. Most children of colonial subjects were considered stateless even if one parent was born in Germany.

Mandenga and his daughters were among the very few Afro-Germans in the Danzig area. Although Danzig was technically independent after World War I, Erika and Dorothea had to take courses on Nazi German racial science, learning that black people were inferior to whites. Erika married a Cameroonian actor in 1938 and moved to Berlin.

In **1943**, Nazi officials took away Mandenga, Emilie, and Dorothea's passports. Mandenga unsuccessfully tried to arrange for his family to immigrate to Cameroon. He died of a heart attack in June 1943. Dorothea was ordered to be sterilized and was taken to a women's clinic. She cried hysterically and one of the soldiers escorting her decided to let her go. The Diek sisters knew many Afro-Germans, including a nephew, who were sterilized by the Nazi regime.

Dorothea was arrested because of her race and sent to forced labor in a shipyard in December 1944. It took decades for Dorothea and Erika to regain German citizenship. Emilie, although she was white, born in Germany, and spent her whole life in Germany, died without regaining her citizenship.



## Thomas Doeppner

Born 1920  
Berlin, Germany

Tom Doeppner was born in Berlin in 1920. Tom's mother, Ella, was Jewish, but his father, August, was not. Tom did not consider himself Jewish either. He attended Quaker summer camps and clubs in Berlin. But in 1935, Nazi Germany instituted the Nuremberg Race Laws, and classified Tom as a "Mischling"--someone who was of "mixed race."

When Tom's parents divorced, August moved from Nazi Germany to Amsterdam. Tom was afraid that he would be drafted into the German military, and he illegally entered the Netherlands in the summer of **1938** to live with his father. That December, Tom wrote to the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a Quaker aid organization, for help escaping to safety.

After the Kristallnacht attacks in November 1938, students at more than 200 American colleges and universities raised money to help refugee students. The AFSC helped Tom obtain a scholarship to McPherson College, a small Christian college in McPherson, Kansas. Tom was still gathering his visa paperwork in September 1939, when World War II began in Europe. Although the war meant that fewer passenger ships crossed the Atlantic Ocean, Tom finally obtained a ticket for the *SS Pennland*. He made it to Kansas before the spring 1940 semester began.

Tom graduated in 1944 and joined the US Army as an interpreter, interrogating Germans captured by the Allies. In January 1944, Tom's mother, Ella, was deported from Berlin to Theresienstadt, a hybrid ghetto and concentration camp. She had managed to avoid deportation for so long because she had been married to a non-Jewish man. Ella survived the Holocaust.



## Anne Frank

Born 1929

Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Annelies (Anne) Frank was born on June 12, 1929, in Frankfurt, Germany. After Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in 1933, the Frank family immigrated to Amsterdam in the Netherlands, where Anne's father, Otto, had business connections. He ran a business in Amsterdam and employed many non-Jewish workers.

In May 1940, Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands. Anne and her sister Margot had to leave public school to attend a Jewish school. Otto tried to gather the necessary paperwork so his family could immigrate to the United States, but the US consulates closed before he could submit it.

In July 1942, Margot Frank was ordered to report for forced labor. The family decided to go into hiding in hidden rooms above Otto's business at 263 Prinsengracht Street. They were joined by four other Jews and were aided by several of Otto Frank's former employees.

Anne began writing in a diary she had received on her 13th birthday, just a few weeks before the family went into hiding. Over more than two years, she recorded life inside the "Secret Annex," conveying her fears and hopes for the future. On August 4, **1944**, the Gestapo discovered the hiding place and arrested the inhabitants. Anne and her family were deported to Westerbork, a transit camp in the Netherlands, and then to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Anne and Margot stayed together and were sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. They both died during a typhus epidemic in late February or early March 1945.

Otto Frank was the only survivor from the "Secret Annex." He published Anne's diary in 1947.



## Isadore Frenkiel

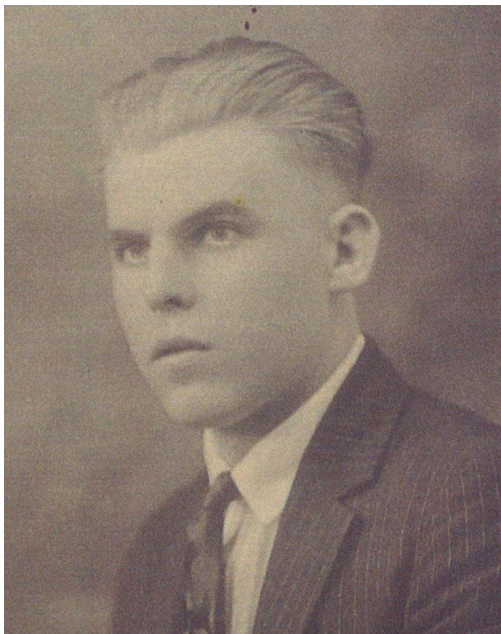
Born 1898  
Gabin, Poland

Isadore Frenkiel and his wife, Sossia, had seven sons and were a religious Jewish family. They lived in a one-room apartment near the synagogue at the center of Gabin, a town near Warsaw. Isadore was a self-employed cap maker, selling his caps at the local market. He also fashioned hats for the police and military.

The German army occupied Gabin soon after the September 1939 invasion of Poland. Ten people were shot in the street and others, such as doctors and teachers, were taken away. The Germans rounded up Jewish men and held them in the marketplace while soldiers doused the synagogue with gasoline and set it on fire.

In 1941, the Frenkiels heard rumors that the Germans were deporting Jews to their deaths. A cousin visited the family after escaping from a transport and said the rumors were true. "They put you in trucks, gas you, then throw your body into a burning pit," he said. Isadore's three-year-old son ran to his mother crying, "Will they burn me, too?" Isadore urged his cousin to tell the Jewish leadership of the town. But they did not believe the cousin's story and told him to leave town.

In May **1942**, Gabin's Jews were deported to the Chelmno killing center. Isadore, Sossia, and four of their sons were placed in a sealed van and asphyxiated with exhaust fumes.



## Carl Gärtig

**Born 1902  
Weidau, Germany**

Carl Gärtig was born on March 11, 1902 in Weidau, Germany. He was a Protestant. When he turned 18, he began working as a coal miner and grew interested in politics. After briefly joining the Social Democrat party, Carl declared his allegiance to the German Communist Party.

Carl began working as an assistant baker on passenger ships. He traveled to the United States multiple times in the 1920s and, in 1922, left the ship. He applied to naturalize and become an American citizen. There is no evidence he ever finished this process, possibly because he had entered the United States illegally. He soon returned to his work on German passenger ships.

On March 28, **1933**, two months after Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany, Carl was arrested for publishing and distributing anti-Nazi material. He was briefly imprisoned, then released.

In January 1935, Carl was arrested again for distributing illegal writings, and since he had been arrested before, he had very little hope of release. He was imprisoned in the Lichtenburg concentration camp and at Kassel prison from 1935 to 1938. In 1938 he was transferred to the newly opened Buchenwald concentration camp. He was assigned prisoner number 5209.

At Buchenwald, Carl and the other prisoners were forced to build a long road up the mountain leading to the camp. The work was exhausting, and many prisoners died. At some point, Carl revealed that he had training as a baker. This allowed him to work in the prisoner canteen, a privileged position. He had access to extra food and tried to distribute it to the other prisoners.

Carl Gärtig was liberated from the Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945.



## Johanna Gerechter

Born 1930  
Hamburg, Germany

Johanna Gerechter was an only child, born on December 2, 1930 to Siegbert and Alice Gerechter. Her father, a World War I veteran, was a merchant and manufactured work gloves. Even after Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in January 1933, Johanna had a happy childhood. She attended a Jewish elementary school and was spoiled by her parents and relatives.

In the 1930s, Siegbert tried to get American immigration visas for his wife and daughter, wanting to join Alice's sisters in the United States. But although Johanna and Alice were born in Germany, Siegbert was born in Poland. Under US law, there were far fewer visas available for people born in Poland than for people born in Germany.

After the Kristallnacht attacks in November 1938, the Gerechters decided to leave Germany. In March 1939, they escaped by train south to Albania. They rented an apartment in the port city of Durazzo, which was under Italian control, and were treated well. Johanna and her family were protected by Njazi and Lizalotte Pilku, a kind Albanian Muslim couple, who pretended that the Gerechters were their relatives from Germany. That way, no one would suspect the Gerechters were Jewish.

In **1943**, Germany invaded the northern Italian territories, including Durazzo. The Gerechters moved to the Albanian capital of Tirana. As Nazi Germany and its collaborators began deporting Jews from Albania in the summer of 1944, the family fled from town to town, hiding with the assistance of various families. They were liberated by partisans in the fall of 1944.

Johanna and her mother Alice immigrated to the United States in June 1946, and her father Siegbert joined his family a year later.



## Georg Glückstein

Born 1886

Oranienburg, Germany

Georg Glückstein was born in 1886 in Oranienburg, Germany. He was a decorated veteran of World War I and worked as a municipal court judge in Berlin. His wife, Hedwig, was Christian, and the couple had one son, Fritz, born in 1927. Fritz was raised Jewish, and the family attended a liberal synagogue.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Jews were prohibited from holding public office and Georg was dismissed from his position. The family endured severe financial hardship. Under Nazi racial laws, Georg was considered Jewish and Fritz was a “Mischling” or “mixed race.”

After World War II began in 1939, all of the Glücksteins’ valuables were confiscated, along with many other belongings, including their pet dog. The family had to relocate to a segregated Jewish area in Berlin. In 1942, when Jewish schools closed, Fritz was put in the forced labor service.

On February 27, **1943**, Georg and Fritz were arrested during a roundup of the remaining Jews in Berlin. They were imprisoned with other husbands and children of non-Jewish women in a building located on Rosenstrasse. Within hours, the women began to demonstrate outside the building, demanding freedom for their loved ones. This effort secured the release of the prisoners, including Georg and Fritz.

In the fall of 1944, Georg and Fritz were assigned to forced labor crews sent to demolish buildings damaged by air raids. The Soviet military captured Berlin in early May 1945. After the war ended, Georg resumed his judicial career and served as chairman of the Jewish community's assembly of representatives.





## Szeina Katzenelenboigen

Born ca. 1900  
Ejszyszki, Poland

Szeina Katzenelenboigen was born in Ejszyszki (Eišiškės), a small town in northern Poland, around 1900. Approximately 70 percent of the town's population was Jewish. Szeina was fluent in multiple languages, including Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, Polish, and German. She ran a hotel in Ejszyszki and also starred in local theatrical productions.

On September 17, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. Lithuania annexed the territory surrounding and including Ejszyszki. The Jewish community of Ejszyszki was therefore not subjected to Nazi antisemitic persecution right away, unlike Jews in Poland.

The Soviet Union invaded Lithuania in June 1940. Soviet occupying forces seized private property and outlawed Jewish community activities in Ejszyszki.

One year later, on June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany invaded Soviet territory. The day after the invasion, German occupying forces arrested hundreds of Jewish men in Ejszyszki and took them for forced labor. German officers took over Szeina Katzenelenboigen's hotel and established it as their headquarters.

On September 24-25, **1941**, the Jewish community of Ejszyszki was taken to the local Jewish cemetery and murdered in a mass shooting. Their bodies were buried in pits. Szeina Katzenelenboigen was among the victims.



## Magdalena Kusserow

**Born 1924**  
**Bochum, Germany**

One of 11 children, Magdalena was raised as a Jehovah's Witness. When she was seven, her family moved to the small town of Bad Lippspringe, Germany. Her father was a retired postal official and her mother was a teacher. Their home was the headquarters of the local Jehovah's Witness congregation. By age eight, Magdalena could recite many Bible verses by heart.

The Nazis marked the Kusserows as enemies because they declared that their loyalty was to Jehovah, not to the Nazi Party or Adolf Hitler. As a teenager, Magdalena joined her parents and sister in missionary work. Her father was arrested for hosting Bible study meetings in their home; even her mother was arrested. The Gestapo searched their house many times, but Magdalena and her sisters managed to hide the religious literature. In 1939 the police took her three youngest siblings to be "reeducated" in Nazi foster homes.

Magdalena was arrested in April **1941** and detained in nearby juvenile prisons until she was 18. She was told that she could go home if she signed a statement repudiating her faith. Magdalena refused and was deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. She was assigned to do gardening work and look after the children of the SS women. Her mother and sister Hildegard were also sent to Ravensbrück a year later.

During a forced march from Ravensbrück in April 1945, Magdalena, her sister, and mother were liberated by the Soviet Army. When the war ended, they returned to Bad Lippspringe.



## Lila Lam

Born 1922

Stanisławów, Poland

Lila Lam was born in 1922 in Stanisławów, Poland, a city with a large Jewish population. The Lam family owned an oil field and refinery and Lila's father, Michal, who trained as a lawyer, helped manage the business. The family was wealthy and Jewish but not very religious.

In September 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland, but Stanisławów was in eastern Poland, which was occupied by the Soviet Union. After Germany invaded Soviet territory in June 1941, the Lam family was forced into a ghetto. Michal briefly served as the chairman of the Judenrat (the Jewish council).

Lila, her mother, Dorota, brother Henryk, and an uncle obtained false identity papers and escaped the ghetto. Lila traveled to Warsaw, where she lived under the name of "Leonora Leska," pretending to be a Polish Catholic woman.

In **1944**, the Polish underground launched a military operation, known as the Warsaw Uprising, to liberate the city from Nazi occupation. The uprising was put down and Polish citizens evacuated the city. Along with approximately 650,000 others, "Leonora Leska" went through a transit camp in the city of Pruszków. She was then deported to Mauthausen concentration camp, where she spent several weeks before being sent to a forced labor factory to work for the Nazis. She worked at Steyr factories producing weapons in the Linz and Znojmo labor camps before being liberated by the Soviet Army in May 1945.

Lila returned to Poland after World War II and reunited with her mother, who supervised a Jewish orphanage in Chorzów, Poland. Her father Michal and brother Henryk both perished during the Holocaust.



## Klaus Langer

Born 1924  
Gleiwitz, Germany

Klaus Langer was born in Gleiwitz, Germany, in 1924. He was an only child and lived with his parents, Erich and Rose (Rahel), and his grandmother. Erich was a judge, and he lost his job in 1933 because he was Jewish. The family moved several times when Klaus was a child, finally settling in Essen, Germany, in 1936. Klaus attended public school and was also active in his local Zionist youth group, the Maccabee Hazair, where he and other teenagers made plans to immigrate to Palestine in the future.

During the Kristallnacht attacks in November 1938, Erich was arrested and imprisoned in a concentration camp. He was released only after he promised to leave Germany. In his diary, Klaus recorded his parents' efforts to find a place to go. They tried to get papers to immigrate to Chile, India, Palestine, Holland, the United States, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Uruguay, Shanghai, Argentina, or Great Britain. Every time they had hope but were disappointed.

In January 1939, Klaus learned that a group of Jewish teenagers had obtained permission to immigrate to Palestine. His departure kept being delayed, and he continued to worry about his parents' efforts to escape. A week after World War II began in September 1939, Klaus escaped to Denmark. He waited there until 1940, when he traveled to Palestine.

Rose Langer died of natural causes in September 1941. Erich was deported to the Izbica ghetto in April 1942, where he was murdered.



## Moshe Levin

Born 1896

Kybartai, Lithuania

Moshe was born on October 30, 1896 in Kybartai, a small Lithuanian town on the border of Russia and Germany. As a young man, he went to a business college in Kovno (Kaunas) and ran a movie theater. He married his friend Jacob's sister, Golda, and the couple moved to Memel (Klaipėda), where they had a son, Abraham, in 1925.

In 1939, Nazi Germany demanded that Lithuania hand over a strip of land, including Memel, which Germany had lost after World War I. Golda and Abraham escaped to Kovno, while Moshe quickly tried to close his business and rejoin his family. He planned for his family to immigrate to Canada, where his older brother lived, but the Soviet Union rejected their requests to travel through Soviet territory.

On June 22, 1941, Germany invaded Lithuania. In August all of Kovno's Jews had to move into a ghetto. Moshe was first appointed the head of the ghetto criminal police and then head of the entire ghetto police force. He also participated in the ghetto's resistance movement. His friend and brother-in-law, Jacob, became a member of the Jewish Council.

On March 28, **1944**, the Germans arrested all members of the ghetto police and brought them to the Ninth Fort, one of the fortifications surrounding Kovno. The Germans interrogated Moshe about the locations of hiding places and resistance activities in the ghetto. He refused to disclose any information. Moshe and 36 other policemen were executed.

Abraham and his mother went into hiding with a Lithuanian woman. After the Red Army liberated the territory, Abraham joined the Soviet military and his mother, Golda, immigrated to Tel Aviv.



## Wilma Schlesinger Mahrer

Born 1876  
Zolyom, Czechoslovakia

Wilma was born to German-speaking Jewish parents in Zolyom, in the part of the Austro-Hungarian empire that became Czechoslovakia after World War I. Wilma's husband, Gyula Mahrer, fought in World War I. The couple moved to the Hungarian capital of Budapest, where they raised two daughters. They lived near her daughter Kornelia, Kornelia's husband Miksa, and their three children.

In May 1939, the Hungarian government enacted a law that limited the rights of Jews, but Wilma's life did not change dramatically. In 1940, her son-in-law, Miksa, was conscripted into the Hungarian labor service. Two years later, he was forced to give up his business, distributing Swedish-made matches, to the relative of a Hungarian government official.

Nazi Germany occupied Hungary in March **1944**. The Mahrers was forced to move into houses marked by a Jewish star. Gyula Mahrer died of illness in the summer of 1944. In October, Hungary was taken over by the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross party, which rounded up and murdered many Jews. Kornelia and Miksa were arrested separately and deported. They were both murdered. Wilma found Christians to help her care for her grandchildren.

On January 18, 1945, Wilma and her grandchildren were liberated in Budapest by Soviet troops. She remained in Budapest after the war.



## Channah Mazansky-Zaidel

Born 1909

Paneveys, Lithuania

Channah was one of six children born to a Jewish family. In 1914, a year after her father died, the family fled to Russia. After World War I, they returned to Lithuania and settled in the village of Pampenai in a house owned by Channah's grandparents. After her three oldest siblings moved to South Africa in the 1920s, Channah began to work as a seamstress to support the family.

In the mid-1930s, Channah met and married Channoch Zaidel and had a child. Although World War II began in September 1939, Lithuania had signed a nonaggression pact with Germany. Lithuania's independence did not last long: the Soviet Union occupied the country in June 1940, and one year later, in 1941, Germany invaded Lithuania.

In late summer **1941**, German troops approached Pampenai. Before the troops arrived, however, groups of armed Lithuanian collaborators herded the town's Jews to a nearby forest and forced them to dig trenches and strip naked. The Jews were ordered to climb into the trenches and were shot.

Channah, Channoch, and their child were killed, along with Channa's mother, Sara Rachel, her twin brother, Moishe, and her younger brother, Chaim. Channah was 33.



## Sonia Orlinsky Minuskin

Born 1914  
Zhetel, Poland

Shanke (Sonia) Orlinsky was born in Zhetel, Poland on September 17, 1914. She married Shlamke (Sam), and the couple had two sons, Harold (born 1938) and Kalmanke (born 1940). Sam owned a bus company and Sonia was trained as a hairdresser and manicurist.

In September 1939, Nazi Germany invaded western Poland. The Soviet Union, under the terms of a secret alliance with the Nazis, occupied eastern Poland, including Zhetel. In June 1941, however, Nazi Germany invaded Soviet territory. German forces quickly occupied Zhetel and immediately began persecuting the Jewish population.

On August 6, **1942**, the Germans began the final liquidation of Zhetel. Sam was rounded up and locked up with hundreds of other Jews in the town's synagogue. In the confusion, he and a few others first hid in the synagogue's rafters and then escaped into the woods. Meanwhile, Sonia and her sons hid in a space that Sam had built underneath the family's outhouse. After three days, Sonia fled into the forest with her sons, ages four and two.

Sam reunited with his wife and sons and led them to a partisan camp for resistance fighters. Sam went on missions with the partisans to carry out revenge killings, blow up railways, and ambush German patrols, while Sonia and their sons hid in a series of camouflaged underground shelters in the forest, constantly moving to avoid capture.

After living in the forest for over two years, the Minuskin family and their fellow partisans were liberated on September 7, 1944 by the Soviet Army. After briefly returning home to Zhetel, the Minuskins immigrated to the United States on September 6, 1946.





## Stefan Moise

Born 1923  
Iasi, Romania

Stefan was born to Romani (gypsy) parents in Moldavia, a region in eastern Romania. Stefan's father made a living playing guitar in local restaurants. As a child, Stefan learned to play the violin and often performed with his father.

When Stefan was a teenager and old enough to perform on his own, he left his father and teamed up with another young man to perform in restaurants all over Moldavia. The outbreak of war in 1939 was bad for business and many restaurants closed down, so Stefan began to work on a farm to support himself.

Romania had signed an alliance with Nazi Germany, and life for Jews grew more difficult. Stefan's father died in 1941 and his mother in January 1942. Stefan became the guardian of his five-year-old sister. One month after his mother's death, Stefan got married, moved into his own home in Iasi, Romania, and tried to provide for his new wife and little sister.

In September **1942**, Iasi's Romani community were rounded up by the Romanian police and sent east by cattle car. When they disembarked in Transnistria, a large swampy area, they were marched to open fields and left to starve with very little food and water. After six months, Stefan's wife pleaded with him to run away and save himself. Stefan took his violin, hitched a ride on a freight train to Odessa, and found work playing in a hotel. He was trying to get in contact with his wife when he was arrested by Romanian authorities. They forced him to enter the military in May 1944.

After the war, Stefan was reunited with his wife in Iasi. He learned that his sister had not been able to recover from the disease and malnutrition she suffered in Transnistria. She was six years old when she died.



## Franz Morawetz

Born 1873

Piessling, Czechoslovakia

Franz Morawetz was born on November 25, 1873 in Piessling, in the part of the Austro-Hungarian empire that became Czechoslovakia after World War I. Franz served in the German Army in World War I. After the war, he moved to Vienna and married Therese Sinaiberger in 1918. They had two sons: Walter in 1919 and Hans in 1921. Franz ran a successful business.

In March 1938, Nazi Germany annexed Austria and established harsh anti-Jewish policies. The family was forced to leave their seven-room apartment and move into a single room.

Tens of thousands of Austrian Jews lined up outside the US consulate in Vienna to add their names to the waiting list for immigration. In spring 1940, Franz was able to obtain United States immigration visas for Hans, Therese, and Walter, but for some reason—possibly due to the expense or perhaps he failed the medical test—Franz could not obtain a visa for himself.

In May 1940, Franz said goodbye to his wife and sons, and Therese, Walter, and Hans boarded a train from Vienna to Genoa, Italy to reach a ship. They left Europe on the *Washington* and arrived in New York on May 29.

Franz never saw his family again. He was deported on July 29, 1942 to Theresienstadt concentration camp. In 1944, he was transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp and murdered.



## Alfred Münzer

Born 1941  
The Hague, Netherlands

Alfred Münzer was born on November 23, 1941 in The Hague, Netherlands, to a Jewish family. His father, Simcha, owned a men's tailoring business and his mother, Gisele, cared for Alfred and his two older sisters, Eva and Leah.

On May 21, **1942**, Simcha was ordered to report to a German labor camp, but he evaded the order. By September, he realized that his entire family needed to go into hiding. Simcha faked a suicide attempt so he would be committed to a psychiatric hospital. Gisele hid her children with friends and neighbors before joining Simcha at the hospital as a nurse's assistant.

Gisele placed Alfred in the care of a friend, Annie Madna, who gave him to her sister. When Annie's sister became too nervous to hide Alfred, Annie gave the baby to her ex-husband, Tolé, a native of Indonesia. For the next three years Alfred remained in Tolé's home, cared for by their housekeeper, Mima Saïna, who became his surrogate mother. The Madnas treated Alfred as one of their own children, but he was not allowed to leave the house and was hidden in the cellar when the Gestapo inspected the house.

Gisele placed Eva and Leah with a neighbor's friend, but in early 1944 the woman's husband denounced his wife and the girls. All three were arrested and sent to Westerbork. On February 8, 1944 eight-year-old Eva and six-year-old Leah were deported to Auschwitz, where they were murdered.

In early 1943 Alfred's parents were deported to Vught, a camp in the Netherlands, and in 1944 to Auschwitz where they were separated. Simcha was liberated from Ebensee but was unable to recover and died two months later. Gisele, who survived multiple concentration camps, reunited with Alfred in 1945.



## Richard Oestermann

Born 1926

Copenhagen, Denmark

Richard Oestermann was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, on May 19, 1926. His father, Moritz, owned a hat shop, while his mother, Gertrud, took care of Richard and his three older sisters: Else, Margot, and Lilian. The family was Jewish and Richard's ancestors had lived in Denmark for generations.

Nazi Germany invaded Denmark in April 1940, but German officials did not impose strict antisemitic laws. Denmark had a relatively small Jewish population, and most Danish Christians were protective of their Jewish neighbors.

In August **1943**, however, Germany declared martial law in order to stop Danish labor strikes and punish the sabotage of German military equipment. A German naval advisor in Denmark, Georg Duckwitz, warned members of the Jewish community that the Nazis planned to deport them.

Richard, who had been working for the resistance distributing underground newspapers, realized that he and his family needed to escape. Richard, his mother, Gertrud, and sisters, Margot and Lillian, met a young resistance fighter who connected them with a boat skipper he knew. The family escaped by bicycle to the coast, and from there, took a boat to Sweden. His sister Else also escaped to Sweden with her husband and baby.

Denmark financially supported its Jewish citizens in Sweden. Richard attended a Danish high school and joined a Danish military unit in Sweden, hoping to participate in the liberation of his homeland. In 1945, the family returned to Denmark. More than 7,200 Danish Jews escaped to Sweden in October 1943. Fewer than 500 were deported to concentration camps.



## Harry Pauly

Born 1914  
Berlin, Germany

Harry Pauly was born in Berlin, Germany in 1914. As a young boy in Berlin, he developed a love for the theater. At 15 he began acting in minor roles at a theater at the Nollendorfplatz. He was also apprenticed to a hairdresser but disliked the work. He spent most of his time with other actors, both at the theater and in nightclubs.

After Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in January 1933, Nazi officials closed gay bars. Some gay men, especially those who were Jewish, were killed by Nazi brownshirts. Harry's friend "Susi," a drag queen, was stabbed to death.

In **1936**, Harry was arrested under the Nazi-revised paragraph 175 of the criminal code, which outlawed homosexuality. He was imprisoned in the Neusustrum concentration camp, a camp specifically for gay men, where he worked in the marshes 12 hours a day. After 15 months he was released.

In 1943, Harry was turned in by two boys pressured by the Gestapo to denounce homosexuals. He was sentenced again under paragraph 175. After eight months, Harry was released because friends in the theater intervened on his behalf.

Harry was then drafted into the army, but his fellow soldiers knew of his "175" conviction and called him homosexual slurs. Harry deserted the military twice. Finally, as punishment, he was transferred to a special combat unit that was sent into particularly dangerous situations. Somehow, he managed to survive.

After the war, Harry started his own small theater.



## Alexander Pechersky

**Born 1909**  
**Kremenchuk, Ukraine**

Alexander Pechersky was born on February 22, 1909 in Kremenchuk, Ukraine. His father was Jewish and worked as a lawyer.

On June 22, 1941, after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Alexander was drafted into the Soviet Red Army. During the Battle of Moscow in October **1941**, German troops captured Alexander's unit. During a medical inspection, a German doctor discovered that Alexander had been circumcised, which was uncommon except in the Jewish community. Once the German military discovered that Alexander was Jewish, he was separated from the other POWs and sent to an SS work camp. At the camp, prisoners were starved and forced to work constantly.

In September 1943, Alexander was deported from the work camp to the Sobibór killing center. Of the 2,000 prisoners on the train, only 80 were selected to work, while 1,920 were immediately murdered in gas chambers. Alexander survived the selection. Around this time, Sobibór prisoners discovered evidence that the last prisoners of the Bełżec killing center had been murdered. They realized that they, too, would soon be killed and had nothing to lose. Alexander led the planning for the uprising since he had military training.

On October 14, 1943, the prisoners of Sobibór launched an uprising. They murdered SS guards with axes and knives, and more than 300 prisoners escaped into the forest. Some were killed by guards with machine guns, others were killed by the mines buried around the camp. At least 170 prisoners were recaptured within weeks, and the prisoners who remained in the camp were executed.

Alexander was not recaptured and fought alongside partisan groups before rejoining the Soviet Army. Only 53 Sobibór prisoners survived the war, including Pechersky.



Peter Wilhelm Pollmanns was born on April 1, 1899 in Düsseldorf, Germany. He served in the German Army during World War I and was injured on the front. The injury left him in constant pain for the rest of his life, and he was unable to perform physical labor.

Peter, who was Catholic, was trained as a house painter, but his war injury made that kind of work difficult. Peter struggled to support his wife and daughter, and his marriage fell apart.

In the late 1930s, the Nazi welfare office refused to believe Peter's claims that he was unable to work and announced that the state would not provide him with any support. Instead, Nazi officials arrested him in April **1938** and sent him to the Buchenwald concentration camp. Even though he was a military veteran, he was forced to wear a black triangle identifying him as "asocial" or "work-shy."

Peter was released in 1940, but he still could not support himself. After Nazi officials received a complaint against him, he was rearrested and sent back to Buchenwald in 1942. He died there on August 2, 1942.

## Peter Wilhelm Pollmanns

Born 1899  
Düsseldorf, Germany



## Max Rosenblat

Born 1939  
Radom, Poland

Max's parents, Taube and Itzik, met as children in 1925. Itzik was an apprentice in Taube's father's tailor shop. Although her parents frowned on the match, the young Jewish couple were excited to start their lives together.

The Rosenblats married in Radom in 1938, where Itzik opened a tailor shop. They welcomed their son Max in July 1939. He had curly hair and blue eyes like his father. In September 1939, two months after Max was born, Germany invaded Poland. The Germans occupied Radom and soon evicted all the Jews from the Rosenblats' neighborhood. They had to leave everything, even Max's baby carriage.

In April 1941, Radom's Jewish Council assigned the Rosenblats to a shack within a Jewish ghetto. Max slept in a homemade bed of straw. He had no toys and little food. In August 1942, when Max was 3, the Germans began rounding up and deporting all the Jews who were unable to work. Itzik tried to hide Taube and Max in his shop, but they were caught in a roundup and taken away. They were marched to the railroad and herded into a boxcar.

The family was deported to the Treblinka killing center in April **1942**, where they were gassed upon arrival. Max was 3 years old.





## Isak Saleschutz

Born 1882  
Dubas, Poland

Isak was one of seven children born to devout Hasidic Jewish parents living in Dubas, Poland. Isak married Ester Berl when he was 18. It was an arranged marriage. The couple moved to Kolbuszowa, a small town near Dubas, where Isak ran a successful store.

On September 9, 1939, the German army occupied the Dubas area. They hanged two Jews to demonstrate the consequences of not cooperating with them. Isak's store began to have problems because he could not receive any new shipments. The situation worsened when the Germans wrongly suspected that he had been hiding coffee beans, a prized commodity. German soldiers confiscated all of his merchandise.

Life under German occupation was very difficult. The Jewish community had a curfew, had to wear an identifying armband, and had to do forced labor. In June 1941, they had to move from their homes into a designated ghetto. The Gestapo commandant demanded that religious Jews must cut their beards. Isak had never cut his beard, believing that to be a violation of Jewish law.

On April 28, **1942**, the Gestapo came to Isak's house in the ghetto. When they pounded at the door, Isak ran to the backyard to hide but was captured, forced into a shed, and shot twice. Wounded, Isak yelled, "Pigs, executioners! Revenge! Take revenge!" Isak was shot five more times and died, along with 22 other Jewish men also executed that day. Isak's two sons buried their father in Kolbuszowa.



## Dawid Sierakowiak

Born 1924  
Łódź, Poland

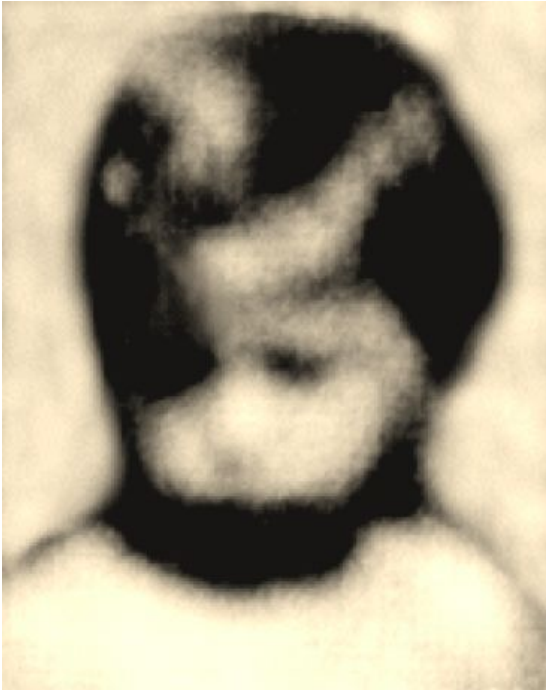
Dawid Sierakowiak was born in Łódź, Poland, in July 1924. He had a younger sister, Nadzia. Dawid earned a scholarship to a private Jewish high school in Łódź.

In 1939, just before his 15th birthday, Dawid began keeping a diary while at a Zionist summer youth camp. He recorded the chaos in Łódź after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the aerial bombing of the city, and the desperation of the city's residents to flee to safety.

In summer **1940**, Dawid's family was sent to the Łódź ghetto. Dawid wrote about the squalor of the ghetto, his own exhaustion, and slow starvation. He also expressed his anger at his father, Majlech, who, overcome by his own hunger, stole bread rations from Dawid and Nadzia. In September 1942, after ghetto doctors determined that she was not able to work, Dawid's mother, Sura, was deported and murdered. Majlech died in March 1943.

Dawid Sierakowiak's diary ended in April 1943, one month after his father's death. In entries that month, he described constant illness and lamented that "There is really no way out of this for us."

Dawid Sierakowiak died of tuberculosis and starvation in the Łódź ghetto on August 8, 1943. Five volumes of his diaries survived. Dawid's sister, Nadzia, was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was murdered.



## Ossi Stojka

Born 1936

Austria

Ossi Stojka was the youngest of six children. His family was Catholic but belonged to a group of Lowara Roma (gypsies), who made their living as horse traders. The family traveled in a wagon, spending winters in Vienna, Austria, and summers in the Austrian countryside. Ossi's ancestors had lived in Austria for more than 200 years.

Ossi was two years old when Germany annexed Austria in March 1938. The Stojka family wagon was parked for the winter in a Vienna campground. German officials ordered all of the Roma to stay put. They were no longer permitted to move freely throughout the country. The Stojkas had to convert their wagon into a wooden house.

Roma were forced to register as members of a different "race." When Ossi was five, the Germans took away his father. Next, they took his sister, Kathi. Finally, Ossi and the rest of his family were deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. In Birkenau, near the gas chambers, the SS had a special camp for Roma and Sinti (gypsies). There was very little to eat, mostly turnips. Ossi fell ill with typhus and was taken to a barrack for sick prisoners.

Ossi was given no medical treatment in the infirmary and died of typhus and malnutrition in **1943**. He was seven years old.



## Wladyslaw Surmacki

**Born 1888**  
**Proszowice, Poland**

Born to Catholic parents, Wladyslaw grew up in Warsaw and earned an engineering degree in Moscow in 1914. After fighting in World War I, he commanded a horse artillery division in Warsaw, worked for Poland's Military Geographic Institute, and taught topography courses. He started a family in 1925, and after he retired from the army, he founded a surveying company.

When war with Germany became imminent in the summer of 1939, Wladyslaw volunteered to fight but was rejected as too old. In early September, after Germany overwhelmed Poland's western defenses, he fled, hoping to defend eastern Poland. In mid-September, a day before the Soviet Union invaded eastern Poland, he was offered a chance to escape to Great Britain. Wladyslaw chose to stay and fight with the Polish resistance.

Wladyslaw became chief of staff of TAP, a group that formed part of the Polish underground. In the summer of **1940**, German officials arrested him and sent him to the Auschwitz concentration camp. As prisoner 2759 he worked as a surveying engineer in the camp's construction office. His work enabled him to go outside the camp. He used this privileged status to smuggle letters and, by October, began to organize a military underground. In November 1941, he was released from Auschwitz thanks to the help of a former German engineering colleague. Wladyslaw was quickly arrested again and sent to Pawiak prison in Warsaw.

On May 28, 1942, Wladyslaw Surmacki was taken to a forest near Magdalenka with 223 other Poles. They were murdered with machine guns and buried in mass graves.



## Aleksandr Tolupow

**Born 1920**  
**Soviet Union**

Very little information exists about Aleksandr Tolupow. He was born on January 13, 1920. Like most young men in the Soviet Union, he was drafted or voluntarily joined the Soviet Army. He may have fought in one of the major battles on the eastern front, possibly defending Stalingrad, or may have fought to prevent the German army from reaching Moscow. At some point, he was captured.

Nazi Germany did not always follow international agreements regarding the treatment of prisoners of war when the POWs were Soviet soldiers. Instead of imprisoning the POWs in internment camps, as they generally did with American and British soldiers, the German Army frequently imprisoned Soviet POWs in concentration camps as prisoners—or, often, murdered them after capture.

On August 20, **1942**, Aleksandr arrived at the Auschwitz concentration camp. He was given prisoner number 60306. He was probably sent to specific barracks designated for Soviet POWs in Birkenau. The Soviet POWs were treated very poorly, and many died of starvation and disease. Aleksandr may have been sent for forced labor outside of the camp, which may have given him an opportunity to obtain small amounts of extra food to help him survive.

Aleksandr Tolupow died in Auschwitz-Birkenau on June 6, 1943. The cause of his death is unknown.

Historians estimate that the Nazis and their collaborators killed approximately three million Soviet POWs during World War II, including 50,000 POWs who were Jewish. As many as 15,000 of them were imprisoned at Auschwitz, and most of those POWs were murdered there.



## Fanny Wertheimer Valfer

Born 1886  
Kippenheim, Germany

Fanny Wertheimer was born on December 24, 1886 in Kippenheim, Germany. She married Max Valfer around 1905. Max ran a cigar shop, and the couple had six children: Karl, Hugo, Freya, Else, Ruth, and Erich.

By the late 1930s, all of the Valfer children had managed to leave Kippenheim and immigrate to safety. Ruth immigrated to the United States in 1937 and helped bring her brother Hugo to the United States in 1938. Karl and Freya traveled through Great Britain in 1939 and made it to the United States in 1940. Else left for England in 1939 and Erich went to Palestine that same year. Max and Fanny joined the waiting list for US immigration visas in September 1938. The US State Department informed them they would have to wait about two years.

After the Kristallnacht attacks in November 1938, Max Valfer was arrested and interned in the Dachau concentration camp. He was released after promising to emigrate and was forced to close his cigar store.

On October 22, 1940, the Jews of Kippenheim, including the Valfers, were arrested and deported to the Gurs internment camp in southern France. Fanny continued to write to her children, hoping to soon be summoned to the US consulate for an immigration interview. The Valfers received a notice that their appointment would be December 8, 1941. However, after the Pearl Harbor attacks on December 7, 1941, led the United States to enter World War II, the Valfers had to prove that even though they were German, they were not dangerous.

US bureaucrats in Washington, DC, approved the Valfers' visas, but by the time the letter arrived, it was too late. Fanny and Max Valfer were deported on August 12, **1942**, from France to the Auschwitz killing center, where they were likely sent to the gas chambers upon arrival.



## Carl von Ossietzky

Born 1889  
Hamburg, Germany

Carl von Ossietzky was born on October 3, 1889 in Hamburg, Germany. Carl's stepfather, Gustav Walther, was a member of the Social Democrat party and very involved in politics. Carl began to be interested in politics, too.

Carl left school at age 17 and soon decided to become a journalist. He published articles in *Das Freie Volk*, a newspaper published by the Social Democrats. Carl was drafted to serve in the German military during World War I, but during the war, he became a pacifist. After Germany's defeat, Carl gave speeches in Hamburg to advocate for lasting peace. He became active with the German Peace Society while continuing his work as a journalist, particularly at anti-war, pro-democracy newspapers.

After Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in January 1933, Carl refused to leave Germany. He wrote that "a man speaks with a hollow voice from across the border." The morning after the burning of the German Reichstag on February 27, **1933**, Carl was arrested for his political views. He was sent to the Sonnenburg and the Esterwegen-Papenburg concentration camps, where he was tortured.

In 1936, the Nobel Committee in Oslo, Norway announced that Carl von Ossietzky was being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Nazi Germany refused to release him from the concentration camp to accept the prize, although they publicly claimed that he was free to go. Carl was still imprisoned by the Nazi regime when he died in May 1938.



## Gerda Weissmann

Born 1924  
Bielsko, Poland

Gerda was born to a Jewish family in Bielsko, Poland. She began her education in Polish public school but later entered a Catholic girls' school. A rabbi was permitted to come to the school and instruct the Jewish students in religious studies.

On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. German fighter planes appeared overhead, and many people fled Bielsko. Gerda's family remained and lived through the intense shelling that followed. The next morning they heard people shouting "Heil Hitler!" and a black, white, and red swastika flag suddenly fluttered from a window across the street. The Germans occupying Bielsko forced Jews, including the Weissmanns, to give up their homes and move to a newly established ghetto.

In **1942**, Gerda was deported to work in a textile mill in Bolkenhain (Bolków), in southern Poland. Despite the hunger and backbreaking labor, the inmates of the camp cared for each other. At one point, Gerda was almost killed. She had fallen ill and went to the infirmary. A German supervisor, Mrs. Kugler, realized that there would be an inspection of the inmates, and she dragged Gerda back to the factory. Although Gerda was delirious from fever, she passed the inspection. Mrs. Kugler's actions likely saved Gerda's life.

Gerda was later sent to slave-labor camps in Marzdorf, Landshut, and Gruenberg. She was liberated by the American army in May 1945 and immigrated to the United States in 1946.





## Elie Wiesel

Born 1928  
Sighet, Romania

Eliezer (Elie) Wiesel was born in Sighet, Romania on September 30, 1928. Elie attended a local yeshiva (Orthodox Jewish school), where he studied Jewish texts and dreamed of being a yeshiva scholar. The area around Sighet was put under Hungarian control in August 1940. Some men were sent for forced labor, and the Jewish community of Sighet heard vague rumors that Jews were being killed in other countries, but Elie was able to continue his studies.

In March **1944**, Nazi Germany invaded Hungary and placed Sighet's Jewish community in a ghetto. Two months later, they were deported to Auschwitz. Elie and his father, Shlomo, were selected for labor, but Elie's mother and younger sister Tzipporah, went immediately to the gas chamber. Elie and his father were sent to Buna, a forced-labor camp next to Auschwitz. They worked in Buna until January 1945, when Soviet troops neared Auschwitz and the SS evacuated the camp.

Elie and Shlomo were sent on a forced march in the middle of winter, along with tens of thousands of other prisoners. After several weeks, they arrived at the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. Shlomo died before the camp was liberated in April 1945.

After liberation, Elie lived in an orphanage in France before reuniting with his two older sisters and moving to Paris. In 1958, he wrote a memoir of his experiences called *La Nuit*, which was published in English as *Night* and has sold millions of copies. Elie Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work as a human rights activist and teacher. He wrote 56 books before his death in 2016.



## Marianne Winter

Born 1921  
Vienna, Austria

Marianne Winter was born in 1921 in Vienna, Austria. Her father, Max, was a perfume chemist, and her mother, Anna, worked as a music teacher and took care of Marianne and her younger brother, Stephen. Marianne loved to swim and dance and was involved in the Campfire Girls program. Through the Campfire Girls, she connected with an American pen pal named Jane Bomberger, who lived in Reading, Pennsylvania. Marianne used her letters to Jane to practice English.

On March 12, **1938**, Nazi Germany occupied and annexed Austria. German officials immediately imposed antisemitic laws on Viennese Jews. Marianne wrote to Jane to explain that her family desperately needed to leave and asked if Jane knew a rich man in the United States who could sponsor her family's immigration to the United States.

In June 1938, Jane Bomberger wrote back. Her father, Joseph Bomberger, offered to sponsor the Winter family. Although he was not wealthy, he was willing to sign the paperwork promising to financially support the Winters.

The Winters managed to leave Austria to live with relatives in Prague. Their initial application for a US immigration visa was unsuccessful, since the US consular officer did not believe that Joseph Bomberger would really support the Winters. Joseph Bomberger sent more financial paperwork, confirming his desire to help. The Winters also needed to get new passports, since Nazi Germany canceled all passports for Austrian Jews.

In January 1939, the Winter family flew from Prague to Switzerland and then took a train to Genoa, Italy. They boarded the *Conte di Savoia* and sailed for the United States on January 26, 1939. Upon arrival, they moved to Reading and briefly lived with the Bomberger family.



## Alfred Wödl

**Born 1934**  
**Vienna, Austria**

Alfred Wödl was born on November 25, 1934. His mother, Anna, was unmarried and worked as a nurse. Three weeks prior to Alfred's birth, Anna was exposed to a massive amount of smoke--so much that she became unconscious. She survived, but the lack of oxygen may have led to Alfred's birth defects.

Anna and Alfred moved to the city of Wiener Neustadt, south of Vienna. Anna tried to care for her son, who was unable to walk or speak, but seemed to understand everything around him. When he was two years old, local doctors examined him and decided that he was "intellectually disabled."

In April 1939, Anna recognized that Alfred needed more care than she could provide, and he went to live at the Maria Gugging Psychiatric Clinic, a home for people with mental disabilities.

A year later, Anna noticed that psychiatric homes and clinics were being emptied, and doctors were notifying the families of patients that their loved ones had died. Suspicious, she traveled to Berlin and protested to Nazi officials to prevent her son's transfer from Gugging. They did not permit her to remove him from the home, but officials finally promised that Alfred would not be sent to the Hartheim Institute, where Anna knew patients were being killed.

In January **1941**, Alfred was transferred to the children's ward at the Am Spiegelgrund Institute in Vienna. He was murdered there on February 22, 1941. Nazi officials told Anna that he had died of "pneumonia."