



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.



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.



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.



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.



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 Channah's mother, Sara Rachel, her twin brother, Moishe, and her younger brother, Chaim. Channah was 33.



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.



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.



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.



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 Tziporah, 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.



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."