

BIOGRAPHIES



Anielewicz, Mordechaj (1919–1943)

was born in Warsaw. Before the war, he joined the Jewish youth organisation Hashomer Hatzair. From the start of the war, he was active in the Warsaw underground and organised Jewish groups in other ghettos. He was a co-founder of the Jewish Combat Organisation (Polish acronym ŻOB) and subsequently became its leader. He led the fighting in the Warsaw ghetto in January 1943 and the uprising that broke out on 19 April. On 8 May 1943, he committed suicide with a group of fighters in a bunker at ul. Miła 18, where the ŻOB staff operated. A partisan unit of uprising participants who managed to escape the ghetto through sewers was named after him.

Bartoszewski, Władysław (1922–2015)

– a historian, writer, publicist, politician and diplomat. In 1940–1941, he was a prisoner at Auschwitz (number 4427). In 1942, he was a co-founder of the Council to Aid Jews codenamed Żegota. In 1942–44, active in the underground Catholic organisation Polish Revival Front (Polish acronym FOP). In 1942–45, he was employed by the Information Department of the Information and Propaganda Office (Polish acronym BIP) at the Home Army (Polish acronym AK) General Staff and in 1943–1944 also worked at the Internal Affairs Department of the Polish government delegation in the country. As an AK soldier, he took part in the Warsaw Rising in 1944.

After the war, he was an associate at the Chief Commission for the Study of German Crimes in Poland as well as a member of the Polish People's Party (Polish acronym PSL) and an editor of *Gazeta Ludowa*. He was convicted of espionage and twice imprisoned in 1946–1948 and 1949–1954. Afterwards, he repeatedly spoke out against illegal actions of communist authorities, among others, by signing letters of protest

by intellectuals to the government and parliament. He was an associate and later member of the editorial board at *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Secretary-General of the Polish PEN-Club in 1972–82, a lecturer on modern history at the Catholic University in Lublin, a contributor to Radio Free Europe and a close associate with the democratic opposition. From 1980, he was a member of *Solidarność* and was interned at the time of martial law. After the fall of communism, he was twice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator in the IV term and in 2007–2015 Secretary of State at the Office of the Prime Minister. He also headed the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom and the International Auschwitz Council. He was one of the first Poles to receive a Righteous among the Nations medal (in 1963). Since 1991, he was an honorary citizen of Israel.

Bielski, Tuvia (1906–1987)

was the head of a partisan unit and family camp for Jews hiding in forests near Novogrudok in Belarus. After the war, he returned to Poland and subsequently left for Palestine. In 1954, he emigrated to the US.

Cukierman, Icchak ('Antek') (1914–1981)

was a member of the Dror youth organisation, one of the leaders of the Jewish underground in the Warsaw ghetto. An editor of the underground press, he arranged clandestine education in the ghetto. In 1942, he co-founded the Jewish Combat Organisation (Polish acronym ŻOB) and served as a deputy to M. Anielewicz. In December 1942, he took part in an attack on German officers in the *Cyganeria* café in Krakow. During the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 he stayed on the Aryan side, where securing help for those fighting inside the ghetto. He represented the ŻOB in contacts

with the Polish armed underground (Home Army and People's Army). After the ghetto uprising, he remained in hiding until the outbreak of the Warsaw Rising in August 1944, when he fought within the ranks of the People's Army. In 1947, he left for Palestine together with Cywia Lubetkin. Until his death, he lived in the Ghetto Fighters kibbutz, which he co-founded.

Czerniaków, Adam (1880–1942)

was an engineer, social and political activist, publicist and pedagogue. He was a well-known figure in Warsaw's Jewish community who supported Jewish crafts associations and organised Jewish vocational training. In 1931, he was elected to the Polish Senate. He was also a city council member and deputy head of the Temporary District Management. In September 1939, he assumed the function of district chairman at the recommendation of the city mayor. He also became the head of the *Judenrat* in the Warsaw ghetto, co-organised civil resistance and social welfare and supported the creation of an underground ghetto archive. Czerniaków opposed armed conflict with the Germans. He committed suicide on 23 July 1942 after refusing to sign an announcement on the forced expulsion of Jews that meant their deportation to death camps.

Eichmann, Adolf (1906–1962)

was a member of the SS, a high state official and the head of the Jewish affairs department in the Gestapo. He was responsible for the 'final solution to the Jewish question'. In 1932, he joined the Austrian Nazi party. In 1934, he began his official career in the security service (German acronym SD), where he became a chief specialist for Jewish matters and was considered an expert on Zionism. In 1937, he even briefly visited Palestine to consider the possibility of moving Jews from Nazi Germany over there. From September 1938, he headed the Office for Jewish Emigration Affairs in Vienna. He dealt with the registration, assembly and expulsion of more than 150,000 Jews from Austria. He drew on his experience in this post when implementing the 'final solution'. In March

1939, he conducted the deportation of Jews to Poland and in September of that year became a special officer for the expulsion of Jews and Poles. In December, he was transferred to the Fourth Department of the Main Reich Security Office (German acronym RSHA), where he took over Department IV B dealing with the expulsion of Jews. In 1941, he visited Auschwitz for the first time. In January 1942, he convened a conference in Wannsee at which his superior, Reinhard Heydrich, officially entrusted him with executing the 'final solution'. In carrying out this assignment, he proved to be a model of bureaucratic efficiency and iron resolve. He zealously carried out all entrusted duties. From March 1944, he was personally responsible for transporting Jews from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau and earned the nickname 'murderer from behind the desk'. After the war, he was arrested in the American occupation zone of Germany. In 1946, he was able to escape to Argentina. However, he was arrested by Israeli intelligence at the outskirts of Buenos Aires on 2 May 1960 and secretly transported to Israel, where he was publicly tried in Jerusalem. On 2 December 1961, he was sentenced to death for crimes against the Jewish nation and humanity. The sentence was carried out on 31 May 1962.

Frank, Hans (1900–1946)

was a lawyer and Governor-General in occupied Poland. A member of the NSDAP since 1923, he took part in the Munich putsch. In 1926, he pursued a legal internship in Munich. Until 1933, he repeatedly supported Adolf Hitler, thus becoming a leading legal luminary within the NSDAP. He became Hitler's personal lawyer after the Nazis took power in Germany and enjoyed a series of high state and party positions, among others, a legal-political head of the NSDAP and Reich Minister of Justice. After German forces had taken control over Poland, he was appointed Governor-General and head of the German administration in Polish territories occupied by Germany. Holding this post, he consistently pursued a policy of persecution and repression of Poles and particularly zealous extermination of Jews.

After the war, he was tried in Nuremberg, showed remorse pleading guilty of the charges against him and was executed in a Nuremberg prison.

Globočnik, Odilo (1904–1945)

was born into a Croatian-Austrian family of officials in Trieste. In 1930, he joined the NSDAP in Carinthia (Austria). After one year in prison for political offenses, he advanced to the role of an intermediary between Hitler and National Socialists in Austria. In May 1938, he acted as Gauleiter of Vienna but in January 1939 was dismissed for currency speculation. After German forces took control over Poland, he was appointed head of the SS and police for the Lublin district. He was renowned as a fierce anti-Semite as well as a loyal and consistent executor of orders. Himmler appointed him to direct Operation Reinhard: the murder of Polish Jews. In this position, he supervised the creation of four death camps in occupied Polish territories: Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka and Majdanek. He greatly enriched himself by plundering property of nearly three million Jews. As a punishment for appropriating assets of murdered Jews, he was transferred to Trieste as a senior head of the SS and police for the Adriatic region. He was briefly arrested after the war yet managed to escape. The circumstances of his death remain unknown.

Goebbels, Joseph (1897–1945)

was one of the closest associates of Adolph Hitler. In 1929, he was appointed head of party propaganda and from 1933 served as Reich Minister of Propaganda and Public Education. He used modern means of mass communication such as radio, television and film for his propaganda efforts. Goebbels committed suicide in Berlin.

Göring, Hermann (1893–1946)

was one of the most important Nazi functionaries, head of the Reichstag, Prime Minister of Prussia. He joined the NSDAP in 1922. After the Nazis assumed power in Germany in 1933, he helped establish the Gestapo secret state police and the first two concentration camps in the north of Germany, Oranienburg and Papenburg.

From 1935, he headed the Luftwaffe and in 1936 became responsible for a four-year plan to develop the arms industry in the Reich. He was appointed Reich Marshall in July for successes of the German Air Force in the first phase of the war (in Poland and France). From 1943 onwards, Hitler successively removed him from power. In May 1945, he voluntarily surrendered to American forces. He was sentenced to death at the Nuremberg trial and committed suicide in his prison cell.

Heydrich, Reinhard (1904–42)

was one of the highest Nazi functionaries. He was a member of the NSDAP and SS from 1931, organised and headed the SS security service and (from 1936) the security police (Gestapo). In 1939, he became head of the Main Reich Security Office (German acronym RSHA) which controlled German concentration camps. He then played a key role in executing the 'final solution to the Jewish question' in German-occupied countries and co-organised a system of terror and extermination of civilians there. In 1941, he became Deputy Reich Protector of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and was killed in an attack in Prague carried out by Czech commandos flown in from England.

Himmler, Heinrich (1900–1945)

was one of the leaders of the Third Reich and from 1925 a member of the NSDAP. In 1929–1945, he was head of the SS and from 1936 also of the German police. In 1933, he established concentration camps jointly with Hermann Göring. He held many high-level party and state posts, among others in 1936–1943 served as undersecretary of state and Reich Minister of Internal Affairs in 1943–1945. In 1938, he co-organised a state anti-Jewish pogrom known as the Night of Broken Glass' as well as the kidnapping and killing of the Nazi regime opponents abroad. In 1939–1945, as Reich Commissar for the Consolidation of German Nationhood, he was responsible for the Germanisation of East European territories. He played a chief role in creating an apparatus of terror in occupied countries and in the Holocaust of Jews. In the face

of defeat of the Third Reich, he considered a seizure of power in Germany. Hitler expelled him from the NSDAP for his attempts to contact the Allies. Captured by the British, he was tried in Nuremberg, where he committed suicide.

Hitler, Adolf (1889–1945)

was born in the Austrian town of Braunau. From 1920, he was the leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). In January 1933, he was appointed Chancellor of the Reich and held this post until 30 April 1945, the date of his suicide. His great ambition was a career as a painter, but at the age of 19 he failed his exams at the Fine Arts Academy in Vienna. He spent 1907–1913 in the capital of the Habsburg Empire. He moved to Munich in 1913. The First World War broke out soon thereafter and changed his life. During his four years of military service in the German army he took part in the first battle at Ypres (1914), bloody battles on the Somme (1916) and in October 1918 fell victim to a mustard gas attack (was temporarily blinded). In August 1918, he was awarded the Iron Cross First Class. After demobilisation, he returned to Munich, where he joined a small anti-Semitic political organisation, the German Workers Party (German acronym DAP). One year later, he became its *Führer* (leader). On 9 November 1923, he staged an unsuccessful putsch in Munich. Arrested, he wrote a book in prison entitled *Mein Kampf* in which he presented Nazi ideological assumptions and policy goals. After coming to power in 1933, he called on the Germans to unite and thwart the treasonous practices of Jews, who he considered to embody absolute evil. This was subsequently reflected in his policy of 'racial purity' and a gradual exclusion of Jews from German society. Hitler inspired and was personally responsible for the planning and execution of the Nazi 'war against Jews', which ultimately ended with the extermination of the majority of European Jews. This was one of the few objectives of the Second World War which he stoked that attained nearly full success.

Karski, Jan (Kozielewski) (1914–2001)

was a courier of the Polish underground state who brought news to the free world about the situation in occupied territories. During his second mission in the autumn of 1942, he delivered a report to members of the Polish government-in-exile as well as British and American politicians (including the US President) and representatives of Jewish organisations in America about the Holocaust in occupied Polish territories together with a plea to help the murdered Jews. He obtained this information from members of the Jewish underground. He himself also twice entered the Warsaw ghetto and the transit ghetto in Izbica Lubelska, where he observed preparations for the transport of Jews to the death camp in Belzec. He remained in the US after the Second World War as a university professor. He taught Modern History and Political Science. In 1982, he was awarded the medal Righteous among the Nations.

Korczak, Janusz (pen name of Henryk Goldszmit) (1896–1942)

was a physician and educator of Polish and Jewish children. Before the war, he ran an orphanage in Warsaw. He created a system of education based on recognition of children as human beings in their own right. In opposing the prevailing common pedagogical practice of 'instilling discipline' in a child, he excluded corporal punishment and condemned the 'shaming of children'. In 1926–1929, he published a popular pamphlet *Mały Przegląd* jointly with children under his care. In 1935–1936, he aired popular talks for children and parents on Polish Radio entitled 'Playful Pedagogy'. In the ghetto, he ran an orphanage for children at ul. Krochmalna 29. He died on 6 August 1942 in a gas chamber at the death camp in Treblinka together with children he took care of.

Kossak-Szczucka, Zofia (1890–1968)

– a Polish writer and a co-founder of two secret organisations in German-occupied Poland: the Polish Revival Front and the Council to Aid Jews codenamed Żegota. In 1943–1944, she was imprisoned in KL Auschwitz. In August 1942, she published

an appeal entitled A Protest appeal as an expression of determined opposition of Polish Catholic milieus to the Jewish Holocaust. She received a posthumous medal in 1982 for her contribution to rescuing Jews during the Second World War as well as the title of Righteous among the Nations.

Lubetkin, Cywia (1914–1978)

was an active pre-war participant in the Zionist youth organisation Dror. She found herself in the Soviet occupation zone after the war broke out, where she organised underground Dror structures. After reaching Warsaw, she organised the Jewish resistance movement in the ghetto, was a co-founder of the Jewish Combat Organisation (Polish acronym ŻOB) and a member of its central command. She took part in the April 1943 uprising, as well as in the Warsaw Rising in 1944. After the war, she left for Palestine together with Icchak Cukierman, where she co-founded the Ghetto Fighters kibbutz.

Pechersky, Alexandr Aronovich
(‘Sasha’) (1909–1990)

was an officer of the Red Army. On 23 September 1943, he was sent to the Sobibor death camp in a group of 2,000 Jews from Minsk. He co-organised the camp resistance and on 14 October 1943 headed an uprising and the escape of Jewish prisoners. He then fought in a Soviet partisan unit and in the Red Army from summer of 1944. After the war, he was arrested and imprisoned by the NKVD and only released upon intervention of former Sobibor death camp prisoners.

Ringelblum, Emanuel (1900–1944)

was a historian and social activist as well as a key leader of the Jewish underground in the Warsaw ghetto. He was the creator of the secret ghetto Oneg Szabat archive, also known as the Ringelblum Archive, documenting the fate of Jews during the Holocaust. He advocated armed resistance and drafted reports on the situation of Jews, which couriers of the Polish underground then brought to the West to alert the world. He was deported to a camp in Trawniki near Lublin during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in

April 1943. With the help of friends from the Polish underground, he managed to escape and take refuge in a collective shelter at Grójecka Street in Warsaw. On 7 March 1944, acting on a tipoff, the Gestapo arrested all those in hiding and sent them to the Pawiak prison where Ringelblum, his wife Judyta and son Uri were executed.

Rumkowski, Chaim Mordechaj (1877–1944)

was an industrialist, a Zionist activist and head of the council of elders (*Judenrat*) in the Lodz ghetto. Before the war, he represented a Zionist party in a local denominational society. After the Germans took control over Lodz, he was ordered to set up a *Judenrat*, which he headed until the ghetto was liquidated in August 1944. He was a proponent of complete submission to German demands and orders, including economic exploitation of the ghetto, in the hope of its survival. Together with his family, he was taken on the last transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he perished in a gas chamber.

Sendler, Irena (1910–2008)

– a Polish social activist and charity worker. During the war she worked at the Public Welfare Department of the Warsaw Municipal Administration and provided aid to persecuted Jews. When the Council to Aid Jews codenamed Żegota was created in 1942, she established cooperation with this organisation and became head of the children’s department. Through financial support and contacts from this organisation, she was able to streamline the work of a group of associates helping their subordinates by smuggling and rescuing Jewish children from death in the ghetto and placing them with Polish families or in groups in care centres, orphanages, monasteries, as well as various welfare and educational institutions. It is estimated that an attempt to rescue approximately 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto was made through Żegota and cooperating organisations. Unfortunately, not all of them survived the war. In October 1943, she was arrested by the Gestapo, yet Żegota was able to free her. She was a nurse during the Warsaw Rising. After the war she worked

in public welfare, the state administration and intermediate medical education. Even though she received a Righteous among the Nations medal already in 1965, for many years her work during the German occupation was unknown. It was only popularised in 2000 by a theatrical group from an American high school in Kansas, whose students wrote a play entitled *Life in a Jar* based on her life story. In 2003, Irena Sendler received one of the most esteemed state designations from the Polish President, the Order of the White Eagle. In 2007 and 2008, her candidacy for the Nobel Peace Prize was submitted.

Szpilman, Władysław (1911–2000)

was a pianist and composer. From 1935, he worked at Polish Radio and wrote many popular melodies. He lived in the Warsaw ghetto during the war and then hid on the Aryan side. Shortly after the war, he wrote his memoirs on his salvation in Warsaw and published *Death of a City*. His memoirs were republished in 1998 as *The Pianist*. On their basis, the film director Roman Polański made a popular film under the same title in 2002.

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