

There Were Millions of Them - Victims of German Extermination Industry



1928-1943

CZESŁAWA KWOKA
WAR'S HELL SEEN
IN HER EYES



1912-1943

JAN MELLER
BOXER WHO PUT HIS FOOT
DOWN TO THE NAZIS



1894-1941

**FATHER MAXIMILIAN
MARIA (RAJMUND) KOLBE**
LIFE FOR LIFE

“My Dearest Mother, at the end of May, I was transported to the camp in Oświęcim. Don't worry,” writes in 1941 Father Maximilian Kolbe, a Franciscan already at that time legendary in Poland. He becomes No. 16670. In July 1941, he was standing on the camp's roll-call square with others. The SS-men were walking between the rows of prisoners and selecting ten random people to be killed by starvation. One of them was Franciszek Gajowniczek. He cried in despair. Father Kolbe bravely approached the surprised German soldiers, and said, “I am a Catholic priest, and I want to die for this man.” He was dying for two weeks. On August 14, he was finished off with a lethal phenol injection into the heart. He is a Roman Catholic Saint. ■



1917-1944

**ZUZANNA GINCZANKA
(GINCBURG)**
POETESS. SUPERSTAR

When the war broke, one of her friends told her to always carry poison with her. Zuzanna Ginczanka (Sara Polina Gincburg), a young poetess, was in a literary world of a prewar Poland like a fresh breeze. Beautiful and talented. She was 22, when the first German bombs fell on Poland. She was hiding for months for the fear of being recognized as Jewish. Gestapo traced her in Kraków. After brutal interrogation, she admitted to being of Jewish origin. It was like signing her death sentence. In May 1944, she was sent to the camp in Płaszów. Probably right after she crossed the gate, she was shot to death. ■

Expelled from her own house. First, dozens of hours spent in a cattle wagon, standing. No food and drink, but still with her mama. Then, the camp's gate. Guards yelling out, separated families crying. She wanted to be brave, although now without her mama. Pushed around, with her head shaved, wearing dirty, oversized striped uniform. She stood in terror, looking in the angry face of a shouting German female guard. She couldn't understand her screams, she was Polish. To punish her, the German guard whipped the child's face with her all might. Wilhelm Brasse, who in Auschwitz would photograph prisoners for documentation, recalled that before Czesia sat down to have her picture taken, she wiped her tears and blood off her face. Three months later, Czesia Kwoka was killed with a lethal phenol injection into her heart. She was almost 14, and had a tattooed number of 26947. She came to Auschwitz in December 1942, in one of the first transports from the region of Zamość, which the occupants planned to transform into the holiday region for the Germans. During this operation, about 110,000 Poles were deported, including 30,000 children. ■

In a pre-war Gdańsk, Jan Meller was an onboard mechanic on SS Polonia ship, which would regularly sail to New York. His passion, though, were daring fights in a boxing ring. As a middleweight boxer, he would score one victory after another. When in 1939 the German troops entered Gdańsk, Meller was placed on the Gestapo wanted list. He had to hide. He was caught, because he wanted to surprise his wife and children – right before Christmas of 1942, he visited home with his present, a Christmas tree. When in prison, the Nazis gave him choice: German citizenship or death. His honor did not allow him to yield. He died, tormented in the Stutthof concentration camp, walking on the so-called “death path” organized by the camp guards. He had to keep on walking, and the German guards were beating him until he died of exhaustion. About how he died, his wife and children found out by accident. Several years after the war, a stove setter came to their house. He told them his camp memories. “I had a wonderful friend there, Janek, who was a boxer, and who put his foot down to the Germans. Before he died, he asked me to tell his family how he died – but I don't know where to find them,” he said. The woman who was listening to him fainted. She was the wife of Jan Meller. ■

German Concentration Camps on Polish Territory

The Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Western Europe, American General Dwight D. Eisenhower, future President of the United States (1953-1961), after a visit to Buchenwald near Weimar, had the truth about German concentration camps documented on film. He then publicly promised that those guilty of the crime would suffer well-deserved punishment.

As part of the re-education of the German civilians who lived near the places of execution, Eisenhower ordered a forced tour of the camps. German Concentration Camps. Factual Survey was supposed to be the name of a full-length documentary about the camps liberated in 1945. It was not fully executed. The reconstruction of Europe from war damage after the war was a priority. The film was to be completed later. However, fragments of shocking images from film chronicles with piles of skeletons

of human corpses have survived to this day. “I felt as though I had peered into hell,” said one of the cinematographers. Fragments of this film were used in the trial of the Nazi leaders of the Third Reich in 1946 in the German city of Nuremberg. The material evidence in the form of chronicles and witnesses' testimonies about the German camps essentially contributed to the indictment by Robert H. Jackson, an American prosecutor, against the German war criminals who managed to be brought before the International

Military Tribunal. The Court recognized the crimes committed in German concentration camps as crimes against humanity that are not time-barred.

Camps in Poland

After the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939, the Germans built the largest network of concentration camps in occupied Europe, serving the extermination of Poles and Jews. Soviet POWs were held there, too; from 1943, Italian POWs were also held there. It is estimated that



Auschwitz-Birkenau German concentration and extermination camp on the territory of Oświęcim. Sonderkommando (special unit of prisoners) is burning the corps

in the years 1939-1945, the total fatal losses of Polish citizens under German occupation amounted to about 5,500,000 people, including about 2,800,000 citizens of Jewish descent. The majority of Polish Jews died in concentration camps and death camps. Poland therefore suffered the greatest loss of population in the Second World War among the warring parties in terms of the total population of the state.

The first transport of 135 Poles from the Free City of Danzig reached the