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Welcome to the exhibition Resistance through their eyes. Personal stories portray resistance against National Socialism during the Second World War in four European countries: the Netherlands, Italy, Poland and Germany.

The exhibition depicts the multifaceted nature of resistance throughout Europe. The possibilities for resistance varied from country to country, depending on the circumstances. How does one resist an oppressor? What does resistance mean when the local government collaborates with the occupiers? Or when your own government is the oppressor?

Resistance manifested in multiple forms: some chose armed resistance and sabotage. Others pursued non-violent forms, such as helping people go in hiding, working for the illegal press or falsifying documents. The exhibition shows the courage of young people, women, Jews, people from the colonies and many others.

We invite you to discover the resistance through their eyes.

The exhibition is a project of the “Liberation Route Europe,” in which museums and expertise centers from Germany, Italy, Poland and the Netherlands participated. More biographies from the “Resistance through their eyes” project can be found online using the QR-code below.

## Resistance in four different countries

This exhibition tells resistance stories from the Netherlands, Italy, Poland and Germany. The conditions under which the resistance operated differed from country to country.

In Germany, Hitler and his Nazi party came to power in 1933. Hitler turned Germany into a dictatorship. Resistance was harshly suppressed. Communists - who were fiercely opposed to the Nazis - were locked up in concentration camps as early as the 1930s. Organized resistance was hardly possible. Nevertheless, there were groups of people who offered help to Jews and political prisoners, who distributed illegal pamphlets. There were even attempts to assassinate Hitler planned from within the army.

The Polish resistance emerged in the first weeks of the war in 1939, after the occupation of Poland by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The resistance began with small local organizations. These mainly engaged in armed resistance, but some organized illegal education or helped Jews. Over time, many of these groups came into contact with the Polish government-in-exile in London. This created the "Polish Underground State," with a secret government including a parliament and the "Armia Krajowa" (the Home Army), which became the largest armed resistance force in Nazi-occupied Europe.

The Netherlands was occupied by Nazi Germany in May 1940. In the more densely populated Netherlands, armed resistance was much harder. Illegal newspapers called for resistance. When Jews were deported from July 1942, small groups began helping those in hiding. These groups started working together nationwide when young Dutch men were sent to Germany for forced labor beginning in May 1943. There was also an armed branch that captured ration coupons, destroyed population records and shot traitors.

In Italy, resistance to Mussolini's fascist regime began in the 1920s. Resistance was crushed harshly: anti-fascists were imprisoned, forcibly exiled and went underground. During World War II, Italy was an ally of Nazi Germany. On 8 September 1943, Italy surrendered to the Allies. When Nazi Germany subsequently occupied northern Italy, resistance to the Nazis began: armed resistance, sabotage, guerrilla warfare, as well as illegal press and communication between the various resistance groups. Several anti-fascist groups formed the National Liberation Committee to coordinate armed resistance actions.

**Marga Grunberg**

11 August 1924 - 21 December 2022

Marga Grunberg was a 17-year old Jewish refugee from Germany. In the Netherlands she joined the

resistance and distributed false papers, took people into hiding and helped to set up an escape route to France.

Because of anti-Semitism in Hitler Germany, Marga fled to the Netherlands with her family in 1934.

When the Netherlands was occupied in 1940, one anti-Jewish measure after another was introduced.

From 1941 Marga had to attend a separate Jewish school and as for all Jews a large 'J' was stamped in her personal identity card. From 1942 she had to wear a Star of David on her clothes. "In June 1942, the roundups and deportations began. As I was walking along the street close to home, a raiding van suddenly arrived to pick up Jews." With help from a stranger Marga managed to escape. "But, from that anxious moment, I decided to adopt a new identity and dyed my hair blond."

Through Piet Landweer, head of the Amsterdam Registry Office, she received a false identity card by reporting her card as lost. He issued her a new one without the required 'J'. Marga also removed the Star of David from her clothes.

Piet and Marga began to work together. Piet provided false identity cards using the personal details of deceased Amsterdam residents. In the wake of an attack on the Amsterdam Registry Office by the resistance in March 1943, this became a bit easier: the chaos provided more opportunities to tweak documents. Marga's job

was to distribute forged papers, to find housing for people in hiding and provide them with ration coupons.

Marga went to live in Amsterdam with her mother and brother in the apartment above a Nazi sympathizer. “She saved our lives several times, without knowing it herself. When houses on our street were raided, for example, she opened the door and said that only pro-Nazis lived in her house. ‘In the lion’s den you are safest.’” In the apartment, Marga and her brother Manfred provided housing for people in hiding and organised an escape route to France. Marga survived the war. Piet Landweer was arrested and executed along with five colleagues in the summer of 1944.

Photo’s:

- Portrait of Marga Grunberg. (© Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam)
- The picture shows the brown leather handbag Marga Grunberg used to distribute forged documents. The leather is worn down and clearly used. (© Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam)

**Fernanda Kapteijn**

22 January 1925 - 16 December 2001

Fernanda Kapteijn was a teenager from Utrecht and a bicycle courier for the resistance. Women

like Fernanda were essential to the resistance as they were less likely to attract suspicion and were not subject to forced labour for the Nazi regime.

Fernanda was the daughter of communist parents who ran a bookshop in Utrecht. The family lived above the shop. Right from the beginning of the war, Fernanda, like her parents, became active in the resistance. In the bookshop, illegal newspapers were stenciled. Fernanda distributed these newspapers and money to families whose fathers had been arrested. "You couldn't be afraid. You just had to be safe. Your bike had to be okay, your light had to be okay. Because you should never be caught for anything else."

One day, Fernanda was on route with 500 illegal brochures in her saddlebags when things almost went wrong. "Suddenly, there was a German checkpoint." One of the German soldiers nudged her saddlebag with the butt of his rifle. There were potatoes on top of the brochures and the German soldier allowed Fernanda to pass. "I started walking as slowly and casually as I could, though I felt like running at full tilt!"

By the end of 1944, bicycle couriers became even more essential to the resistance. In mid-September 1944, the Dutch government in exile in London had called for a railway strike to bring the transport of German troops to a halt. Some 30,000 railway workers went into hiding, with financial support

from London. Because of the railway strike, it became more difficult for the resistance to communicate over longer distances. There were hardly any cars and there was no petrol. As a result, the resistance communicated mainly via bicycle courier services and illegal telephone connections. To facilitate this a bicycle courier network with regular connections was established.

When Fernanda was ordered to carry a gun by the communist resistance group of her parents, she refused. “Then I thought to myself: not now and not ever. I don’t have the right to take someone’s life.”

Photo’s:

- Portrait of Fernanda Kapteijn, taken around 1943. (© Utrechts Archief)
- Storefront of the bookshop of Fernanda’s family, taken in 1942. (© Utrechts Archief)

Johan Snoek

25 May 1920 - 31 August 2012

Johan Snoek helped people in hiding. When he and his family were driven from their home by the Battle of Arnhem in September 1944, they moved in with their aunts. Johan continued his resistance work and helped a British general cross the front, back to his troops.



Johan was almost 20 years old when the Netherlands was occupied. Gradually, the family became involved in the resistance. Johan came from a reformed protestant family and saw the war as a battle between good and evil. In his diary, he wrote of his resistance work: "You would lose your self-respect if you wouldn't do it." The family hid a Jewish child in their house, and Johan organised hiding places elsewhere. During the Battle of Arnhem, their house was in the middle of the front line. The family had to move in with their three aunts.

British general John Hackett had been badly wounded during the Battle of Arnhem and was trapped in the occupied part of the Netherlands. Hackett went into hiding with Johan and his family. It was not an easy situation, as there were major food shortages and the Snoek family were guests in their aunt's house as well. But Hackett and the family got along well.

After Hackett recovered from his injuries, he became eager to return to his troops. In January 1945, Johan helped him reach De Biesbosch, a nature area with many streams and swamps that provided an escape route to the liberated part of the Netherlands. They set out by bicycle, Hackett wearing a badge that meant 'Hearing Impaired'. It was a way to hide his inability to speak Dutch should he be addressed by German troops.

After a journey of several days two members of the resistance managed to deliver Hackett into liberated territory by canoe. One week later, Johan heard the coded message on Radio Orange: “The grey goose has gone.” That meant that Hackett had successfully made the crossing!

After the defeat at the Battle of Arnhem, some 350 Allied troops went into hiding in the area, at least 145 of whom were taken back to friendly lines by the Dutch resistance. There were 374 ‘Biesbosch crossings’, most of them involving Allied soldiers trying to rejoin their units in liberated territory. Supplies such as medicine were transported in the opposite direction, into the occupied Netherlands.

Photo’s:

- Portrait of Johan Snoek. (© NIOD)
- Picture of John Hackett in uniform during a commemoration of the Battle of Arnhem in Oosterbeek, September 1945. (© Nationaal Archief / Fotograaf Onbekend / Anefo – Wikimedia commons – CC0)

**Evy Poetiray**

13 June 1918 - 27 August 2016

19-year-old Indonesian Evy Poetiray came to the Netherlands in 1937 to study. Three years later, the Netherlands was occupied by Nazi Germany. Evy resisted the Nazi regime. As a young woman,

she helped people in hiding and distributed resistance newspapers.

Indonesia, then called the Dutch East Indies, was a colony of the Netherlands. There were 800 to 1,000 Indonesians living in the Netherlands in 1940. Like many Indonesian students in the Netherlands, Evy was a member of the student association Perhimpunan Indonesia (PI). The PI members were in favour of Indonesian independence and opposed to Dutch colonial rule. But they were also against the racist Nazi regime. After the German invasion the PI members had to decide if they would now fight on the side of their colonial oppressor. The board called upon members to resist the German occupation.

The PI was forbidden by the German occupiers, but the members continued working together in the resistance. Evy: "It was well organised. Out of five people, only one person was in contact with the leadership of Perhimpunan Indonesia. We met every week." Evy hid people in her house and began distributing resistance newspapers.

"Distributing those magazines was very dangerous, but I was young and I dared to do so." Evy worked closely with Dutch members of the resistance.

"The Indonesians constantly appealed to the conscience of the Dutch. Because they themselves were now being oppressed, they came to understand the Indonesian struggle. And they

published articles about the independence of Indonesia.”

People of colour were seen as inferior by the Nazis, but they were not actively persecuted. As a young woman of colour, Evy was not easily suspected. She never got into trouble because of her resistance work.

After the liberation of the Netherlands, Evy dedicated herself to Indonesian independence. She was very disappointed when the Netherlands did not recognise Indonesia’s independence after the Second World War and started a war to regain control over its colony. After four years of war, and under international pressure, the Netherlands recognised Indonesia’s independence in 1949.

Photo’s:

- Portrait of Evy Poetiray. (© KITLV)
- Evy Poetiray delivers speech on the independence of Indonesia, Amsterdam, 1946. (© Java post)

Hans Scholl

22 September 1918 - 22 February 1943

Hans Scholl was the central figure of the White Rose, an anti-Nazi resistance group in Munich. Hans, together with friends, wrote, produced and distributed six leaflets denouncing the Nazi regime. Hans was arrested and sentenced to death. Just

before his execution he shouted: “Long live freedom!”

Hans was born 1918 in Ingersheim, a small town in Württemberg. His father was the mayor there and at the family’s later place of residence, Forchtenberg. In 1932 his family moved to Ulm. Hans joined the Hitler Youth in 1933 when he was fourteen years old, although his father was against the Nazi regime. Hans was responsible for a group of 160 boys. After a while he found the rigid structures of the Hitler Youth confining and began to follow the more liberal ideals of the forbidden Bündische Jugend (free youth movement). Hans was arrested during a wave of arrests aimed at these groups and was accused of homosexual behavior in April 1938. His rather small penalty was suspended due to a general amnesty.

Before Hans was allowed to start studying medicine in Munich in 1939, he had to complete the Labour Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst) and two years of service in the army: the Wehrmacht. As a student and soldier, he was assigned to the Second Students’ Company where he met Alexander Schmorell in June 1941. They soon became close friends. They shared literary and artistic interests and encouraged each other in their critical attitude towards National Socialism. In June and July 1942 Hans and Alexander published four “Leaflets of the White Rose” numbering some 100 copies each.

From mid July to the end of October 1942 Hans, Alexander and other friends served as medical orderlies with their Students' Company at the front near Moscow. The impression of the criminal warfare strengthened their opposition against the Nazi regime. Upon their return to Munich, they convinced more friends to support their resistance activities. In January and February 1943, the group distributed a fifth and sixth leaflet, now supported by Professor Kurt Huber and others. Several thousand copies were produced and spread in major German cities.

Hans, Alexander and their friend Willi Graf also wrote clearly visible slogans on facades in Munich and at the university's main entrance: "Down with Hitler", "Hitler Mass Murderer" and "Freedom". When Hans and his sister Sophie Scholl spread the sixth leaflet at Munich University on 18 February 1943, they were arrested. After only four days, the People's Court sentenced them to death, along with their friend Christoph Probst. That same afternoon they were beheaded at the Munich-Stadelheim prison.

Photo's:

- Hans Scholl in 1942. (© Family Hartnagel)
- Telegram on the execution of the death penalty on Hans Scholl, including his last words "Long live Freedom!" (© Bundesarchiv Berlin)

Sophie Scholl

9 May 1921 - 22 February 1943

Sophie Scholl played an active role in the White Rose resistance group. She was exceptionally politically minded and self-reflective. During the Gestapo interrogation she firmly denounced the Nazi regime and explained her resistance stance. She was the only woman of the group that was executed.

Sophie was born 1921 in Forchtenberg, a small town in Württemberg of which her father was the mayor. In 1932 her family moved to Ulm. When Sophie was twelve years old, she joined the Bund Deutscher Mädel (Young Girls League), a Hitler Youth organization for girls, and became a group leader. As a result of the arrests of her siblings for forbidden activities of the free youth movement in 1937, she increasingly rejected National Socialism.

Hoping to avoid compulsory Labour Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst), Sophie began training as a kindergarten teacher. Nevertheless, she was called up for Labour Service in the spring of 1941. The experience of enforced subordination and lack of freedom, as well as her intense interest in literary and religious themes, strengthened her opposition against the Nazi regime.

Sophie had a great artistic talent and had the idea of studying art. However, she began to study biology and philosophy in Munich in May 1942 and

was accepted into her brother's circle of friends. They established contacts with writers, philosophers and artists. The question of how to behave as a Christian in a dictatorship was one of her main issues. Because her boyfriend Fritz Hartnagel was a military officer, they frequently discussed whether war could be legitimate.

In summer 1942 Sophie had to perform auxiliary war service at a rivet factory in Ulm. During that time, her father was in prison for three months because he had made a critical remark about Hitler. In November, back at university, Sophie moved into a flat together with her brother Hans. From now on, she played an active part in the resistance group. She bought envelopes and stamps on a large scale, took part in the reproduction and distribution of the last two leaflets in Munich and took 3,000 copies by train to Augsburg, Ulm and Stuttgart.

On 18 February 1943, when Sophie and Hans Scholl handed out the sixth leaflet at Munich University, they were arrested. Four days later, the People's Court sentenced her to death together with her brother and their friend Christoph Probst. That same afternoon they were beheaded at the Munich-Stadelheim prison.



Photo's:

- Sophie Scholl late in 1930. (© Family Hartnagel)
- Sophie Scholl said goodbye to her brother and friends when they were sent to the Eastern Front on 23 July 1942. (© George (Jürgen) Wittenstein / akg-images)

Alexander Schmorell

16 September 1917 - 19 April 1943

Alexander Schmorell was born in Russia but grew up in Germany. In the summer of 1942, he and Hans Scholl produced and distributed four illegal leaflets. A passage in the second leaflet condemning the murder of Jews as a crime against humanity was written by Alexander.

Alexander was born in Orenburg in Russia. His father Hugo Schmorell, a doctor, was from a German family that had settled there in the 19th century. His mother Natalja was Russian and died of typhus when Alexander was one year old. In 1920, his father remarried. During the Russian Civil War, the family was forced to leave the country and settled in Munich in 1921. Alexander and his two younger siblings grew up bilingual and Russian culture was an important part of their upbringing.

From 1933 onwards Alexander was a member of National Socialist youth organizations. After school, in 1937, he had to perform

Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labour Service), and later he had to join the Wehrmacht. When he had to swear the obligatory oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler he asked, in vain, to be discharged from the Wehrmacht. His unit was deployed in the invasion in Austria in 1938 and later during the occupation of Czechoslovakia. The drill and uniformity of military life were at odds with his longing for independence and freedom. In 1939, Alexander began studying medicine. He was then assigned to the Second Students' Company where he met Hans Scholl in June 1941 and Willi Graf at a later time. They became friends because of their shared interest in art and literature and their critical attitude towards National Socialism. In June and July 1942, Alexander and Hans published four "Leaflets of the White Rose".

From the end of July to October 1942, Alexander and his friends from the Students' Company were forced to serve as medical orderlies on the Eastern Front near Moscow. This return to his early childhood homeland, the experiences at the front and the impression of the criminal conduct of the war convinced him to intensify the resistance against the Nazi regime.

When his friend Hans Scholl and his sister Sophie Scholl were arrested on 18 February 1943, Alexander decided to flee Munich. He planned to hide in a camp for Soviet prisoners of war near Innsbruck. When this plan failed, he returned to

Munich where he was betrayed in an air-raid shelter on 24 February and handed over to the Gestapo.

The People's Court sentenced Alexander to death on 19 April 1943, along with Kurt Huber and Willi Graf. The sentence was carried out on 13 July when Alexander was beheaded in the Munich-Stadelheim prison.

Photo's:

- Alexander Schmorell in 1940. (© Family Schmorell)
- Hans Scholl stated in his interrogation on 21 February 1943, that Alexander Schmorell wrote this paragraph, in which he denounced the murder of the Jews in Poland and the atrocities against the Polish youth. (© Bundesarchiv Berlin)

Traute Lafrenz

3 May 1919 - 6 March 2023

Traute Lafrenz, was an early opponent of the Nazi Regime and a close friend of Hans Scholl and his family. She helped to print leaflets of the White Rose and brought them to Hamburg and Vienna. After the war, Traute moved to the United States where she passed away at the age of 103.

Traute was born in Hamburg on 3 May 1919. Her parents were politically national and conservative.

After the Nazis came to power, Traute quickly developed a critical attitude towards the regime. Her open-minded teacher Erna Stahl in the Lichtwark Schule strongly influenced her.

In 1939 Traute began studying medicine at the University of Hamburg, where she met Alexander Schmorell. In summer 1941 she switched to the University of Munich. There she met Alexander again and fell in love with his friend Hans Scholl. After their love affair, she remained closely associated with him and his family. Traute Lafrenz took part in reading evenings and political discussions of the circle of the White Rose.

When she received a leaflet in summer 1942, she recognized Hans as the author. She began to support the resistance activities. In November 1942 she brought two different White Rose leaflets to her former classmate Heinz Kucharski in Hamburg and later sent him another. Kucharski copied them and passed them on. At Christmas 1942, Lafrenz took a leaflet to relatives in Vienna and tried to organize a hectograph. Together with Sophie Scholl, Hans' sister, she procured envelopes and stamps in January 1943.

On 20 February 1943, Traute Lafrenz travelled to Ulm and informed the parents of Hans and Sophie about the arrests of their children. She was also courageous enough to accompany the Scholl family to the funeral in Munich on 24 February. On

5 March, she herself was interrogated by the Gestapo for the first time, later arrested and sentenced to 12 months in prison by the People's Court.

In the course of the investigation against the "Hamburg branch of the White Rose", the Gestapo arrested her again on 14 March 1944 and took her to the Gestapo prison in Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel. Towards the end of the war, she and other women were transferred to prisons in Cottbus, Leipzig and finally Bayreuth, where she was liberated by US forces on 14 April 1945.

In 1947 Traute was invited by a Jewish friend to San Francisco. Here she met her future husband Veron Page in 1948. She finished her studies in the USA and stayed there. For 23 years she ran a school for disadvantaged children in Chicago. Since 1995 Traute Lafrenz-Page lived in South Carolina.

Photo's:

- Traute Lafrenz, circa 1940. (© Familie Lafrenz-Page)
- Traute Lafrenz remained humble after receiving her decoration. In an interview she said: "I am only a contemporary witness (...) Any complaining is out of the question in view of the fates of the others." (© Auswärtiges Amt)

Stanisław Kolasiński

16 November 1916 - 19 November 1996

Stanisław Kolasiński was a soldier of the Polish Army. After the Polish defeat in 1939 he went to France to join the Polish forces there. From France he moved to Great Britain where he received parachute training. In 1943 he was dropped in Poland. He became a commando of the resistance movement "Home Army".

Stanisław was born on 16 November 1916. He served with the Polish army and was wounded during the fighting in September 1939. Stanisław escaped from the hospital and then made his way to France to join the Polish forces there. As an officer of the 3rd Infantry Division, he took part in the defense of France.

After the defeat of France, Stanisław evacuated to Great Britain where he was given command of a platoon of the 1st rifle brigade. In September 1942, he volunteered for service in occupied Poland and was then sent to training to join the "Silent Unseen": elite special operations paratroopers. The training was very demanding. Out of over 2,400 candidates, only a quarter were able to complete it. Stanisław took the "Home Army" soldiers' oath and on the night of 13 on 14 March 1943, he jumped into Poland. He was assigned to the subversion unit in Lwów. He took part in sabotage actions, liquidation of traitors and

military actions against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. This formation was a paramilitary and partisan organization founded in 1942 which fought against the Soviet Army, Nazi Germany and the Polish "Home Army" for an independent and nationalist Ukraine. Ukrainian Insurgent Soldiers were involved in massacres of Polish civilians in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in 1943-44.

During operation "Tempest" Stanisław was a company commander of the 19th Infantry Regiment of the "Home Army". He was caught in a raid where the Germans arrested all the men in the village and sent them to camps in the heart of Germany. Stanisław was assigned to perform forced labor near Hamburg. However, at the turn of April and May 1945, he escaped from the camp and made his way through the front line to the British positions.

After the war, he could not return to Poland. He worked as an upholsterer, and in 1951 he moved to West Germany. He worked officially as a store manager, but also worked for the CIA as a training manager in Munich and Heidelberg. Paratroopers were trained, who were to be directed to communist Poland, just as the "Silent Unseen" were directed during World War II.

After the death of his wife, Stanislaw returned to Poland. He died on 19 November 1996, 8 days after he permanently returned to Poland.

Photo's:

- Stanisław Kolasiński as a Polish officer, 1940-50. (© Home Army Museum)
- Polish paratroopers practising on the training ground. (© Polish National Digital Archive)

Danuta Siedzikówna

3 September 1928 - 26 August 1946

Danuta Siedzikówna joined the armed resistance movement the "Home Army" (Armia Krajowa) when she was 15 years old and served as nurse. After the war, when the communists came to power, she was unjustly accused of conspiring against the government and sentenced to death.

Danuta was born in small village near to Białowieza Forest in 1928. When the Second World War broke out, the area where Danuta lived was occupied by the Soviets. Her father was arrested and exiled deep into the Soviet Union. Danuta's mother was a soldier of the "Home Army". After the Nazis occupied eastern Poland, she was arrested by the Gestapo and executed in a forest near Białystok in 1943.

In December 1943, Danuta and her sister Wiesława swore an oath to the "Home Army" and formally joined the resistance. She was sent to a sanitary course to be trained as a nurse and was given the nickname "Inka". The resistance movement units



in the area Danuta operated in took an active part in the “Tempest” (Storm) operation, the purpose of which was to help the Red Army in the fight against the Nazis. But where the Nazis were defeated, the Soviets took power. The communist Soviets turned against the nationalist “Home Army”. Some units of the “Home Army” decided to fight against the Soviets. One of them was the “5th Vilnius Home Army Brigade” commanded by Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz.

In June 1944, “Inka” was arrested by the NKVD for her cooperation with the Polish resistance movement. She was saved from prison, and probably from death, by the soldiers of the 5th Brigade, who freed her from captivity. From that moment she had to hide from the communists. She changed her name but remained in the brigade as a nurse and liaison.

In June 1946, she went to Gdańsk to get medical supplies for the unit. She was arrested on 20 July and sent to prison where she was tortured for information. She was accused of participating in a plot to overthrow the government. Although she was a nurse, she was accused of murdering militiamen and security corps soldiers. Communist propaganda in the press called her the “bloody Inka”. Less than two weeks later, on 3 August, a communist court sentenced her to death. On 28 August, she faced a firing squad, but none of the soldiers wanted to kill her. Although they were

standing a few steps away from her, Inka was only wounded. The platoon commander then killed Inka with a shot to the head.

The location of Danuta's remains was unknown for many years until her grave was found in 2015.

Photo's:

- Portrait of Danuta Siedzikówna. (© CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikipedia.pl)
- Danuta Siedzikówna poses for a photo with soldiers of the "Home Army Vilnius Brigade", summer 1945. (© Public domain, source Institute of National Remembrancecommons – CC0)

Henryk Kosior

11 May 1920 - 7 March 2020

Henryk Kosior fought in the Polish Army in September 1939. During the Soviet occupation, he joined the resistance. He was arrested and deported to the Soviet Union. Henryk joined the Polish army that was formed in the Soviet Union and took among other things part in the liberation of Italy.

Henryk was born on 11 May 1920. He was sent to the armored weapons school in Przemyśl before the war. After the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, he fought against the Red Army. Henryk was taken prisoner.

At the time, captured Polish officers were often murdered for instance during the infamous Katyn massacre. Fortunately, non-commissioned officers such as Henryk were released quite quickly.

At the age of 19, Henryk began serving in the Polish resistance movement. He worked undercover in a transport company in Lviv, and his job was to obtain weapons for the resistance. Henryk's colleague at work saw that he had a gun and therefore reported him to the NKVD (Soviet secret police). Henryk was sentenced to 5 years of forced labor near Leningrad. He managed to escape but was caught by guards on the border with Finland and sent to Kharkov, where he was given an additional sentence of 10 years in the labor camp in Vorkuta.

In 1941, most Polish prisoners were released, to form a Polish army in the Soviet Union to fight against Nazi Germany. They were thus able to escape the hell of the Soviet labor camps. Henryk joined the newly formed army but his health was in disastrous condition and he spent nearly a year in field hospitals.

After some time, the Polish Armed Forces evacuated from the Soviet Union. Henryk also left the Soviet Union as a soldier of the 23rd Transport Company. Poles were sent to the front in Italy. Henryk, as a platoon commander, delivered ammunition to the front line. He took part in the

Battle of Monte Cassino, and the liberation of Ancona (1944) and Bologna (1945).

Immediately after the war, he was an instructor at a transport school in Italy, and then returned to Poland. He was persecuted by the communists and decided to emigrate to Germany. He died on 7 March 2020.

Photo's:

- Henryk Kosior in England in 1946. (© Foto uit de familiecollectie van Mirosław Kosior)
- Henryk Kosior with his Willys MB which he used at the frontline, 1944-1945. (© Foto uit de familiecollectie van Mirosław Kosio)

**Jadwiga Podrygałło**

20 September 1919 - 2 May 2015

Jadwiga Podrygałło took part in the defense of Warsaw in 1939. After the occupation she joined the resistance movement, helping Polish prisoners of war to escape from captivity. During the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, she served as a nurse and liaison officer.

Jadwiga was born in Warsaw in 1919. Before the war, she was a girl scout and then joined the Female Military Training. Furthermore, she was taught to shoot by her father.

Jadwiga became the commander of the anti-aircraft defense after the German attack on Poland in 1939. During the siege of Warsaw, Jadwiga helped in medical points and care centers for infants and small children.

After the fall of Warsaw on September 27, she joined the resistance. She helped organize escapes for Polish soldiers from the hospital, which was used by Germans as a POW camp. Later, she organized housing for the needs of the resistance. Then she became a soldier of the “Dysk”, the unit of Women’s Diversion and Sabotage. “Dysk” dealt with blowing up railway tracks, bridges, viaducts and other strategically important objects for the Germans. Women from the unit also executed traitors and gestapo agents.

When the Warsaw Uprising began, Jadwiga could not reach her unit. Nobody knew her there, so they didn’t believe that she had undergone combat training. Jadwiga was short, of very slight build and could be taken for a child. That’s why she was sent to the rear of the fighting. Finally, she ended up in a branch of the “Home Army Group”, “Kryśka”. She adopted the nickname “Cub”.

Jadwiga fought in the “Czerńaków” district, where a unit of several hundred Slovaks also fought on the side of the “Home Army” at that time. Jadwiga became a liaison officer with the Slovak forces. She was often sent out with orders or to reconnoitre

the area. Jadwiga had to run through the streets of ruined Warsaw under fire from the enemy.

After the capitulation of the Warsaw Uprising, Jadwiga evacuated with civilians from the city. However, she escaped from the German transport and came to Kielce. She engaged in clandestine teaching as a history teacher. There she married Stanisław, who was a delegate of the government-in-exile in Kielce. Both she and her husband were persecuted by the communists after the war. Jadwiga died in 2015.

Photo's:

- Jadwiga Podrygałło in 2005. (© Private archive of Małgorzata Koszarek)
- Polish women fighting in the Warsaw Uprising. (© public domain)

Enrichetta Alfieri

23 February 1891 - 23 November 1951

Enrichetta Alfieri was a nun who worked in the San Vittore prison. After the German occupation she helped the political prisoners and Jews incarcerated in the prison.

Maria Alfieri was born in Borgo Vercelli on 23 February 1891 into a Piedmontese peasant family. As a young girl, she joined a Sisters monastery under the name Enrichetta. She studied education

and became a kindergarten teacher before a serious illness forced her to quit.

Enrichetta recovered from her disease and in 1923, she was assigned to serve in the San Vittore prison in Milan. Sister Enrichetta immediately created a dialogue with the female prisoners and instituted workshops, schools and nurseries for their children. She was in San Vittore at the outbreak of the Second World War and in August 1940 she was formally appointed as mother superior. Due to the large-scale bombing of Milan, the prison was evacuated in August 1943 and prisoners and nuns were transferred to other prisons. After the Nazi occupation, the Nazis took control of San Vittore, which became a place of imprisonment for political opponents and Jews before they were deported.

In February 1944, the nuns were also transferred back to San Vittore. Sister Enrichetta and the other sisters began to secretly help the prisoners. The nuns had contacts with the Upper Italy National Liberation Committee and helped to smuggle messages, money, food and other materials in and out of the prison.

On 23 September 1944 a clandestine message directed to Enrichetta was intercepted by the Nazis. They were already suspicious of the nuns' activities and arrested Sister Enrichetta on charges of espionage on 23 September 1944. Enrichetta was taken to the cells of San Vittore and sentenced

to death. The intervention of Cardinal Schuster managed to overturn the death sentence into a prison sentence. After the Liberation, Enrichetta returned to duty at San Vittore.

Photo's:

- Enrichetta Alfieri in her habit. (© Memorie di una ribelle per amore, Suor Wandamaria Clerici, Suor Maria Guglielma Saibene, Velar, Gorle (BG))
- San Vittore prison today. (© Igor Pizzirusso, Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri)

Ferruccio Parri

29 January 1890 - 8 December 1981

Ferruccio Parri was a key figure of the Italian resistance movement. As the Deputy commander of the “Volunteers of Freedom Corps”, he played an important role in the liberation of Italy from nazism and fascism.

Ferruccio was born in Pinerolo on 29 January 1890. He graduated from the University of Turin with a degree in literature and afterwards began to work as a teacher. Ferruccio was called up for service in the First World War in 1915. After the war he became politically active and began a career as a journalist and newspaper editor.

The assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, an anti-fascist and socialist politician, marked the



beginning of his militant anti-fascism. He left his job as a newspaper editor and dedicated himself to spreading the clandestine anti-fascist press. He also helped anti-fascists that were in danger to flee abroad. In 1926 Ferruccio was sentenced to ten months in prison and three years in confinement for helping the socialist Filippo Turati escape to France. Despite all this, Ferruccio managed to establish connections between the various clandestine anti-fascist groups in northern Italy.

After 8 September 1943, when the nazi's took power in Northern Italy, Ferruccio worked with the Italian communist movement to form the first armed resistance groups in Nazi occupied northern Italy. Ferruccio helped to smooth over the relations between the different anti-fascist political forces. In 1944 Ferruccio became the deputy commander of the "Freedom Volunteers Corps". The goal of this organisation was to coordinate the efforts of the various partisan groups (armed resistance groups) active in northern Italy.

Ferruccio was captured by the Nazis in January 1945. He was released in March after negotiations by the Allied Forces. After his release Ferruccio formed an important link between the Allies and the various resistance movements during the last phase of the war.

On 25 April 1945 Ferruccio was appointed to lead the first post-war Italian government with the

support of the majority of the political factions of liberated Italy. Ferruccio also played an important role in safeguarding the memory of the Italian resistance. In 1949, he founded in Milan the “National Institute for the History of the National Liberation Movement in Italy” with the aim of defending and preserving the heritage of the resistance.

Photo’s:

- Portrait of Ferruccio Parri in 1946. (© Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri, Archives, Fondo Mario Venanzi, serie 26)
- The leadership group of the General Command of “Volunteers of Freedom Corps” parade through the streets of Milan on 6 May 1945. Ferruccio Parri is the third from the left. (© Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri, Archief, Fondo Mario Venanzi, serie 26)

Ada Buffulini

28 September 1912 - 3 July 1991

Ada Buffulini was a doctor and anti-fascist. She was interned in the Nazi camp in Bolzano where she managed to set up a resistance movement.

Ada was born in Trieste on 28 September 1912 into a well to do family. In 1930 she moved to Milan to study medicine at the university. It was here that Ada came into contact with life in the big

city and she became involved in the anti-fascist movement.

In 1943, Ada met Lelio Basso, secretary of the Socialist Party, and from this moment her active involvement in politics and anti-fascism grew. Her activities mainly took place in the university environment. She distributed leaflets, translated documents, and attended meetings. She also edited an underground socialist newspaper for women.

In November 1943 she was forced to go into hiding: “From then on I had no home, no relatives, no work; I no longer even had a name [...] So began that terrible and magnificent time, at times haunting like a nightmare, at times splendid like an epic; that time when everything was forgotten, of all that had formed my life up to then, to remember only one thing, the political passion for which I lived and for which I knew I could die every day”.

On 4 July 1944, she was caught by the fascists and taken to San Vittore prison in Milan. On 7 September 1944, she was deported to the Nazi camp in Bolzano together with other prisoners. Among them was Carlo Venegoni, a communist leader, whom Ada would marry after the war. Political prisoners wore overalls with a red triangle and prisoner number sown on to them. Ada became number 3795.

Because she was a doctor and spoke German, Ada was assigned to the camp infirmary. Inside the camp she managed to continue her resistance activities. She coordinated the resistance in the camp, kept in contact with a group outside the camp which aided the prisoners, kept them in contact with their families and sometimes organised escapes. The SS-guards suspected that Ada played a role in the resistance movement in the camp and imprisoned her in the cell block from February 1945 until the liberation of the camp.

After the war, she returned to Milan where she continued her political commitment in the ranks of the Communist Party and where she dedicated herself to the memory of the resistance in the Bolzano camp by being a member of the National Association of Former Political Deportees from Nazi Camps.

Photo's:

- Picture of Ada Buffulini in 1946. (© Archivio famiglia Buffulini Venegoni)
- Picture of Ada wearing the camp uniform with the red triangle. (© Archivio famiglia Visco Gilardi)
- The red triangle with the identification number of Ada Buffulini. (© Archivio famiglia Buffulini Venegoni)

Validio Mantovani

20 October 1914 - 31 July 1944

Validio Mantovani was an Italian factory worker and a member of the “Patriotic Action Groups”. He was executed by the Nazis for his role in the resistance alongside five other partisans (resisters) in 1944.

Validio was born in Ariano Polesine in Veneto on 20 October 1914 into a socialist family. After the rise of the fascist movement the family was faced with intimidation and violence. In 1924 the Mantovani family moved to Milan. Validio found a job in the Pirelli Sapsa tire factory and came into contact with the communist party which was popular in the industrial regions of northern Italy.

After the German occupation of northern Italy in 1943 Validio became an important member of the “Patriotic Action Groups” (Gruppi di Azione Patriottica, GAP). The GAP carried out risky tasks such as attacks on enemy units and headquarters, and assassinations of German officers, fascist leaders or spies.

One of the first actions Validio took part in was an unsuccessful assassination attempt on Gino Gatti on 20 October 1943. Gatti was a captain of the Republican National Guard and had a reputation for torturing partisans. Validio was then promoted to command the Gramsci detachment, a smaller group within the GAP, and took part in numerous

actions in Milan, including the successful assassination attempt on Aldo Resega, a Milanese fascist official on 17 December 1943. Because of his actions, Validio was transferred to Genoa to serve as the deputy commander of the local GAP.

On 26 July 1944 Validio was captured because of his alleged participation in a series of attacks in Genoa. He was sent to the San Vittore prison in Milan where his father, Rottilio, was also being held for his involvement in the resistance. On 31 July 1944, Validio, Rottilio and four other partisans, including a seventeen-year-old boy, were executed near Milan. In total, seven members of the Mantovani family were executed for their involvement in the resistance.

Photo's:

- Portrait of Validio Mantovani in a commemorative book. (© Luigi Borgomane)
- The plaque commemorating killed partisans, including the name of Validio Mantovani. (© public domain)