

WOMEN

War & Peace



WOMEN'S STORIES OF WORLD WAR II



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Europe for Citizens Programme
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An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
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INSTITUTO DE FORMACION
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Women War and Peace

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Women War and Peace is an innovative year-long transnational project with four European partners from Ireland, Spain, Germany and Poland. The project uses creative processes of theatre and film to promote a remembrance of European history with a focus on women's stories of World War II and explores the power of the EU and the arts to promote peace and gender equality today.

The project is co-funded by the **Europe for Citizens programme of the European Union** and the **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund** and the four European partners are:

- Smashing Times Theatre Company, Ireland, www.smashingtimes.ie
- Institute de Formacion Y Estudios Sociales (IFES), Valencia, Spain, www.ifes.es
- Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universitaet, Hannover, Germany, www.uni-hannover.de
- University of Humanities and Economics in Lodz, Poland, www.ahe.lodz.pl

As part of this project, we have researched a minimum of 20 women's stories from WWII - 5 from Ireland, 5 from Spain, 5 from Germany and 5 from Poland – in order to promote a remembrance of European history with a focus on women's experiences of WWII and ways to promote human rights, gender equality and peace today. The stories were gathered by Mary Moynihan, Freda Manweiler, Jessie Maguire, Edyta Pietrzak, Inga Kuzma, Fernando Benavente Tendillo and Arne Schrader.

Ireland Herstories

Collected by Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd, Dublin, Ireland

- Mary Elmes
- Ettie Steinberg
- Margaret Skinnider
- Josephine Alexandra Mitchell
- Dorothy Macardle
- Mary Fleming and Aileen Turner
- Louise Graham, née Boyle

Spain Herstories

Collected by IFES, Valencia, Spain

- Federica Montseny Mañe
- Pilar Tendillo Haro
- Rosa Estruch Espinos
- Neus Català Pallejà
- Dolores Ibárruri, La Pasionaria

Germany Herstories

Collected by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universitaet (LUH)

- Anna Seghers
- Esther Bauer
- Sophie Scholl
- Marta Hillers
- Gertrud Pötzinger

Poland Herstories

Collected by University of Humanities and Economics in Lodz

- Alina Szapocznikow)
- Maria Eugenia Jasińska
- Homeless women in Łódź, WWII
- Regina (Inka) Milichtajch
- Johanna Majewska

Ireland Herstories



Mary Elmes, photo courtesy of AFSC Archives

Mary Elmes

Mary Elmes (1908–2002), a Cork woman who passed away in 2002 was the first Irish person honoured as ‘Righteous Among Nations’ for her work saving Jewish children from the Nazi gas chambers during World War II. The award was bestowed on Mary Elmes in 2015 by Yad Vashem, Israel’s official memorial to Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

One of the children saved by Mary Elmes was Ronald Friend, now professor emeritus of psychology at Stony Brook University, New York. At the time he was a two-year-old child whose father would not survive but whose five-year-old brother Michael was also rescued by Ms Elmes. Ronald Friend described the award as ‘a long overdue recognition of Mary Elmes’ courageous and selfless actions in rescuing me and many other children when convoys were regularly departing to the death camps.’

Mary Elmes was born on 5 May 1908 in Cork as Marie Elisabeth Jean Elmes. Her family ‘had a family business in Winthrop Street, J Waters and Sons, Dispensing Chemists, her father being the pharmacist. She was educated at Rochelle School and Trinity College Dublin where she gained first class honours in Modern Literature (French and Spanish) and was awarded the Gold Medal.’

She then studied as a scholarship student at the London School of Economics where she was awarded the LSE Scholarship in International Studies “which led to a summer school in Geneva in 1936”. In February 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, she joined the University of London Ambulance Unit in Spain and worked in a children’s hospital in Almería. According to an article by Bernard Wilson on the life of Mary Elmes, Mary assisted at a ‘feeding station set up at Almeria to help cope with the stream of refugees arriving from Malaga. 80,000 women, children, and men had struggled into the town having walked or shuffled the 120 miles from Malaga, having been bombed and machine gunned daily. A further 20,000 had given up and turned back, and more than 5,000 had died en-route, either shot, drowned or starved. This massacre is known as ‘The Caravan of the Dead’ as over 80,000 people tried to escape from the Fascists by fleeing from Malaga to Almeira only to be attacked by Fascists from the air and sea with thousands dying along the way.

Mary ‘spent a short time working in the children’s hospitals at Almeria and Murcia before there. At a certain point this work was taken over by the Quaker Society, the Friends Service Council, and although not a member herself, Mary continued her refugee relief work at the hospitals in Almeria and Murcia before ‘before moving on to Alicante where she took charge of the hospital’. During this time Mary received news that her father had died but she refused to leave the hospital where she was working until a replacement could be found. “No replacement was forthcoming and so Mary stayed on”. The bombing in Alicante had become unbearable for the children so Mary found a refuge in the mountains to which she moved her charges. “Despite her mother’s pleas that she should return home, she carried on with her work until the war came to an end with the victory of General Franco.”

In May of 1939 Mary and a few other workers, with the support of the Quaker organization the AFSC (American Friends Service Committee), crossed the border into France bringing with them all the records of their work in Spain. Mary joined thousands of Spanish men, women and children fleeing from the tyranny of Franco’s fascist regime, over the Pyrenees into France. At a certain point Mary returned to Ireland to visit her mother but then came back to France to work with the refugees.

According to Bernard Wilson

“in the first two weeks of February 1939, half a million Spanish men, women and children had struggled into France, bombed and machine-gunned by planes, while enduring the hardships of the terrain and the winter weather. The French

response was to section off areas of the beaches with barbed wire, and to enclose the refugees between the wire and the sea. They had to scoop depressions in the sand for shelter. There were no toilets, they had to use the sea in full view of everyone. Drinking water was pumped up from underground but rapidly became polluted, bread was tossed over the wire leaving the refugees to fight for food. The French authorities hoped that their unwelcome guests would return to Spain – some did, but most refused knowing what fate might await them there". By the time Mary arrived in France, things were somewhat more organised, there were now many more camps along the coast and some attempt at shelter and provisions had been made. There was still a pressing need for clothing and food, and conditions were still woefully inadequate. She saw however, that if these camps were to remain for any length of time, there was a need for schooling, for reading matter suitable for both children and adults, for the means to occupy their time and provide some kind of purpose to their existence. In July 1939 she was appointed by the Quaker organization, the International Commission of the American Friends Service Council, to provide relief efforts and cultural activities for refugees from the Spanish Civil War now living in internment camps in France, organizing food supplies and providing educational books for children. She saw the need for books in Spanish, and shortly after her appointment was in Paris buying books for the libraries she was soon to open. She became a familiar figure in the camps, thousands knew her as "Miss Mary" and turned to her for solutions to their problems."

In 1940 France fell to German occupation and thousands of Jewish people and others fled to the south of the country where they were arrested by the French police and held with Spanish refugees.

According to Bernard Wilson, "now everyone was short of food. Mary and her colleagues in Perpignan opened canteens, provided meals in schools throughout the region, while still continuing the work in the camps. With the fall of France, British workers had to leave, but Mary as an Irish neutral stayed on. She continued her work in the camps. She was now in charge of the AFSC office in Perpignan and her work included the various camps for Spanish refugees on the coast, of which Argeles was the largest, and canteens in schools throughout the region, extending as far as Montpellier and Carcassonne. There was scarcely a town or village in the whole of that huge area that did not receive help in some form or another from the AFSC office in Perpignan".

In January 1941 a former army camp called Rivesaltes, near Perpignan, was set up as a permanent internment camp firstly housing the Spanish refugees and then in 1942 it was used to intern Jewish people who were being rounded up. All Jewish people rounded up in the unoccupied zone of France were interned in Rivesaltes internment camp. The Quakers and other aid organisations established canteens and workshops there however the camp was overrun with lice and rats and those there had little protection from the harsh winters and scorching summers, the place was filthy with little food and minimum clothing. Many children died at the camp. As the war progressed, there were weekly deportations of Jewish people, both adults and children, from Rivesaltes in railway wagons, taking them to concentration camps in Germany and Poland including Auschwitz where death from the gas chambers or from starvation awaited them.

According to Bernard Wilson, "between the 13 August to the 19 October, 9 trains left the Rivesaltes camp for Drancy in the suburbs of Paris filled with Jews, a total of 2251 persons, of whom 110 were children. The number of children would have been considerably greater had it not been for the intervention of Mary and her colleagues in the other organisations."

Despite the danger to their own lives, Elmes and the Quakers started a campaign to save as many children as possible. If their parents agreed to it, Jewish children in the camp under the age of 16 could be taken out of and sent to designated places. For example Elmes made contact with, and helped transport young refugees to 'children's colonies and hotels... a ruse to get them to safety since many simply slipped over the border.' Elmes even hid children in the boot of her car and drove them high into the Pyrenees. It will probably never be known how many children she saved.

The aim was to move as many Jewish children as possible out of the actual camps into other places where they would be safe because, during this time, 'if Jewish children under the age of 16 were housed separate from their parents outside the refugee camps, they often weren't searched out particularly if the French officials knew they could already meet their quota for scheduled deportations of Jews.'

In 1942 it is known that Mary made contact with an American woman called Lois Mary Guden who had served in France in World War II with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) providing World War II relief efforts and helping refugee children. Lois Mary Guden was also one of only a handful of Americans awarded the 'Righteous Among the Nations' award. At the time that Mary Elmes contacted her, Lois was working in Canet-Plage at Villa St Christophe, a 20-room convalescent home located on the Mediterranean beach. This home held sixty children, many of them Spanish refugees, and was located about 12 miles from the Rivesaltes Refugee Camp. Mary contacted Lois as she was looking for safe places for children in the refugee camp who were in danger of being deported to concentration camps where their lives would be at risk. Lois wrote in her diary on 9 August 1942 that 'Mary informed me about return of Polish and German Jews to Poland where death by starvation awaits them'. Lois wrote in her diary on 10 August 1942 'when I got back to colony found a little boy crying – asking for his barrack and for the Secours Suisse (Swiss Aid to Children, organization assisting at the refugee camp); Miss Elmes had brought us three Jewish boys in an attempt to save them when their parents leave; had quite some time quieting the poor little fellow; but finally his sobs died down".

In January 1943 Elmes was arrested on suspicion of helping Jews escape. She was never charged, but she was first held in Toulouse and then held for six months in Fresnes Prison near Paris. After her release, she continued her activities as before. According to Bernard Wilson "she later dismissed her imprisonment with the words "Well we all experienced inconveniences in those days, didn't we?" Mary refused to accept the salary which had accrued while she was in prison, and likewise the Legion d'Honneur which the French government wanted to bestow on her. She was not a Quaker, though she led the Quaker work in Perpignan throughout the war.' After the war ended, Mary Elmes married Roger Danjou and they settled in France and had two children. Elmes made frequent trips to Cork before her death on 9 March 2002 at the age of 92. Mary Elmes never sought special recognition for all the help she gave or all the lives she saved.

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Ettie Steinberg

Esther, or Ettie Steinberg (1914-42) was the only Irish-born Jewish woman to be murdered in the Holocaust. She was one of a family of seven children who were reared in a small house at 28 Raymond Terrace, off the South Circular Road in Dublin. It is believed that Ettie was born on 11 January 1914 to Aaron Hirsch Steinberg and Bertha Roth in the former Czechoslovakia, in a town called Veretski (Vericky). It is believed Ettie moved with her family to Ireland in 1928 to live in a small house at Raymond Terrace.

Ettie, along with her siblings attended St Catherine's School in Donore Avenue. Ettie worked as a seamstress shortly before she got married. Her sister, Fanny Frankel, recalled in an interview in 2008 how Ettie had such 'golden hands' when it came to making clothes. Ettie was described as a 'beautiful girl and tall and slim with wonderful hands'.

On July 22, 1937, Ettie Steinberg married Vogtjeck Gluck in the Greenville Hall Synagogue on the South Circular Road in Dublin. Shortly after their marriage, the couple moved to Antwerp, Belgium to be near Vogtjeck's family business (goldsmiths), 'setting up home at Steenbokstraat 25'. Because of the rise of fascism and Nazism and the persecution of Jewish people, the family were forced to flee Belgium in 1939 and they sought refuge in France. It was in Paris that their son Leon was born on 28 March 1939. The family moved from Paris to the South of France to avoid arrest. At this time, the Vichy government, Nazi Germany's collaborator in southern France was rounding up Jewish people within the province, forcing the Gluck family into hiding. The family moved from house to house to escape detention and between 1940 and 1942 the family moved around rarely staying in one place for more than two nights. They eventually ended up in a hotel in Toulouse. But Ettie, Vogtjeck and their two-year old son Leon were soon found.

According to Yad Vashem records, the Glucks were caught in a round up of Jewish people and were deported from Drancy transit camp outside of Paris on September 2, 1942, at 8.55am and arrived by train in Auschwitz on September 4, 1942 and were immediately exterminated. They were murdered in the gas chambers minutes after they arrived at the notorious death camp.



Ettie Steinberg in a dress she made herself. Photo courtesy of E. Warmberg on behalf of the Steinberg family

Back in Dublin, the Steinbergs worked frantically to save the young family. Desperate pleas were sent to the Vatican and the Red Cross for information but to no avail. They succeeded in securing three visas from the British Home Office in Belfast which would allow Ettie and her husband and son to travel to Northern Ireland and sent them to Toulouse, where the family was in hiding. However, the visas arrived a day late as Ettie, Vogtjeck and Leon had been arrested the previous day.

On display in the Irish Jewish Museum in Dublin is Ettie and Vogtjeck's marriage certificate, a copy of the visas which arrived a day late and an envelope sent by Ettie's father dated 1940 which was censored by both Irish and German censors and returned to Dublin. Also in the museum archive is a postcard. It is understood that Ettie addressed the postcard to her family in Dublin and threw it from the moving cattle car as they were being deported to Auschwitz. Miraculously a passer-by found it and returned it to her family home in Dublin days after Ettie and her son were murdered. The postcard was coded in Hebrew terms. To the common eye, the message Ettie sent may seem like she was talking about finding relatives on the journey. But her family understood the tragic, cryptic message. It reads: "Uncle Lechem, we did not find, but we found Uncle Tisha B'Av". When decoded, it is believed to mean that instead of finding good fortune, the young family had found destruction. Lechem is the Hebrew word for bread and Tisha B'Av is a Jewish fast day commemorating the destruction of the temple. The message indicates that Ettie understood the fate that awaited her family at Auschwitz.

The Irish Jewish Music in Portobello, Dublin, has erected a memorial to Ettie and her family and a section of the museum is dedicated to telling her story. A stone memorial was also erected at Malahide Community School in Dublin as a way to create a permanent Holocaust memorial to honour Ireland's only victim murdered at Auschwitz.

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Margaret Skinnider

Margaret Skinnider (1893-1971) was a revolutionary feminist and maths teacher who came to Dublin from Scotland at the age of 23 to take part in the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916. In Scotland she had been a member of Cumann na mBan and she now joined the Irish Citizen Army and was in the Stephen's Green battalion under Commandant Michael Mallin and her friend Countess Markievicz who was second-in-command. During the Rising she worked as a scout and messenger and when they moved to the Royal College of Surgeons she operated as a sniper. While out on a mission to burn down two buildings she was shot and injured by British troops near Harcourt Street. Margaret had travelled to Ireland to join the struggle on the basis that it promised equal status for women under the new Republican 1916 Proclamation.

After the Rising she wrote her memoir **Doing My Bit for Ireland**. In December 1916 she went to America to raise money and awareness of the Irish fight for freedom and spent 1917 and 1918 touring the US on behalf of Cumann na Ban. She returned to Ireland and was involved in the War of Independence and Civil War taking the anti-Treaty side. During the War of Independence she trained volunteer recruits. She was arrested by the new Irish Free State in 1923 and was imprisoned in Mountjoy jail and the North Dublin Union (1922-23) and subsequently refused a 1916 pension from the government on the grounds that she was a woman.

Margaret Skinnider



She worked as a teacher at the King's Inn Street School in Dublin from 1923 until her retirement in 1961 and became an active trade unionist with the Irish National Teachers Organisation campaigning for women's rights and equal wages and equal status for women. She became a member of the INTO executive in 1949 and president of the union in 1956 and also served on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions executive council until 1963. She died in 1971 and is buried in the Republican Plot beside Countess Markievicz in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin.

After Ireland won its independence radical women such as Margaret Skinnider continued to campaign for equality and social justice and to challenge traditional female roles. However during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s in Ireland, the power of an oppressive patriarchal state linked closely to a conservative church denied women their rights. By the end of World War II most of those women who had devoted decades of their lives to the creation of a different society and political system in Ireland had virtually disappeared from public life. The new Irish Constitution of 1937 firmly put a woman's place as in the home and conservative politicians and church leaders took over as women were stealthily marginalised. Catholic conservative Ireland had no place for radical women, nor indeed for anyone that did not conform or submit to rigid religious ideology and beliefs. Margaret Skinnider continued to campaign for the rights of women in relation to equal pay and status for female teachers even as her story and the stories of many women like her were, until very recently, hidden and denied.

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Josephine Alexandra Mitchell

Josephine Alexandra Mitchell

Josephine Alexandra Mitchell (1903-95) was a jazz singer, bandleader and saxophonist. She was born in Dublin in 1903. The young girl from Phibsborough developed a zeal deemed odd for a female at the time: the saxophone. She was 11 when she performed in her first gig in Dublin. She took her dream across the Irish Sea, visiting England with her musician brother Eddie who was performing a series of gigs around London and he took Zandra along as a 'novelty' act. She adopted the stage name Zandra and in a short time she was spotted by a talent scout and asked to join a jazz band. Her parents in Dublin sent her a telegraph saying they would disown her if she did not come home immediately but she refused and instead she joined the Irena Davis band, the first band she signed with, and toured in Switzerland for six months before moving to Germany where she signed up with Leo Solinsky.

She was in her early twenties when she settled in Berlin and performed with jazz legends including Coleman Hawkins, Jack Hilton and Jean 'Django' Reinhardt and played with a range of bands as well as forming her own band and travelling extensively throughout Europe. She moved back to Germany in the mid-1930s and while she continued playing jazz and classical music she witnessed first hand the transition from the artistic freedom of the Weimar Republic to the cruelest excesses of the Nazi regime. In 1939, she sent her parents a letter discussing the government's closing down of dance halls and banning music.

According to a radio documentary on Zandra's life story called 'Zandra: A Sentimental Journey', made by Irish journalist Mark McMenamin and broadcast in 2015, the Third Reich heavily controlled the type of music that was allowed to be played in Germany at the time with rules for jazz bands saying that no

'Jewish lyrics' or 'negroid sounds' could be heard as the Nazis were determined to remove the influence of what they perceived as 'inferior races', so that music would be pure 'Aryan'. Zandra was one of only forty Irish citizens who remained in Germany during World War II but she eventually wed a Belgian man in a marriage of convenience in order to get out of Germany. She had hoped that the war would end soon and she could remain living in Germany and that her parents would come and visit. As the Soviet Red Army advanced on Berlin Zandra was forced to flee and entered into the marriage of convenience with a Belgian man and as a couple they were given a letter of support by an American serviceman who asked for permission for Zandra and her husband to be allowed to leave Berlin. Towards the end of the war Zandra made a living by performing for Allied troops and two tunes constantly in demand by the troops were 'Sentimental Journey' and 'Blue Moon'.

According to the radio documentary, while in Germany Zandra gave birth to a daughter whom she named Constance Alexandra. She was not married and her boyfriend would not stand by her and so, after the birth she left her daughter with a Russian family to mind. This was the start of a very complex period in her life. Zandra was frequently away touring and at a certain stage when the child was around four the father returned and claimed the child.

Zandra did not tell people about her child and it was only publicly known when she died at the age of 93 and left money in her will to her daughter. When Zandra returned to Ireland in 1946 she lived in Dublin for a brief period before she settled in Rossnowlagh, County Donegal living in her family's holiday home. She lived a reclusive lifestyle, however she had a small number of close friends and played some gigs in Donegal and Sligo in the 1960s and 1970s and is still fondly remembered by local musicians who also played at the time. She died on 23 November 1995 and is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin.

Mark McMenamin found out about Zandra's story through a postmaster in his native Donegal, a man called Michael Gallagher who was also a musician and became a good friend of Zandra in the 1980s. They shared a strong interest in music and he inherited Zandra's collection of memorabilia. According to the documentary Zandra lived alone, smoked Woodbines and liked a glass of wine. As part of his work in researching the documentary Mark McMenamin attempted to make contact with Zandra's daughter but was unsuccessful. However he believes she survived the war. Zandra never attempted to find her daughter, whom she named Constance Alexandra, but left her about £3-4,000 in her will when she died in 1995.

Zandra ended up as a recluse, living in the basement of her house and had only a few close friends. She told Michael Gallagher she didn't want her story to be told until after she died. Zandra's letters are the only known correspondence of an Irish person living in Berlin during World War II. Mark McMenamin's documentary was aired on RTÉ Radio's Lyric FM at 7pm on Christmas Day 2015 and people can listen to the documentary on <https://soundcloud.com/the-lyric-feature/zandra-a-sentimental-journey>



Dorothy Macardle

Dorothy Macardle (1889-1958) was born on the 2 February 1889 in Dundalk, Ireland. She worked as a teacher, writer, historian, novelist, playwright and journalist and is the politically-engaged author of numerous books including *The Irish Republic: A Documented Chronicle of the Anglo-Irish Conflict* and the *Partitioning of Ireland, with a Detailed Account of the Period 1916-1923* commissioned and preface by Éamon de Valera. She was a humanitarian, civil liberties activist and feminist and was involved in Ireland's War of Independence and Civil War taking the anti-Treaty side. She served a prison sentence of six months in Mountjoy Gaol, 1922-23 and shared a cell with Rosamund Jacob. She was a member of the Gaelic League and later Cumann na mBan. Her brother Kenneth died at the Front during World War I. In 1926 she left the Republican party Sinn Féin and joined Éamon de Valera's new Fianna Fáil party, 'believing that an Irish republic could be achieved through political means'. Although she was a member of the Irish political party Fianna Fáil, she opposed the party's views on censorship and equality for women and she spoke out against the new 1937 Irish Constitution because of its lack of equality for women.

During the 1930s and 1940s she was very involved in international affairs and was a strong supporter of the League of Nations where she worked as a journalist between the two World Wars. She lived in London during World War II and worked for the BBC. She spoke out against the rise of Fascism in Europe and supported the United Nations and international cooperation. Her book *Children of Europe: A Study of the Children of Liberated Countries* (1950), which she wrote in 1949 is an account of the plight of children during and after the Second World War and the devastating consequences of war particularly as it affected

children. The book was an early contribution to the social history of World War II and the Holocaust.

She returned to Dublin after the war and worked as a journalist and theatre reviewer. During the 1940s and 1950s she wrote several novels including her first gothic novel, published in 1942 and which was adapted for the screen in 1944 as one of Hollywood's most successful ghost stories, *The Uninvited*. According to Irish Professor Luke Gibbons 'her first gothic novel *The Uninvited*, filmed by Lewis Allen in 1944, became a cult movie, earning the ultimate accolade in William Everson's *Classics of the Horror Films* "quite possibly the movies best ghost story"¹.

According to Lisa Coen of Tramp Press, 'to this day, Martin Scorsese cites *The Uninvited* as a favourite film of his.'² *The Uninvited* was recently re-published by Tramp Press (<http://www.tramppress.com/shop/>), as the second in the *Recovered Voices* series. According to one of the founding members of Tramp Press, Lisa Coen, the aim of the company is 'once a year or so, to find a book that has fallen from public awareness... Dorothy Macardle is one playwright we've never heard of. Luke Gibbons (Professor of Irish Literary and Cultural Studies in NUI Maynooth) got in touch with us last year about reissuing *The Uninvited*, which he teaches. As he writes in the introduction to this new edition, Macardle is "a feminist activist who was also a radical republican; a universalist civil liberties humanitarian who was also a nationalist; a defender of Irish neutrality during World War Two who moved to London to participate in the fight against the Nazis; a brilliant lecturer who held no teaching position; a journalist and historian who was a critic and novelist of distinction; a psychological rationalist who also put in a good word for ghosts and extrasensory experiences." Macardle even did time in prison during the Civil War. Like many women involved in revolution, she was dismayed at how women were disenfranchised in the new constitution"³.

According to Luke Gibbons, 'Her awareness of the Nazi menace, acquired as an Irish Press journalist at the League of Nations in the late 1930s, prompted a move to London during the war years. There she identified with the plight of other small nations fighting for their survival, not least the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile... Her arrival in London coincided with the harsh treatment of East European refugees (including up to 8,000 Czechs) by the British authorities, leading to the internment of thousands suspected as being Nazi "fifth columnists"... For Macardle, her republican past and experiences of prison during the Irish Civil War were a means of opening up, rather than closing off, identification with others in the unfolding catastrophe of the second World War... Macardle's internationalism led to her becoming a founding member of the Irish Institute for International Affairs (IIIA) in the late 1930s'⁴.

Dorothy Macardle died on 23 December 1958 and is buried in St Fintan's Cemetery, near Howth head in Dublin.

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Article: Dorothy Macardle (1889-1958): Republican and Internationalist

The following is an article on Dorothy Macardle by Nadia Clare Smith, her biographer, who lectures in history at Boston College - *Dorothy Macardle: A Biography* (Dublin: Woodfield Press 2007).

‘I am a propagandist, unrepentant and unashamed’, Dorothy Macardle, author of *The Irish Republic*, announced in June 1939. Many readers familiar with her classic history of the Irish revolution, commissioned by her political hero Éamon de Valera, might be only too ready to concur with Macardle’s candid self-assessment. In this instance, however, she was speaking not in relation to her activities as a republican journalist or Fianna Fáil supporter, but as a proponent of the League of Nations who was urging an American audience to speak out against fascism and to support international cooperation. A half-century after her death, Macardle, a historian, journalist, novelist, playwright, activist and student of the occult, is mainly remembered as the politically-engaged author of *The Irish Republic*.

An unlikely republican, Dorothy Macardle was born in Dundalk in 1889 to Minnie Ross Macardle, a troubled and enigmatic Englishwoman, and Thomas Callan Macardle, the chairman of Dundalk’s Macardle Moore brewery. The Macardles were a wealthy Catholic family with both unionist and Home Rule sympathies. Dorothy moved to Dublin in her teens and was educated at Alexandra College and University College Dublin. In Dublin she met prominent nationalists, such as Maud Gonne MacBride, and moved from cultural nationalism to republicanism while forging a career as a teacher and playwright. She worked as a journalist and publicist during the War of Independence and the Civil War, when she supported the anti-Treaty side and served a prison sentence. In 1926 she left Sinn Féin and joined Éamon de Valera’s new Fianna Fáil party, believing that an Irish republic could be achieved through political means. During the late 1920s and 1930s she researched and wrote *The Irish Republic*, commissioned by de Valera, while continuing to work as a journalist and playwright.

Macardle worked on *The Irish Republic* during a critical phase in the development of the modern Irish historical profession. She was one of many accomplished Irish female historians during the Free State period. Others included Mary Hayden, Mary Donovan O’Sullivan, Síle Ní Chinnéide, Constantia Maxwell, Alice Stopford Green, Eleanor Hull, Rosamond Jacob, Helena Concannon, Isabel Grubb and Ada Longfield. Like Macardle, many of these women were noted for their political and social activism as well as for their historical works; Green and Concannon, for instance, were both senators. Macardle stood out from her counterparts by writing contemporary Irish political history, as most of the other women historians wrote on early modern Ireland. The 1930s also marked the emergence of the modern, university-based Irish historical profession, whose leading figures were the young academic historians

Robert Dudley Edwards of University College Dublin and Theodore Moody of Trinity College, founders of the journal *Irish Historical Studies*. While the new professionals concentrated on early modern rather than contemporary Irish history, they were aware of Macardle, and RD Edwards praised her efforts.

The Irish Republic met with much popular acclaim in Ireland, as well as some misgivings, and brought Macardle widespread recognition when it was published in 1937. *The Irish Press*, the newspaper linked with de Valera and Fianna Fáil, actively promoted the book by publishing extracts as well as a glowing review. *The Irish Times* review offered measured praise, as did the *Times Literary Supplement*, which brought the book to the attention of British readers. The most hostile responses in Ireland came from the *Irish Independent*, the newspaper of Fine Gael supporters, which opposed Macardle’s treatment of the Free State side in the Civil War and her exaltation of de Valera, and the *Catholic Bulletin*, which felt that Macardle had slighted the role of the Catholic Church in the Irish independence movement. Overall, the responses to *The Irish Republic* combined praise for Macardle’s research, thorough documentation, range of sources and narration of dramatic events with reservations about the book’s political slant. Although stocks of the book were blown to bits when the Luftwaffe dropped bombs on a warehouse in London during World War II, *The Irish Republic*, like the phoenix, rose from its own ashes and was reprinted several times, most recently in 2005. It was pressed into political service by de Valera and Fianna Fáil over the years, as de Valera considered it ‘the only really authoritative account of the period 1916–26’.

Ironically, *The Irish Republic* was published at a time when Macardle began to raise objections to Fianna Fáil’s policies, particularly censorship and legislation pertaining to women in employment. Her secular, liberal vision of republicanism came into conflict with the official, more conservative nationalism promoted by Fianna Fáil in the 1930s. Like other Irish feminists, she spoke out against the 1937 Constitution because of its clauses on women. In the late 1930s Macardle turned her attention to international affairs and became a strong supporter of the League of Nations and a vocal opponent of fascism. In the late 1940s she reached a rapprochement with de Valera and Fianna Fáil, although she continued to speak out against censorship. At this time she became a supporter of the United Nations and its humanitarian efforts in post-war Europe, and wrote *Children of Europe* in 1949. An account of the plight of children during and after the war, the book was an early contribution to the social history of World War II and the Holocaust.

The completion of *The Irish Republic* allowed Macardle to concentrate on writing novels, and she wrote four between 1941 and 1953. A student of the occult, three of her novels dealt with supernatural themes, including ghosts, extrasensory perception and witchcraft, while her least successful novel was a wartime romance. Her novels, like some of her earlier plays, tend to feature dysfunctional families, troubled marriages and parent–child relationships, and problematic sexuality, and allowed Macardle to grapple, in creative and coded ways, with some of her own preoccupations. Her most successful novel, *Uneasy Freehold*, a haunted-house mystery set in England, was adapted for the screen and released as a film called *The Uninvited* in 1944. It was compared to Alfred Hitchcock’s film *Rebecca* (1940), based on Daphne du Maurier’s novel, and

indeed the two works contain some similar characters and plot devices. Tim Pat Coogan, in his biography of de Valera, recounts how the Taoiseach watched *The Uninvited* at the Savoy in Dublin with his staff members Kathleen O'Connell and Maurice Moynihan. De Valera apparently disliked the film's twist ending, in which one character, seemingly an icon of conventional womanhood whom the framers of the 1937 Constitution might like, turns out to be not quite what she seemed.

Dorothy Macardle was an accomplished and successful writer in twentieth-century Ireland whose engagement with global events and international currents of thought interacted with her Irish republican thinking. A sophisticated and liberal nationalist and internationalist, her career challenges the related notions that Irish women disengaged from public life between the 1920s and the 1960s and that Irish republicans in the Free State period were simply xenophobic nationalists unconcerned about world events.

Reference:

- <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/dorothy-macardle-1889-1958-republican-and-internationalist/>
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Mary Fleming and Aileen Turner

Smashing Times Theatre Company wish to honour two young Irish women, Mary Fleming and Aileen Turner.

Mary Fleming was a 24-year-old emergency service staff nurse from Cappawhite in County Tipperary, Ireland, when she carried out a daring act during the Blitz. In 1941, Grove Park Hospital in London was hit by German bombs and it was on this night that Mary and a colleague, Senior Assistant Nurse Aileen Turner, aged 26, climbed into a first-floor window and entered the burning building, crawling along the floor of an upstairs ward almost in total darkness, to reach the 17 stranded patients. They then lead them back to safety through scalding steam from burst hot water pipes only moments before the floor of the ward crashed to the ground. Both Irish women were awarded the George Medal for their heroism.

In a supplement to the London Gazette published 9 May 1941, the paper stated that 'The King has been graciously pleased to give orders for the undermentioned appointment to the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for the following awards of the George Medal and of the British Empire Medal and for the publication in the London Gazette of the names of the persons specifically shown below as having received an expression of commendation for their brave conduct in civil defence'. The paper carried the names of Mary Fleming, Staff Nurse and Aileen Turner, Senior Assistant Nurse, Grove Park Hospital saying that 'when a high explosive bomb struck Grove Park Hospital, Nurse Turner and Nurse Fleming climbed through a first-floor window, crawled across the floor of a ward which was in a highly dangerous condition and released several patients who were trapped. The quickness, coolness and courage of these two nurses resulted in all the patients being rescued a few minutes before the floor collapsed'.



Louise Graham née Boyle

Louise Graham née Boyle

The evacuation of civilians in Great Britain during the Second World War was designed to save civilians, particularly children, from the risks associated with aerial bombing of cities by moving them to areas thought to be less at risk. Operation Pied Piper began on 1 September 1939, and officially relocated more than 3.5 million people.

Born in Manchester to Irish immigrants just before the outbreak of World War II, Louise Boyle was the youngest of six children; tragically her five-year-old sister died nine months before her arrival. Before joining the British air force, Louise's father had served in the Irish army during the Irish Civil War. Louise's mother and her five children were evacuated to a farm in Matlock, Derbyshire where they stayed with the Chapman family. After a brief stay on the farm, Louise's mother returned to Ireland with four of her five living children. Louise, a small infant remained with Mrs Chapman with whom she shared an affectionate bond forever more.

With the rise of Nazism during the 1930s, the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Department was founded. From 1 April 1935 it was this department that was to direct the British response to passive air defence. In April 1937 the Air Raid Wardens' Service was created which aimed to recruit some 800,000 volunteers. In 1938, the Air Raid Precautions Act came into force. This compelled all local authorities to begin creating their own ARP services. With the threat of war imminent in 1939, dozens of leaflets were issued advising people on how to protect themselves from the inevitable air war to follow. ARP Wardens enforced the 'blackout'. Heavy curtains and shutters were required on all private residences, commercial premises, and factories to prevent light escaping and so making them

a possible target for enemy bombers to locate their targets. Although Louise has vivid memories of blacked-out windows and dimmed lamps, she remembers always feeling safe with Mrs Chapman during these times.

Although only a young child, Louise remembers people from the village gathering at the local cinema where a list of names of those who had died would be presented. In January 1940, the British government introduced food rationing. The scheme was designed to ensure fair shares for all at a time of national shortage. Not all foods were rationed. Fruit and vegetables were never rationed but were often in short supply, especially tomatoes, onions and fruit shipped from overseas.

Schools in rural areas such as Matlock remained open but they often had to share their facilities with the evacuees. This meant the introduction of the double shift system. This involved local children using the classrooms in the morning while the evacuees would attend school in the afternoon. Local authorities attempted to provide a full-time education by finding alternative buildings to accommodate the evacuated children and teachers. This included the use of churches and village halls as classrooms. Louise remembers that as well as ordinary lessons, children learned air raid drills, leaving classrooms when the sirens sounded to go to air raid shelters. She also has memories of attending Sunday School.

In late November 1945 a black cab arrived at the farm. After six-and-a-half years it was now time for Louise to be reunited with her biological family in Ireland, something she did not understand. Mrs Chapman's daughter, Dorothy (Dot) brought Louise back to Ireland, telling the young child about her other family. Louise was dressed in a bright coloured coat so she would be recognisable by her mother and Aunt Eileen who greeted them as they arrived off the ship. They travelled through the streets of Dublin by horse and carriage. This journey had a lasting memory for Louise; it was at that moment she realised she was in a foreign land. The farm was worlds away, she thought, as the horse's hooves met the hard cobbled surface. Louise's eldest sister opened the door. As she clung to Dot, her siblings introduced themselves. That night she had an egg for dinner. This indeed was a sign of celebration for Louise as eggs were scarce during the war. Dot stayed with the Boyle family for three days before leaving early one morning while Louise slept. It took Louise some time to realise Dot did this purely out of love and respect for Louise and her family. Dot did not want to see Louise distressed.

Within a few short days Louise attended Harold's Cross School. On arrival Louise's siblings introduced her to the head nun as Louise Boyle. "Louise is a very English name. What is your middle name?" she said. "It's Ann" said the young girl. From that day, educators called her Áine Ní Bhaoill. From this day forth, Louise felt her identity had changed. Students were fascinated with her accent and some asked her about the war.

A strong relationship remains between Louise and the Chapmans. They kindly sent her a beautiful dress for her communion. Pictures of Louise on her communion day were sent back to Mrs Chapman. Louise went on holiday to Matlock some years later. As an adult, Louise worked as a seamstress and when she had her own family, she brought her children to the English village as she continued to feel a strong connection with the family. Her bond with the Chapmans remains unbreakable.

Years have passed and yet Louise is still emotionally attached to the Chapman family and to Matlock, feeling sad when she hears certain music, looking up at the stars or seeing a ship docking. Many stories are very positive, with evacuees being extremely happy, gaining new experiences and making new friends. Many formed a lasting bond with the families they were billeted with and some did not want to leave their wartime 'foster parents' behind.

Spanish **Herstories**



Federica Montseny Mañe

Federica Montseny Mañe (1905-94) was born in Madrid in 1905. She was a Spanish anarchist leader and was one of the most emblematic figures of the Spanish labour movement. Federica Montseny was also a brilliant writer and speaker.

Her early life was marked by the decisive influence of her parents, both activists in libertarian ideas, they were heavily involved in social and propaganda activity in which the need to extend education to all social groups was a fundamental axis: the freedom of men and women could only be achieved through the acquisition of knowledge.

A strong sense of freedom also determined her whole process of learning. Personal freedom, empowerment and choice of lifestyle were the foundations of womanhood that her mother passed on to her. The theatre, for which her father wrote many works, also formed a big part of Federica's education. She also attended free courses at the University of Barcelona and completed an instruction that would broadly distance herself from the women of her time.

Rallies and demonstrations were also part of Federica's teenage life. When just twelve years of age, she accompanied her parents

on their militant activities. At Café Spanish she met Salvador Seguí, union leader at the time, and Lluís Companys, later president of the Catalan Generalitat. All of them were crucial characters in the social and political history of Spain and later shared with Federica experiences of the labour struggles and tragic Civil War.

In late 1920, aged fifteen years, Federica Montseny wrote her first novel, *Peregrina de amor* which she burned shortly thereafter. At seventeen she began her contributions to the anarchist press, using the pseudonym 'Blanca Montsan'. In 1923, at eighteen, she joined the CNT (National Confederation of Labour), the large central anarchist union of the time. It was at that time that she received the offer to collaborate with the newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera*. Federica was to take charge of the section 'Social Relief'.

Federica also joined the directors of the *White Magazine*, a theoretical organ of the Spanish anarchism team. There she became known through her many writings, spreading her thought through over 600 articles.

From 1932 Federica Montseny began to take part in various tours, very unusual at that time, she travelled throughout various parts of the country reporting on syndicalist and revolutionary ideas. She participated in many rallies and speeches that were soon collected in pamphlets. In 1933 Federica gave birth to her first child, the result of a long relationship with fellow anarchist Germinal Esgleas. This however did not mean her departure from the organization or literary work.

In the latter field, Federica Montseny wrote about fifty stories, some of which addressed the problem of female freedom, empowerment of women and their right to free will, matters that Federica dealt with through her whole lifetime.

Federica remained a leading member of the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation), the most radical wing of the CNT, and relentlessly maintained a dialectical confrontation with peers from the more moderate sector.

The CNT faced a crucial ethical issue within a few months of starting the Civil War. During the government of Largo Caballero, some members in the CNT opposed any form of government collaboration, which would eventually happen. This event deeply affected Federica Montseny. Indeed, of the four ministers who were appointed as representatives of the CNT in government, occupying the portfolios of Justice, Commerce, Health and

Industry, one of them was Federica Montseny. The ideological scruples and pressures to which she was subjected to by members in the CNT who were opposed to collaboration, was difficult to overcome. Despite this and the serious divisions that the decision resulted in, Federica and her three companions agreed, as they considered intervention in the government essential for structuring a defence against the rebel army.

Federica Montseny thus became the first woman in the history of Spain to be in the position of Minister of Health and Welfare. While few reforms could be undertaken in the turbulent context of the war and in the midst of problems within the government, Federica issued from her ministry a decree legalizing abortion and creating centres for prostitutes, where they were offered accommodation and training. She also added to her duties the role of taking care of refugees.

During the period of the Civil War, some of her activities included giving lectures and conferences and she wrote several essays.

On 26 January 1939 the entire Montseny family went into exile in France, fleeing the advance of Franco's army. In June 1940 they would suffer a second exodus, this time on the run, with thousands of French, from the Nazi troops. However, exile did not mean the end of Federica's political militancy, she joined the SERE (Service of Evacuation of Spanish Refugees) and collaborated in assisting refugees who were in great danger to flee by ship to America.

During the later years of the Nazi occupation, an alias, Fanny Germain, brings Federica protection from persecution by the Germans who nevertheless chased the 'Free French'. Finally arrested, the fact that she was again expecting a child saved her from being sent to Spain, but she spent time in French prisons. After the liberation of France by Allied troops, in November 1944, the family settled in Toulouse, where Federica could resume work to reorganize the libertarian movement of opposition to Franco.

With the restoration of democracy in Spain in 1977, Federica Montseny was able to return to her country. During her long exile she settled in France, continuing her militant activity with multiple conferences and the publication of several books, most notably her memoir *My first forty years* in 1987, when she was 80. She also founded with her partner Germinal Esgleas, the weekly *L'Espoir*. She died on 14 January 1994, in Toulouse, aged 88.

Pilar Tendillo Haro

Pilar Tendillo Haro (b. 1926) was born in Burgos in northern Spain on 10 November 1926. She was the daughter of a military father. Six months after her birth her family (consisting of her parents and older sister Margarita, also born in Burgos) travelled to Oviedo, the birthplace of her two younger sisters, Ana and Covadonga.

The death of her father when Pilar was only three years old marked her future. Her mother, who was barely 24 years old, had to leave with her four daughters for Larache in Morocco, where her parents lived. Pilar spent her childhood in Morocco and her summers in Málaga with her mother and sisters. The military uprising on the 18 July 1936 against the Republic stunned the family who were on vacation in the neighbourhood of El Palo



Pilar Tendillo Haro

de Málaga. Earlier that same year her grandfather had died of pneumonia. Pilar was nine years old.

During the first Franco movements towards Málaga many people panicked at the idea of repression that the fascists would impose. As a result many civilians and militiamen chose to flee by road to Almería as the other roads from Málaga were cut off and controlled by the fascist forces. A road runs along the Mediterranean coast and is an easy target for control from land, sea and air. Everyone who began their escape (some estimates suggest 150,000 people) knew how dangerous the trip was but they deeply trusted and harboured hopes that the revolting army would have respect for an exclusively civilian caravan and so they took the risk of walking the 200 kilometres that separated them from Almería.

A cousin of Pilar's mother, who had a car, tried to drive the six women (grandmother, mother and four sisters) to the city of Alicante where he had a flat. But before they got to Motril, they were arrested, the car was searched and their cousin was killed. The six women were abandoned on the road. They had to walk for eight days from Motril to Almería (130 kilometres), during the daylight they took refuge where they could and walking through the night on what came to be called 'the road of death'.

During that journey on the 8 February 1937, one of the bloodiest episodes of the Spanish Civil War took place, perpetrated by the rebel army with the help of nine Italian battalions and ending in the deaths of about 5,000 civilians fleeing from Málaga city before Franco's troops got there.

All the hopes of those who sought refuge in the republican zone were frustrated when the artillery, tanks and three war cruisers of the rebels proceeded to bombard the long lines of people fleeing Málaga. The three cruisers bombed at pleasure the convoy of unarmed refugees including whole families, women, children and old people. The slaughter was a planned operation, as fascists anticipated the exit of thousands of people from Málaga and they used the Almería road as a death trap for those fleeing.

Pilar and her family managed to survive and to get to Almería, they gathered along with everyone else in the bullring, where they stayed a few days, until they could take a train to Murcia (where they took shelter in different schools for two months) and then to Alicante, where they managed to stay in the flat of their murdered cousin.

For approximately three years they lived in Alicante, they did so under the constant threat of bombing (there was an underground shelter right next to their house), unable to attend school (the older sister was a teacher of the other three, meanwhile she wrote a diary that her grandmother ordered her to destroy to avoid problems in the future) and living in a situation of permanent distress until the war ended. Luckily, her mother found work in the military commissary and as a result managed to keep safe the whole family during those difficult years.

Just after the war, the six women returned to Málaga, but all their properties had been seized (the house and the shop they had), so they had to return again to Larache, where they remained for three years, finally they all moved to Madrid in 1942. Pilar was 16 and a dramatic reminder accompanied her for the rest of her life.

In February 2005, a memorial was opened in the Málaga town of Torre del Mar, in memory of the victims of the slaughter, with the assistance of some of the survivors of the exodus, and a ceremony was held in which Pilar Tendillo participated. In recent years there have been several acts of remembrance for the victims and survivors, as well as a travelling photo exhibition entitled 'The Crime of the Málaga-Almería highway'.

After living in Madrid for 47 years (until 1989), Pilar moved to Valencia, where she currently resides.

Rosa Estruch Espinos

Rosa Estruch Espinos (1915-78) was born in San Juan, Argentina in 1915. Her parents had emigrated from Vilallonga in search of work. Years later they returned to the village, but the economic situation made them emigrate again, this time to France.

Back in Vilallonga in 1936, Rosa was dedicated to teaching French. With the triumph of the Popular Front, she joined the Communist Party and was elected Secretary General of the PCE of Vilallonga.

During the Civil War she was a municipal councillor in the Vilallonga UGT union. Joining ranks with the Communist mayor Andrés Tarazona, Rosa Estruch was appointed mayor in the context of war. Thus she became the first woman to become mayor of Vilallonga.

After the Civil War, she was arrested and imprisoned in Valencia and underwent interrogations that left her marked for life. In March 1940 she was tried in a summary court martial, accused of professing communist ideas, of helping the rebellion and of participating as a militia. She was sentenced to fifteen years in prison.

With an increasingly deteriorating physical condition, her body became immobilized. Incarceration in prison alternated with periods of admission to the Provincial Hospital of Valencia. She was released from prison in 1942 and remained under surveillance until 1951.

Despite her disability, Rosa Estruch continued her militancy work in hiding, assisting in the reorganization of the PCE in Valencia. In 1952, Rosa Estruch was again indicted and the police tried to arrest her but this was impossible because of her disability status.

In 1955 she entered the Sanatorium Malvarrosa of Valencia, where statements were taken from her because she was accused of having participated in the guerrilla movement. When it came time for her to appear in court, she was taken on a stretcher to the courtroom. Again they interned her in the hospital under police surveillance. After the coroner's report on her physical condition, Rosa was never again disturbed.

The stay at the sanatorium Malvarrosa of Valencia, where she remained until her death, marked a new era in the life of this republican. Rosa Estruch was a reference to the comrades who had fought with her in the Republic and civil war. When the dictatorship ended, many Valencian republican activists and communists went to the hospital continuously to visit Rosa, dividing amongst themselves the tasks of assistance and support. For them she represented an example of the struggle that women made in defence of the Republic and freedoms.

Rosa Estruch became one of the female icons of the struggle against Franco in Valencia. She died 22 years after her admittance to the hospital on 27 June 1978.

Neus Català Pallejà



Neus Català Pallejà (b. 1915) was born in Els Guiamets (Tarragona) in Catalonia, Spain, on 6 October 1915 and was active in the United Socialist Party of Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War. Neus is the only living Spanish survivor of the Nazi concentration camp Ravensbrück and a reference figure in the fight against Franco.

Neus Català was raised in Els Guiamets. Her father was a barber and worked in the fields. Soon she began to have and to defend her own ideas. When she asked her parents why her brother was studying to become a teacher and she could not study, she received the response that only one of the children could study and the man will be the chosen one. Neus accepted at that moment that she had to work in the field and demanded fair work conditions from her employers, but also cultivated her love for theatre and did not abandon her dream of studying to

become a nurse. In those adolescent dreams and determination resides the germ of her subsequent rebellion and resilience.

The advent of the Second Republic in Spain brings new hope. But the Civil War disrupts her life and her village is affected by the division between the Communists and the CNT (National Confederation of Labour), the large central anarchist union of the time. Neus began as a militant woman in the Unified Socialist Youth and moved to Barcelona to study nursing. Her aim is to work in a hospital, but fate leads her to take care of an infant colony. At the age of 23, after the Republican defeat, she crossed the Pyrenees in 1939 with 182 children who she later helped to repatriate or facilitated their adoption in Europe.

When she and her parents, also in exile, began to make roots in France, she started a relationship with a French citizen, Albert Roger, and the couple married. When Hitler occupied France, the two collaborated closely with the Resistance. Neus hid messages under her hair covered with a scarf or hid the messages in a basket of vegetables and made daily marathons cycling and by bus. The couple also facilitated accommodation for and means of escape for members of the French Maquis (French resistance fighters). Neus changed from being a Spanish exile to becoming an active contributor to the French Resistance.

In 1943, aware that they had been exposed the couple prepared to flee but Nazi officers burst into their home and arrested them. Neus was held in Limoges and from there, in 1944, she was deported. When she finished the long journey, she was imprisoned in Ravensbrück, a Nazi concentration camp located 90 kilometres from Berlin, in which 92,000 women died. Neus saw many of the women die in a humiliating way. From Ravensbrück she was transferred to a second camp in Holleischen in Czechoslovakia. She and other women were forced to work in an arms factory and she and her colleagues tried to sabotage production. Their moral and militancy helped them think it was worth trying.

The ordeal ended with the liberation of the camp by Allied forces in 1945. Neus was then 'a bag of bones'. The return to her parents' house in France was painful. Going from being considered a number and a starving body that wore pinstripes back to reality took time. She kept the striped uniform she had worn while in captivity, despite the pain that it evoked whenever she looked at it. One day she realized that she had no photos of the day of her release so she put on the striped suit again, went to the studio of a well-known photographer and asked him to take her picture. In that picture she concentrated her memory and that of the women who accompanied her. Her partner Albert, who was also deported to another camp did not return home: he died before the camps were liberated. So Neus's life was saved but she had been left a widow. And in Spain, Franco was still in power. It seemed a mockery that the dictator did not fall with Hitler and Mussolini. She had to stay in exile.

Although there is much violence in Neus' memories there is no shortage of laughter as a resistance strategy along with her great love of the theatre. Over the years, Neus Catala rebuilt her personal life in France and went on to marry again and have two children despite the experience of the captivity and thinking that she could not be a mother, for as soon as she reached Ravensbrück they stopped her menstruation with an injection. She resumed her work as a nurse (which she had hidden in the concentration camps in order not to be forced to hurt anyone)

and collaborated with the clandestine PCE and the French Communist Party, devoting much of her life to reconstructing the memory of deported republicans.

Neus chose to tell of all the horrors that she and others had lived through, experiences that had never been told before, to talk about the agonizing adventure that led her and others to death camps. It is a first-person testimony of someone who had suffered firstly in terms of her exile from Spain and who continued to suffer from accumulative ordeals. But she always remained resolute and combative.

In Ravensbrück, her experience was that as soon as you thought they could inflict no more torture on your body or you were about to faint, they would impose a new suffering, and all of this only ended in 1945. She and other Spanish, French, Polish and Russian prisoners fought against this torture in different ways, sometimes through singing or keeping up the belief that they could not lose their dignity even though their jailers always tried to snatch it away from them.

Many years after the war Neus began to look for other survivors, collecting their testimonies and publishing their common history. She discovered many names of Republican women who had suffered captivity or who had lost their lives in the Nazi death camps, women who, after losing the war in Spain and despite being foreigners and refugees and barely able to speak French, decided to risk their lives again in their willingness to fight fascism as members of the French Resistance, as Neus did.

Neus still lives and has received much recognition for her work and experiences, having been granted several awards by the Catalan Government. She has continued her work in the Communist Party of Catalonia, a miracle in its own right, as she is over 100 years of age. She is an icon as well as a survivor. Her message is that the atrocities that she witnessed should never be repeated.

Dolores Ibárruri, La Pasionaria

Dolores Ibárruri Gomez, 'La Pasionaria', (1895-1989) was born on the 9 December 1895 in Gallarta (Vizcaya). She belonged to a family of mine workers. Dolores excelled as a student in the local school. Her teacher tried to get permission from Dolores' parents for her to continue her teaching studies but the economic hardship of the family and the prejudices of the time frustrated Dolores' studies and, as a teenager, she had to become a servant.

Dolores became interested in the workers' struggle as her husband was a miner (they had married in 1915, however the marriage did not last) and she started to read and became a socialist activist. Dolores started using the pseudonym of La Pasionaria, writing her first article in *El minero vizcaíno* in 1918 under that name. From the time of her involvement in the revolutionary general strike of 1917, Dolores Ibárruri gained prestige as a speaker and political columnist.

Impressed by the triumph of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, Dolores participated with the socialist grouping of Somorrostro, where she was a member, in the split of the PSOE that gave birth to the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) in 1920. She became a member of its Central Committee in 1930. In 1931 she moved to Madrid to work for the newspaper of the PCE, *Mundo Obrero*. Her tireless fighter activism saw her being jailed twice between 1931 and 1933. She became a newly-elected deputy for Asturias in 1936, and was involved in the fight against the military uprising against the government which increased her popular appeal as she was involved in propaganda activities during the Civil War of 1936 to 1939. During this time her passionate, sensible and coherent prose and oratory became a symbol of the resistance and militancy of Republican Spain. Her enormous popular support was due to her oratorical skills but also because of her personal involvement in the workers' struggles. She joined striking miners in the pit; she stood by poor neighbours at a Madrid suburb whose modest belongings had been thrown into the street; and all this activism made her immensely popular with her parliamentary speeches.

In the famous parliamentary debate of June 1936, La Pasionaria delivered one of the most famous speeches of her life, denouncing the fascist machinations and preparation of the coup with the complicity of the military, capitalists and landlords, with the passivity of the government.



Dolores Ibárruri

When the fascist uprising occurred in 1936, La Pasionaria displayed a titanic activity, giving speeches, visiting the front, making Republican propaganda trips, she did a lot of work in terms of agitation and created the most famous slogans of war: 'Better to die standing than to live on your knees' and 'They shall not pass!'.

During the war she rose to second-in-command within the party, after its secretary general, Jose Díaz. After the military defeat she went into exile in the Soviet Union (1939-77), continuing her work as a representative of Spain in the Communist International. Díaz died in 1942 and La Pasionaria replaced him as general secretary of the PCE, a position from which she was displaced by Santiago Carrillo in 1960; however, she remained in the honorary position of president of the PCE.

After 38 years of exile, Dolores Ibárruri returned to Spain after the death of Franco and the transition to democracy, being chosen again as deputy for Asturias in 1977. She was afflicted by health problems which led her to abandon her seat and withdraw from active politics. She died in Madrid in 1989.

Germany Herstories

Anna Seghers

Anna Seghers (1900-83) had the experience of living under two different forms of authoritarianism during her lifetime. Known for her brilliance as a writer and author of anti-fascist essays and especially novels, Seghers first escaped from the Hitler regime during the 1930s and finally ended up as a citizen of the DDR (East Germany), a communist satellite state of the Soviet Union. Between those periods she was a refugee, living in exile in France and later Mexico, which had a big influence on her writing.

Anna Seghers was born under the name of Netty Reiling in 1900 in Mainz. As both a communist and Jew, she was aware from an early stage of her 'bad' status when the Nazis took over control in Germany in 1933. Her mother was killed in a German concentration camp however Seghers and her husband managed to get away. They moved to France in 1933 but life there was difficult. Anna had to battle with several problems in relation to the acquisition of labour as well as residence permits, while her husband was detained in a French camp for refugees. German state officials were already looking out for Jews and secessionists and pursuing them throughout Western Europe. Seghers described the struggle of getting a visa or looking for permission to board one of the few ships heading for transatlantic destinations in one of her most famous novels *Transit*. It would take eight more years until she finally got to Mexico.

However, apart from the problems and difficult circumstances during her getaway, the 1930s were some of the most productive years in Seghers' literary career. She finished her magnum opus, the novel *Das siebte Kreuz* (*The Seventh Cross*), a book about a group of men arrested during the Nazi rule, who would attempt to break out and flee from their suppressors. It was later described by the famous Polish-German critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki as a 'novel against the dictatorship'.

Seghers came back to Germany in 1947. The war was over and Germany separated into four occupation zones. Seghers lived in the zone administrated by the Soviets, which would soon turn into the DDR, the Deutsche Demokratische Republik. She lived there until the end of her life.

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(c) Aufbau-Verlag

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Esther Bauer

Esther Bauer (b. 1924) was born in 1924 in Hamburg. She went to the Jewish school for girls in the Karolinenstraße, run by her father Alberto Jonas, while her mother Marie Jonas was a doctor at the Universitätsklinikum Eppendorf. After nine years, when the Nazis took over, she had to leave the school to do compulsory labour.

In the summer of 1942, the family was deported to the concentration camp Theresienstadt, where Esther fell in love with a Czech cook, whom she later married. Her father died after a few months. Because of her profession as a doctor her mother had to work for the Nazis in Theresienstadt, but was murdered in Auschwitz in October 1944. When her husband was deported again, Esther followed him to Auschwitz. She survived the 'selection' – she only had to be there for ten days – and came to Freiberg afterwards. She would never see her first husband again. In 1945 the Mauthausen concentration camp was liberated by the Red Army and Esther emigrated to the United States of America.

The story of Esther Bauer became famous because of the documentary 'Einfach Esther – Eine Eppendorfer Lebensgeschichte' (Just Esther – A lifetime-story from Hamburg-Eppendorf). The director Richard Haufe-Ahmels, a student who just finished his Abitur while he was doing the movie, accompanied her for two years throughout Hamburg and New York, portraying her new life and recording Esther talking about her memories and experiences.

He also started interviewing historians and other people from Hamburg involved in research and remembrance around the Second World War. The movie was awarded many prizes and was used in schools as an example of a women's life during the rule of the fascist Nazi regime. Esther Bauer would go to these schools herself, telling her story over and over again. She has often been asked why would a woman over 90 years of age still do that? 'Wir sterben aus - umso wichtiger ist es mir, so lange davon zu berichten, wie es geht' she replied, 'We, the people who witnessed the Nazi regime, are dying. It is all the more important to tell about it, as long as it works'.

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Sophie Scholl

One of the most outstanding German women who rejected the ideology of the fascist Nazi regime by forming an organised resistance group was Sophie Scholl (1921-43). Sophie along with her brother Hans Scholl and a few other young students from Munich, Bavaria, fought against the dictatorship until they were arrested and finally executed in 1943.

Sophie Scholl was born on 9 May 1921. She grew up with a sister and a brother. When the three siblings got into trouble with the National Socialist youth organisations such as Hitlerjugend and Bund Deutscher Mädel, she refused to follow the so-called Führerkult (the manipulation by Hitler to drive his leadership cult, having him acknowledged as supreme leader) and resigned the membership of these organisations. From the winter of 1942 Sophie participated in the Weiße Rose or White Rose, a resistance group whose members included her brother Hans and his friend Alexander Schmorell. In February 1943 they were caught distributing anti-war leaflets at the University of Munich and afterwards were arrested by the Gestapo. The events following that day are most remarkable for the active resistance against the regime and are a good example of how the Nazi system dealt with renegades like Sophie Scholl. Within two days the

three students were questioned by Robert Mohr, the so-called 'Vernehmungsberater', who was responsible for the questioning of witnesses. In fact, his examination had only one goal, to get them to betray each other. But they did not.

Nevertheless, one of the most sensational show trials in the history of Nazi rule took place. The judge of the supreme court, Roland Freisler himself, was in charge of the process. Freisler was infamous for having his own absurd interpretation of jurisdiction and therefore was the most feared 'judge' in Germany at the time. As a result, the verdict was already passed before the actual process began and the propaganda trial ended up with Sophie and her two 'co-conspirators' being sentenced to death by guillotine. Hans Scholl's last words were Es lebe die Freiheit! (long live freedom!) and Sophie's resistance lasted until the very end.

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Marta Hillers



Marta Hillers (1911-2001) studied history and the history of art at the Sorbonne in the years 1933 and 1934. After she moved to Berlin in 1934 she worked as a journalist for several newspapers and magazines of the national socialist Germany.

She became famous for the publishing of her autobiographical story *Eine Frau in Berlin* (A Woman in Berlin) under the name Anonyma in the 1950s. In this 'series of unsentimental diary entries', she told her story during the last days of World War II. Hillers was hiding from the Russian soldiers in a basement in Berlin but in the end they found her.

She was born in 1911 as the daughter of a factory manager who died during World War I. At the end of the Third Reich she was 34 years old. The soldiers of the Red Army raped and abused her constantly: 'In the days that followed, the woman - who was well educated and spoke Russian - sought out the highest-ranking Soviet officer in the neighbourhood and made herself available to him. She describes the arrangement as "sleeping for food". Hillers described her suffering in a diary - a method of dealing with the atrocities that many other German women also used.

The Red Army soldiers saw themselves as liberators: German men were prisoners of war, their women spoils of war. Marta Hillers was just one of many of those victims.

Her case raised awareness because of the reception of her publication. *Eine Frau in Berlin* was already published in a few countries when it came out in Western Germany in 1959. The reaction of the German press was rather restrained, at times negative. Many people accused Hillers of making money out of a sickening story.

The book seemed almost forgotten until the year 2003, when it was posthumously republished by famous German author Hans-Magnus Enzensberger. Then it quickly became a bestselling title. Due to the fact that this topic was slowly creeping back into public debate in Germany, one can see it as a perfect image of the process Germany went through when it came to the rehabilitation of the cruelties of World War II in general.

Marta Hillers represents the 'other side' of women's stories during the World War II. Women who did not suffer under the fascist regime because of being enemies of the Nazis, but women who suffered because of being more or less part of that regime.

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Gertrud Pötzing

Gertrud Pötzing (b. 1912), born on 1 January 1912 in Hirschberg, was a member of the Zeugen Jehovas (Jehovah's Witnesses), a religious group that was persecuted by the Nazi regime during WWII.

Her father was originally a patriotic and strong follower of the German emperor before the World War I. As a Christian he believed in God and his home country, so that he volunteered for the army when the war began in 1914. Because of several cruel experiences witnessed on the battlefield his faith began

Gertrud Pötzing



to decline. After the war he worked as a railway employee when he first came in contact with the so-called "Bibelforschern" or Jehovah's Witnesses.

His daughter Gertrud would accompany him to one of his meetings when she was 13 years old. The Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany had about 3,000 to 4,000 members at that time and discrimination and criminal convictions against them had already begun during the reign of the German reich.

After finishing her training as a tailor it was really difficult for Gertrud to find a job because of her religious views. She went to Hungary and Yugoslavia looking for work. In Yugoslavia she first met Martin who later became her husband.

The Jehovah's Witnesses were officially forbidden in Germany in 1933 and their leaflets were all burnt. Gertrud Pötzing was arrested by the Gestapo in Dresden in 1935. She refused to talk about the secret documents and secret societies of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Gestapo tried to force her, during countless questionings and interrogations, to sign a paper against the spread of her own faith. She refused to betray her 'brothers and sisters' and as a result Gertrud was deported to Ravensbrück Concentration camp in 1941. Meanwhile, her husband Martin was interned in the infamous concentration camp Mauthausen, where many other Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested and interned.

Because of her determined efforts and interventions at the end of the war, she managed to finally see her husband again. Since then, Martin and Gertrud Pötzing travelled for 31 years throughout Germany spreading the word of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

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Łódź, Poland *Herstories*

Introduction

Łódź was founded in the 15th century, however, in 1820 it still had only 767 inhabitants. Right before the First World War, their number increased to 600,000, and an agricultural town was transformed into a textile industry centre. Emigrants from Silesia, Bohemia, Moravia, Brandenburg, Switzerland, France, and England came to it. The city became the 'promised land' (it was easy to make a fortune there), a place where numerous cultures and religions coexisted and influences merged, and a cultural and ethnical borderland. It was inhabited by Catholics, Jews, members of the Orthodox church, and Protestants. Łódź developed not only in industrial and demographic terms, but also as a city. Buildings erected at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century still reflect its exceptional and multicultural character.

Most Germans living in the city were craftsmen and industrialists, Russians were employed in the administration and army, Poles coming from nearby villages became the workforce in factories, while Jews dealt with trade and finances. The coexistence of these groups was not idyllic. Although they tolerated and were kind to each other, the harmonious life of the minorities was disturbed by chauvinist tendencies as well as social and political conflicts. Despite all kinds of tensions, the multicultural atmosphere prevailed in Łódź until the outbreak of World War II.

In September 1939, the Łódź Germans welcomed the Nazi army entering the city by cheering in the streets. Despite the fact that Łódź was incorporated into the Third Reich and renamed Litzmannstadt, the city was marked by the trauma of the Holocaust. In the ghetto established within its borders, about 145,000 Jews from all around Europe were killed or transported to concentration camps (there was also a special sub-camp for the Roma in the ghetto).

The presented stories of women living in Łódź during the World War II have been chosen so as to show the multicultural character of the city, and to draw attention to the fact that people fall victim to war regardless of their ethnic and religious background, particularly if they are women.

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Alina Szapocznikow

Alina Szapocznikow (1926-73) came from an assimilated Jewish family, provincial intelligentsia. She was born in Kalisz on 16 May 1926, her parents were doctors. Her father Jakub was a dentist, and her mother Rywka was a paediatrician. After Alina was born, they moved to Pabianice, as this was Jakub's hometown. They lived in an elegant quarter, in 4 Narutowicza Street.

In 1938, her father died of tuberculosis. This death symbolically ended the happy period in the life of the family. In 1939 the war broke out, and in February 1940 a ghetto was established in Pabianice, where they had to move. On 16 May 1942, Germans started to liquidate the Pabianice ghetto and transport people to Łódź. Alina, together with her mother and brother, were transported there on 18 May. The Łódź ghetto covered an area of about four square kilometres. 150,000 Jews lived there, suffering from hunger, diseases, and a shortage of medicines. The ghetto was located in the poorest quarters of the city, without a sewer system, and it was completely isolated. It could only be entered through official gates.

They were housed in 24/4 Hohensteiner Strasse (today's Zgierska Street). Alina was registered in the list of newcomers as a nurse, and her brother Mirosław was registered as an installation electrician, so that they could find a job. Everyone unfit for work, including children and the elderly, were sent to concentration

camps. Alina's mother worked in a children's hospital and through her intercession, in June 1943, Alina was placed in a vocational school at the Leon Glazer underwear and dress factory in Dworska Street, where students were taught sewing and fed, and teachers secretly taught them a secondary school curriculum.

The ghetto's atmosphere was described by Maria Jarosz as follows: "Everyone were afraid probably all the time. They were afraid of death of themselves and their relatives. They would welcome the end of each day with a relief: once again they managed to survive. But what would happen tomorrow or the day after? And what death awaited them? Even I, a small optimist, didn't know how to chase away bad thoughts. Would I die? Of hunger, killed by a bullet, or in a gas chamber? And were people burnt in crematoria really dead? During the daytime it was easier not to think about it, but before falling asleep it was much more difficult (...) I knew – just like my small brother – that you had to deal with depression on your own, you didn't involve adults in it".

Alina was about 16-17 at that time and she would always have several boyfriends. Seducing them was her passion. People living in the ghetto enjoyed the moment in case there was no tomorrow, and Alina seized every opportunity to be happy and derive pleasure from life. Here is what she wrote in her yellow book: "Apple trees are in bloom. Oh! How beautiful I am. Oh! How unhappy I am, how happy, imprisoned, depressed, how I crave freedom! How I'd like to get away".

In August 1944, Alina and her mother were taken from the ghetto to Auschwitz, and then to Bergen-Belsen. She survived the war and became a sculptor. She did not return to her wartime experiences. For many years she was battling against cancer, and she died on 2 March 1973, in Paris.

She was known for her expressive works reflecting transformations taking place in a human body. She was interested in sensuality and drama – she was looking for a proper form for them, using modern materials. Fascinated by what happens to people in extreme situations, she wrote: 'A fleeting moment, a trifling moment – this is the only symbol of our earthly existence'.

The artist's works can be seen on the Culture.pl website. (<http://culture.pl/en/artist/alina-szapocznikow>)

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Maria Eugenia Jasińska

Maria Eugenia Jasińska (1906-43) was born on 20 November 1906, in Łódź. She lived in 10 Żytnia Street in the Bałuty District. She attended Romana Konopczyńska-Sobolewska Girl's Secondary School. Most probably, she came from a working-class family. In the third form of the secondary school she joined the 6th Klementyna Hoffmanowa Girl Scouts' Troop in Łódź and was soon elected by her peers as patrol leader. In the Scouts, she

Maria Eugenia Jasińska



was never an instructor that would acquire instructor licences or serve functions in the organisation. In 1928, she graduated from the secondary school and wanted to graduate in pharmacy and medicine in order to become a paediatrician. On 8 June 1932, she received a degree of an 'assistant pharmacist' at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Warsaw. She graduated from extramural studies, while working in a pharmacy of the national insurance system as a trainee.

On 1 September 1939, World War II broke out. Two months later the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association was officially dissolved, and the underground Grey Ranks and Wartime Rescue Services of Girl Scouts were established in its place. Jasińska became a member of the resistance and the underground movement in Łódź under the cover of her work in the pharmacy.

After the ghetto for Jews was established in February 1940 in the Bałuty District, the Jasińskis had to leave their home because the ghetto area covered their address, and they moved to 80 Wrześniańska Street, not far from their family home. Maria decided to live alone in 33 Płocka Street in the Chojny District, far from her previous quarter. Working in the pharmacy, she helped those in need. She sold them medicines that were difficult to obtain and organised medical care. She would help everyone in danger of death and those wanted. At some point, having won the trust of the German manager of the pharmacy, called at that time Pod Łabędziem/Under the Swan (37 Wólczajska Street), she produced false documents for the soldiers of the Home Army and escapees in the pharmacy basement. Polish and foreign officers, soldiers, Jews, and priests got them. She sent food parcels to concentration camps, forced-labour camps, and the ghetto in Łódź. As part of the resistance, she was a liaison smuggling people abroad. For example, she took part in the Dorsze/Codfish operation, the aim of which was to smuggle three British officers who had escaped from a POW camp abroad.

On 19 April 1942, at 11 am, she was arrested in the pharmacy in 6-go Sierpnia Street, where she worked. Initially, she was kept in the prison in Gdańska Street, and then she was transported to Radogoszcz. In the prison she was subjected to prolonged torture, the aim of which was to obtain information about other participants of the operation and names of the Home Army soldiers, however, she did not give away anything. She was accused of helping English officers to illegally cross the border with the General Government.

The investigation lasted over a year. Jasińska did not plead guilty to the charges, skilfully refuting the Gestapo's arguments. During the investigation, the interrogators did not manage to get any specific information concerning her activity or the remaining prisoners out of her. On 8 March 1943 her case was heard in the district court by two generals and ten German officers. Jasińska was sentenced to death by hanging. Such a harsh sentence resulted from her determination, as she skilfully defended herself and others. Only the testimony of Bernard Drozd, a member of an underground organisation from Poznań, most probably obtained through torture, pointed Jasińska out as a resistance liaison.

On 20 April 1943, Maria Eugenia Jasińska was executed, probably in the Łódź Jewish cemetery. On 10 November 1944, Colonel Michał Stempkowski, the commanding officer of the Home Army Łódź District, awarded her posthumously the Silver Cross of the War Order of Virtuti Militari. In 1945, her family received a diploma from the Marshal of the air force of the British Commonwealth 'as a token of gratitude and appreciation of the help she provided to sailors, soldiers, and pilots'. On the thirtieth anniversary of the liberation of the country, Jasińska was decorated with the Cross of Valour 'for her bravery and courage'. Her body has not been found.

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Homeless women

One of the shelters for homeless women in Łódź was run by the Albertine Sisters. They were brought to the then Łódź Diocese in 1926. Their first task was taking care of the elderly and the disabled, for whom a home was established in Sulejów near Łódź. A similar institution was later allotted to Albertine Sisters in Wolborz (1927), and then in Łęczyca (1936) located near Łódź. In 1938 they came to Łódź and started work in a night shelter for homeless women located in 32 28, Pułku Strzelców Kaniowskich Street. It had 180 beds for the needy. Next to the home the 7th National Police Station was established in order to break up fights taking place in the neighbourhood. On 1 September 1939, the home was taken over by the Łódź Municipality. The shelter for women was opened until 24 February 1940, when the Gestapo raided the place. Soldiers took 140 women staying there to an unknown place, and two days later the Albertine Sisters were ordered to vacate the home.

Extermination of the homeless during the Second World War was a fact however, not many people realize that. It was a result of the social eugenics practiced by the Third Reich. A certain position in a hierarchy ensured chances of survival. This depended on one's ethnical background, valued better or worse (Jewish, Roma, and Polish backgrounds were the worst), and one's position within the social structure, being a result of one's views, sexual identity, and social class. The social policy of the Third Reich distinguished the so-called social elements, which were rather broadly defined. They included beggars, homeless people, tramps, alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, petty criminals, and the poor. Research into 'asocial' groups, today classified as socially excluded, was conducted in the Reich before the Second World War. At that time, researchers were dealing with projects as part of the activity of the German Committee for Scientific Research. Conclusions from this research delivered 'evidence' justifying the killing of selected individuals deemed racially impure, as they had 'bad' blood, while 'bad' blood could have also concerned poor and other socially maladjusted people. Thus, the research covered 'tramps', people with all kinds of psychological and physical disorders as well as representatives of minorities.

One of the key researchers from the already mentioned Institute – Robert Ritter – wrote that the low value of people of low social status was equal to the low value of the mentally ill whose disorders were hereditary. He described the then underclass of the city as 'low-value elements'. He believed that they came from 'a combination of asocial elements and the mentally retarded, [which] gave birth to the population of idlers, prostitutes, camouflaged beggars, drunkards, and creeps'. Ritter also worked on the project entitled Reasons for insurmountable poverty. This research was conducted on one of the German social estates. Here are the conclusions he drew after the end of the research: 'poverty is not caused by economic factors but can be ultimately explained in terms of hereditary and biological principles'. During World War II people categorised as the 'asocial class' were sent to concentration camps, just like the representatives of ethnic groups, political opposition, and sexual minorities. 'Asocial' individuals were marked in the camps with a black triangle.

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Regina (Inka) Milichtajch

Regina (Inka) Milichtajch was a Jewish woman from Łódź. When the World War II broke out, she was a girl in her twenties. Before the war she had worked as a sales assistant. She had a seven-years younger brother and a nine-years younger sister. She also had a fiancé but the war broke this bond. In 1940, when the ghetto in Litzmannstadt was established, she was moved there with her whole family, including her parents. She gave a false date of birth – she said she was five years younger in order to be in the same age group as her sister and get deported with her. As she emphasised in her memoirs, in the ghetto she tried to take care of herself despite numerous diseases she contracted because of hunger and poverty (she even stopped menstruating then). However, she did not want to 'frighten people' with the way she

looked. She saw her friends go mad due to constant hunger they suffered.

She said that in the workplaces in the ghetto people had love affairs: 'sex worked', she said, despite diseases, hunger, death, and uncertainty. People did not want to wait. She also decided to have a love affair with a man 20 years her senior, who was lonely, cultured, and clearly interested in her. For a long time, this relationship was platonic. It was broken after she visited him at his home, where he treated her to a feast of bread and tea. He was moved that she had turned out to be 'a decent girl in the ghetto', so he proposed to her. Inka turned down his proposal.

For some time, thanks to letters smuggled into and out of the ghetto, she would 'arrange to meet' one of her schoolmates and her mother – Poles who lived outside the ghetto. These 'meetings' took place as follows: on the arranged day, her schoolmate and her mother got on a tram that ran through the ghetto in the Polish part of the city. They were standing on the tram platform, while Inka with her mother and sister were walking down the pavement, following the tram. They 'met' without words, without any gesture; they could only look at each other.

The Litzmannstadt Ghetto was liquidated in 1944. Inka together with her father, brother, and sister were taken to the camp in Auschwitz. Her mother had died before that, and her father and brother died in the camp. Only Inka and her sister survived the war. After prisoners got to Auschwitz, they had their heads shaved. However, Inka was not completely shaved (which she treated as a happy coincidence). She also managed to hide a small fine-toothed comb (which protected her against lice). Thanks to this, as she said, she 'was a human being of a specific sex' because 'the fact that I had hair often made contacts with other people easier, I didn't frighten anybody'. After leaving Auschwitz, she and her sister went through the camp in Bergen-Belsen, and then they got to Magdeburg, where they were when the war ended and from where they safely came back to Poland. On their way back to the country, they stayed on a German farm, where they joined a group of POWs and Polish forced labourers. Separated from their families, people were building new relationships. Inka caught the eye of one of the prisoners – a Serbian. In order to prove his serious intentions, he brought her a big loaf of bread and some chocolate. This was his Red Cross ration, which he had received as a prisoner of war. The bread was eaten by Inka's sister and her friend. Inka was terrified because she was afraid that the Serbian would treat it as her consent to their relationship, and Inka did not want this. Fortunately, he believed her explanation and left her alone.

Reference:

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Johanna Majewska

Johanna: My whole family came from Zgierz since time immemorial. My great-grandmother's maiden name was Rej, just like this poet Mikołaj. And my grandfather came from Riga, Latvia. He was a great lord. He came to Poland with Mr Possent, a great factory owner from England. They had studied together. And he met my beautiful grandmother, returned to Latvia, said

goodbye, fell in love, and stayed. So only my grandfather was from Latvia. But the rest of the family have lived in Zgierz since time immemorial. And, you know, we simply can't be Germans because we have Polish roots [she raises her voice]...And then, hard times came because my grandfather's name was Johann Ernest Rosenberg, so Germans thought he was a Jew. And there were lots of trouble with the Germans, and it all started when my father was taken to Germany in 1942. He escaped...Then searches started and they gave my grandfather a hard time. They kept him several times here in Łódź, in Anstadta Street. The Gestapo headquarters was located there. And they would summon him, it was Easter, and after Easter he was to decide (he was an evangelical) whether he would sign the Volksliste or whether he was a Jew. And on Easter Day he had a stroke and died, while we – my grandmother, my mother, and I – were left alone. My father never came back...He met a woman from Grodno, she was a young girl. Fell in love and divorced my mum. So there were three of us: my grandma, my mum, and I...

After 1945, things were bad. You could feel some kind of hatred among people. Before the war, when my parents went somewhere, for example on holiday, they wouldn't go far, only to Lućmierz, or Rosanów. Rich Jews from Łódź rented rooms there. So everyone stayed together: Poles, Germans, Jews. Everyone were together, no one was alone. And then such hatred appeared...Times were hard. There was hatred. I understand that during the occupation there was a great deal of injustice. But those responsible for it had already escaped. And those who stayed were innocent people. I went to school, there was a lot of snow, they wanted to go past me, they knocked me over, kicked me. The same happened at school: "Kraut, Heinie, she's stuffed herself with butter". While I hadn't even seen butter, you know, if someone had something, it was rape oil or something...During the occupation you would spread oil on bread...

Let me tell you a story: it was before Christmas. We lived in the attic. It was cold. There was only a pot-bellied stove there...We were just sitting there and suddenly my grandma said to my mum: 'What are we going to do now? There's nothing; there's no flour, sugar, or bread. There's literally nothing. What are we going to do?' And my mum said: 'I could borrow it somewhere'. She went to one of my aunts, and then to another. They were all so-called aunts. And one of them gave us some sugar, another gave us something else, and so we were sitting there. What was going to happen? Christmas Eve came and we had nothing! Not even a slice of bread. The window had frozen over. I only breathed on the window pane and wiped a circle in it. It's cold, we're sitting, waiting. Suddenly my mum says: 'My God, if you're in heaven, help us. But don't help me, help this child!' And my grandma says: 'What are you doing? Praying? If God really loved us, he wouldn't hurt us so much.' And my mum says: 'Don't say such things! What if this God exists?' And we're still sitting, and it's got dark all at once. We didn't know those residents who lived there. We only knew the Landlord. The Landlady was also from Germany. And suddenly someone knocks on the door. My grandma says: 'Jesus Christ!' We lived in fear all the time. And someone knocks on the door [the speaker is clearly moved], my grandma opens the door slightly, and a hand appears with a parcel wrapped up in paper, this hand gave us the parcel. My grandma wanted to look out, but the corridor was dark. She only said 'Thank you' and closed the door. There was half a loaf of bread, an apple, some candies, and a piece of pork fat, a big piece. And it wasn't pork fat for melting, but for slicing. That pork fat was strange. There were a few nuts and a small piece of yeast cake. And my mum said: 'You

see?' And none of them were hungry all of a sudden. They gave me everything. They didn't want it. They weren't hungry, oh, no. We divided the bread. Those loaves were so big, and this was half a loaf. So we divided the bread. For the first and the second days of Christmas. And I also said that I wouldn't eat the cake if they didn't eat it...

You see what it was like? On Christmas Eve it was already really tight. We had suffered great pain with my mum. And even today, when I see a dog that is looking for food, I go to the butcher's. The day before yesterday, I was going to Polo Market, you know, and I saw a poodle, a grey poodle. It was gnawing on ice. Someone had left something there, and the dog was trying to get it from under the ice. I said to myself: 'My God!' I went to the butchers and said: 'Give me one sausage.' Ania gave me a sausage, I paid for it, went out, divided it into several pieces, and gave it to the dog, it ate it immediately... When you're hungry, your stomach really hurts, water gathers in your mouth, sour water, and you feel really terrible. And I was growing then. When I got my first period, I was nearly seventeen. Because I was so thin, so skinny, I was undernourished, you know.

But let bygones be bygones, now it's better. I've got my 840 zlotys. I pay everything, I have no debts. I pay my gas and electricity bills. A postman comes. When he leaves, I already have all bills prepared. The next day I go to the bank. And I pay everything. I also go to a pharmacy and pay 150 zlotys for my medicines, and then, you know, I divide what's left.

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 - Volksdeutsche pozostaną w obozach jeszcze do 31 marca 1948 roku, „Express Ilustrowany”, 3 XI 1947, nr 301, p. 3.
24. In 1943 in Sikawa near Łódź, Germans established a penal camp for “educational work” (Arbeitserziehungslager). It ran until January 1945. Immediately after the war, the communist authorities organized a labour camp there, intended mainly for Germans and Volksdeutsche. From autumn 1948 it operated as a camp for German prisoners of war and officers. After December 1950 the camp was intended exclusively for Poles. The number of deaths in Sikawa was approximately 1,080 people. Under Polish law since 1945 there was announced a decree on criminal liability for deviation from Polish nationality during 1939-45. The decree provided for the detention of Volksdeutsche in the camp until they are brought to trial. The law referred only to the Poles who signed volkslista, not the Germans, who were at that time deprived of their citizenship and deported from Poland.



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