STOLPERSTEIN-VERLEGUNG

in Frankfurt am Main
in remembrance of victims of National Socialism

on December 5, 2025, at 11 a.m.
at Schützenstraße 7
for
Josef, Esther, Helene, Hermann, and Leo Sonnenblick

Josef Sonnenblick
Date of birth: 1/29/1895
Expulsion: “ Polenaktion ” 10/18/1938 Bytom (Beuthen)
Escape: 1939 Belgium, 1940 France
Internment: 1941 Camp des Milles
Deportation: 1942 Drancy transit camp, 8/19/1942 Auschwitz
Date of death: unknown

Esther Erna Sonnenblick, née Frant
Date of birth: 3/16/1889
Expulsion: “ Polenaktion ” 10/18/1938 Bytom (Beuthen)
Escape: 1939 Belgium, 1940 France
Internment: 1941 Camp de Rivesaltes
Deportation: 9/14/1942 Drancy transit camp, 9/16/1942 Auschwitz
Date of death: unknown

Helene Sonnenblick
Date of birth: 11/5/1923
Expulsion: “Poland Action” 10/18/1938 Bytom (Beuthen)
Escape: 1939 Belgium, 1940 France
Internment: 1941 Camp de Rivesaltes
Deportation: 9/14/1942 Drancy transit camp, 9/16/1942 Auschwitz
Date of death: unknown

Hermann Sonnenblick
Date of birth: 5/29/1921
Expulsion: “ Polenaktion ” 10/18/1938 Bytom (Beuthen)
Escape: 1939 England, Scotland, 1942 USA

Leo Sonnenblick
Date of birth: 11/5/1923
Expulsion: “ Polenaktion ” 10/18/1938 Bytom (Beuthen)
Escape: 1939 England, Scotland, 1946 USA

Josef Sonnenblick was born in Ranizów (German: Ranischau) in southern Poland, the son of Majer Drillings and Chaya Sonnenblick. He was married to Esther (Erna) Sonnenblick, née Frant (also: Frank), who came from Jasło. They emigrated to Germany in the early 1920s at

the latest. Both had Polish citizenship. Their three children, a daughter and two sons, were born in Frankfurt: Hermann (later: Herman) in 1921 and the twins Helene and Leo in 1923.

The family initially lived at Zeil 18, then from around 1928 at Hanauer Landstraße 11, from where they moved to Schützenstraße 7 in 1932. From 1937 until their deportation, they lived at Obermainstraße 12. It is quite possible that this change of residence was not voluntary due to anti-Semitic persecution.

After attending school in Poland, Josef Sonnenblick completed a commercial apprenticeship. In Frankfurt, he worked as a commercial clerk in the grocery store "A. Metzger," later "Levi," at Zeil 27. In the early 1930s, he owned a business selling eggs and butter; no business address was registered. He was also employed in auxiliary roles by the Jewish community.

Helene and her brothers attended the Israelite elementary school at Röderbergweg 29. Both brothers then began training as carpenters at the Jewish training workshop on Fischerfeldstraße. Helene had to leave school.

As part of the so-called " Polen-Aktion" (Poland Action), the family was to be expelled across the border to Poland at the end of October 1938. The parents and their children were taken by train from Frankfurt Central Station to the border at Bytom (German: Beuthen). More than 17,000 Polish Jews who had immigrated to Germany were affected by this violent expulsion. In order to avoid having to take them back, Warsaw revoked their Polish citizenship. German and Polish border guards drove the deportees back and forth between the border lines for days. Since Poland refused to accept the expellees, Josef Sonnenblick, his wife, and children also had to return to Frankfurt. After these experiences, they planned their escape.

Leo and Hermann were able to escape to England in 1939 and from there to Glasgow in Scotland. Hermann was briefly interned as an "enemy alien" but was soon released. In Scotland, he attended a yeshiva (religious school) and was registered as a "rabbinical student."

Helene was unable to flee to England with her brothers because her travel documents had to be reissued. Her parents planned to leave with their daughter and applied for visas for Belgium and England. They submitted lists of their belongings for the shipment of their luggage.

On May 22, 1939, Josef arrived in Brussels, followed by Esther and Helene on October 10. Since Poland had revoked their citizenship, they were now registered as stateless and only had a so-called alien passport. The Belgian authorities noted that Esther and Helene had illegally crossed the border at night with a guide when they entered the country.

The Sonnenblicks planned to travel on from Belgium to the USA, but did not yet have the necessary valid papers. They therefore left Brussels before the German invasion in May 1940 and fled to France.

German citizens in France and England were sent to camps as "unwelcome foreigners" immediately after the outbreak of war, and this also affected Jewish and political refugees. The family was probably initially interned together. There is evidence that Josef was in the Camp des Milles near Aix-en-Provence in 1941, which was used as a deportation camp for Jews in the following years.

Josef Sonnenblick
(Yad Vashem)

Esther Sonnenblick
(privat, Fam. Sonnenblick)

Helene Sonnenblick
(Yad Vashem)

Helene and Esther were sent to the Rivesaltes camp near Perpignan. From January 1941, this camp held Spanish Civil War refugees, Sinti and Roma from Alsace, and foreign Jews. In August 1942, it became a main collection camp for Jews who had fled from Germany to the unoccupied zone in southern France. Always hoping to be able to leave soon and be reunited as a family, the parents and daughter in the French camps corresponded by letter with their two sons in England. The sons, as far as they had money, sent their parents food parcels.

Like many other camp inmates, the Sonnenblick family waited in the camp for entry papers for the USA. But the hurdles were high, and Jewish refugees were not welcome anywhere. In order to leave via Portugal, the only remaining escape route after the outbreak of war, they needed a Spanish visa, which they could only apply for with a Portuguese visa. A Portuguese entry visa required an entry visa for the destination country and proof of a booked and paid ship passage. Finally, a French exit visa also had to be applied for.

The parents tried in vain to enable at least their daughter to flee to England, but unfortunately without success. Since they did not receive an exit permit, mother and daughter were transported on September 14, 1942, from Rivesaltes to Drancy, the central transit camp for the extermination camps in the east. From this collection camp near Paris, over 60,000 French and foreign Jews were deported to the extermination camps.

Esther and Helene Sonnenblick were crammed into cattle cars with 586 men and 407 women on the 33rd transport on September 16, 1942, and deported to Auschwitz. The three-day journey took them via Frankfurt am Main.

Josef Sonnenblick also probably came to Drancy from Camp des Milles only one or two days before his deportation to Auschwitz. He was already deported on August 19, 1942, on Transport 21 to Auschwitz, where he arrived two days later.

All three family members were murdered in Auschwitz.

Hermann Sonnenblick's escape took him to the USA in 1942. In 1943, he was drafted into the US Army. He became a US citizen and lived in New York City, where he found work as a diamond cutter and polisher. He died in New Jersey in 2015.

His brother Leo also emigrated from Glasgow via Liverpool on the Cunard Line to the USA in 1946 to live with an aunt. He found only casual work as a furrier, a job he had already done in England. In 1952, he married Helene Zelkowitz. The couple had three children, including Joseph, who initiated the laying of the Stolpersteine. Leo Sonnenblick died in Cedarhurst, Nassau, USA, in 1998.

The Stolpersteine were initiated by Jennifer Rosebrock and Professor Joseph Sonnenblick, New York, son of Leo Sonnenblick. They were financed by Deutsche Post AG.

The Stolpersteine will be laid on December 5, 2025, prior to the official presentation of a special stamp by Deutsche Post with the motif "Stolpersteine."

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