

Bad Arolsen,
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After More than 80 Years, Families Finally Read Their Loved Ones' Last Words

#lostwords – Farewell letters from Munich-Stadelheim.

First Successes in the Search for the Families of Victims of Nazi Executions

- Fourteen families already found with the help of volunteers
- Eighty-two-year-old daughter of a victim learns of her father's fate for the first time
- Project inspires further research into farewell letters from sites of Nazi executions

Around nine months ago, the Bavarian State Archives and the Arolsen Archives launched a collaborative project focusing on the farewell letters found in the execution files of victims of Nazi persecution from Munich-Stadelheim, one of the regime's central execution sites. The project partners are now presenting the initial results of the #lostwords project.

Volunteers play key role in success

With the help of their Europe-wide network of volunteers, the Arolsen Archives succeeded in locating 14 families within a few months. In addition, extensive information about the people who wrote the farewell letters was gathered. The search for relatives is made easier by the wealth of detail often contained in the execution files held at the Munich State Archives.

One example of a successful search for surviving family members is the case of Lorenz Frühschütz, who was executed in Munich-Stadelheim on October 12, 1943. Volunteers found information on social media that led them to his daughter, Helga Knott, who is 82 years old and now lives in Sardinia. Only through #lostwords did she discover that her father had been executed. Because her mother died young, she had known nothing about his fate beforehand. "I'm a great believer in reality. If something has happened, I want to know about it," says Helga Knott. This attitude explains why she not only read the letters, but also studied his execution file. "He had a different opinion. And he lived at the wrong time. If he had lived in a different era, he would have been free to express his views."

Not every search leads to family members

Some execution victims were so young that they had not started families of their own when they were killed. Nevertheless, the research often fills important gaps and reveals new connections. The case of Jean Ferrier from France is a good illustration. The search

for his relatives led to his hometown, where a street had already been named after him. His farewell letter is now helping to keep the memory of this victim of Nazi murder alive in the town where he lived.

Unexpected collaborations and new lines of research

The #lostwords project has also led to surprising connections with other research initiatives. In early 2025, microscopic specimens from several people executed at Munich-Stadelheim were discovered in the collection of the Institute of Anatomy in Erlangen. During the Nazi era, it was common practice not to bury the remains of execution victims, but to hand them over to nearby anatomical institutes for use in research and teaching. The Institute of Anatomy in Erlangen is now working with the Arolsen Archives to search for the families of these victims as well.

Research in other archives has also led to the discovery of further collections of undelivered farewell letters from the Nazi era.

Farewell letters that never reached their intended recipients

As a “central execution site” in the Nazi era, the Munich-Stadelheim prison was one of the main sites of Nazi injustice in Munich. A total of 1,188 people were executed there up until 1945. Among the most poignant documents to survive are these undelivered farewell letters written by condemned prisoners to their relatives, which were withheld by the prison administration or penal authorities of the time. More than 50 such letters can be found in the 844 so-called execution files, which have been stored in the Munich State Archives since 1975 and are freely accessible for academic and personal research.

The Nazi judiciary as an instrument of persecution

Between 1933 and 1945, the judiciary was co-opted to serve the aims of the Nazi regime, becoming an integral part of its system of injustice. The number of crimes punishable by the death penalty rose from three to 46 during this period. The “justice” dispensed by the special courts was politically motivated and the intention was to consolidate power, eliminate opponents, and intimidate the population.

Detailed information about the #lostwords project, the execution files, and the cooperation can be found at <https://arolsen-archives.org/en/participate/lostwords/>.

Press photos

A selection of [press photos is available for download here](#).

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Biographical Research into Victims of Nazi Persecution Executed at Munich-Stadelheim: Selected Examples

Lorenz Frühschütz was born in Landsberg/Lech in 1912. In 1933, the Nazis imprisoned him in Dachau concentration camp for being a Communist. After his release later that same year, he worked as a casual laborer. During the war, he lived in Munich-Haidhausen with his partner Anna and worked for a piano removal company. When he ignored the Wehrmacht's conscription orders, the Munich Special Court sentenced him to death. At the time of the trial, his partner Anna was seven months pregnant. Lorenz wrote her tender letters from death row, full of care and concern for his unborn child. On October 12, 1943, a merciless justice system had him and five others beheaded at Stadelheim. Lorenz was the second to die; resistance fighter Willi Graf went to the scaffold before him.

In his last letter, Lorenz asked for forget-me-nots to be planted in the cemetery for his brother-in-law and for his child to be named according to his wishes: "If our child is a boy, christen him Georg Lorenz, and if we have a daughter, her name shall be Zenta – that is my last wish."

These final wishes never reached Anna. His daughter Helga was born six weeks after his death. Until October 2025, all she had ever known of her father's fate was that he had died in the war. Since her mother died young too, she never had the opportunity to ask questions or learn more about him.

Excerpt from Lorenz Frühschütz's farewell letter:

My dearest Anni,

Today I must write to you with the sad news that I will meet my death at 5 o'clock. As I have lived, so I wish to die, I will not tremble. But there will come a time when those who have so much on their conscience are called to account. Now, my dearest, you too will have to find the strength to bear this, and then a time will come when things will go well for you, that is what I wish for you with all my heart.

Above all, give my love to your mother, father, Xaver, Resi, Maria, Kufer, Zenta, and Schorsch, Kathi, Toni, and all your relatives [...] and to the child you are carrying. And tell them that I did not die as a murderer, but only because I wanted what has been promised to us for 10 years now, and that is this: only peace, never war again. And if you go to the cemetery, keep a small space free by Schorsch's grave and plant a few forget-me-nots there, that is my last wish. And I close my last letter with these words: be brave and hold on, things will soon be different. Once more, a thousand greetings and kisses from your beloved Lorenz.

If our child is a boy, christen him Georg Lorenz, and if we have a daughter, her name shall be Zenta – that is my last wish.

Mieczysław Kopyto was born in Grodzisko, Poland, in 1924. In 1941, when he was barely more than a child, he was sent to the German Reich as a forced laborer. He was put to work as a farm hand for a farmer called Bartholomäus Eisenreich near the small Bavarian town of Rosenheim. "Mitschek," as he was known, worked on the farm for over a year and settled in well there. In September 1942, an argument between the boy and a German maid escalated. She accused him of trying to rape her, and the local police arrested him. Less than three months later, Special Court 1 in Munich sentenced him to death. Mieczysław was 18 years old when he was executed in Munich-Stadelheim prison.

His trial before the Special Court was a summary proceeding, and he was not given the opportunity to defend himself. He was convicted under the *Polenstrafrechtsverordnung* (Polish Criminal Regulation), the enactment of which was later classified as a war crime. Only superficial investigations were made. Mieczysław did not get a fair trial. It was his word against hers, and as a Pole, Mieczysław's word counted for nothing. In a final letter to his father, mother, and siblings, Mieczysław insisted that he was innocent. "Things went very badly for me in court, I was convicted of something I did not do."

His letter was never sent. Instead, his parents received a parcel containing his belongings. In his letter, Mieczysław asked for his soul to be remembered at a church service. Eighty-three years later, his family learned of this wish and was able to fulfill it.

Excerpt from Mieczysław Kopyto's farewell letter:

Dear parents, Mama and Papa, brothers and sisters.

The first words of my letter are praise be to Jesus Christ. I write to you with tears in my eyes, caught in this unhappy fate that has befallen me, in my last days I want you to know that I have stayed healthy so far, but what does it matter if I'm in good health when the white one [Death] awaits me today, or tomorrow.

[...] I was imprisoned on June 28, after that woman, the one you have a photo of, accused me of something so trivial. I was held in Rosenheim for 11 weeks and transported to Munich on September 11, my trial was on September 17 in the morning, at 8:30 a.m. Things went badly at court because she committed perjury and they believed her and not me, I didn't get a fair hearing. My only hope is that God is with me, but don't worry, because I'm not alone in this unhappy fate, there are many of us Poles and people of other nationalities here.

[...] Arrange for [...] a mass to be said for me, perhaps the good Lord will still lead me back to earthly life, pray for me, I still want to return to you, but I don't know what will happen to me, all hope lies in God, every night I see you.

[...]

I take my leave of you, Mama and Papa, brothers and sisters, brothers-in-law and family, and my dearest companions. [...] Write back by registered post, I don't know how much longer I'll still be here.

Henry Hoareau (Albert Maire), born on January 17, 1918, in Beaune in the Côte-d'Or department, took his own life in Munich-Stadelheim prison on April 15, 1945, just days before the end of the war. Under the name Henry Hoareau, he left a farewell letter to his wife Imperia. After extensive research, however, it turned out that Henry's real name was Albert Maire. Albert used his brother-in-law's name as an alias from 1943 on.

In 1943, a German court in Kassel found Albert Maire guilty of having had contact with prisoners of war. He was taken to Kassel prison on January 4, 1943, but managed to escape.

There is much evidence to support the theory that Albert Maire returned to France after escaping from prison in Kassel and assumed his brother-in-law's identity. His wife Imperia d'Este also used the surname Hoareau. Why Albert Maire returned to Germany again later remains unclear. One possible explanation is that he followed his wife, who had been conscripted for forced labor in Munich.

Members of the Hoareau and Maire families experienced Nazi persecution on multiple occasions. Several of Albert Maire's siblings were also sent to Germany for forced labor. Various members of the family were active in the resistance.

Henry Antony Hoareau's brother, Joseph Lucien Yves Hoareau, who was born in 1915, died in Dachau concentration camp in May 1945. The Nazis deported his wife Christiane, née Delattre, to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. She survived. The couple had one daughter, Yvette Hoareau, who died in 2021 – but left a daughter of her own. Efforts are now focused on making contact with this generation of grandchildren.

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Excerpt from Albert Maire's farewell letter:

My dear wife,

As I find myself in a cell for those who have been condemned to death, I have no hope left. I would have loved to see you, but that's impossible. Go to the gentleman I was staying with and bring him the bicycle that is at Lake Tegernsee. I prefer to take my own life. Farewell, my love. Farewell, take a friend with you and go to Dachau to pick up my things and my money, which belongs to you because I sold your things. I close with a last kiss, I will not forget you until my last breath.

Marija Žgur, known as Minka, was born in Slovenia in 1917. She was captured in the village of Orehovica and shot in Munich-Stadelheim on June 11, 1944, for her activities as a partisan, nurse, and member of the People's Liberation Army's "Ivan Gradnik Brigade."

Volunteers in Slovenia succeeded in locating Marija Žgur's nephew, Boris Žgur. Boris's father was Marija Žgur's brother. Boris Žgur recalls that Marija was not spoken of in the family for many years because she had apparently given birth to a son at a very young age while unmarried. Her father in particular had maintained a stubborn silence about Marija.

The family believes that Marija's son, Slavko, was sent to an orphanage in Trieste and later adopted by a family in Rijeka (now in Croatia). Slavko apparently tried to contact the family later, but Marija's father did not allow any member of the family to get in touch with him.

According to family lore, Marija joined the partisans as a young woman. At the end of 1943, a partisan gathering was held for the population of a nearby village. Marija wanted to spend the night at her father's house in Podraga, but because he refused to allow it, she went to the village of Orehovica, where some of her mother's family lived, to find shelter. She was eventually arrested in a nearby inn.

Up until now, the family had assumed that Marija had been murdered either in the San Sabba concentration camp near Trieste or in the Auschwitz extermination camp. Through the #lostwords project, they learned of her execution in Munich-Stadelheim and of the farewell letter she wrote to an unknown friend.

Farewell letter from Marija Žgur:

Dear Ivanka, I have ascended to the stars. You remember how I always said that this is what would happen, but you didn't want to believe it. Ivanka, May 11 was the end of my stay in this world, and I have gone home to my Mama. I tried very hard to be brave and I haven't cried, because I know my last hour has come. I have been to confession and received Holy Communion. Be brave, Ivanka, I send you greetings and kiss you for the last time. I'm in heaven now. Warmest regards to all. Farewell.

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About the Arolsen Archives

The Arolsen Archives are the world's largest archive on the victims and survivors of Nazi persecution. The collection has information on about 17.5 million people and belongs to UNESCO's Memory of the World. It contains documents on the various victim groups targeted by the Nazi regime and is an important source of knowledge for society today.

Social Media:

LinkedIn @ArolsenArchives: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/arolsen-archives>

Instagram @arolsenarchives: <https://www.instagram.com/arolsenarchives/>

YouTube @geschichteistjetzt: <https://www.youtube.com/@geschichteistjetzt>

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About the Bavarian State Archives

The State Archives of Bavaria acquire, secure, and preserve the written records of the Free State of Bavaria in both analog and digital form. The archival holdings comprise nearly 50 million documents. Among other things, the Munich State Archives hold the records from the Munich-Stadelheim Prison. The execution files, some of which include farewell letters, can be accessed there for both academic and private research in accordance with the Bavarian Archives Act and can be searched digitally using the virtual reading room.

Contact for Public Relations/Press at the Bavarian State Archives:

oeffentlichkeitsarbeit@gda.bayern.de

Virtual reading room:

<https://www.gda.bayern.de/gvl/welcome.xhtml>

Social Media:

<https://www.instagram.com/staatlichearchivebayerns>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/generaldirektion-der-staatlichen-archive-bayerns/>

Archives in Bavaria Blog:

<https://archivebay.hypotheses.org/>