

A Women of Resistance: The Life of Marie Loewenstein

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Background

After the Nazi regime rose to power, thousands of Jewish citizens in Germany were deported to concentration camps as part of the regime's Final Solution. However, Jewish men in interfaith marriages were initially spared from deportation to prevent unrest among the non-Jewish population. In February 1943, the Gestapo launched the Fabrikaktion, a mass roundup of remaining Jewish citizens. Over 1,700 Jewish men were detained and taken to a Jewish community center on Rosenstrasse in Berlin. When word of the arrests spread, their non-Jewish wives and family members gathered in protest, demanding their release. For over a week, around 6,000 women stood in defiance, facing Gestapo threats and the risk of death. Despite the danger, they refused to back down. Their persistent acts of civil courage led to a remarkable victory—on March 6, 1943, the detained men were released, marking one of the few successful public protests against Nazi policies during the Holocaust.

Introduction

The Rosenstrasse Civil Courage Foundation is dedicated to researching the lives of the women who participated in the Rosenstrasse Protest, ensuring their stories are remembered and recognized. Through their collection of testimonies, and goal of discovering descendants through genealogical research, the foundation inspires to inform the public on the issue. Despite the courage and sacrifices of these women and their families, little is known about their personal histories. This research aims to bridge that gap by uncovering the ancestry and personal narratives of the protesters, compiling a collection of stories, artifacts, and testimonies that humanize history. This project focuses on Marie Lilli Loewenstein, one of the protesters. Using genealogical research tools such as AncestryDNA, JewishGen, and Find a Grave, key details of Marie's life—including her birth, marriage, and family background—were uncovered. Based on these findings, a biography was created to document her story and highlight her bravery. By shedding light on individual experiences like Marie's, this project ensures that the memory of the Rosenstrasse Protest reaches and resonates with more people.

QR Code to biography



Methods

1. Selection of Subject

- The Rosenstrasse Civil Courage Foundation provided a list of protesters involved in the Rosenstrasse protest.
- Selected Marie Lilli Loewenstein as the subject of research.

2. Genealogical Research

- Utilized AncestryDNA, JewishGen, and Find a Grave to locate historical records, including Marie's birth, marriages, and death certificates.

3. Supplementary Research

- Gathered additional information from the University of Denver's archives on the Loewenstein family, which provided further context into the details of Marie's life and background.

4. Publication

- The completed biography, written to detail the events of Marie's life, will be posted on the Rosenstrasse Civil Courage Foundation's website to contribute to the documentation and remembrance of the protesters.



Figure 1.1:
Henry Loewenstein, Karin Steinberg, Max Loewenstein, and Marie "Mautzy" Loewenstein family portrait in Berlin, Germany before Henry left for England on the Kindertransport. Courtesy of DU Library Exhibits.



Figure 1.2: Marie Lilli Margarete Bätege Steinberg, 1915. Courtesy of DU Library Exhibits.

- 1894 Birth of Marie Lilli Bätege, Tallinn, Estonia
- 1914 Birth of daughter, Karin, with first husband, Erich, who she wed a year prior
- 1917 Fled to Berlin Germany due to the Russian Revolution, Erich died three years later
- 1925 Marriage to Max Loewenstein and birth of son Heinrich
- 1933 Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany
- 1939 Heinrich is sent to England via the Kindertransport Program
- 1943 Marie takes part in the Rosenstrasse protest to fight for the release of Max



Figure 1.3: Henry Loewenstein visiting the Rosenstrasse memorial in Berlin, Germany. Courtesy of DU Library Exhibits.

Results

- Uncovered key details about Marie Lilli Loewenstein's upbringing in Estonia, immigration to Berlin, two marriages, and family history, including living and nonliving descendants.
- Compiled an extensive biography documenting her life from birth to death, highlighting her resilience and bravery.
- Ensured her story is publicly accessible—the biography will be published on the Rosenstrasse Civil Courage Foundation's website, allowing her sacrifices to be remembered.
- Committed to ongoing research, aiming to uncover and share the stories of more Rosenstrasse protesters.
- Recognized the biography as a living document, continuously updated as new information emerges.

Conclusion

- The Rosenstrasse Protest and the courageous women who risked their lives have long been overlooked in history.
- The Rosenstrasse Civil Courage Foundation is making pivotal efforts to uncover and share the lost stories of these women, ensuring their bravery is recognized.
- Marie Lilli Loewenstein led a life of resilience—escaping the Russian Revolution, protecting her family during the Holocaust in Berlin, and adapting to a new life in the United States.
- Her biography continues to grow as new discoveries emerge, shedding light on her untold sacrifices.
- Through ongoing research and storytelling, the Rosenstrasse Foundation preserves these histories, ensuring that the memory of these remarkable women endures.

References

