



OSKAR ROSE

(Groß Strehlitz, former Upper Silesia, now Poland, January 27, 1906 – 1968)



Image: Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma

Oskar Rose was born on January 27, 1907, to Anton and Lisetta Rose in Groß Strehlitz (then Upper Silesia). His brother, Vinzenz Rose, was two years his junior. In the early 1930s, the family lived in Darmstadt. Anton Rose ran a successful cinema company, where his sons also worked.

The Rose family, who were Sinti, suffered discrimination. As early as 1934, Anton Rose was expelled from the Reichsfilmkammer (Reich Chamber of Film). He challenged his expulsion, but eventually, in 1937, Nazis shut down the cinema, and he and his family were deprived of their livelihoods.

To avoid impending arrest, **the family**, who now lived in Frankenthal (Palatine), **decided to flee**. On October 21, 1940, the family members went into hiding. Over the next few years, they stayed in different places, including in Czechoslovakia. Sadly, most of the family

members were captured, arrested and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp in 1943.

Oskar Rose, however, was able to avoid being arrested, **staying hidden from the authorities with forged papers**. In Munich, in the spring of 1943, he tried to get in touch with various high-ranking representatives of the Catholic Church. Despite of the risk, Rose contacted the Catholic Archbishop and Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber to inform them about the plans in place to kill the Sinti and Roma, and the imminent deportations. Requesting his assistance, he was refused an audience with the Cardinal. The two letters sent by Rose to the President of the Episcopal Conference of Fulda, Cardinal Adolf Bertram, and the Archbishop Conrad Gröber of Freiburg, resulted in similar outcomes. **By asking for help from the underground, Rose contested Sinti and Roma persecution by the Nazis**. The Church failed to defend Sinti and Roma, even though the majority were Catholic.

After his failed requests for help, Rose was able to find shelter in a friends' home in Heidelberg. There, he discovered that **his brother Vinzenz was detained in the nearby concentration camp of Neckarelz**, a subcamp of the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration

camp, and **worked out a plan to free him**. Once again, in resisting the Nazi Regime, Rose put himself in danger. With the assistance of a bribed truck driver, he succeeded in freeing his brother from the camp. Armed with forged documents, the brothers fled through Mannheim and Munich to the village of Gangkofen, where they witnessed the liberation by the American troops.

Thirteen members of Rose's family, including his parents, were killed by the Nazis.

The ongoing discrimination of Sinti and Roma after 1945 led the Rose brothers to establish the **Union of Racially Persecuted People not of Jewish Faith** in 1956. With this, they laid the foundations of the German Sinti and Roma Civil Rights movement.

Oskar Rose passed away in 1968. His brother pursued his political work.

In his letter to Cardinal Bertram, Oskar Rose wrote in May 1943: "It is important to point out that this case is concerned not with individual families, but 14,000 members of the Roman Catholic Church. That is why our Catholic Church cannot ignore and neglect them."¹

Sources and further information:

1. "Wir geben uns nicht in ihre Hände". Bildungsmaterialien zum Widerstand von Sinti und Roma gegen den Nationalsozialismus. Hrsg. von der Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand und vom Bildungsforum gegen Antiziganismus des Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrums Deutscher Sinti und Roma. Berlin 2019.
2. Brief von Oskar Rose an Michael von Faulhaber, in: Erzbischöfliches Archiv Breslau / Wrocław, IA25z1. Ein Mikrofilm der Akte befindet sich im Archiv der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte, Bonn.
3. Awosusi, Anita; Pflock, Andreas: Sinti und Roma im KZ Natzweiler-Struthof. Anregungen zu einem Gedenkstättenbesuch. Heidelberg 2006.
4. Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma (Hrsg.): 45 Jahre Bürgerrechtsarbeit deutscher Sinti und Roma / 45 year of civil rights work of German Sinti and Roma, Katalog zur Ausstellung, Heidelberg 2017 (online: <http://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/download/6102>). (16.10.20)

This biography has been written by the Educational Forum against Antigypsyism

1. Erzbischöfliches Archiv Breslau / Wrocław, IA25z1. Ein Mikrofilm der Akte befindet sich im Archiv der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte, Bonn.