

Marianne Strauss's "J-stamped" Passport (1939), Wartime Postal Pass (1943), and Postwar Identity Card (1945)

Abstract

In October 1938, the Nazi regime declared that all passports belonging to Jews were invalid until they were stamped with a "J." Passports like the ones belonging to Marianne Strauss pictured here made it clear that she belonged to a Jewish family. Marianne Strauss (1923–1996) was a young Jewish girl from a wealthy family in Essen. When the Nazis began the deportation of Jews from Essen, the Strauss family's respected reputation allowed them to avoid deportation. Instead, they were chosen as the de facto liaisons between the regime and their departing Jewish neighbors. In 1943, however, the Gestapo informed the Strauss family that they were to board the next train to the East that was scheduled to leave two hours later. Marianne Strauss managed to flee and was aided by the Bund, a left-wing underground association that had tasked itself with protecting Jews and political allies. With their help, Strauss changed her hair and clothes and started her life in hiding for the next two years. She obtained a postal ID card (second image) that no longer identified her as a Jew. This identification was not, however, a proper ID and she was forced to avoid all major police check points until Germany's defeat in 1945. The third image shows her postwar ID that identified her as a person who had been persecuted by the Nazi regime. Marianne's story is a rare one. She avoided capture and deportation for the entirety of the remaining war years. Her friends never betrayed her, nor did she raise the suspicions of local authorities and neighbors. She was the only member of her immediate family who survived. In Berlin, it is estimated that of the 5,000 to 7,000 Jews that remained in the city after May 1945, 1,400 had survived the war underground in a similar manner as Marianne Strauss.

Source





Source: Photos: Marianne Ellenbogen. Courtesy of University of Southampton

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