

Rufajzen, Oswald

(1922--1999 originally named Shmuel Rufeisen, later known as Brother Daniel), Jew posing as an ethnic German who helped save Jews during the Holocaust.

Born near Cracow, Rufajzen was a member of the *Akiva* Youth Movement as a young man. When World War II broke out in September 1939, Rufajzen escaped to Vilna, Lithuania where he met up with other Zionists who had gathered there. In June 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union and Soviet-occupied territories, including Lithuania. Rufajzen managed to procure false identity papers that "confirmed" that he was a Volksdeutsche (ethnic German) named Josef Oswald. Rufajzen then moved to Mir, a town in Belorussia, where he began working for the local police chief. Soon, under the name Oswald, he was appointed assistant district commander and translator for the district commander of the German police.

While in Mir, Rufajzen met up with two Zionist friends from his Vilna days, who were now leaders of the Mir Ghetto Underground. Unbeknownst to the German police, he cooperated fully with the underground, giving them information about the Germans' plans and providing them with weapons. On August 6, 1942 Rufajzen told the underground leaders that a date had been set for the liquidation of the ghetto: August 13. He also told them that on August 9, he and the rest of the police would be out of town on a "raid against the Partisans"---providing the Jews with a perfect opportunity for escape. When the time came, 180 Jews fled the ghetto for the forests.

After the escape, the German authorities began to suspect that Rufajzen had been assisting the Jews. He was arrested, but managed to escape to a monastery, where he hid for 16 months, at which point the Germans were hot on his trail. Rufajzen fled to the forests, where he was almost arrested by the partisans for being a German, until Jewish partisans from Mir recognized him. After the war, Rufajzen helped identify Mir locals who had collaborated with the Germans. He then moved on to Cracow, where he converted to Christianity. He later moved to Israel, where he joined a monastery.

