

Frankfurter, David

(1909--1982), Assassin of a Nazi leader in Switzerland. Frankfurter was born in Daruvar, Croatia to a local Orthodox rabbi. In 1929 he began medical school in Leipzig and then at Frankfurt; in 1934 he moved to Switzerland to continue his studies.

The racial Nuremberg Laws were passed in Germany in September 1935; these and other anti-Jewish steps convinced Frankfurter that he needed to take a stand against the Nazis. He soon began to track Switzerland's leading Nazi, Wilhelm Gustloff. On the evening of February 4, 1936, Frankfurter entered Gustloff's lodgings at the famous Alpine resort town of Davos, and shot him dead. He then immediately surrendered to the police.

Many in Switzerland approved of Frankfurter's act, but the government was afraid of Nazi Germany and thought that German Jewry would only be punished if Frankfurter were to go free. Thus, the trial ignored the political issues and stuck to the criminal elements of Frankfurter's deed. The young medical student was convicted and sentenced to 18 years in jail.

At the end of World War II Frankfurter was granted a pardon, but banished from Switzerland. He settled in Palestine, and only 24 years later, in September 1969, did the Swiss government lift his expulsion order.