

## Zimetbaum, Mala

(1922--1944), Escapee from Auschwitz. Originally from Poland, Zimetbaum grew up in Belgium. In September 1942, during deportations from Belgium, she was deported to Auschwitz, where she was transferred to a women's camp in Birkenau. Since she could speak several languages, Zimetbaum became an interpreter. This accorded her a special status in the camp, but unlike other privileged inmates, Zimetbaum managed to gain the trust of her fellow prisoners.

During her time at the camp, Zimetbaum came to know a young Polish inmate named Adek Galinski. Galinski, who was planning his escape from Auschwitz, invited Zimetbaum to come with him, and in June 1944 the two fled. In fact, Zimetbaum was the first woman to escape Auschwitz. The two managed to reach the Slovak border, but were caught and sent back to the camp. Both were sentenced to death by hanging---as a punishment and a warning to the other prisoners. However, on the way to the gallows, each committed suicide. Zimetbaum took her own life with a hidden razor blade, which she used to cut an artery in her wrist. The ss guard who was holding her tried to grab the razor away from her---and in an ultimate act of defiance, she slapped his face with her bloody hand.