

## The New York Times

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# *Jakiw Palij, Former Nazi Guard Deported After Decades in U.S., Dies at 95*

By Alan Yuhas

Jan. 10, 2019

Jakiw Palij, a former Nazi concentration camp guard who lived for decades in New York City and resisted deportation for 14 years, died on Thursday in a retirement facility in Ahlen, Germany. He was 95.

German officials confirmed the death, according to an American Embassy official. No cause was cited.

Before investigators traced him to the borough of Queens in 1993, Mr. Palij had lived for decades in anonymity, a Polish-born draftsman in one of the most diverse neighborhoods of a city famous for its immigrant communities.

He had arrived in the United States in 1949 in his 20s, after receiving a visa meant for people left homeless by World War II, according to Peter Black, the former chief historian for a Justice Department unit devoted to deporting former Nazis.

On his application, Mr. Palij claimed to have worked on his father's farm and then as a factory worker in Germany during the war.

Mr. Palij told the truth on one account — he was born on Aug. 16, 1923, in the village of Piadyki, then part of Poland and now Ukraine — but lied about his life during the war.

In reality, Mr. Palij had volunteered to serve in Hitler's Schutzstaffel, or SS, in February 1943, according to records unearthed by the Justice Department. He went through training at the Trawniki labor camp in Poland, where the Nazis prepared for Operation Reinhard, the planned extermination of Poland's two million Jews.

With two other Nazi soldiers who would also emigrate to the United States, Mr. Palij served in the Streibel Battalion, guarding forced laborers who made uniforms and brushes, court documents show. On Nov. 3, 1943, an estimated 6,000 Jews at the camp were executed in a single day, according to the historian Christopher Browning's book "Ordinary Men." Mr. Browning called it "the largest killing operation against Jews in the entire war."

Mr. Palij received United States citizenship in 1957, and with his wife bought a home in Queens from a Polish Jewish couple who had survived the Holocaust and were not aware of Mr. Palij's past.

A decade after investigators identified Mr. Palij, a federal judge stripped him of his American citizenship, based on the Justice Department's findings that he had lied on his visa application and had served as a concentration camp guard. A year later, a judge ordered him deported — but neither Poland nor Ukraine would agree to take him.

Germany also refused to accept Mr. Palij, who was never a German citizen.

In limbo in Jackson Heights, he denied that he had participated in any killings and said the SS had forced him into service. "I was never a collaborator," he told The New York Times in 2003.

He also dared the government to arrest him: "Let them come and get me."

"What will they do? Shoot me? Put me in the electric chair?" he asked. "What country is going to take an 80-year-old man in poor health?"

The men who emigrated with Mr. Palij were also pursued by American officials. One died in Queens in 2007 with a case pending against him; the other was stripped of his citizenship in 2001 and died in Florida nine years later.

After other former Nazis died or were deported, Mr. Palij became the last known Nazi war crimes suspect residing in the United States. For years, on Holocaust Remembrance Day, students and faculty members from Rambam Mesivta high school in nearby Lawrence, on Long Island, protested outside his house.

The Trump administration made his deportation a priority, announcing in August 2018 that Germany would receive Mr. Palij. The same day, officials escorted him from his home, and he was flown to Münster, in northwestern Germany.

He had no children, and The Associated Press reported that his wife was deceased.

Melissa Eddy contributed reporting.

A version of this article appears in print on Jan. 11, 2019, on Page B11 of the New York edition with the headline: Jakiw Palij, 95, Nazi Guard Deported After Decades in U.S.