

Konstantin ALEXANDROVICH SHILOV

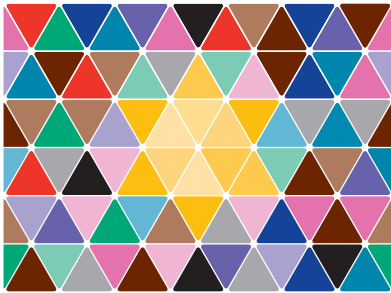


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Mosaic – Victims of
Nazi Persecution





Konstantin Alexandrovich Shilov

Konstantin Alexandrovich Shilov was born in Bugulma in Russia in 1913 and, like millions of other

Russians of his generation, he experienced great hardship during his childhood. In 1921 his family were forced to move to Siberia because of famine in their home region and in 1928 Konstantin's father died. Even as a child Konstantin had worked in the summer but after his father's death he needed to find a permanent job. This eventually led him to volunteer for the Red Army in 1932.

Konstantin had not intended to stay in the army for long but he was successful as a soldier and he rose to become an officer. By the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Konstantin was the commander of an artillery division based in Kiev in Ukraine where he lived with his wife Ksenia.

Konstantin's unit was captured by the Germans outside Kiev on 22nd September 1941. He was sent to a prisoner of war (POW) camp in Volodymyr Volynskiy in western Ukraine along with thousands of other Red Army soldiers. By the spring of 1942 most of the prisoners had died

from starvation or typhus. Konstantin was one of the minority who survived but he was then sent to a series of other POW camps and eventually, in March 1944, to a Gestapo prison in Bydgoszcz in Poland where he was tortured and only narrowly avoided execution.

In June 1944 Konstantin was transferred from Bydgoszcz to the notorious Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Mauthausen was the only camp in Germany and Austria designated by the SS as a 'camp of no return'; i.e. prisoners were not expected to leave the camp alive. In addition to back-breaking work in the camp's huge quarry, Konstantin and other prisoners faced hunger, cold, disease, maltreatment by the guards, and the constant risk of being sent to the camp's gas chamber if they became too weak to work. In November 1944 Konstantin was moved to Ebensee, an equally brutal sub-camp of Mauthausen. When the camp was liberated on 5th May 1945, he was barely alive.

Konstantin returned to Kiev at the end of the war where he was reunited with Ksenia. However, despite surviving the Nazis, he suffered persecution by his own government, including periods of arrest and limited employment opportunities, simply for having been a POW.