

Hans THUNA (1895-?), Else HERZOG (1891- 1944), Erich THUNA (1924- 2012), Erika THUNA (1924-2013)

Originally from Vienna, Austria, the Thuna family escaped to Luxembourg following the Anschluss of Austria to the German Reich in 1938. During their two-year stay in Luxembourg, they were supported by the Jewish ESRA Committee and resided in the Hotel Select. Despite efforts to obtain entry visas for countries in South America, they remained in

Luxembourg until the invasion of German troops in May 1940, from where they embarked on a disrupted transport to Lisbon in November 1940, which eventually took them to France. In 1942, Hans Thuna was deported to Auschwitz via Drancy. Else Thuna and her daughter Erika Thuna were also deported to Auschwitz in 1944, while the son Erich Thuna managed to escape to the Dominican Republic. Only Erika Thuna survived Auschwitz and, like her brother, emigrated to the USA after the war, where she died in 2013 and her brother in 2012. ¹

WRITTEN BY [Nicolas Arendt](#)

Early years and the life in Vienna, Austria

Chaim Hersch Hans Thuna was born on 24 January 1895 ², in Vyžuonos (Mizum), Lithuania, which was then a part of Poland. His father, Isaac Thuna, was originally from Stryj, a city in present-day Ukraine, then part of the Habsburg Monarchy at the time, and his mother, Clara Steinberg, was from Zebrzydowice, a Polish town near the present-day Czech border ³. In 1920, or according to other sources, in February 1922, Hans Thuna moved to Vienna, where he met Else Herzog. ⁴ Else (Elsa) Herzog was born on 2 February 1891 in Vasgyar, in former Czechoslovakia. Her father, Adolf Herzog, came from Slanica in Croatia, while her mother, Rosa Probst, was born in Lwiw (Lemberg). Else Herzog moved to Vienna in 1911 and married Hans Thuna in August 1923. Their twins, Erika and Erich Thuna, were born in Vienna on 1 November 1924 ⁵.

The Thuna family lived in the Schönburgstraße in the 4th district of Vienna. Hans Thuna was a freight and insurance

agent and worked for the Italian insurance company *Assicurazioni Generali*. ⁶ Else Thuna was not employed, at least after the birth of her children. She suffered from the disease *Retinitis pigmentosa*, a genetic disease of the retina that causes a gradual loss of sight until blindness. ⁷ Financially, the family was well off until the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in March 1938, as Erika stated that she and her brother each had their own bedroom and that a household helper was employed. According to the statements of Erika and Erich, which both gave to the USC Shoah Foundation in 1995 and 1998 respectively, Hans Thuna was interned in the Dachau concentration camp for several weeks after the *Anschluss*. ⁸ However, in a record of his registration with the Foreign Police in Luxembourg, he only mentions receiving a threat of arrest and internment in a concentration camp in Vienna ⁹ .

Escape via Luxembourg after the *Anschluss* 1938

In May 1938, Hans Thuna and his family registered with the emigration authorities of the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* for departure from Austria and filled out an emigration form ¹⁰ . On 15 June 1938, according to Hans' account, he lost his job to an Aryan applicant, and a few weeks later, he fled alone, without valid papers, first to Germany and then further by train across the border to Luxembourg via Wasserbillig. There he was registered by the Foreign Police on 13 August 1938 ¹¹ . In Luxembourg, with the help of the businessman, Alfred Levy, owner of the *Banque Alfred Levy & Cie.*, he managed to obtain an entry permit for his wife and children ¹² . After a train journey, they were officially registered in Luxembourg on 25 September 1938 ¹³ .

In Luxembourg, the Jewish aid organisation ESRA took care of their accommodation and meals. In September 1938, they initially moved to the Hotel Wellington in the *Michel Rodange StraÙe* in the city of Luxembourg ¹⁴ . A few months later, they

moved a few blocks away to the Hotel Select on the *Straßburgerstraße*, which had been set up especially for Jewish refugees. Erika Brodsky described their room as a small space with two bunk beds. ¹⁵ During their stay in Luxembourg, they were prohibited from working. However, it is documented that at least their son Erich Thuna worked as a labourer on a farm in Steinheim near Rosport in the summer of 1939 ¹⁶ . According to her own account, Erika attended a Catholic school in the capital for about four months ¹⁷ .

Since their arrival, the Thuna family has been in constant contact with the Luxembourg Foreign Police. With the help of ESRA, their residence permit in Luxembourg was extended several times while they applied for an emigration permit to South America, in particular to Paraguay. However, there were repeated delays in obtaining the necessary documents and these plans could never be realised. ¹⁸ Following the annexation of Luxembourg by Nazi Germany in May 1940, the entire family fled to Lisbon on 7 November 1940 on a transport organised by the Jewish Consistory, together with some 300 other Jewish people ¹⁹ . In total, the Thuna family spent approximately 25 months in Luxembourg between September 1938 and November 1940.

Last years of the war in France: Escape, Arrest and Deportation

As the French border authorities at the time were opposed to any entry or transit of foreigners, this train had to be escorted by SS men. However, the Portuguese border authorities considered the uniformed and armed SS to be a violation of their neutrality. It also turned out that most of the passengers on the train were unknowingly in possession of forged visas for South America. As a result, the transport was stopped at the Portuguese border and sent back to Spain. ²⁰ After days of uncertainty, the Thuna family ended up in an internment camp in Bayonne, France ²¹ .

From there, the family found their way to Marseille. Erich managed to eventually reach Portugal with a group of young people, from where he boarded a ship bound for New York. On arrival, however, he was not allowed to leave the port without a visa and ended up in the newly established Jewish community of Sosua in the Dominican Republic. ²² In Marseille, Hans Thuna was arrested in 1942 and deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau via the French assembly and detention camp of Drancy on 16 September 1942, from where he sent a letter to Erika and Else, who remained in southern France. ²³ With Else Thuna now almost completely blind and dependent on her daughter's support, another attempt to escape overseas was out of the question. After southern France fell under German occupation in November 1942, Erika and Else were interned in various French camps and deported together from the Drancy camp to Auschwitz-Birkenau on 7 March 1944. ²⁴ Erika was sent on a death march from Auschwitz to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where she was liberated by British troops in April 1945 ²⁵ .

Hans and Else Thuna were both murdered at Auschwitz. ²⁶ After her liberation, Erika Thuna presented herself as a French citizen and spent some time in Switzerland and France before immigrating permanently to the United States in 1946 ²⁷ . She died in 2013 ²⁸ . Erich Thuna also managed to immigrate to the United States in the turbulent years after 1945, where he died in 2012 ²⁹ .

Notes

← ¹ For a more detailed description see: Nicolas Arendt, "Geduldet, aber nicht erwünscht. Wiener Juden und Jüdinnen in Luxemburg nach dem Anschluss 1938", in *Les Cahiers Luxembourgeois*, ed. I. De Toffoli, M. Limpach, and E. Schmit (Luxembourg, Luxembourg: Les Cahiers Luxembourgeois a.s.b.l., 2023), 97-111.

← ² Other sources indicate 1885 as his birthyear: "Chaim Hersch Hans Thuna," *The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names Entry*,

Yad Vashem, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=4964200&ind=0> (accessed February 2024).

← [3](#) Archives Nationales du Luxembourg (ANLux), Fonds Ministère de la Justice, Police des Etrangers, J-108-0397387, "Declaration of arrival" of Chaim Hersch Thuna, August 13, 1938.

← [4](#) Resident in Vienna since 1920: AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Declaration of arrival" of Chaim Hersch Thuna, August 13, 1938.
Resident in Vienna since 1922: Archiv der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde (IKG) Wien, Bestand Fürsorgezentrale der IKG Wien, Auswanderungsabteilung, Auswanderungsfragebögen, A/W 2589, 29, "Questionnaire" of Hans Thuna.

← [5](#) AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Declaration of arrival" of Else Herzog, September 25, 1938.

← [6](#) AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Report on the declaration of arrival" of Hans Thuna, August 13, 1938.

← [7](#) Brodsky (born Thuna), Erika. Interview 3945. Interview of Ruth Resnikoff. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, July 13, 1995. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/3945?from=search> (accessed February 2024); Thuna, Eric. Interview 48103. Interview of Eileen Gottlieb. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, November 19, 1998. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/48103?from=search&seg=4> (accessed February 2024).

← [8](#) Ibid.

← [9](#) AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Report on the declaration of arrival" of Hans Thuna, August 13, 1938.

← [10](#) Archiv der IKG Wien, A/W 2589, 29, "Questionnaire" of Hans Thuna.

← [11](#) AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Report on the declaration of arrival" of Hans Thuna, August 13, 1938.

← [12](#) Brodsky (born Thuna), Erika. Interview 3945. Interview of Ruth Resnikoff. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, July 13, 1995. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/3945?from=search> (accessed February 2024). For the Banque Alfred Levy & Cie. see: "Banque Alfred Levy & Cie.," industrie.lu, <https://www.industrie.lu/BanqueAlfredLevyCie.html> (accessed February 2024).

← [13](#) AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Declaration of arrival" of Else Herzog, September 25, 1938.

← [14](#) Ibid.

← [15](#) Brodsky (born Thuna), Erika. Interview 3945. Interview of Ruth Resnikoff. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, July 13, 1995. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/3945?from=search> (accessed February 2024).

← [16](#) AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Declaration of arrival" of Erich Thuna, July 7, 1939.

← [17](#) Brodsky (born Thuna), Erika. Interview 3945. Interview of Ruth Resnikoff. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, July 13, 1995. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/3945?from=search> (accessed February 2024).

← [18](#) AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Report from the Foreign Police" of Hans Thuna, August 13, 1938; AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Report from the Foreign Police" of Hans Thuna, July 14, 1939; AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Report from the Foreign Police" of Hans Thuna, November 20, 1939; AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Report from the Foreign Police" of Hans Thuna, February 2, 1940; AnLux, J-108-0397387, "Report from the Foreign Police" of Hans Thuna, June 28, 1940.

← [19](#) Portugal et Luxembourg. Pays d'espoir en temps de détresse, exhibition catalog, organized by Vilar Formoso Fronteira da Paz, neimënster, and Memoshuah Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 2020.

← [20](#) Ibid.

← [21](#) Brodsky (born Thuna), Erika. Interview 3945. Interview of Ruth Resnikoff. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, July 13, 1995. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/3945?from=search> (accessed February 2024).

← [22](#) Thuna, Eric. Interview 48103. Interview of Eileen Gottlieb. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, November 19, 1998. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/48103?from=search&seg=4> (accessed February 2024).

← [23](#) "Chaim Hersch Hans Thuna," The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names Entry, Yad Vashem, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/name/Details.html?language=de&itemId=4964200&ind=0> (accessed February 2024); Brodsky (born Thuna), Erika. Interview 3945. Interview of Ruth Resnikoff. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah

Foundation, July 13, 1995. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/3945?from=search> (accessed February 2024).

← [24](#) "Erika Thuna," The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names Entry, Yad Vashem, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=9391075&ind=1> (accessed February 2024); "Elsa Thuna," The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names Entry, Yad Vashem, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=4964201&ind=1> (accessed February 2024).

← [25](#) Brodsky (born Thuna), Erika. Interview 3945. Interview of Ruth Resnikoff. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, July 13, 1995. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/3945?from=search> (accessed February 2024).

← [26](#) "Elsa Thuna," The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names Entry, Yad Vashem, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=4964201&ind=1> (accessed February 2024); "Chaim Hersch Hans Thuna," The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names Entry, Yad Vashem, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=4964200&ind=0> (accessed February 2024).

← [27](#) Brodsky (born Thuna), Erika. Interview 3945. Interview of Ruth Resnikoff. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, July 13, 1995. <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/3945?from=search> (accessed February 2024).

← [28](#) "Obituary of Erika Brodsky" (September 2013), Beth Israel Chapel, <https://www.bethisraelchapel.com/obituaries/Erika-Brodsky-32976/#!/TributeWall> (accessed February 2024).

← [29](#) "Obituary of Eric Thuna" (September 2012), Dignity Memorial, <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/north-lauderdale-fl/eric-thuna-5220225> (accessed February 2024).

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1920

1930

1938

Formular für die Anmelde-Erklärung (Declaration d'Arrivée) in Luxemburg, datiert am 22. September 1938. Das Dokument ist in Deutsch und Französisch ausgefüllt. Es enthält persönliche Daten der Person, die registriert wird, sowie Angaben zu Verwandten und Aufenthaltsort. Ein Foto der Person ist auf der linken Seite angebracht. Die Unterschrift des Bürgermeisters ist rechts unten zu sehen.

Anmelde-Erklärung
Declaration d'Arrivée

Am 22. September 1938

Der Bürgermeister / Police-Commissioner in Luxemburg

image

Declaration of registration of Else Herzog in Luxembourg

Sep 25, 1938

Formular für die Anmelde-Erklärung (Declaration d'Arrivée) in Luxemburg, datiert am 25. September 1938. Das Dokument ist in Deutsch und Französisch ausgefüllt. Es enthält persönliche Daten der Person, die registriert wird, sowie Angaben zu Verwandten und Aufenthaltsort. Ein Foto der Person ist auf der linken Seite angebracht. Die Unterschrift des Bürgermeisters ist rechts unten zu sehen.

Anmelde-Erklärung
Declaration d'Arrivée

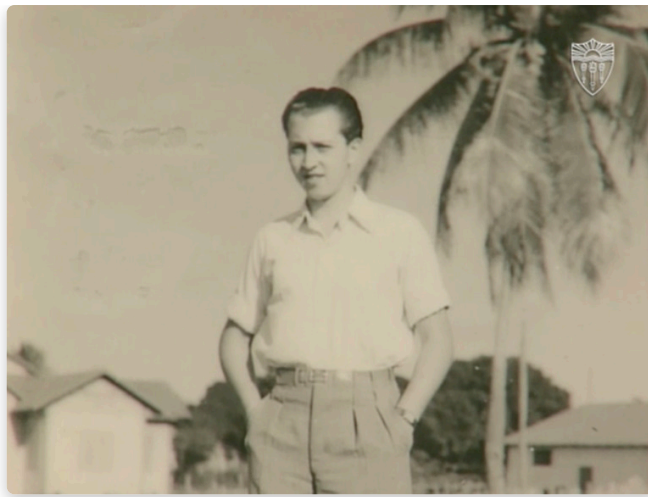
Am 25. September 1938

Der Bürgermeister / Police-Commissioner in Luxemburg

image

Declaration of registration of Chaim Hersch Thuna in Luxembourg

Aug 13, 1938



image

Emigration questionnaire by Hans Thuna from the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde in Vienna

May 16, 1938



image

Hans Thuna in the streets of Marseille

May 16, 1938

1939

1940

1945

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

1995



image

Erika Brodsky during her biographical interview of the USC Shoah Foundation

1995

1998



image

Eric Thuna during his biographical interview

1998

2000

2010

2020

2022



image

Shoah Memorial in Ostarrichi Park in Vienna

2022

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