Sali Blech is born in Eschweiler, Germany on June 2nd, 1880 to Moses Blech (1855 – 1941) and Sibilla Hartog (1849 – 1910). Sali –he refers to himself ‘Solly’ – has five siblings: the twins Friederika and Karl (20-01-1882), Emile (13-01-1885), Paula (15-04-1889) and Adolf (1893, fallen in France in WWI on 08-10-1915).

On November 4th 1907, Sali marries Amalie Seligmann who is born in Seibersbach, Germany, on November 3rd, 1881. The couple gets three children: Herta (1908 – 1994), Lotte Sybille (1911 - 1970) and Hans Heinz (1915 – 1942).

Together with Amalie’s sister Lina Hess, Sali owns a shoe store named ‘Boa Shuh’ which is located at the Hohestraße 138-140 in Cologne. He speaks French and for business travel purposes to Belgium, he applies for visa multiple times. Sali’s son Hans Heinz works in his shoe store as a purchaser until August 1934. Then Hans Heinz moves to Belgium to study and work there.

The growing antisemitism trigger Sali, Amalie and Lina to flee Germany. Sali’s daughters meanwhile are married and have respectively moved to Cape Town, South-Africa and Trieste, Italy before the breakout of WWII. On 11 April 1938 -Sali is then 57 years of age- they are registered in Heer and housed at the Burgemeester Thomassenstraat 20. One month later, in May 1938, Sali acquires a small number of shares in the ceramic factory ‘La Céramique de l’Est S.A.’ in Morsenet, Belgium. The majority of the factory’s shares are owned by Hans Heinz. On January 5th, 1939, the factory is set on fire. Sali is charged with arson and is arrested on May 20, 1939. However, he denies the accusation and is released on bail. The public prosecutor pleads not to impose a travel-ban to Belgium on Sali but instead, to grant him a visa that enables Sali to defend himself in court. The beginning of January 1939 is probably also the period when Amalie boards a ship to the United States where she will live with her sister Babette Oppenheimer until the end of the war. Lina returns to Germany and Sali remains in Heer. In 1939 Sali applies for a long-stay visa at the Belgium consul in Maastricht. Such visa would enable him to regularly visit and consult his Belgian lawyer Louis Pirard. His application, however, is declined and Sali is informed that he will have to apply for a visa for each separate visit to Belgium.

Between January 1939 and November 1940, Sali will re-locate 3: first to the Sint Antonius van Paduastraat no. 31 (currently Padualaan), then to the Koning Clovisstraat no. 84 where he temporarily moves in with his cousin Benjamin Holländer and Benjamin’s daughter Frieda. The latter had fled Germany in April 1939 and settled in Maastricht hoping to be safe there. As from 21 November 1940, Sali moves in with the Moermans family at the Dorpsstraat 14A (currently Dorpsstraat 22). Somewhere between the end of November 1940 and September 1941, Hans Heinz probably also lives at this address all be illegally.

On 10 September 1941, at 2:15 PM, Sali and Hans Heinz are arrested during a raid on the house at the Dorpsstraat 14A, commanded by of Max Strobel, head of the German *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) in Maastricht. It is not unlikely that Hans Heinz’ illegal stay prompted this action. If so, the question arises who betrayed him. Following the arrest, during which Sali -61 years of age- is brutally pushed off the stairs, the men are brought to the house of detention at the Minderbroerdersberg. The Maastricht police commander then receives a phone call from the National Aliens Registration Authority in The Hague informing him to transfer Sali and Hans Heinz to camp Westerbork, where they arrive on 12 September 1941. At that time, Westerbork functioned as a refugee camp for Jews. As from 1 July 1942, it was designated as a transit camp for Jews. Mrs Moermans visits them on occasion and brings food supplies. Two-and-a half years later, on February 1st 1944, Sali is deported to Bergen-Belsen where is murdered on 2 March 1945. Sali dies at the age of 64.

On 23 October 1942, the Verviers Public Prosecutor writes in a letter to the national authorities in Brussels that no judgment has yet been delivered in Sali’s criminal case and that his current address is unknown. On that date, Sali is being detained in camp Westerbork for more than one year already.

Hans Heinz is Sali’s only child that does not survive the war; he is murdered in Auschwitz. After the war, Amalie migrates to Cape-Town, South-Africa. She passes away on 16 December 1953.

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