

Koestraat 12

Gerhard Soesman

Resistance fighter at Age 18

On the 9th of November, 1940, Gerhard Soesman, a Jewish student at the HBS in Maastricht Helmstraat, attends a speech of the Resistance movement at school which inspires several of his (anonymous) fellow students to send a letter to the

Ortskommandant, addressing the 'Lumpen' Ortskommandant in Maastricht. This mysterious letter, in which not only the local commander, but also Hitler himself was ridiculed, was signed by "Die Organisation tötet Hitler, class 2a, 3a and 4a. The police's attempts to find the senders are all in vain. Yet, to punish all students, the school is closed for eight days.



Betrayed by an Infiltrator

A little more than one year after the Ortskommandant receives his despised letter, Gerhard Soesman has developed into a rebel just as brave as the secret senders of the letter. On January 24, 1942, he, together with two fellow students – W. Hack and M. Hoppers – is arrested for distributing *De Vonk* (The Spark), a communist opposition magazine, in Maastricht. The boys are betrayed by Engwirda, a policeman working for the *Sicherheitspolizei* with extensive knowledge of the Communist movement due to his own experiences in the communist militia in Spain.

Soesman Remains Imprisoned

The three young criminals are transferred to the German political prison at Grote Looiersstraat, after which one of the three, M. Hoppers, is released quickly. Soesman's second companion, Hack, is bailed out by his father one year later. Only Soesman himself, then 19 years old, however, is unable to get out. After eighteen months, he is transferred to Camp Vught, from where he is deported and murdered in Auschwitz on the 21st of January in 1945, mere days before the liberation of the concentration camp.