



On display at the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center.  
Photograph by Harve Bergmann.

# *Bowl from Sobibor*

THOMAS BLATT'S BOWL FROM SOBIBOR DEATH CAMP

*Each of us was given our own eating pot. Each day at five I picked up my pot from under the pillow of my bunk and joined the others in line for supper. When my turn came, the cook poured out about 16 ounces of black liquid that tasted like sweetened warm water, I received dark bread with a warning that it should last me until the next evening.*

-Thomas Blatt

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Thomas Blatt, age 17

Thomas “Toivi” Blatt was born in Izbica in the Lublin district of Poland in 1927. After the Nazi occupation of his town in 1939, Thomas escaped from the ghetto in Izbica, but was caught and imprisoned at the age of 15. He managed to escape prison again and return to family in Izbica.

On April 28, 1943, the Nazis deported Thomas and his family to the Sobibor death camp. His family was murdered shortly after they arrived at Sobibor. Thomas was selected to be a part of the camp’s labor force.

In Sobibor, Thomas became associated with several prisoners, including captured Jewish officers from the Soviet Army, who were planning a revolt.

*We knew our fate. We knew that we were in an extermination camp and death was our destiny... We had no dreams of liberation; we hoped merely to destroy the camp and to die from bullets rather than from gas. We would not make it easy for the Germans.*  
-Thomas Blatt, in his memoir [From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival](#) (1997).

By October 1943, 250,000 Jewish people had been murdered at Sobibor.

*“For all those left behind.”*

On October 14, 1943 the prisoners of Sobibor revolted. This revolt had been carefully planned for months by a select group of prisoners, including Russian prisoners of war, within Sobibor. The plan was to quietly kill Nazi officers one by one. The prisoners could then overtake the remaining guards and escape.

300 prisoners (out of the 600 who attempted to escape) broke out of the camp. Unfortunately, many of these escapees lost their lives on the minefields surrounding the camp.

The camp was closed shortly after the revolt and the Germans burned it down in an attempt to get rid of any evidence.

The revolt “made my improbable survival possible,” explains Thomas.

Of the 300 prisoners who escaped Sobibor, only 53 lived to witness the liberation of the region by the Soviet army in 1944. Thomas Blatt, age 17, was one of them.

Before the revolt took place, Thomas buried his eating bowl in the sand of his barracks with valuables placed inside. Late in 1944, he recovered his bowl. Why? “For all those left behind.”

Thomas Blatt was a member of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center’s Speakers Bureau for many years. He is the author of two books, *From the Ashes of Sobibor* (1997) and *Sobibor: The Forgotten Revolt* (2004). Thomas was also a consultant for the 1987 movie “Escape from Sobibor.” He currently resides in Santa Barbra, California.