

THE LATE BRONZE AGE CEMETERY



The late Bronze Age cemetery at Gusen was established between 1400 and 1100 BC. It was re-discovered during Nazi dictatorship and is part of Upper Austria's long history.

The cemetery contained up to 200 (partially destroyed) graves. Successive work was carried out under archaeological supervision between 1942 and 1943. The cemetery contains for the most part cremations and also inhumations, including the 'warrior's grave' (grave 5/1941).

Since the 1950s, the finds have been kept at the Natural History Museum Vienna. They have not been publicly displayed nor contextualised until now. Finds from the cemetery serve as type form for archaeological research on this period (e.g. the 'Gusen type cup'), a testament of the cemetery's scientific significance.

© Bundesdenkmalamt, Abteilung für Archäologie, Mauerbach, Fotoarchiv, Ausgrabung Langenstein-Gusen



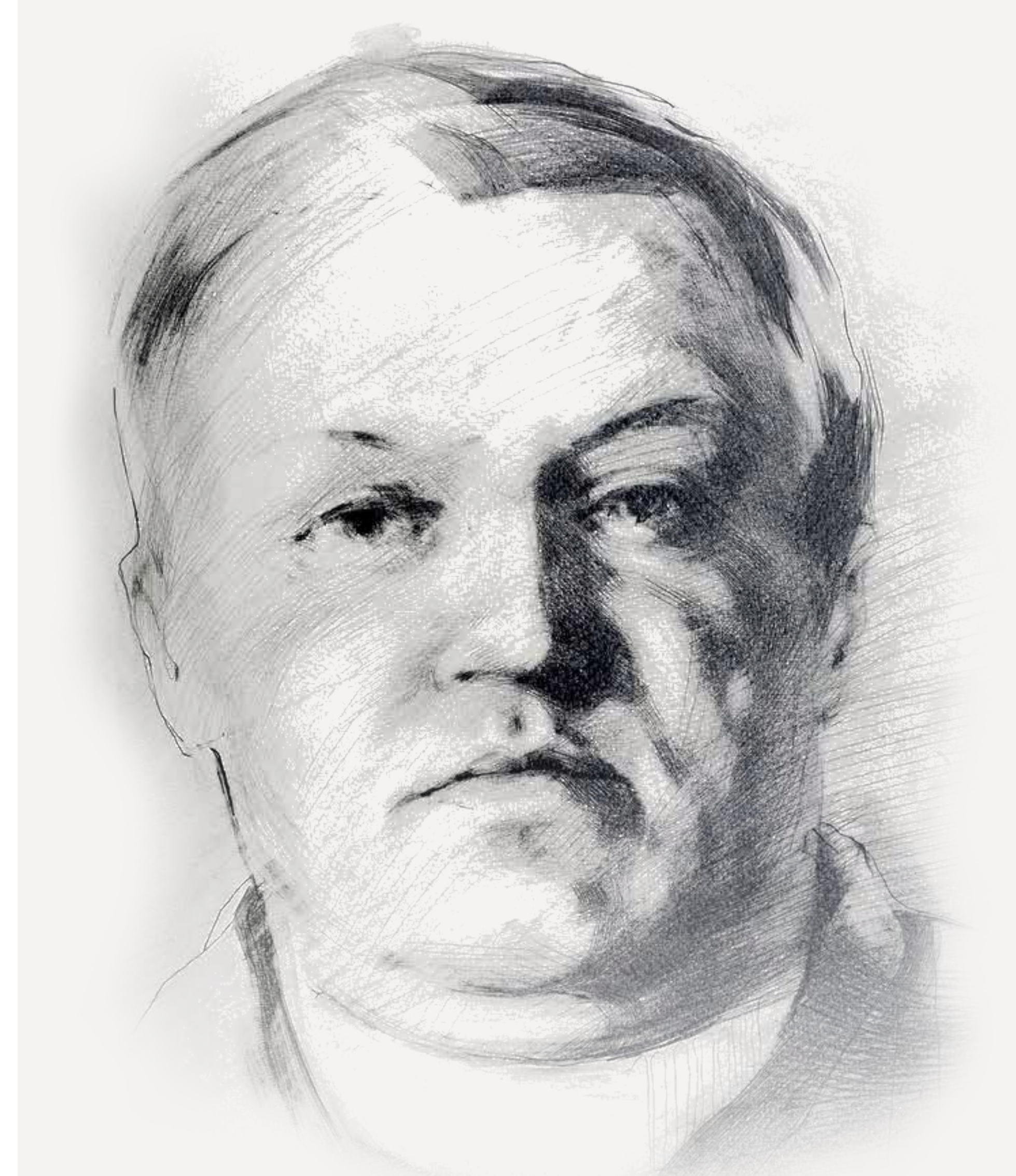
COMPLICITY OF PROMINENT ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Prominent archaeologists of the Nazi era were involved in the excavations: Oswald Menghin (University of Vienna), Eduard Benninger (Natural History Museum Vienna), Kurt Willvonseder, Hertha Orel and Josef Vockenhuber (Institute for Monument Preservation, now the Federal Monuments Authority Austria).

Menghin, Benninger and Willvonseder were already staunch Nazis and anti-Semites in the 1930s.

During the excavations in Gusen, they were in close contact with the Gusen camp commander Karl Chmielewski. They arranged for detainees from the concentration camp to be forced to perform hard labour during archaeological excavations. Hertha Orel, as Kurt Willvonseder's deputy, and the restorer Josef Vockenhuber also used the camp's structures for archaeological work. They were all entangled in the criminal activities of the concentration camp system.





DR. JOHANN GRUBER

(1889, Grieskirchen, Austria – 1944, Gusen, Austria)

Priest and educator Johann Gruber, an outspoken critic of National Socialism, was arrested in May 1938. He was detained in the Gusen concentration camp from 1940 onwards. In 1942, Gruber was assigned to the labour commando at the camp museum. There he succeeded in setting up a covert relief organisation for fellow detainees.

By transporting archaeological finds, which were regularly brought to Vienna and back again, he managed to bring food, medicine and schoolbooks into the concentration camp. He taught young detainees in a camp school. He is also said to have smuggled communion wafers into the camp to secretly celebrate holy masses with his fellow detainees.

In the spring of 1944, the covert relief organisation was discovered by the SS. Johann Gruber was arrested, tortured and murdered on 7 April.



KAZIMIERZ GELINEK

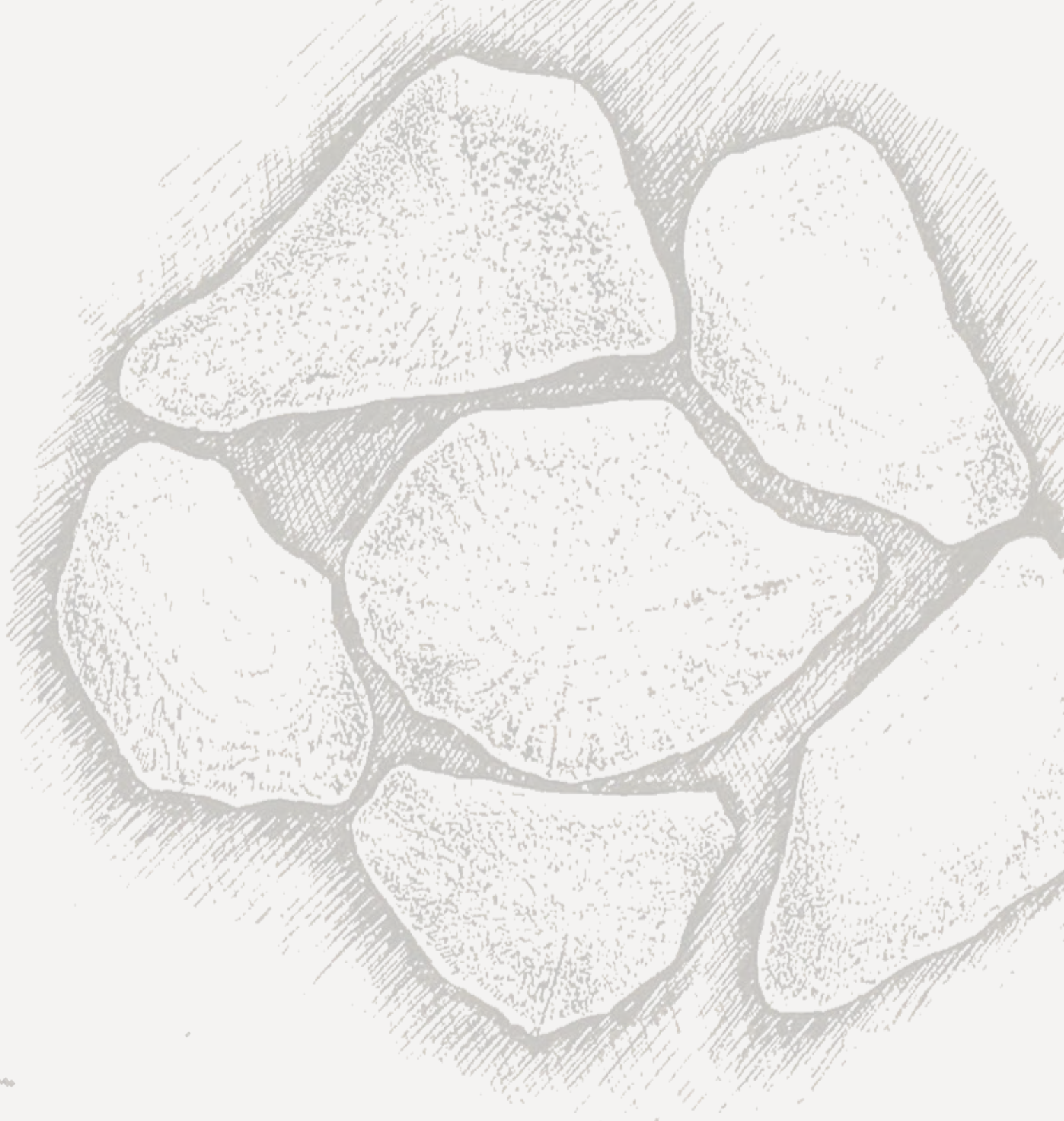
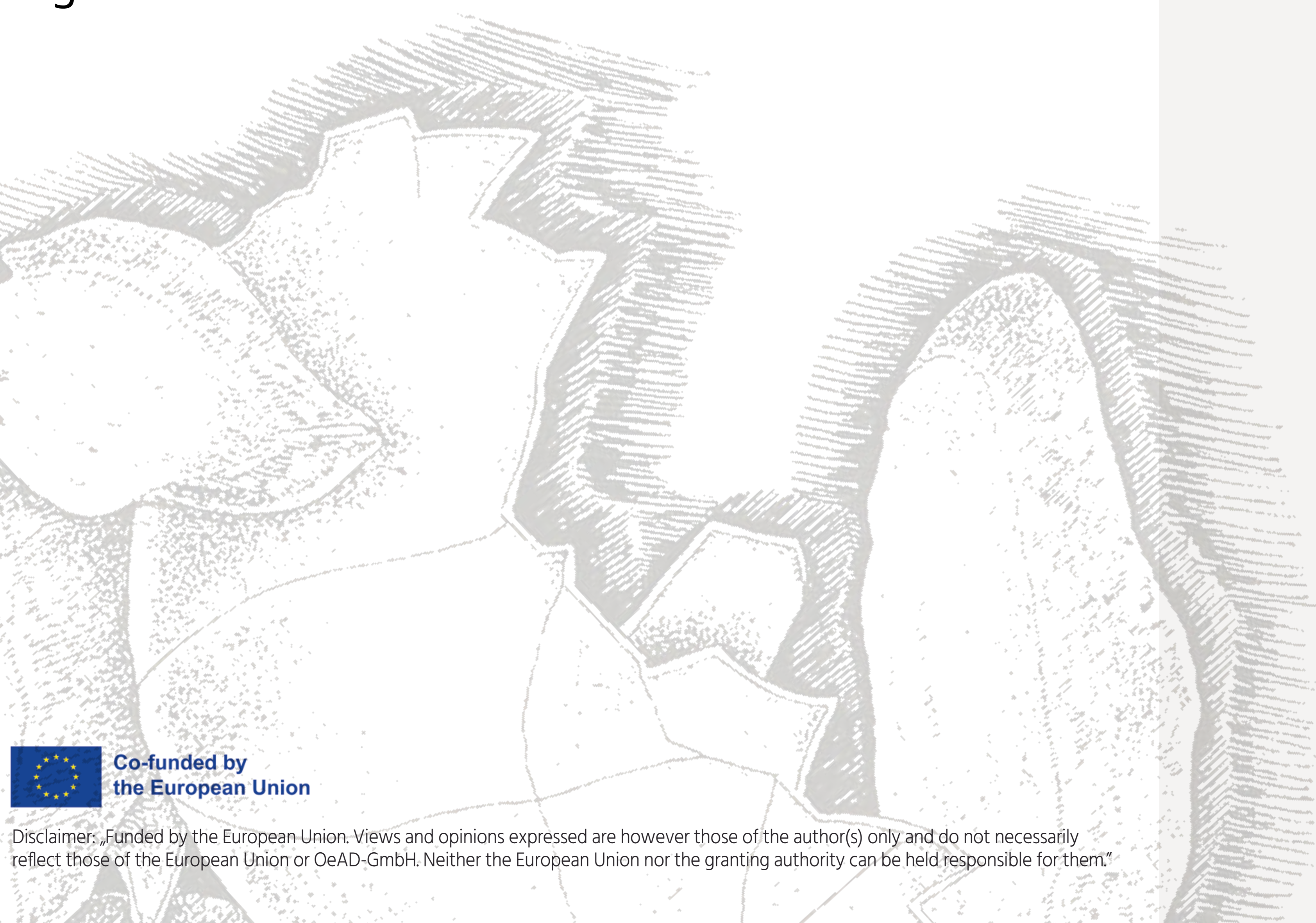
(1882 Brzezany, Poland – 1969 Płock, Poland)



© Andrzej Prinke

Kazimierz Gelinek had already been engaged with archaeology before his arrest in 1940. He recognised the great significance of the Late Bronze Age cemetery at Gusen and advocated for the collections from Spielberg Castle and the cemetery to be kept in the concentration camp.

This led to the installation of a camp museum in the Gusen concentration camp, headed by 'Kasimir' Gelinek. In 1940, many of the archaeological sites were hastily destroyed by the SS. The fact that these sites had been professionally documented and still exist today is due to the outstanding scientific achievement of Gelinek's archaeological work in Gusen.



DR. WŁADYSŁAW GĘBIK

(1900 Szczyrzyc, Poland – 1986 Krakow, Poland)



Władysław Gębik was arrested in 1939 for promoting Polish culture in the German Reich and was imprisoned in Gusen from 1940 onwards. He quickly turned one of the archaeological labour commandos, the “Spielberg commando”, into the nucleus of organised Polish resistance and Polish aid in the Gusen concentration camp.

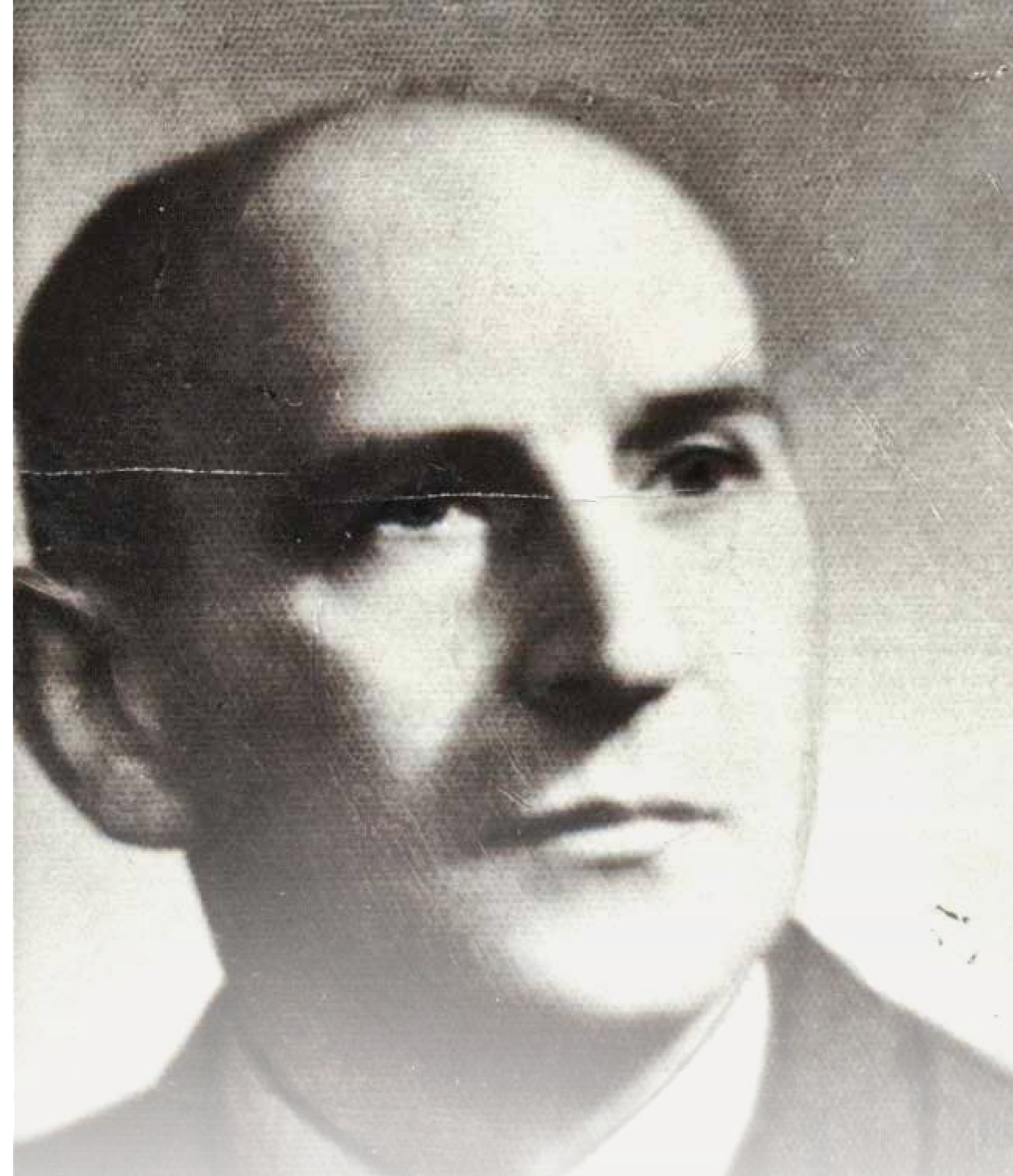
He continually risked his life. Thanks to his efforts, physically weak detainees, who would have died in other camp commandos, were temporarily accepted into his commando. After the liberation of the concentration camp, he returned to Poland.

© Sammlungen der KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen, MM 141_0044 (Nachlass Dobosiewicz)



DR. JÓZEF IWIŃSKI

(1904 Łódź, Russisch-Polen – 1990 Warschau, Polen)



After the German invasion of Poland, Józef Iwinski worked for war-wounded Polish soldiers of the underground 'Home Army (ZWZ)' in Warsaw. He was arrested in April 1940 and detained in the Gusen concentration camp from May 1942 onwards.

A gifted artist, he began producing naturalistic drawings of the Spilberg ruins in 1941. He also documented the features and findings of the Bronze Age cemetery.

He helped establish a covert aid organisation and resistance group in the Gusen concentration camp. Iwinski was released in September 1942 and continued to work underground. He died in Warsaw in 1990.

