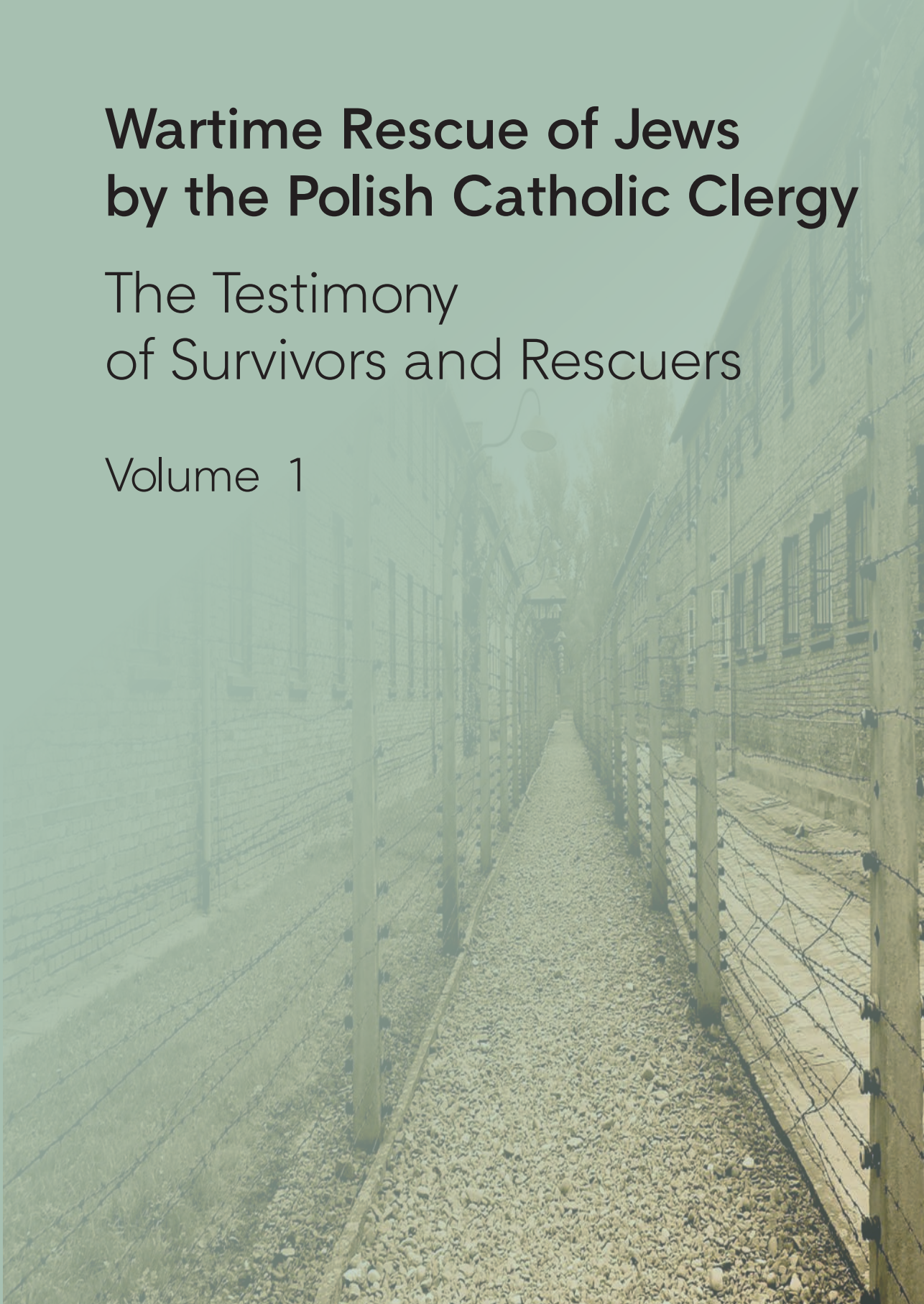


# Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy

The Testimony  
of Survivors and Rescuers

Volume 1



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by the Polish Catholic Clergy**

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of Survivors and Rescuers

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin



# **Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy**

## The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers

Volume 1

Compiled and annotated by

Ryszard Tyndorf

with the assistance of  
Zygmunt Zieliński

Professor Emeritus  
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin  
Former Head of the Department  
of the History of the Church in the 19th and 20th Centuries

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Reviewers

Prof. Wacław Wierzbieniec, University of Rzeszów  
Prof. Maciej Mróz, University of Wrocław

Proofreading

Lucyna Cynarzewska-Właźlik

Typesetting

Jarosław Bielecki

Cover and title pages design

Dorota Woźniak

Indices

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Wydawnictwo KUL

ul. Konstantynów 1H, 20-708 Lublin, tel. 81 740 93 40  
e-mail: [wydawnictwo@kul.lublin.pl](mailto:wydawnictwo@kul.lublin.pl), <https://wydawnictwo.kul.pl>

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*This labour is dedicated to the memory of the Polish Catholic clergy  
whose profiles in courage and Christian charity  
inhabit the pages of this book,  
and to honouring the memory of countless others like them,  
whose names and sacrifices must go forever unrecorded*



# Table of Contents

|                                                                                 |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Abbreviations .....                                                             | 9   |
| Maps .....                                                                      | 11  |
| Introduction .....                                                              | 15  |
| CHAPTER 1                                                                       |     |
| An Overview of Rescue by the Polish Catholic Clergy: 1939–1945 ...              | 19  |
| CHAPTER 2                                                                       |     |
| The Plight of the Polish Catholic Clergy .....                                  | 33  |
| CHAPTER 3                                                                       |     |
| The First Years of the German Occupation:<br>September 1939–June 1941 .....     | 61  |
| CHAPTER 4                                                                       |     |
| Germany Attacks the Soviet Union: June 1941 .....                               | 121 |
| CHAPTER 5                                                                       |     |
| The Holocaust Intensifies: 1942–1945 .....                                      | 141 |
| APPENDICES                                                                      |     |
| APPENDIX A                                                                      |     |
| Select Bibliography .....                                                       | 969 |
| APPENDIX B                                                                      |     |
| Parishes and Church Institutions Where Assistance<br>Was Provided to Jews ..... | 975 |

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

### APPENDIX C

Religious and Monastic Orders of Women Who Rescued Jews ..... 979

### APPENDIX D

Religious and Monastic Orders of Men Who Rescued Jews ..... 985

### APPENDIX E

Polish Catholic Clergy Recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations”  
by Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Authority ..... 987

### APPENDIX F

Polish Catholic Clergy Who Lost Their Lives for Helping Jews ..... 995

### APPENDIX G

The Price of Rescue .....1013

### APPENDIX H

Rescue Efforts of Christian Poles .....1023

### APPENDIX I

(Non)Recognition and (In)Gratitude .....1115

## INDICES

Personal Index .....1143

Index of Place Names .....1247

# Abbreviations

## (for Archival Sources)

|       |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FVA   | Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut                                                                       |
| JHI   | Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw                                                                                                                       |
| PRP   | Polish Righteous, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw<br>Internet: <a href="https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en">https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en</a>            |
| RD    | The Righteous Among the Nations Database, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem<br>Internet: <a href="https://righteous.yadvashem.org">https://righteous.yadvashem.org</a>               |
| SFV   | Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Los Angeles<br>Internet: <a href="https://vhaonline.usc.edu/">https://vhaonline.usc.edu/</a> |
| USHMM | United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.                                                                                                                |
| YVA   | Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem<br>Internet: <a href="https://documents.yadvashem.org/">https://documents.yadvashem.org/</a>                                              |





# Maps

Map 1. Archdioceses and Dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church of the Latin Rite as of 1930



Source: Rafał Dmowski, "Korekty granic diecezji podlaskiej w latach 1918–1939 z innymi diecezjami rzymskokatolickimi w Polsce," Internet: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/160236895.pdf>.

**Province of Gniezno—Poznań**

Archdiocese of Gniezno—Poznań

Diocese of Chełmno

Diocese of Włocławek

**Province of Warsaw**

Archdiocese of Warsaw

Diocese of Łódź

Diocese of Lublin

Diocese of Płock

Diocese of Sandomierz

Diocese of Siedlce (Podlasie)

**Province of Kraków (Cracow)**

Archdiocese of Kraków (Cracow)

Diocese of Częstochowa

Diocese of Katowice (Silesia)

Diocese of Kielce

Diocese of Tarnów

**Province of Lwów**

Archdiocese of Lwów

Diocese of Łuck

Diocese of Przemyśl

**Province of Wilno**

Archdiocese of Wilno

Diocese of Łomża

Diocese of Pińsk

Map 2. Archdioceses and Dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church of the Latin Rite in 1939



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31996938>.



## Introduction

The present work is a long-overdue attempt to explore and to document the extent of rescue activities that the Polish Catholic clergy extended to Jewish fugitives during the German occupation of Poland in Second World War. A full and definitive chronicle of this prodigious, yet still virtually unknown achievement is probably impossible. Nevertheless, ample substance has been assembled in these pages to establish its validity.

For many years, the primary focus of the most influential works addressing Polish-Jewish wartime relations has been on Poles who profited from the desperate circumstances faced by Jews, or who maliciously contributed to Jewish suffering. This work is not aimed at denying or downplaying such misdeeds, at probing the motivation of certain other works—which focus disproportionately on that aspect of Polish-Jewish wartime relations—or at explaining why so many Polish witnesses to the Holocaust declined to risk their lives (and the lives of those closest to them) for a slender chance (perhaps) to save a Jewish life, or in some otherwise dangerous and burdensome manner to assist the unfortunate.

Rampant psychologizing has flooded this topic with malignant, ideological projections that transform terrorized “neighbours” into ready sympathizers with Hitler’s Final Solution, and a ruthlessly subjected nation into zealous co-authors of the Holocaust. Indeed, the whole subject of Polish-Jewish relations during that period has become so infested with skewed, indignant moralizing and strident generalizations that giving some attention to polemics is inescapable. As far back as 1997, a Columbia University historian observed that, “No issue in Holocaust literature is more burdened by misunderstanding, mendacity, and sheer racial prejudice than that of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II.”<sup>1</sup>

While such issues must necessarily be acknowledged, the research that underpins this volume was focused solely on establishing the extent of rescue efforts by the Catholic clergy. Generalizations (one way or another) about the behaviour of both the clergy and the Polish population at large have been avoided. Nor have the motivations of rescuers and bystanders been imputed

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<sup>1</sup> István Deák, “Memories of Hell,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 26, 1997.

as a way of teasing out some element of character or circumstance that might determine either a spirit of heroic resistance or the more universally human response of submissiveness in the face of an overwhelmingly murderous force. The approach is strictly empirical, and the text is descriptive.

Inspired by works like Martin Gilbert's monumental *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (1986), this book surveys the territory of German-occupied Poland as a first attempt at chronicling a distinctively heroic undertaking that deserves its own honoured place in the Received Holocaust narrative.

The author is grateful to the Catholic University of Lublin for agreeing to publish this book. Due to the unfriendly reception it will surely meet with in certain quarters, it could not otherwise have seen the light of day.

**T**hough several decades have gone into arduously piecing together the testimonies of both Jewish survivors and their Polish rescuers, this project is far from complete. The sources are dispersed and often fragmentary. Accounts are often sketchy, and the records are scant.

The last thing that clergy members engaged in rescue activities wanted was recognition for what they were doing, and any records they made or kept of their activities on behalf of Jews during the German occupation would have been worse than suicidal, for exposure would have cost much more than just one person's life. After the war, it would have been similarly dangerous to possess materials linked to any clandestine activity independent of Soviet control or at odds with the Stalinist puppet regime imposed on Warsaw after the Germans were driven out. Numerous accounts in this book attest to the persecution of Polish Catholic clergy by agents of the Kremlin, both during and after the war itself.

It wasn't until many years after Germany's defeat that Church institutions, archivists and scholars began to document those events. Publications addressing this theme have mushroomed in recent years, but they remain scattered, and they are far from comprehensive. Many Polish archives have yet to be examined thoroughly.

For that reason, the more accessible Jewish testimonies have been invaluable. Many supplement Polish sources, while others bring to light hitherto unfamiliar descriptions and occurrences. Memoirs and Jewish archives that remain untranslated from Hebrew or Yiddish are certain to contain additional, relevant material.

Sources have been limited to published works and testimonies from key archives. Not all such accounts were sufficiently detailed or reliable to merit inclusion. Moreover, numerous archives—Polish, Israeli, German, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and American—remain untapped. Many of the stories found herein would benefit from expansion or further validation. That being said, however, every effort has been made to cross-check sources and confirm the names of priests, nuns, and their various associations in the light of existing church records.

The uniquely harsh conditions faced by Christian Poles under German rule require some attention. A successful rescue was almost never the accomplishment of just one person or institution. The importance of informal networks of helpers and intricate “conspiracies of silence” has been greatly underestimated. Yad Vashem’s gallery of rescuers, e.g., routinely glosses over the auxiliary players and complex factors that would have been essential to any particular Jewish survivor’s destiny. Those peculiar features often remain buried in unpublished, difficult to access testimonies.

Clergy rescuers fell into three main groups: (1) women who belonged to religious orders, i.e., nuns or sisters; (2) priests, monks and brothers belonging to religious orders; and (3) priests who were members of the diocesan clergy.

Nuns most commonly rescued by sheltering Jews, especially children, in their convents, orphanages, hospitals, and boarding schools. They also supported the Jewish underground in Warsaw and Wilno. Only a few male religious orders operated boarding schools, but they too sheltered Jewish boys. The German occupiers allowed priests to continue their interwar function of issuing birth and baptismal certificates, a privilege that greatly facilitated the acquisition of official German identity documents. In addition to the immense contribution made by certificates that falsely established the Gentile identity of innumerable Jews, parish priests were well positioned to place Jews in safe houses as well as to support, by other means, both fugitive Jews and their Christian rescuers.

Current research affirms that nuns from 66 orders conducted rescue activities through some 450 institutions, as did male religious and monastics from 25 orders in 85 establishments. The present study identifies more than 700 priests as rescuers in at least 580 distinct localities. Despite the fact that thousands of Jews owed their lives, at least in part, to this extraordinarily perilous and abiding endeavour—carried out under the most challenging circumstances imaginable—to date, only one pioneering work, published a quarter of a century ago, has made a small part of this remarkable story known outside of Poland.<sup>2</sup>

Copious footnotes bear witness to the depth of scholarly research that went into this publication. Yet this is not a product of the Academy. It is a compilation of personal accounts and vignettes, interspersed with numerous, often lengthy citations. The arrangement is loosely chronological and geographical. Any particular excerpt is likely to require unusually attentive scrutiny to properly detect and appreciate the evidence of clergy involvement in a Jewish survivor’s narrative. This makes for difficult reading. But it also helps to corroborate the

<sup>2</sup> Ewa Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine: How Polish Nuns Saved Hundreds of Jewish Children in German-Occupied Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997).



fact that rescue efforts were multifaceted, and that the role of clergy was integrated within a larger chain of informal social assistance.

Lengthy appendices further demonstrate that clergy rescue was neither unusual nor out of character, but rather an intrinsic element in the Polish nation's response to the Holocaust. Though almost as laborious to read straight through as they were to compile, this mass of seemingly disconnected episodes sheds light on a little-known aspect of the Poles' rescue efforts, most of which did not involve the participation of the clergy. The final appendix draws attention to some of the all too many unfair assessments of that response.

Except for Warsaw and sometimes Cracow (Kraków), Polish spellings designate all localities within prewar Poland. For example, Lwów and Wilno—largely Polish-speaking cities at the time—appear instead of, respectively, Lemberg or Lvov, now Lviv, Ukraine; and Vilna or Wilna, now Vilnius, Lithuania. This practice is consistent with that found in the publications of Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*. The misspelling of Polish names and words appearing in Jewish accounts has been corrected wherever possible. Jewish names have generally been left as found in the relevant source; this does not necessarily reflect spellings that would have been most naturally used in Poland during the period under study. Text in square brackets within quotations is the author's, as are all translations into English. Cited Internet sources were accessed within the last few years.

Many photographs of clergy rescuers and the people whose lives they helped to save have survived. Some were taken in the wartime era, while others date from subsequent reunions. Unfortunately, circumstances did not allow their inclusion to enliven the present work. Likewise, due to the still open-ended nature of this investigation, no proper conclusion appears at the end. Far from putting closure on the Polish Catholic clergy's widespread rescue of Jews at the very vortex of the Holocaust, the present study aims to serve as an invitation for additional research. It is to be hoped that these omissions will be rectified at some future time.

Thanks are also due to the many individuals who inspired this publication or assisted in its research and editing. In particular, the author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of—first and foremost—Rev. Zygmunt Zieliński, professor emeritus of the Catholic University of Lublin; Rev. Tadeusz Krahel; Sister Teresa Antonietta Frącek; Rev. Sławomir Zabraniak; Artur Rytel-Andrianik; Agnieszka Dąbek; Hanna Sokolski; and Robert Lamming.

A grant from the Toronto District of the Canadian Polish Congress facilitated the editing of this book.

The author takes full responsibility for any shortcomings, oversights, or errors that may have lingered undetected in these pages.

## An Overview of Rescue by the Catholic Clergy: 1939–1945

In his pioneering work on rescue, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, which was first published in 1957,<sup>3</sup> Holocaust historian Philip Friedman described various forms of assistance provided to Jews by the Catholic clergy in a number of German-occupied countries. The following is his brief overview of the situation in Poland.

Monasteries and convents opened their doors to Jews. In Otwock, Pludy [Płudy], and certain other places, the convents of the Sisters of Maria's Family were outstanding in their rescue activities. No less effective was the work performed by the Ursuline Sisters (in Warsaw-Powisłe [Powiśle] and the provincial convents); the Franciscan Sisters in Laski; the Sisters of the Order of the Lady Immaculate (*Niepokalancki*) in Warsaw, Szymanów [Szymanów], and Niepokalanów [Niepokalanów]; the Sisters Szarytki of the municipal hospitals in Warsaw; and in Otwock, by the Catholic personnel of the orphanages and hostels of the RGO (Polish Relief Council). Although a strong missionary zeal influenced their work, the aid these groups extended saved countless Jewish lives. In Lwów [Lwów], after the Nazis occupied the city [in June 1941], according to the collaborationist [German-sponsored] *Gazeta Lwowska*, no less than 4,000 Jews attempted to evade the German net by baptism, (Lwów had a Jewish population of 170,000). *Gazeta Lwowska* violently castigated the Catholic Church for accepting the applications. A particularly vicious attack was directed at one of the priests of the Church of St. Vincent a Paolo [de Paul] who had approved of the conversions and defended the baptized Jews in his church sermons.

In Warsaw, more than 6,000 baptized Jews were ordered by the Nazis to move into the ghetto, where they established their own churches. Food parcels were sent them by the Caritas Catholics, and several priests moved in among them to minister to their needs.

Emanuel Ringelblum notes in an entry in his diaries dated December 31, 1940, that priests in all of Warsaw's churches exhorted their parishioners to bury their prejudice against Jews and beware of the poison of Jew-hatred preached by the common enemy, the Germans. In an entry of June, 1941, Ringelblum tells of a priest in Kampinos [Rev. Stanisław Cieśliński] who called on his flock to aid Jewish inmates of the forced-labor camps in the vicinity. A priest in Grajewo [Rev. Aleksander Pęza] similarly enjoined his parishioners to help Jews.

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Crown, 1957; New York: Holocaust Library, 1978).

During the early days of the German occupation, in October, 1939, eleven Jews were seized in Szczepieszyn. Aid was sought from the local priest, Cieslicki [Józef Cieśllicki]. He promptly formed a committee of Christians to plead with the German authorities. In Pruzany [Prużana], Catholic nuns rescued scores of Jewish women by disguising them in the clothes characteristic of their Order.

Several Jews of Siedlce survived in a bunker in the woods near Miedzyrzec [Międzyrzec Podlaski], thanks to a monk who, having discovered their hiding place by accident, brought them food every day.

In July, 1941, the Germans imposed a staggering fine on the Jews of Zolkiew [Żółkiew]; a Roman Catholic priest contributed a large sum of money to help the Jews.

Andreas [Andrzej] Gdowski, priest of the famous Ostra Brama Church in Vilna [Wilno], saved the lives of several Jews by concealing them in the house of worship. According to Hermann Adler, a Jewish poet who survived the Vilna ghetto, Father Gdowski, in addition to saving the lives of Jews, also took care of their spiritual needs by setting aside a well-camouflaged room in his church to be used by his "guests" as a synagogue.

In Szczucin, on the Day of Atonement [Yom Kippur], [September 23] 1939, the Germans staged a raid on all the synagogues. They harassed and beat the worshipers, ridiculed and spat upon them; they tore the garments off young Jewish females and drove them naked through the market place. At noon, the vicar of the local Catholic church appeared in the market place in his sacerdotal vestments and implored the Germans to cease torturing the Jews and permit them to return to their prayers. The SS men, however, were not to be denied their afternoon of fun and frolic; they burned down the synagogues.

A number of priests in the neighborhood of the death camp at Treblinka gave food and shelter to Jews escaping from transports on the way to the camp.

Father [Jan] Urbanowicz of Brzesc-on-Bug [Brześć nad Bugiem] was shot by the Germans in June, 1943, for aiding Jews. For the same crime Canon Roman Archutowski, Rector of the Clerical Academy [archdiocesan seminary] in Warsaw, was sent to the Majdanek concentration camp, where he died of torture in October [April], 1943. Similarly, the Deacon [Dean] of Grodno parish [Rev. Albin Jaroszewicz<sup>4</sup>] and the Prior of the Franciscan Order [Fr. Dionizy or Michał Klimczak] were sent to Łomża [Łomża] in the autumn of 1943, and were shot.

In 1942, during the massive German raids on the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, the three remaining rabbis received an offer of asylum from members of the Catholic clergy. The rabbis graciously declined the proffered chance of escape and perished with their congregations.<sup>5</sup>

There were valorous men like [Rev.] Joseph Stokauskas [Juozas Stakauskas] of Vilna [Wilno], who gave refuge in his office to several Jews escaped from the ghetto. He hid twelve Jews in a well-constructed section of the archives department of which he was the director. He informed two other officials of the archives department of his secret: the nun, Maria Mikulska, and a former mathematics instructor, Zhemaitis [Vladas Žemaitis].<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Although arrested twice by the Germans, Rev. Albin Jaroszewicz was not killed by them. He perished in 1946 in a Soviet concentration camp.

<sup>5</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 124–26.

<sup>6</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 138.

Several priests in Vilna [Wilno] delivered sermons admonishing their parishioners to refrain from taking Jewish property or shedding blood; eventually these clerics disappeared.

A priest who baptized a seventeen-year-old Jewish girl and aided her in other ways was tried in public, flogged by the Gestapo, and sentenced to forced labor for life.<sup>7</sup>

Friedman's preliminary survey of rescue was eclipsed by the Polish researchers. Historian Władysław Bartoszewski, a prominent member of Żegota, the wartime Council for Aid to Jews (Rada Pomocy Żydom), provided the following overview in his book *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, published in 1970.

There was hardly a monastic congregation in Poland during the occupation that did not come in contact with the problem of help to the hiding Jews, chiefly to women and children—despite strong pressure from the Gestapo and constant surveillance of the monasteries, and the forced resettlement of congregations, arrests and deportations to concentration camps, thus rendering underground work more difficult. Some orders carried on work on a particularly large scale: the Congregation of Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary who concealed several hundred Jewish children in their homes throughout Poland; the figure of Mother [Matylda] Getter, Provincial Superior of that Congregation, has already gone down in history. The Ursuline Sisters [of the Roman Union] played a similar role in Warsaw, Lublin, Cracow [Kraków] and Cracow Voivodship, Lvov [Lwów], Stanisławów and Kołomyja; the nuns of the Order of the Immaculate Conception did the same in their convents; the Discalced Carmelites gave shelter to the especially endangered leaders of Jewish underground organizations. In their home at 27 Wolska Street in Warsaw, situated near the ghetto walls, help was given to refugees in various forms; this was one of the places where false documents were delivered to Jews; there, too, liaison men of the Jewish underground on the “Aryan” side—Arie Wilner, Tuwje Szejngut, and others—had their secret premises. In 1942 and 1943, the seventeen sisters lived under permanent danger of [death] but never declined their cooperation even in the most hazardous undertakings. The Benedictine Samaritan Order of the Holy Cross concealed children and adults at Pruszków, Henryków and Samaria [Niegów] in the voivodship of Warsaw; Sisters of the Order of the Resurrection [of Our Lord Jesus Christ] hid Jews in all their convents throughout Poland; the Franciscan Sisters [Servants of the Cross] in Laski near Warsaw many a time gave refuge and help to a great number of these persecuted when all other efforts had failed; the Sacré-Coeur Congregation took care of Jews in Lvov [Lwów] at the time of most intensified Nazi terror there. ...

Equally splendid was the record of many orders of monks, and in particular the St Vincent [de Paul] Congregation of Missionary Fathers, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Salesian Society, the Catholic Apostleship Association, the Congregation of Marist Fathers, the Franciscans, the Capuchins and the Dominicans.

Well known is the protective role played towards the Jews by Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski, at the time metropolitan bishop in Vilna [Wilno], and by Dr Ignacy Świrski, professor of moral theology at Stefan Batory University in Vilna, after the war Ordinary of Siedlce Diocese (died in 1968); it was of their will and with their knowledge that a great many refugees from the ghettos were hiding in ecclesiastical institutions and convents.

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<sup>7</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 140.

Also well known are the activities of the distinguished writer and preacher, the late Father Jacek Woroniecki of the Dominican Order. In Warsaw, an especially beneficent role was played among others by Father Władysław Korniłowicz,<sup>8</sup> Father Jan Zieja,<sup>9</sup> Father Zygmunt Trószczyński, and in the ghetto itself, up to 1942, by Father Marcelli Godlewski, rector of the Roman Catholic parish of All Saints, by Father Antoni Czarnecki and Father Tadeusz Nowotko. In Cracow [Kraków], broad social work was displayed—with the knowledge and of the will of the Archbishop-Metropolitan Adam Sapieha, by Father Ferdynand Machay, well-known civic leader, writer and preacher. It was also to the priests throughout the country that the dangerous task fell *ex officio* to issue to people in hiding birth and baptism certificates necessary for the obtaining of “Aryan” documents.<sup>10</sup> A number of priests,

<sup>8</sup> Rev. Władysław Korniłowicz was the chaplain of the Institute for Blind Children in Laski, outside Warsaw, run by the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross outside of Warsaw. Because of his public pronouncements at the outset of the war, he had to take refuge in Żułów near Krasnystaw, where he served as chaplain at a newly established branch of the Institute for the Blind. Periodically, Rev. Korniłowicz returned to Warsaw, where he assisted Jewish converts and Jews who escaped from the ghetto. See Mateusz Wyrwich, “Obcy we własnym mieście,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 3 (2009): 82 (testimony of Tomasz Prot). Jan Kott, a Jew who was baptized as a child, wrote: “Father Korniłowicz baptized many of the Jews who were part of the long-assimilated Warsaw intelligentsia. I do not know how many of these conversions were truly religious and how many were prompted by the threat of a wave of anti-Semitism. Undoubtedly Father Korniłowicz’s apostolic gift also played a major role.” See Jan Kott, *Still Alive: An Autobiographical Essay* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Before the war Rev. Jan Zieja was a professor at the clerical seminary in Pińsk, in Polesie (Polesia). He was a well-known preacher and author of works on religious subjects. During the war he provided many Jews with baptismal and birth certificates, temporary shelter, and food, and found hiding places for them. See his account in Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, eds., *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej: Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (Kraków: Znak, 1969), 819–20. Some of Rev. Zieja’s rescue activities are detailed in this study.

<sup>10</sup> In interwar Poland, baptismal certificates issued by Roman Catholic parishes had the status of official state documents and also served as birth certificates. The document was known as *metryka urodzenia i chrztu*, that is, a birth and baptismal certificate. It was customary to pay a small fee (donation) to the parish for the issuance of such documents. In 1942, the German authorities introduced a requirement for all Poles 15 and older to obtain an identity card known as a Kennkarte. To receive a Kennkarte, a person had to fill out an application form and provide two photographs and supporting documents such as a birth or baptismal certificate, a certified attestation of permanent residence, a prewar Polish national identity document (if possible), a marriage certificate, etc. The applicant was also obliged to make a formal declaration of their Aryan ethnicity and was fingerprinted. In practice, obtaining a baptismal certificate was the first important step. Since Polish-speaking civil servants were involved in the process, Kennkarten were frequently forged, thus allowing members of the underground and Polish Jews to obtain new identities. Illegal printing shops manufacturing fake Kennkarten also operated, and such cards were widely available either through underground organizations or on the black market. According to the Gestapo, in Warsaw there were up to 150,000 fake cards in circulation in 1943. On the acquisition and use of false identity documents see Sebastian Piątkowski,

like Father Julian Chrościcki [Chrościcki] from Warsaw, paid for it with deportation to a concentration camp. ...

In all their efforts aimed at helping Jews, the clergy and the convents collaborated as a rule with Catholic laymen in their region. Thus, for example, rectors would place some of those hiding in the homes of their parishioners, and convents often kept in contact with lay institutions of Polish social welfare; the personnel of the latter included a great many persons dedicated to the idea of bringing help.<sup>11</sup>

Since Bartoszewski wrote this overview, considerable research has been carried out by Polish scholars on the activities of Catholic religious orders in particular. Unfortunately, to date, there is no comprehensive survey of the rescue activities of the Polish Catholic clergy. The research is scattered in numerous publications, some of which this present study draws on. Much more research remains to be done. One should bear in mind, however, that the true extent of rescue efforts will never be known. Many of these deeds were, in all likelihood, never recorded.

While Friedman and Bartoszewski's early studies presented a somewhat promising assessment of the rescue efforts undertaken by the Polish Catholic clergy, Jewish scholars, including Friedman himself, took a decidedly different view. Without bothering to gather the evidence or taking into account the dramatically different occupation conditions prevailing in Poland (the Polish Catholic clergy was persecuted like no other clergy and helping Jews was punishable by death), damning verdicts were issued.

Already during the German occupation, Emanuel Ringelblum (who perished in March 1944) set the stage for this unfavourable, dismissive, and, indeed, condemnatory, assessment of the rescue efforts of the Polish Catholic clergy. Ringelblum wrote:

The clergy took some Jewish children in their institutions, generally the very young ones. These few cases did not help the general condition very much. ... the Polish clergy was not very much interested in the question of saving Jewish children.

The Polish clergy has reacted almost with indifference to the tragedy of the slaughter of the whole Jewish people.<sup>12</sup>

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“Aryan Papers”: On the Help Provided by Poles in Legalising False Identities for Jews in the Territory of the General Governorate for the Occupied Polish Regions,” *Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 1 (2020): 437–63.

<sup>11</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us: Pages from the History of Help to the Jews in Occupied Poland* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1970), 189–94.

<sup>12</sup> Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974; Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 150–51,



After noting Ringelblum's views as to the Catholic clergy's alleged "indifference" to the plight of the Jews, American sociologist Nechama Tec correctly points out that his conclusions are "based on scattered case histories and casual observations."<sup>13</sup>

Ringelblum's stance set the tone for Jewish historians for decades to come. While admitting a few exceptions, Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer reduced the assistance of the Polish Catholic clergy to next to nothing. Instead, he argues, they allegedly promoted anti-Semitism.

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206. The following passage, at p. 208, is cited by some historians without clarifying that Ringelblum was making a comparison to the interwar period, and that Ringelblum was implicitly conceding that there was not much that the Polish Catholic clergy could do in the harsh conditions that it endured during the German occupation: "One could hardly expect any considerable help from a clergy like this in the present war, if it gave no help at a time when it was still possible to do so." Ringelblum also went on to make unfavorable comparisons between the Catholic clergy's response in Poland and Western Europe (Holland, Belgium, France) based on scant anecdotal information, and without acknowledging the fundamentally different conditions the clergy faced in Poland. Ringelblum takes a similar stance in his ghetto diary, where he dismisses individual rescue efforts as acts of opportunism or creating a sort of alibi to cover up the clergy's overall indifference. See Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943*, 1st ed., (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 68, 120, 213, 217, 248.

<sup>13</sup> Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 140. Tec considers the contribution of the clergy to Jewish rescue to be "modest" and "no more extensive than that of other segments of the population." However, her conclusions, which are based on a very small group of survivors (308), are not supported by her own research. While the Catholic clergy made up no more than 0.2 per cent of the country's ethnically Polish population of some 24 million, 6 per cent of the survivors identified their helpers as priests and nuns, and 8 per cent of the rescuers belonged to the clergy. *Ibid.*, 147, 186, 213. Based on Yad Vashem statistics, of the 7,177 Poles recognized as Righteous (as of January 1, 2021), 105 were members of the Catholic clergy, i.e., 1.5 per cent, which is substantially higher than their share of the overall population. Moreover, many entries contained information about priests and nuns who rescued Jews but were not recognized by Yad Vashem.

Sociologists Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, the authors of one of the most highly-regarded works on altruism, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1988), who are secular, non-religious Jews, instinctively took a different view. When asked by broadcaster Dennis Prager, "Knowing all you now know about who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, if you had to return as a Jew to Poland and you could knock on the door of only one person in the hope that they would rescue you, would you knock on the door of a Polish lawyer, a Polish doctor, a Polish artist or a Polish priest?" Without hesitation, Samuel said, "a Polish priest." And his wife, Pearl, immediately added, "I would prefer a Polish nun." See "Sparing Us a Lot of Nonsense on the Subject of Altruism," October 3, 2013, Internet: <https://uncommondescent.com/darwinism/sparing-us-a-lot-of-nonsense-on-the-subject-of-altruism/>.

Nor was the Catholic clergy any help at all. With some very honorable exceptions, the clergy by and large not only echoed the antisemitic sentiments, but led them.

Against the background of church antisemitism in an overwhelmingly Catholic country, the action of the Uniate archbishop of Lwow [Lwów], Count Andreas [Andrzej] Szeptycki, who ordered his clergy to save Jews despite his antisemitic views, stands out. So do the actions of the Ursuline sisters, and other individual monastic houses and occasional village priests.<sup>14</sup>

**M**ordechai Paldiel, former director of the Department of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem, expressed a similar view:

In Eastern Europe, the clergy who extended assistance to Jews were few and far between, but there were notable exceptions.

In Poland, an exceptional priest in this regard was Father Stanislaw [Stanisław] Mazak, whose parish was located in a wooded area of the Tarnopol region.<sup>15</sup>

**H**istorian Friedman has advanced unfavourable and sweeping comparisons to other countries, for which there is little or no basis in fact.

On the whole, the attitude of the lower clergy paralleled that of the various ethnic groups. Where the local population was full of sympathy for the persecuted Jews, *almost all* the priests participated in rescue activities; this was the case in Italy, Belgium, France, Czechoslovakia, and parts of Hungary as in the Protestant countries and in the Greek Orthodox Bulgaria and Greece. Where the majority of the population was anti-Semitic, there were also anti-Semitic clergymen whose attitudes encouraged the enemies of the Jewish people. How much more should we appreciate, then, that amidst those East European peoples devoured by anti-Semitism, some clergymen had the courage to oppose the anti-Jewish wave, sometimes paying for it with their own lives.<sup>16</sup> [Emphasis added.]

In actual fact, only a very small minority of the Catholic clergy in Western Europe was involved in the rescue of Jews, and even fewer in Czechoslovakia (mostly in Slovakia). Yad Vashem has not recognized even one member of the Czech clergy as a Righteous Gentile. The leading historian on the Holocaust in the Czech lands states authoritatively that “the assistance of clergy in the Protectorate was neg-

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<sup>14</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 57, 59–60.

<sup>15</sup> Mordechai Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 56, 91. Paldiel later authored a more extensive—though far from comprehensive—treatment of rescue by the Polish Catholic clergy. See Mordechai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2006), 190–225.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Friedman, *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust* (New York: Conference on Jewish Social Studies; and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), 416–17.



ligible. None of the foremost representatives of the Catholic Church protested publicly against the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws.”<sup>17</sup> The point here is not to deprecate the Czechs, since conditions were dramatically different and even incomparable in the various countries under German rule, but to signal how would-be comparisons are used abusively to denigrate Poland.

Nor is there any evidence of clergy from Eastern Europe—other than Polish clergy—paying with their lives for helping Jews, with the exception of one Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest (Rev. Omelian Kovch, who perished in Majdanek), perhaps one Lithuanian priest (Rev. Kazimieras Puleikis, who was killed in the Ninth Fort of the Kaunas Fortress),<sup>18</sup> and one Hungarian Catholic nun (Sister Sára Salkaházi, who was shot by the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross). Punishing clergymen in Western Europe for helping Jews was virtually unheard of. In fact, sheltering Jews was not a crime in Italy, France, Norway or Denmark. In Poland, it was punishable by death.

This narrative has continued to gain momentum in more recent years. Claims that the assistance provided by the Polish Catholic clergy was much greater than acknowledged by Holocaust historians are summarily dismissed. Israeli historian Nahum Bogner states: “Few of the parish priests were willing to take the risk of issuing false birth certificates to Jews.”<sup>19</sup> David Silberklang, senior historian at Yad Vashem, has even questioned the veracity of the data provided to Ewa Kurek by Polish nuns. Citing no evidence to back his claim, he takes issue

<sup>17</sup> Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 221. Moreover, conditions for Czech and Polish priests varied enormously. For example, in the Czech Těšín area, which was populated by Poles and Czechs, 21 priests were imprisoned, of whom eight perished. All of the victims of clerical repression were Poles. See Damian Bednarski, “Martyrologium polskiego duchowieństwa z Zaolzia podczas II wojny światowej,” *Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2015): 61–86, at p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> Viktorija Sakaitė, “Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai,” *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32. The information regarding Rev. Kazimieras Puleikis is sketchy, and little else is known about his activities and the circumstances of his death. Sakaitė’s claim that Rev. Pranas Gustaitis was shot for helping Jews is incorrect; he was executed by the Soviets in November 1946. Although imprisoned in Stutthof, Rev. Alfonsas Lipniūnas survived the evacuation of the camp in January 1945. He died on March 28, 1945, after the entry of the Soviet army. Philip Friedman’s claim that a Lithuanian priest from Vidkulė, known as Fr. Jonas, was killed for sheltering Jewish children has been discredited as a legend. See Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers*, 140; Regina Laukaitytė, “Katalikų Bažnyčia Lietuvoje 1941–1944 m.: Požiūris į žydų genocidą ir krikštą,” *Lituanistica*, vol. 70, no. 2 (2007): 1–12, at p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Nahum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 43.

with Kurek's research<sup>20</sup> because it is "based almost entirely on the memoirs of the nuns themselves and might have overestimated the extent to which Polish orders protected Jewish children during the war."<sup>21</sup>

In other words, there's good reason to be suspicious of such dubious sources—the very people that desperate Jews entrusted their children's lives to! Query: Who is a position to provide more reliable data? The charges who were taken in as infants and young children and left scant, if any, testimony? If anything, Kurek erred in the opposite direction, by neglecting to mention a number of convents and orders of nuns that sheltered Jewish children, including, e.g., the *Sacré Coeur* Sisters in Warsaw, Salesian Sisters in Wilno, Felician Sisters in Zbaraż, Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś) in Nienadówka, and Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Nyrków (near Czerwonogród), Budzanów, and Przeworsk.

American historian Jan Tomasz Gross employs more "refined" but equally perverse arguments to smear the Polish Catholic clergy as Nazi collaborators. In his essay "On Collaboration," he argues that the definition of collaboration should also include "collaboration by omission," and encompass individuals and institutions that remained passive *vis-à-vis* the policies of the occupier. Armed with that broad definition, Gross to the passivity of the Polish Catholic clergy—whose fate he otherwise ignores—in the face of the persecution of the Jews as an example of collaboration.<sup>22</sup>

Public figures have gone out of their way to entrench an unfavourable view of Polish rescue efforts. Menachem Begin, then Prime Minister of Israel, infamously declared on Dutch television in 1979: "What concerns the Jews, the Poles have been collaborating with the Germans. ... only at most one hundred people have been helping Jews. ... Polish priests did not save even one Jewish life."<sup>23</sup>

By January 1, 2021, Yad Vashem recognized almost 7,200 Poles as Righteous, among them 103 members of the Polish Catholic clergy: 36 priests and 67 nuns. The number of Poles and clergy engaged in rescue activities was many times greater.

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<sup>20</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*.

<sup>21</sup> Armin Rosen, "How Ewa Kurek the Favorite Historian of the Polish Far Right, Promotes Her Distorted Account of the Holocaust," *Tablet* [New York], May 3, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Jan Tomasz Gross, "O kolaboracji," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 2 (2006): 407–16.

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Stewart Stevens, *The Poles* (St. James's Place, London: Collins/Harvill, 1982), 317. Stevens, a Jew, described this outburst as "a disgraceful statement in which Begin disgraced himself and dishonored his own people."

Unfortunately, the litany of anti-Polish remarks by Israeli politicians is long, and growing to this day.<sup>24</sup>

Reuven Bulka, a prominent Canadian rabbi and reluctant March of the Living student chaperon, asked rhetorically: "... how can one go to Poland, to the country so steeped in anti-Semitism that it eagerly cooperated with the Nazis in the cold-blooded murder of the Jews?"<sup>25</sup> The March of the Living Study Guide continues to instruct young Jews to see things in that troubling light:

When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Polish Jewry was caught in the Nazi web. How did the Church in Poland respond? Throughout our visit in Poland we will see Catholic churches everywhere. Even the smallest town has a huge church. You will wonder how the Church could stand by idly when people (Jews) were being discriminated against, and ultimately killed?<sup>26</sup>

The "carefree" existence of the Polish Catholic clergy under German occupation is described in the following chapter.

This inflammatory narrative has achieved its desired effect. Nowadays, "liberal" journalists are among the most ardent purveyors of the black legend about the Catholic Church. At a public event in Brooklyn, New York on June 12, 2016, Svetlana Alexievitch, a Belarusian journalist who won the 2015 Nobel Prize in literature, assured her audience—based on her conversations with "liberal" Polish journalists—that the "Poles were worst of all in how they treated the Jews. *Priests directly called for killing Jews in their sermons.*"<sup>27</sup> [Emphasis added.] There is no credible known case of a Polish priest calling for the murder of Jews.

The present study, consisting largely of a compilation of accounts of Jewish survivors and Polish rescuers, is a much needed corrective of the assessment of the rescue efforts of the Polish Catholic clergy. It is a fact-driven inquiry that is still very much a work in progress, and thus far from comprehensive. Several hundred additional documented cases have yet to be entered. Many relevant testimonies found in the Yad Vashem Archives, University of Southern

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<sup>24</sup> Some of these remarks—by Yitzhak Shamir, Reuven Rivlin, Yisrael Katz, and Yair Lapid—are set out in the final appendix.

<sup>25</sup> Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, "Poles Apart," *The Canadian Jewish News* [Toronto], May 11, 1995.

<sup>26</sup> *MOTL Study Guide*, at p. 48, Internet: <https://www.motl.org/study-guides>. Most villages in Poland at the time did not have churches, and the vast majority of those village churches were small.

<sup>27</sup> "Belarusian Nobel Prize Laureate Accuses Poles of Persecuting Jews in Holocaust," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, July 6, 2016.

California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, and other institutions are as yet untapped.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> While the present study focuses on rescue, the authors are cognizant of allegations of improper conduct, and even collaboration, on the part of the Catholic clergy. Although repeated by academics, most of these accounts are hearsay and, upon verification, raise serious concerns about their reliability. Some examples follow. The notion that there were priests (and nuns) who wanted to harm Jews must be dismissed as an unsubstantiated myth. The most notorious example is found in the Jedwabne memorial book (*yizkor bukh*), which was embraced—without any attempt at verification—by Gross: “Leaders of the Jewish community delivered silver candlesticks to the Catholic bishop of Łomża [at the beginning of July 1941] and sought assurance that he would not permit a pogrom in Jedwabne and would intervene with the Germans on behalf of the Jewish community.” Allegedly, the duplicitous bishop “kept his word for a while. But the Jews placed too much confidence in his promise...” See Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 71. Another version has the rapacious bishop of Łomża (who is not named) accepting a large sum of money for his worthless “promise.” This story is demonstrably untrue. Bishop Stanisław Łukomski had fled Łomża in 1939, remained in hiding during the Soviet occupation, and did not return to Łomża until July 9, 1941, that is, on the eve of the pogrom in Jedwabne. His residence was not restored to him until August 1941, so it was impossible for such a meeting to have taken place. See Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *The Massacre in Jedwabne, July 10, 1941: Before, During, and After* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs; and New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 130; Zygmunt Zieliński, ed., *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945: Metropolie wileńska i lwowska, zakony* (Katowice: Unia, 1992), 67; *Rozporządzenia Urzędowe Łomżyńskiej Kurii Diecezjalnej*, nos. 5–7 (May–July 1974): 61; Tadeusz Białous, *Biskup Stanisław Kostka Łukomski (1874–1948): Pasterz niezłomny* (Rajgród: Towarzystwo Miłośników Rajgrodu, 2010), 228, 233–34.

Two egregious examples—pushed by academics associated with the Polish Center for Holocaust Research, and now widely accepted as fact—are also highly problematic. Both entail alleged denunciation, on an unknown date, by an unidentified priest of another unidentified priest who was sheltering Jews, resulting in the Jews (and possibly the denounced priests) being killed. The first case was publicized by Jan Grabowski, who provides the following information without giving a source: “Jews Who were Killed while Hiding on the Territory of Dąbrowa Tarnowska County, 1942–1945: 5 NN Jews—Wietrzychowice—Hidden by the local priest, denounced by another priest, in 1943.” See Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 245. The source appears to be the testimony of Adam Merc, formerly Majer Künstlich (b. 1935), SFV, Interview code 36249, which Grabowski mentions in another context. However, he does not set out the testimony faithfully. Furthermore, he made no effort to verify this sketchy story, which is at least third hand information from a boy who was eight years old at the time and hiding in a different village. Rev. Jakub Opoka served as the pastor of Wietrzychowice from 1935 to 1965. There is no record that he sheltered Jews, nor that was he executed, as Adam Merc claims.

The second case was reported by Barbara Engelking and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, again without any attempt at verification. Allegedly, a priest who was sheltering 12 Jews, including a rabbi, in Sulisławice, near Klimontów, was denounced by another priest, and

they were all shot (“wzięto ich wszystkich i zastrzelono”). See Barbara Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...: Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), 160; Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Okrzyki pogromowe: Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski lat 1939–1946* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2012), 260. The source of this information is the testimony of Lejb Zyberberg. What Engelking does not tell us is that, at the time (early winter 1943), Zyberberg was hiding in the village of Goźlice, about 15 km away, and heard about this from his host, who in turn learned about it through the rumour mill. Characteristically, the priest is not identified, and neither Engelking nor Tokarska-Bakir bothered to carry out any research. The pastor at the time (from 1933 until 1951) was Rev. Jan Budziński; there is no record of the alleged occurrence in the diocesan records, which would surely have been the case had he been denounced for hiding Jews. Consequently, these two stories must be dismissed as unsubstantiated rumours.

An example from the Soviet occupation period involves Fr. Bolesław (Aleksander) Zarzecki, who was denounced in October 1939 for allegedly having made, in Nur, near Ciechanów, an outrageous threat to murder fifty Jews. A charge of this nature would have been taken very seriously and, if believed, would have resulted in a long term of imprisonment. Since Fr. Zarzecki was released a few days after his arrest by the NKVD, in all likelihood, the allegations were found to be bogus. See Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2001), 227; Roman Dzwonkowski, *Leksykon duchowieństwa polskiego represjonowanego w ZSRS 1939–1988* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2003), 665.

Although documented cases of improper behaviour on the part of the Polish Catholic clergy are in fact quite rare, the authors of one Yad Vashem study strongly suggest that they were almost as frequent as rescue cases. “As the recorded evidence shows, the attitudes of the priests towards the Jewish fugitives varied; and their influence upon the local population reflected the lack of unanimity.” The authors then set out three examples of unfavourable conduct and four positive ones, as if both types of conduct were equally prevalent. There is no mention in this book of the extensive assistance provided by nuns. See Yisrael Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During World War II* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986), 244–45. One of the examples mentioned by these authors—a hearsay account—refers to Sabina Kalmus, a Jewish convert who was allegedly beaten severely by a priest and his sacristan in Lwów, when she disclosed that she was Jewish. According to the author of this embellished account, the Jewish woman lived with a nun in a private home (it is unlikely this was a nun as nuns lived in convents; perhaps she was a tertiary); it is not clear whether the Jewish woman had formally converted (there were numerous conversions at the time, which caused the German authorities to ban them in October 1942); and the severe beating—brought on for no apparent reason well after the woman’s Jewish origin had come to light—occurred at St. Nicholas Church. See the testimony of Pelagia Łozińska, YVA, file 0.33/954 (Item 3547524). It is not clear whether this was the (Polish) Latin-rite or (Ukrainian) Greek Catholic church by the same name. In either case, the notion that a (would-be) convert would have been subjected to a thrashing in such circumstances is far-fetched. As mentioned in the present book, there is credible evidence that Rev. Władysław Pokiziak, a priest at the Latin-rite parish of St. Nicholas, provided birth and baptismal certificates to Jews.

The next example is even more problematic: “In the village of Kreznica [Krężnica], Lublin county, a local priest named Pankowski in his Sunday Mass sermons called upon the

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parishioners to murder the Jews.” In fact, the testimony on which the authors rely says something different. The pastor of Krężnica Jara, Rev. Józef Frankowski (not Pankowski), is mentioned in the testimony of a Jewish woman, Szprynca Fajersztajn, who hid in the vicinity of that village for more than two years, moving from house to house, including the home of the priest’s sister, as “a very esteemed man” (“un homme très estimable”). He spoke out *against* the killing of Jews and publicly ostracized a local man accused of killing some Jews. At one point in her testimony, the woman wrote that, according to one person, the priest had said not to hide Jews because it was dangerous to do so. If such a warning was issued, it would have been a general announcement the Germans ordered the priest to make. (There is more on this topic later on.) However, no one else this woman had contact with confirmed it, and she held the priest in high esteem. See Hela Marder, “Dans les villages près de Lublin: Témoignage de Szprynca Fajersztajn,” *Revue d’Histoire de la Shoah*, vol. 184, no. 1 (2006): 409–52, based on the Lublin memorial book, *Dos bukh fun Lublin*, published in Paris in 1952. (The rescue activities of Rev. Jan Poddębniak, another priest from Krężnica Jara, are described later in the book.) The final example, regarding a priest in Niechcice, which is also problematic, is discussed later in the present book in the context of anti-Semitic sermons. Another unsubstantiated charge directed at priests, namely, that they participated in the interrogation of Jews passing as Christians, is also addressed later.

Shmuel Krakowski also refers to a “report originating with the Polish Catholic Church,” from the period from June 1 to July 15, 1941, i.e., prior to the mass murder of the Jews, which was transmitted to the Polish government in London by the Delegate’s Office (Delegatura), as exhibiting “anti-Semitic sentiments in their most extreme form.” The report is cited to corroborate Krakowski’s conclusion of the existence of widespread hostility toward Jews on the part of the Catholic Church. See Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 52–53. The document in question is reproduced in its entirety in Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Pierwsi po diable: Elity sowieckie w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1941 (Białostoczczyzna, Nowogródzczyzna, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna)* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN and Rytm, 2001), 1195–1203. The report does not set out the name of its author (a careful reading of the text indicates it was written by one person); it is by no means certain the author was a member of the clergy; and, on its face, the report does not purport to be an official document of the Church in Poland or to express the views of its leadership. It is difficult to understand how leading Holocaust historians could, in good faith, manage to overlook these obvious problems and attribute the document to the Church as a whole. The report was analyzed incisively by Polish historian Tomasz Szarota, who points out these obvious facts and provides some valuable context and perspective. Szarota surmises that the author may not have been a member of the clergy at all, but notes that he did have access to some members of the Episcopate. The author’s personal views gravitate toward the extreme elements within the Church, e.g., Rev. Stanisław Trzeciak. At the time the report was written, the Holocaust was not yet underway; therefore, the author could not have been alluding to the physical annihilation of the Jews. In any event, the mainstream factions of the Polish underground did not share the author’s extremist views. The author’s call for the mass emigration of Polish Jews was something that was in fact being championed at that time by Zionist circles and their supporters in the West, who called for the creation of a national Jewish state in Palestine populated by two million Jews from Poland. See Tomasz Szarota, “‘Sprawozdanie kościelne z Polski za czerwiec i połowę lipca 1941-go roku’: Próba analizy dokumentu,” in Julian Warzecha, ed., *Słowo pojednania: Księga pamiątkowa z okazji siedemdziesiątych urodzin Księdza Michała*



*Czajkowskiego* (Warsaw: Biblioteka “Więzi,” 2004), 669–82; the article also appeared in Tomasz Szarota, *Karuzela na Placu Krasińskich: Studia i szkice z lat wojny i okupacji*, 2nd ed. (Warsaw: Rytm, and Fundacja “Historia i Kultura,” 2007), 200–18, and was translated, with revisions, as “A Church Report from Poland for June and Half of July 1941,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 30 (2018), 441–54.

The so-called Church report has drawn the attention of a number of historians, who often read in things that are not there. Israeli historian Saul Friedländer stresses that it is “a report originating with the Polish church itself” and makes much of “its quasi-official nature.” While conceding that it did not represent the general attitude of Polish Catholics toward Jews, Friedländer argues it indicated “some measure of concurrence” among the underground leadership with regard to the so-called Jewish question, which was supposedly characterized by “extreme anti-Jewish hatred,” as manifested in this report. See Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 184–85. British historian Richard Evans goes even further: “As a semi-official report of the Polish Church to the exiled government declared in the summer of 1941, the Germans ‘have shown the liberation of Polish society from the Jewish plague is possible.’” He then concludes that the Polish Catholic Church not only did not take a clear stance against the Germans’ murderous policies towards Polish Jews, “if anything, the opposite was the case.” See Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War, 1939–1945* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Books, 2008), 64. Another historian who jumped on this bandwagon is Alexander Prusin. Prusin claims that the “Polish clergyman” who wrote this report “praised the genocide” (sic—even though it had not yet occurred and wasn’t even known), and that “such views were not necessarily the ravings of a religious fanatic” but were representative of the Polish underground, as “attested to by a report sent to London in September 1941 by the AK [Armia Krajowa—Home Army] commander Stefan Rowecki.” See Alexander V. Prusin, *The Lands Between: Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870–1992* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 173. As for General Rowecki’s report, which Prusin manipulates (like Abraham Brumberg does below), British historian Norman Davies points out that “the quotation takes on a new slant, and might seem to imply either that Polish attitudes were based on fixed prejudice, or even that the Poles approved of the Nazis’ genocidal policies. Significantly, and very conveniently, Mr. Brumberg keeps quiet about the second half of the quotation. The original text of the report, in describing the factors influencing Polish opinion at the time, goes on to say three things: firstly, that virtually nobody approved of German actions; secondly, that Nazi persecution of the Jews was causing a backlash of sympathy; and thirdly, that pro-Jewish sympathies were inhibited by knowledge of Jewish activities in the Soviet zone.” Like Brumberg, Prusin also mistranslates General Rowecki’s report to read “the country is overwhelmingly anti-Semitic,” thus wrongly implying that anti-Semitism was a fixed attribute of the Polish population. General Rowecki, however, used the phrase “nastawiona antysemitcko,” which is rather different, implying a *nastawienie*, an “attitude,” “adjustment,” “disposition,” or “inclination” that can change according to circumstances. It is important to bear in mind that General Rowecki’s report was also written *before* the Holocaust got underway in central Poland, and that news of the massacres of Jews in Eastern Poland—after Germany invaded the Soviet zone of occupation in late June of 1941—was not widely known. See Norman Davies and Abraham Brumberg, “Poles and Jews: An Exchange,” *The New York Review of Books*, April 9, 1987.

## The Plight of the Polish Catholic Clergy

From the very outset of the German occupation, the Catholic Church in Poland and its clergy, especially in the western territories incorporated into the Reich, were subjected to persecution on a scale unlike anything experienced elsewhere under German occupation in the Second World War. In other occupied countries, the Germans did not interfere much with the functioning of Christian religious institutions or with the clergy's routine affairs.

Official Polish church reports presented to the Vatican at the time provide vivid descriptions of the cruel treatment meted out to hundreds of members of the Polish clergy, including bishops. These repressions were part of a broader campaign, the so-called *Intelligenzaktion*, a genocidal policy that targeted Polish elites or educated classes. Between September 1939 and April 1940, some 50,000 Poles were executed in that campaign. Another 50,000 were deported to concentration camps where most of them perished. No other occupied nation experienced such an immediate and murderous repression.

The Primate of Poland, August Cardinal Hlond, who was exiled in France at the time, submitted reports to the Vatican in December 1939 and January 1940 on the repressive measures taken by the Germans against the Polish Catholic Church in those territories incorporated into the Reich.<sup>29</sup> Although based on

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<sup>29</sup> These reports were published in English translation the following year under the title *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in German-Occupied Poland: Reports Presented by H.E. Cardinal Hlond, Primate of Poland, to Pope Pius XII, Vatican Broadcasts and Other Reliable Evidence* (London: Burns Oates, 1941; New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1941). The passages cited (from the British edition) are found at pages 3–11 (Gniezno), 12–18 (Poznań), 37–43 (Chełmno), 44–50 (Katowice), 52–54 (Łódź), 55 (Płock), 57–59 (Włocławek). The information in these reports has been supplemented by the data found in the following detailed listings of losses among the Polish Catholic clergy: Wiktor Jacewicz and Jan Woś, *Martyrologium polskiego duchowieństwa rzymskokatolickiego pod okupacją hitlerowską w latach 1939–1945*, vols. 1–5 (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1977–1981)—hereinafter cited as *Martyrologium*; *Biała Księga: Martyrologium duchowieństwa—Polska: XX w.* / *White Book: Martyrology of the Clergy—Poland: XX Century*, Internet: <http://www.swzygmunt.knc.pl/MARTYROLOGIUM/POLISHRELIGIOUS/>



incomplete information, the following survey will substantiate the savage reign of terror that the Germans inflicted on the Polish Catholic Church in the first few months of the war and occupation.

In the archdiocese of Gniezno:

The Archdiocesan Curia was closed by the Gestapo. ... Likewise, the Metropolitan Tribunal of the first and second instance has been closed and taken over by the Gestapo. The keys of the Curia and the Tribunal are in the hands of the Gestapo.

The Metropolitan Chapter has been dispersed. The Vicar-General and Mgr. [Stanisław] Krzeszkiewicz remain in their houses. The others were ejected from their homes, and Canon [Aleksy] Brasse has been deported to Central Poland (*i.e.*, that part of Poland seized, occupied and ruled by the Germans but not incorporated into the Reich). ...

The archiepiscopal seminary of philosophy at Gniezno was taken over by the soldiers. A German general has taken the archiepiscopal palace as his quarters. The homes of the expelled Canons, as likewise the dwelling-places of the lower clergy of the Basilica, have been occupied by the Germans. ... The Conventual Fathers of Gniezno were thrust out of their parish and convent, the latter being used as a place of detention for Jews. The principal parish church, that of the Holy Trinity, was profaned, the parish house invaded, and the entire belongings were stolen.

The German authorities, especially the Gestapo, rage against the Catholic clergy, who live under a rule of terror, constantly harassed by provocations, with no possibility of recourse or legitimate defence.

The following priests were shot by the Germans:

Rev. Anthony [Antoni] Lewicki, rural dean and parish priest of Goscieszyn [Gościeszyn].

Rev. Michael [Michał] Rolski, rural dean and parish priest of Szczepanowo.

Rev. Matthew Zablocki [Mateusz Zabłocki], rural dean and parish priest of Gniezno.

Rev. Wenceslaus [Wacław] Janke, parish priest of Jaktorowo.

Rev. Zeno Niziołkiewicz [Zenon Niziołkiewicz], parish priest of Słaboszewo [Słaboszewo].

Rev. John [Jan] Jakubowski, curate of Bydgoszcz.

Rev. Casimir [Kazimierz] Nowicki, curate of Janowiec.

Rev. Ladislaus [Władysław] Nowicki, curate of Szczepanowo.

Rev. Peter [Piotr] Szarek, a Lazarist Father, curate of Bydgoszcz.

Rev. [Stanisław] Wiorek, a Lazarist [Vincentian] Father, curate of Bydgoszcz.

With blows of their rifle-butts, German soldiers killed:

Rev. Marian Skrzypczak, curate of Plonkowo [Płonkowo].

Due to forced labour:

Rev. Joseph [Józef] Domeracki, rural dean and parish priest of Gromadno.

Died in prison:

Rev. Canon Boleslaus [Bolesław] Jaskowski, parish priest of Inowrocław [Inowrocław].

Rev. Romoald Soltysinski [Romuald Soltysiński], parish priest of Rzadkwin.

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POLISHRELIGIOUS\_MARTYROLOGY\_main\_01.htm; Jerzy Kłistała, *Duchowni: Ofiary niemieckiego zniewolenia* (Kraków: Miles, 2019).

Killed by a German bomb:

Rev. Leo [Leon] Breczewski, parish priest of Sosnica [Sośnica].

Many priests are imprisoned, suffering humiliations, blows, maltreatment. A certain number were deported to Germany, and of those there is no news. Others have been detained in concentration camps. Already there has begun the expulsion of priests into Central Poland, whence it is impossible and forbidden to return. ... It is not rare to see a priest in the midst of labour gangs working in the fields, repairing roads and bridges, drawing wagons of coal, at work in the sugar factories, and even engaged in demolishing the synagogues. Some of them have been shut up for the night in pigsties, barbarously beaten and subjected to other tortures. As illustrations, we cite three facts.

At Bydgoszcz, in September [1939], about 5,000 men were imprisoned in a stable, in which there was not even room to sit on the ground. A corner of the stable had been designated as the place for the necessities of nature. The Canon Casimir Stepczyński [Kazimierz Stepczyński], rural dean and parish priest of the place, was obliged, in company with a Jew, to carry away in his hands the human excrement, a nauseating task, considering the great number of prisoners. The curate, Adam Musiał [Musiał], who wished to take the place of the venerable priest, was brutally beaten with a rifle-butt.

The Rev. Anthony Dobrzyński [Antoni Dobrzyński], curate at Żnin, was arrested on the street while, vested in surplice and stole, he was carrying the Viaticum to a dying person. The sacred vestments were torn from his back, the Blessed Sacrament was profaned, and the unfortunate priest was dragged at once to prison.

In November, at Gniezno, about three hundred families, assaulted totally unawares, were thrust out of their homes and shut up in the warehouse of a leather factory. Many were arrested on the street as they were returning from church. It was here that the Chancellor of the archdiocesan Curia, the Rev. Canon Alexius [Aleksy] Brasse, the director of the primatial choir, the Rev. Canon Stanislaus Tłoczyński [Stanisław Tłoczyński], three Conventual Fathers, the curates Rev. Bogdan Bole and Lawrence [Wawrzyniec] Wnuk were also confined. The last mentioned was taken by surprise, while still undressed, and was imprisoned, clothed only in pyjamas. Only after several days was he permitted to send for his clothes. All of these citizens, men, women, young and old, were shut up and confined promiscuously with the priests, with no separation whatever. This was a painful situation for the poor priests, especially when some time later another one hundred and fifty families were added. Finally, all were deported in cattle cars to Central Poland.

From an authoritative source it is stated: "Between Bydgoszcz (Bromberg) and Gniezno the churches have been closed, with very few exceptions." In particular, the priests were removed from —

All the 15 parishes of the deanery of Gniewkowo.

All the 12 parishes of the deanery of Łobzenica [Łobzenica].

All the 16 parishes of the deanery of Nakło [Nakło].

All the 21 parishes of the deanery of Żnin [Żnin].

6 parishes of the deanery of Bydgoszcz, rural.

16 parishes of the deanery of Inowrocław [Inowrocław].

9 parishes of the deanery of Kcynia.

7 parishes of the deanery of Powidz.

7 parishes of the deanery of Trzemeszno.

5 parishes of the deanery of Wrzesnia [Września].

In the remaining eleven deaneries there is not even one which does not count at least a few parishes deprived of its pastors. Many of these are considered by the German authorities simply as *aufgehoben* [cancelled]. This situation (in the total 261 parishes almost half are without any priest) is growing worse and worse in proportion as the Polish population is being violently torn from the land of its ancestors and is being replaced by Germans, who have been brought from various parts of Europe. ...

Those churches which still have the ministrations of priests are permitted to be open only on Sunday, and then only from nine to eleven o'clock in the morning. At Bydgoszcz alone is there greater liberty. Sermons are allowed to be preached only in German, but since these serve often as a pretext for the Germans to carry off the priests to prison there is scarcely any preaching. Church hymns in Polish have been forbidden. ...

The crucifixes were removed from the schools. No religious instruction is being imparted. It is forbidden to collect offerings in the churches for the purposes of worship. The priests are being compelled to recite publicly a prayer for Hitler after the Sunday Mass.

In such conditions pious and religious associations are not functioning. The Catholic Action, so flourishing but six months ago, has been proscribed, and its more conspicuous apostles have been persecuted. Catholic societies of charity, the Ladies of Charity, the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, the pious foundations, have been dissolved and their funds confiscated.

From the time of the entrance of the German troops into those regions, numerous crucifixes, busts, and statues of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints that adorned the streets were battered to the ground. The artistic statues of the patron saints, placed in the squares of the cities, and even the pictures and sacred monuments on houses and on private grounds, met with the same fate. At Bydgoszcz the monument of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was profaned and destroyed. ...

The oppression being exerted against the houses and apostolate of Religious houses has as its purpose and end their total extinction. As we have already noted, the Conventuals of Gniezno were imprisoned and deported. A new and beautiful house and the sumptuous church just erected at Bydgoszcz were confiscated from the Lazarist Fathers. The police have installed themselves in the house, while in the church, closed for worship, the German soldiers are carrying on licentious orgies. The Minorites were expelled from their new and large college of Jarocin. The same fate fell to the lot of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost at Bydgoszcz, to the novitiate of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family at Górka Klasztorna, to the novitiate of the Pallottine Fathers of Suchary, to the novitiate of the Oblates of the Immaculate Conception of Markowice, and to the Mother-House along with the novitiate of the Society of Christ for Emigrants at Potulice.

Much more serious were the losses suffered by the religious institutes of women. The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul lost fourteen houses, among these hospitals, orphanages, asylums. The Congregation of the Sacred Heart witnessed the occupation of its new High School and College and Boarding-School at Polska Wies [Wież]. The Sisters of St. Elizabeth (*Graue Schwestern*: Grey Sisters) were expelled from nineteen houses. The Daughters of the Immaculata, whose mother-house is at Pleszew, were forced to close their house for aspirants to the congregation, their novitiate, and in addition lost seventeen other houses. Two houses were taken from the Congregation of St. Dominic of the Third Order, and likewise from the Daughters of the Mother of Sorrows.

A repugnant scene took place at the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of Bydgoszcz. The Gestapo invaded the papal cloister, and summoned the nuns to the chapel, where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. One of the police ascended the pulpit and cried that the nuns were wasting their time praying, because "God does not exist, for if there were a God, we would not be here." The nuns, with the exception of the Superioress, who was gravely ill, were conducted outside of the cloister, and shut up for twenty-four hours in the cellars of the *Passtelle* (passport office). Meanwhile the Gestapo searched the convent, and one of the policemen carried to the Superioress, confined to bed in her cell, the ciborium that had been taken out of the tabernacle. He commanded her to consume the consecrated hosts, crying: *Auffressen!* (Eat them up.) The unfortunate nun carried out the command, but at one point asked for water, which was refused. With an effort the nun managed to consume all the sacred element, and thus save them from further profanation.

The Church is in the hands of the Gestapo also with regard to its possessions. The funds of the archdiocesan Curia have been sequestered. The Braciszewo estate, proprietor of the archiepiscopal seminary, is under forced administration. The archiepiscopal palace was given over to the general of the division for his quarters. The Gestapo has taken possession of the Curia, of the Basilica, of the diocesan archives, of the very old and famous archives and library of the Chapter. The parochial books have been carried away. Particularly in the parishes, from which the priests had been removed, the German authorities consider themselves owners of the church, the cemetery, the parish house, and of all property, ecclesiastical and private. Above all, the administration of the lands that constituted the benefices and the funds of the Church were entrusted to men in the confidence of the German Government, who turn over nothing either to the Church or to the parish priest. Even in the parishes still provided with pastors, priests have already been expelled from their parochial houses, and in their places trustworthy followers of the new lords of Poland have been installed. Funds for the maintenance of the churches have begun to fail, and the priests are living solely on the charity of the faithful. If this state of affairs continues for any length of time, a complete spoliation of the Church will be the consequence ...

## In the archdiocese of Poznań:

The Vicar-General, His Excellency Mgr. Valentine [Walenty] Dymek, an able prelate, pious, generous and very active, has been interned in his own house since October 1st [1939].

The Curia and the Metropolitan Court, whether of first or second instance for, Cracow [Kraków], Lwow [Lwów] and Wloclawek [Włocławek] are closed and in the hands of the Gestapo, who are making a study of the records. The archiepiscopal palace was invaded by soldiers who have remained there for weeks ruining its fittings. The records of the Primatial Chancellery have been and still are being carefully examined by the Gestapo, who also raided the important archiepiscopal archives.

Of the Metropolitan Chapter the Canons Rucinski [Franciszek Ruciński], [Henryk] Zborowski and [Kazimierz] Szreybrowski have been imprisoned. Mgr. Pradzynski [Józef Prądzynski], who is seriously ill, is under military guard in his home. ...

The Cathedral of Poznan [Poznań], which is at the same time a parish church for 14,000 souls, was closed by the police under the pretext of being unsafe for use. The most beautiful of Poznan's churches, the Collegiate Church of St. Mary Magdalene, a parish of

23,000 souls, has likewise been closed, and it seems that the Germans behind closed doors are working in a way to arouse suspicions and fears. The Vicar Forane and the pastors of the city, with the exception of a few from the suburbs, are in prison. A good number of the assistants, too, were deported, so that just about 25 per cent. of the parish clergy of twenty-one parishes are at their posts.

The Theological Seminary, which numbered 120 students in the four-year course, was closed by the German authorities in October [1939] and the buildings given over to a school for policemen. ...

The clergy is subjected to the same treatment as the priests of the archdiocese of Gniezno. They are maltreated, arrested, held in prison or concentration camps, deported to Germany, expelled to Central Poland. At present about fifty are in prison and in concentration camps.

The pastors Rev. John Jadrzyk [Jan Jądrzyk] of Lechlin, Rev. Anthony Kozłowicz [Antoni Kozłowicz], Rev. Adam Schmidt of Roznowo [Różnowo], and Rev. Anthony [Antoni] Rządki, professor of religion at Srem [Śrem], have been shot. ...

In general the clergy are living in constant uncertainty of the morrow, threatened as they are day and night with arrest and acts of violence. ...

The churches that are open can be used for devotions only on Sundays from 9 till 11. Priests have begun to say Mass on week-days in the early hours of the morning behind closed doors. Marriages are not being celebrated. There are no sermons and no music. Crucifixes have been removed from class-rooms, as well as holy pictures, and religion is no longer taught.

The Polish Episcopate had made Poznan the national centre for organization and direction of religious activity and especially of the Catholic Action for the entire Republic. Unfortunately, all these centres of tremendous activity, charitable works, organizations, and publications, have been destroyed by German authorities. ...

Besides these organizations and publications of national scope, all the organizations and publications in Poznan belonging to the archdiocese of Gniezno and Poznan were suppressed. ...

The losses suffered by Religious Institutes are likewise very painful.

The Dominican Fathers lost their newly erected house in Poznan. Having been entrusted with the spiritual guidance of students attending the University and the Commercial Academy, they had destined it as a University House. The Minorites lost their college at Kobylin and the house of theological studies at Wronki. The Conventuals of Poznan were expelled and their place taken over by German Fathers. The Jesuits of Poznan are in prison and their church has been closed by the police. The house of theological studies of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and that of the Missionaries of the Holy Family at Bablin [Bąblin] were closed. The Salesians lost their High School, College, and Boarding-School at Ostrzeszow [Ostrzeszów] and the house of philosophical studies at Marszałki [Marszałki]. The Fathers of the Divine Word were robbed of their novitiate at Chłudowo [Chłudowo]; the seminary at Ninino was taken from the Society of Lyons for the African Missions. The Society of Christ for Emigrants was robbed of their very new theological house at Poznan.

The Ursulines of the Roman Union were robbed of a new High School, College, and Boarding-School in Poznan. The Mother-House of the Ursulines of the lately deceased Mother Ledóchowska [Ledóchowska] at Pniewy is in the hands of a German Treuhaenderin, who

makes the Sisters work like servants. The Vincentian Sisters were removed from their large hospital of the Transfiguration at Poznań, lost four other important hospitals and about twenty of their prosperous centres of activity. The Sisters of St. Elisabeth (Grey Sisters) have lost about twenty houses, some of them very important. The Sisters of Immaculata have suffered similar losses, including their Mother-House at Pleszew. The Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth were forced to abandon their flourishing High School and College at Ostrzeszów [Ostrzeszów]; the Sisters of the Resurrection have closed a renowned school for domestics at Poznań.

Other Religious Institutes, both those for men as well as those for women, are meeting with the same fate or at least are expecting it from day to day, while already hundreds of religious monks and nuns are dispersed and are either living with their own families or are withdrawing to Central Poland, where they are crowding the few convents which they have there, without work and means of sustenance.

**C**onditions in the diocese of Chełmno in Pomerania were equally dire:

The episcopal Curia at Pelplin was closed and its archives confiscated; the ecclesiastical court suffered the same fate. All the members of the Curia without exception were deported.

The Cathedral Canons, with the exception of H.E. Mgr. [Konstanty] Dominik and Mgr. [Franciszek] Sawicki, were thrown into prison, and some were sent to forced labour. The others likewise had much to suffer. The head of the Chapter, Mgr. [Juliusz] Bartkowski, apostolic protonotary, despite his advanced age and precarious health, was forced to perform hard labour.

The ancient Cathedral, a veritable jewel of Gothic art, was first closed and then made into a garage, and it is now proposed to turn it into a market-hall. ...

The bishop's palace was entered and despoiled of all its treasures, works of art and furniture. The valuable library, containing about twenty thousand volumes, was pillaged. ...

The seminaries, large and small, with the college and the secondary school, are occupied by the German army. All the teachers have been driven out. The seminary cellars have been for several weeks the scene of tortures inflicted on both priests and Catholic laymen.

Of the 650 priests devoted to the cure of souls in the schools and in the Catholic Action, only some twenty have been left. The others were imprisoned or deported, or forced to perform exhausting and humiliating labour, at which time some died of fatigue. ...

It is not known where the majority of the clergy are detained, as the German authorities keep it a secret. It seems likely, however, that a large number are imprisoned in the concentration camp at Gorna [Górna] Grupa, and the rest in that of Kazimierz Biskupi, or at Stuthof [Stutthof] near Danzig, if not in other concentration camps in Germany ...

It is stated that a large number of priests have been shot [this was later confirmed to be true], but neither the number nor the details are as yet known, as the occupation authorities maintain an obstinate silence on the subject.

In any case it seems certain that nine priests, Mgr. Felix [Feliks] Bolt, the octogenarian parish priest of Srebrniki, Fr. [Bernard] Burdyn, parish priest of Gorna [Górna] Grupa, Fr. Chudzinski [Jerzy Chudziński] of Pelplin, Fr. Dykier [Gerard Dysarz], curate of Fordon [Fordoń], Fr. [Bronisław] Echaust, curate of Nowe, Fr. [Stanisław] Kotowicz, curate of Bieniaszkowo [Pieniążkowo], Fr. Litewski [Czesław Wilemski], curate of Sliwice [Śliwice],



Fr. Losinski [Bernard Łosiński] of Sierakowice, and Fr. Raszkiewicz [Hubert Raszkowski], parish priest of Fordon [Fordoń], have been executed.

Mgr. [Józef] Szydzik, apostolic protonotary and parish priest of Fordon [Fordoń], died in prison, and Fr. [Alojzy] Kaszubowski, parish priest of Kossakow [Kosakowo], died as a result of the sufferings he endured in prison.

The flourishing religious life of the diocese has been almost entirely suppressed. The churches have almost all been closed and confiscated by the Gestapo, which removes the pictures and other objects of value. Scarcely thirty churches are open for just two hours on Sundays. ...

Religious institutions have been ruthlessly suppressed. The Jesuit Fathers have been driven from their college and secondary school at Gdynia, now christened by Hitler *Gotenhafen*, and those of Grudziądz [Grudziądz] (Graudenz) have all been imprisoned. The Redemptorist Fathers of Toruń [Toruń] have been expelled, after having had to endure the most painful annoyances in prison; their magnificent monastery, built quite recently, together with their college, secondary school, and boarding-house, have been turned into barracks for German aviators. The Salesians have been driven from Rumia. At Chełmno [Chełmno] the Church of the Pallotins has been made into a gaming hall.

The losses suffered by the Religious Congregations have been particularly painful in this diocese. The Ursuline Sisters of Gdynia have been driven out and despoiled of their boarding-school, lycée, and boarding-house. Their Superior, good and worthy as she was, was treated with brutality despite the fact that she was seriously ill. The Ursulines have also been brutally driven from their flourishing school at Koscierzyna [Kościerzyna].

The Sisters of St. Vincent [de] Paul have been driven from their provincial house at Chełmno [Chełmno], where they had been established for three centuries. Twenty of them were killed when the place was bombed by the German air force in September, 1939. At Gdynia the members of the same order have been dispossessed of their large and modern hospital, finished only a few years ago. They were expelled at night, without having time to take with them their personal linen. A shop has been set up in their chapel. The Sisters of the order in question have likewise had to cease some twenty charitable activities to which they were giving themselves with admirable devotion. They are now scattered, either in the Government General or in their own families.

The Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord have been driven from their apprentice school at Brusy, from three houses at Grudziądz [Grudziądz], and from a greatly appreciated school consisting of lycée and boarding-house which they conducted at Wejherowo.

The other religious orders were not spared; for example, the Franciscan nuns and the Servants of Mary, who were expelled from Oksywie, together with their orphans, with whom they had to seek refuge beyond Warsaw, amidst the greatest difficulties.

All the crosses and sacred emblems by the roadsides have been destroyed. At Gdynia the Germans publicly overthrew the great cross which stood before the Church of the Holy Virgin, and covered it with filth. The population then went in secret to cover the remains with flowers and take small pieces as relics, until this act of piety was rendered impossible by the German authorities. The great cross standing on Kamienna Góra [Góra], which used to be illuminated at night and venerated from afar by mariners at sea as a religious greeting of a Catholic Gdynia, was also overthrown.

It goes without saying that the Nazi aim is to dechristianize as rapidly as possible these countries which are attached to the Catholic faith, and the results are as follows: 95 per cent. Of the priests have been imprisoned, expelled, or humiliated before the eyes of the faithful. The Curia no longer exists; the Cathedral has been made into a garage as at Pelplin; the bishop's palace into a restaurant; the chapel into a ball-room. Hundreds of churches have been closed. The whole patrimony of the Church has been confiscated, and the most eminent Catholics executed. The Poles have been driven from the land of their ancestors and replaced by Germans. All the religious emblems in streets and public places have been removed, and Hitlerian agents blaspheme or denigrate the Catholic faith in public.

In the diocese of Katowice, in Upper Silesia:

H.E. Mgr. [Stanisław] Adamski, Bishop of Katowice, is at the moment still in his diocese. From October 7th, 1939, however, he has been forbidden to leave Katowice. ...

As for the Cathedral Chapter, only two members are left. The Canons Mgr. [Paweł] Brandys, [Michał] Lewek, Matea [Karol Mathea], [Emil] Szramek and [Stefan] Sz wajnoch were imprisoned by the German authorities, and then expelled to the territory of the Government General, administered by Reichsminister Frank, from Cracow.

Some priests have been executed, others arrested. For example:

(a) Father [Tomasz] Mamzer, parish priest of Gostyn [Gostyń], was shot by the Germans.

(b) Father [Stanisław] Kukla, parish priest of Konczyce [Kończyce] Wielkie, died in prison in consequence of the atrocious treatment which he suffered. [Fr. Kukla was imprisoned in Sachsenhause and Dachau, and perished in May 1942.]

(c) Father Kwiczala [Józef Kwiczala], parish priest of Cieszyn, died at Cracow as a result of the troubles and vexations he endured in prison.

(d) Four priests died in prison, whereabouts unknown—viz.:

Father Gałuszka [Józef Gałuszka] curate of Jablonkow [Jabłonków or Jablunkov in Cieszyn Silesia]. [Fr. Gałuszka was imprisoned in Auschwitz but survived the war.]

Father [Franciszek] Kupilas, parish priest of Ledziny [Łędziny]. [Fr. Kupilas perished in Buchenwald in October 1940.]

Father Henry [Henryk] Olszak, parish priest of Trzyniec [or Třinec in Cieszyn Silesia]. [Fr. Olszak perished in Mauthausen in April 1940.]

and Father [Władysław] Robota, parish priest of Gieraltowice [Gierałtowice]. [Rev. Robota was executed in September 1939.]

The number of priests imprisoned by the Germans amounted to over a hundred. Some of them were afterwards released, while others were sent into exile. There are still some thirty in prison, including Mgr. Bilko [Leopold Biłko], parish priest of Karwina [or Karviná in Cieszyn Silesia—Fr. Biłko survived imprisonment in several concentration camps]; Canon [Jan] Barabasz, rural dean and parish priest of Czechowice [Fr. Barabasz perished in Dachau in June 1941]; D. Molc [Augustyn Melz or Meltz], parish priest of Wozniki [Woźniki]; D. [Karol] Franek, parish priest of Dziedzice, and Fr. Otreba [Wiktor Otręba], parish priest of Świątchłowice [Świętochłowice].

At the present moment the occupation authorities are hastening to expel the priests to the territory of the Government-General, which is considered not to have been annexed by the Reich—treatment equivalent to exile and dispossession of everything they had. Among the exiled are some of the most eminent clergy in the diocese, such as Canon Matea



[Mathea] of Katowice, Mgr. Lewek of Tarnowskie Gory [Góry], Fr. [Józef] Dwucet, parish priest of Lubliniec, Mgr. [Emanuel] Grimm [Grim] of Istebna, the parish priest of Bogumin [or Bohumín in Cieszyn Silesia], and many others.

The treatment inflicted on certain priests in prison has been outrageous. For example, Fr. Kupilas, parish priest of Ledziny [Łędziny], was shut up for three days in the confessional of the church at Bierun [Bieruń], where 300 men and women were imprisoned at the same time without anything to eat and without being allowed to go out to satisfy their natural needs. Fr. Wycislik [Franciszek Wycislik], vicar of Zyglin [Żyglin], was arrested and beaten in the streets of Tarnowskie Gory [Góry] until the blood ran, and kicked and even trampled until he lost consciousness. Curate [Jan] Budny had his sides pierced by numerous bayonet stabs, because the German authorities had ordered him to hold his hands up, and after a certain time he was unable through fatigue to do so any longer.

The terrorism to which the clergy and the 500 civilians interned in the concentration camp at Opava (Troppau) in the Sudetens were exposed during September and October, 1939, was particularly frightful. On their arrival they were received with a hail of blows from sticks. Priests were deliberately confined together with Jews in wooden huts, without chairs or tables. Their bedding consisted of rotten and verminous straw. The Germans forced the priests to take off their cassocks, and their breviaries and rosaries were taken from them. They were sent to the most degrading labours. For any infraction of the regulations, even involuntary, the prisoners were beaten; sometimes, merely in order to terrorize them or perhaps from caprice, they were beaten until the blood ran. Many died, among them Fr. Kukla, above mentioned, and, it seems, also Fr. Gałuszka [Gałuszka], curate of Jablonkow [Jabłonków], of whom no news has been received since it was learned that he was suffering harsh treatment in the camp in question. ...

The religious orders have been suppressed; the Conventuals have been expelled from Klimszowiec and their church made into a gymnasium. The Jesuits were driven from their important monastery at Dziedzice and from the parishes of Cieszyn and Ruda. The Salesians have had to leave Maslowice [Masłowice]. The Fathers of the Divine Word have lost their great institute at Rybnik. The Salvatorians have had their large and recently built house at Mikołow [Mikołów] taken from them. The Brothers of St. John of God were brutally driven from their great and popular hospitals at Cieszyn and Bogucice; the latter, which is very large and modern, is used at present for German soldiers, who have turned the chapel into a refectory.

The Ursulines have had to close their institution with its school, lycée, and boarding-house at Rybnik; it was first occupied by the Schutzpolizei, and afterwards sequestrated. The Sisters of St. Vincent and those of St. Elisabeth have been sent away from their hospitals, orphanages, and other charitable institutions. The same fate befell the Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo, whose mother-house at Rybnik was confiscated.

### In the diocese of Łódź:

H.E. Mgr. Jasinski [Włodzimierz Jasiński] has remained at his post. He had to submit to more than one examination, and is interned in his house. H.E. Mgr. [Kazimierz] Tomczak, suffragan bishop and Vicar-General, was imprisoned and sent to a concentration camp at Radgoszcz [Radogószcz], near Lodz [Łódź], where he was beaten, insulted, and forced to

perform humiliating work. He is there still. The diocesan Curia has ceased to function. The Seminary is occupied by soldiers. The Cathedral Chapter has been broken up.

A regular avalanche of arrests and penalties has fallen on the regular and secular clergy. Half of them at least are in prison or have been expelled. After sufferings and ignominies of all kinds in a detention prison, the priests were then sent to the Radogoszcz concentration camp, a place of terrorism and sadism.

An eye-witness reports as follows: "In the diocese of Lodz [Łódź] alone several dozens of priests and religious clergy, with their bishop, Mgr. Tomczak, were sent to Radogoszcz. The new-comers were greeted with a frightful hail of blows with sticks, which did not spare even H.E. Mgr. Tomczak himself. The majority were then left without food for three days. The number of those detained amounted to about 2,000. They had to sleep on mouldy straw. The guards insulted and cruelly maltreated the prisoners. One could not enumerate all the insults and humiliations inflicted on them. The priests were made to wash out the latrines with their hands. It was not rare for the guards to order the prisoners to kneel down in a row, touch the ground with their foreheads, and call out, 'We are Polish pigs.' One day a policeman came into a room and said sarcastically, 'You would like me to hang an image of the Virgin on the wall for you to pray to for victory? That would be the last straw.' Then, turning to the bishop he added, 'You also will be hanged soon.' A man who asked to be allowed to tend the bishop's injured foot was shot." (Authentic statement.)

After long weeks of this sort of treatment, the sick priests were dismissed from the camp, and immediately sent to the "Government General." ...

In these conditions ecclesiastical life rapidly disappeared. A large number of parishes are without pastors. The churches are open for a short time on Sundays. The parochial buildings are occupied by the police or given to the German authorities. Poles are forbidden to marry. Religious teaching is forbidden in the schools. The Catholic Action has been dissolved, and its director, Fr. [Stanisław] Nowicki, beaten so brutally that his skull had to be trepanned in order that his life might be saved. All the Catholic organizations for charitable and pious purposes have ceased their activities. The monasteries of the religious orders and their works have been suppressed. The Jesuits have been moved from Leczyca [Łeczyca]. The new, scarcely finished hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God at Lodz [Łódź] has been sequestered. The Lazarists have been driven from Pabianice; the Salesians have been sent away from their orphanage at Lutomiersk with all their poor and abandoned children. The religious institutes for women have also had to suffer grave losses.

## In the diocese of Płock:

H.E. Mgr. [Antoni] Nowowiejski, who is advanced in years, and was the doyen of the Polish bench of bishops, has been expelled from his residence and is detained at Słupno [Słupno]. His suffragan and Vicar-General, Mgr. [Leon] Wetmanski [Wetmański], was first arrested by the occupation authorities, and then released, and finally sent with Mgr. Nowowiejski to Słupno.

The diocesan Curia is unable to function. The large and small seminaries have been broken up and their buildings occupied by the German authorities. Their rich and important archives, as well as the diocesan museum, have been seized by the German police.

A large part of the clergy was arrested, detained in the monasteries, and finally expelled into the occupied territory called the Government General. The extensive district of Mława [Mława], Przasnysz, and Ciechanów [Ciechanów], which extends from the borders of East Prussia to the Vistula, has lost many of its clergy. Those of the Rypin County had to endure the most suffering. There are parishes without pastors and without Mass. Marriages are forbidden. The Catholic Action does not exist any more. The Sunday services are limited to only two hours.

At Soczewka the curate [Paweł] Kwiatkowski was shot; other priests have disappeared and there is no news of them. The Passionists of Przasnysz have suffered, but still more the Salesians, who were simply driven from their novitiate at Czerwińsk [Czerwińsk] and from their school of arts and crafts at Jaciążek [Jaciążek].

In the diocese of Włocławek:

H.E. Mgr. [Karol] Radonski [Radoński] is at Budapest, and the German authorities have refused him permission to return to his diocese or to any other part of Poland.

H.E. Mgr. [Michał] Kozal, suffragan bishop and Vicar-General, devoted himself most zealously to the service of the people of Włocławek [Włocławek] during the hostilities. On the arrival of the Gestapo he was arrested and subject to painful examinations; and after two months passed in the prison at Włocławek he was interned in the concentration camp at Ład [Łąd] ...

Of the forty-two clergy resident at Włocławek, either as members of the Chapter, or attached to the Curia or the Catholic Action, or engaged in the cure of souls, only one sick canon and one young priest were left; the rest were imprisoned and sent to concentration camps. ...

The clergy are suffering the same fate as those of the other dioceses incorporated in the Reich. Both secular and regular priests are maltreated, injured, and beaten. Half of the clergy have been arrested. After weeks in various prisons where they suffered as has been described, these priests were collected, together with those of the contiguous dioceses, in three concentration camps: at Gorna [Górna] Grupa, at Kazimierz Biskupi, and at Ład. In the last camp Mgr. Kozal and about eighty priests are detained ...

From the said concentration camps the priests are sent in groups to the Government General, whilst their places are filled by others who have been forcibly removed from their parishes. In this way Catholic life in these districts is being destroyed according to a pre-arranged plan. There are, however, some priests who are living in hiding and continuing their work among the people.

At Kalisz Fr. [Roman] Pawłowski [Pawłowski], vicar [60-year-old pastor] of Chocz, was publicly shot [in front of assembled crowd, on October 18, 1939]. He was led to the place of execution barefoot and without his cassock. The police compelled the Jews to fasten him to the execution post, to unbind him after he had been shot, to kiss his feet, and to bury him in their ritual cemetery.<sup>30</sup> ...

<sup>30</sup> Another report regarding this execution can be found at pp. 105–6 of *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in German-Occupied Poland*.

The college and the *Długosz* [Długosz] episcopal lycée at Włocławek [Włocławek] have been occupied and stripped of all their modern equipment, and are at present used by the soldiers. The Jesuit church and noviciate at Kalisz were made into a temporary prison for persons exiled to the Government General. The Salesians had to move from their fine college, lycée, and boarding-house at Aleksandrow [Aleksandrów], and a school for policemen has been established in it; while their college at Ład [Łąd] serves as a place of detention for interned priests ... The large modern school, lycée, and boarding-house belonging to the Ursulines of Włocławek were turned into barracks; and the Sisters of St. Vincent were driven from their hospital at Włocławek and from all their other works.

According to a 1940 report by Rev. Zygmunt Kaczyński, director of the Polish Catholic Press Agency,<sup>31</sup> on conditions in the so-called General Government (known as *Generalgouvernement* in German), the central part of Poland under German occupation and administration:

There is not a single diocese in German-occupied Poland where priests have not been murdered without trial or evidence. ...

At Mszczonow [Mszczonów], near Warsaw, [on September 11, 1939] the Gestapo shot [Fr. Józef Wierzejski and his vicar, Fr. Władysław Gołędowski] without any accusation or trial. In the second half of February of [1940] Fr. [Marceli] Nowakowski, [pastor] of the parish of the Redeemer at Warsaw, was sentenced to death merely because he was found in his church praying for the independence of Poland. It is still not known whether this sentence has been carried out, since the Gestapo refuses all information when either a priest or a layman has been condemned to death or to detention in a concentration camp. [Rev. Nowakowski was killed on January 22, 1940 in a mass execution of Polish elites in Palmiry.]

<sup>31</sup> *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in German-Occupied Poland*, 92–95. Rev. Marian Leon Fulman, bishop of Lublin, and Rev. Władysław Goral, the auxiliary bishop, were arrested on November 17, 1939. They were sentenced to death for their “anti-German” activities, among them trumped up charges of gathering arms, at a show trial held on November 27, 1939. As a result of an intervention by the Vatican, their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. The two bishops were sent to the Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg concentration camp near Berlin. In February 1940, Bishop Fulman was transferred to Nowy Sącz, where he was held under house arrest for the duration of the war. Bishop Goral remained in Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg and perished there shortly before the liberation of the camp in April 1945. In total, some 200 of 459 priests of the diocese of Lublin fell victim to German repressions. Fifty-six priests were sent to concentration camps, 26 of whom perished. See Anna Lewandowska, “Represje wobec duchowieństwa katolickiego z diecezji lubelskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945,” *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, Sectio F, Historia, vol. 67, no. 1 (2012): 73–85, at pp. 81–82, 84–85; Jarosław R. Marczewski, “Pięć lat internowania: Biskup lubelski Marian Leon Fulman na plebanii kościoła kolegiackiego pw. św. Małgorzaty w Nowym Sączu (1940–1945),” *Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2015): 5–46, at pp. 13–19; Albert Warso, “I vescovi perseguitati nel periodo dell’occupazione nazista in Polonia,” in Jan Mikrut, ed., *Perseguitati per la fede: Le vittime del Nazionalsocialismo in Europa centro-orientale* (San Pietro in Cariano (Verona): Gabrielli, 2019), 557–82, at pp. 566–68.

In cases where the death penalty has been carried out, the Gestapo does not surrender the body, but buries it at night in some secret place. Of many priests who were arrested months ago there is no news, and it is unknown whether they are alive and where they may be.

In the territory of the Government General the cruellest persecution has befallen the clergy of the diocese of Lublin ...

In the middle of October [actually, November 17, 1939], on the anniversary of the consecration of Bishop [Marian] Fulman, when the local clergy was gathered in the bishop's residence to give their pastor their good wishes, agents of the Gestapo made their way in and arrested the bishop, his suffragan, Bishop [Władysław] Goral, and all the assembled clergy ... After some weeks' detention in Lublin, Bishop Fulman and his companions were in November [27, 1939] brought before a court-martial (*Sondergericht*), and at a secret hearing at which they had no defending lawyer were sentenced to death. The Governor-General [Hans Frank] exercised his prerogative of mercy by commuting the death sentence to one of imprisonment for life.

After sentence Bishops Fulman and Goral and a number of other clerics were taken to Berlin, and thence to the [Sachsenhausen concentration] camp situated near Oranienburg ... After their arrival their clerical dress was taken from them, their heads were shaved, and they were led under a shower-bath, where streams of cold, almost icy water were discharged upon them, after which, shivering with cold, they were filmed from all sides before the eyes of the warders and of Hitler youth. ...

Since October [1939] about 150 priests have been held in prison in the diocese of Lublin—that is to say, more than half the clergy—and many others have to live in hiding, among them Fr. [Zygmunt] Surdecki [Surdacki], the administrator of the diocese. ...

At Radom four priests were severely knocked about during their examination by the Gestapo, their teeth being broken and their jaws dislocated. The following question, among others, was put to them ...: “Do you believe in God? If you do you are an idiot, and if you don't you're an impostor.” When the person questioned pointed out that the question itself was insulting, he was struck in the face.

## The chronicle of repression continues. In Częstochowa:

This town was the scene of dreadful outrages by the German army, which made its entry at 12 noon on September 3rd, 1939.

On the next day, September 4th, the Germans drove into the space round the Cathedral of the Most Holy Family from seven to eight hundred men and women, Polish and Jewish. They were all made to stand with their hands up for two hours; and those who fainted or lowered their hands were beaten and kicked by the soldiers. Towards evening they were all driven into the Cathedral and shut up without food for two days and two nights. Dozens fainted. The Cathedral was shockingly befouled. Appeals to the German authorities were fruitless.

The same day people were hunted down in the town, on the pretext that an attempt had been made to fire at German soldiers from one of the houses. This was the same lie which the Germans used in Belgium and at Kalisz in Poland in 1914 to justify their barbarous massacres.

About sixty people were thus hunted down and shot. One of the houses in the street of the Blessed Virgin Mary was set on fire by the Germans after they had thrown hand-grenades into it. Many persons were not allowed by the Germans to come out, and perished in the flames. It was not allowed to bury or to take away the bodies of those who had been shot, as the object was to terrorize the inhabitants by the sight of them lying about. They were not buried until two days later.

In the evening about 600 persons, including three priests, were arrested in their houses, taken in front of the municipal building, and threatened with death.<sup>32</sup>

According to a report from March 1941:

Mgr. [Stanisław] Adamski, bishop of Katowice, and his auxiliary, Bishop [Juliusz] Bieniek, have been deported by the Germans into the General Government area of Poland. This leaves the diocese without a bishop. ...

Four Polish priests from Danzig [Gdańsk]—Frs. [Bronisław] Komorowski, [Franciszek] Rogaczewski, [Bernard] Wiecka [Wiecki], and [Józef] Hoeft—have died in the concentration camp at Stutthof, near Danzig. They were taken to this camp immediately after the German invasion and were treated very brutally, being beaten and maltreated. It is not known whether they were murdered by the Gestapo men, or whether they died as the result of the torture they had suffered. [Rev. Hoeft was murdered in a mass execution in Piaśnica in November 1939; the other three priests perished in Stutthof in January and March 1940.]

The Germans have now established themselves in the famous Polish monastery at Czestochowa [Częstochowa]. The Gestapo took over the monastery and made a number of searches for the precious votive offerings which formerly adorned the walls of the church. The Gestapo men quickly began to terrorise the priests, and people who went to pray before the famous picture of the Madonna.

Fr. Roman Klaczynski [Jan Romuald Klaczyński] was arrested in the sacristy after preaching a sermon in which he urged the people to “build Poland in your hearts.” He was sent to the concentration camp at Oświęcim [Auschwitz—actually, Sachsenhausen; he was transferred to Dachau, where he perished in April 1942]. Thirty other priests were also arrested at Czestochowa [Częstochowa]. Of these, three were shot, including the distinguished astronomer and director of the Observatory, Canon Bonaventura Meller [Bonawentura Metler].

Two hundred priests of the Lublin diocese, including many Jesuits and Franciscans, have been arrested. One has died in prison, and ten were shot.

Fr. Adam Rozalski [Różalski], of Kielce, was shot at by a military patrol in the street [on September 5, 1939] for no obvious reason. He took refuge in a house. An agent of the Gestapo followed him and killed him with a bayonet.

In the diocese of Sandomierz seven priests have been killed recently. They were five Franciscans from Skarzysko-Kamienna [Skarżysko-Kamienna; actually, three priests and four brothers were killed on February 14, 1940 and the convent was closed; the victims were Fr. Teodor Filip, the guardian, Fr. Anatol Gałucha, Fr. Alojzy Śmigiel, Br. Jan Stawarz, Br. Kazimierz Gałek, Br. Łukasz Neugelauer, and Br. Hugolin Grodzki], Fr. Paul [Paweł]

<sup>32</sup> *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in German-Occupied Poland*, 103–4.



Koppa [?], the dean of Drzewica, and Canon Stanislas [Stanisław] Klimecki. Some of these victims were thrashed and treated in the worst possible way by the Germans before death. This was the fate of Fr. Klimecki: on the way to the place of execution they tore his cross from him and beat him in the face with it. [Fr. Klimecki was executed on September 8, 1939.]

In Cracow diocese eighty-seven priests have been banished to concentration camps; thirty-seven Conventuals, Jesuits, Missionaries, Carmelites and Albertines are working in stone quarries at Mauthausen, near Linz in Austria.

Altogether it is estimated that some seven hundred Polish priests have been shot or have died in concentration camps, throughout the German-occupied area. Some 3,000 Polish priests are held in concentration camps at the present time.<sup>33</sup>

Although this history is not widely known known, academic publications have written about these matters for decades. According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967):

In all, 13 Polish bishops were exiled or arrested and put in concentration camps. Of these the following died: Auxiliary Bishop Leon Wetmański of Płock on May 10, 1941, and Archbishop Antoni Nowowiejski of Płock on June 20, 1941, in Soldau (Działdowo); Auxiliary Bishop Michał Kozal of Włocławek on Jan. 26, 1943, in Dachau; and Auxiliary Bishop Władysław Goral of Lublin at the beginning of 1945 in a hospital bunker in Berlin. There were 3,647 priests, 389 clerics, 341 brothers, and 1,117 sisters put in concentration camps, in which 1,996 priests, 113 clerics, and 238 sisters perished. ... The diocesan clergy of the Polish Church, who at the beginning of World War II numbered 10,017, lost 25 per cent (2,647). The Dioceses of Włocławek (220, or 49.2 per cent), Gniezno (Gnesen, 137, or 48.8 per cent), and Chełmno (Kulm, 344, or 47.8 per cent) suffered a loss of almost half their clergy. The losses for the Dioceses of Łódź (132, or 36.8 per cent) and Poznań (Posen, 212, or 31.1 per cent) were also very heavy.<sup>34</sup>

Historian Zenon Fijałkowski provides the following synopsis:

During the Nazi occupation, the Catholic Church in Poland experienced enormous clerical and material losses. According to the latest research by W. Jacewicz and J. Woś, in the years 1939–1945, 2,801 members of the clergy lost their lives; they were either murdered during the occupation or killed in military manoeuvres. Among them were 6 bishops, 1,926 diocesan priests and clerics, 375 priests and clerics from monastic orders, 205 brothers, and 289 sisters. 599 diocesan priests and clerics were killed in executions, as well as 281 members of the monastic clergy (priests, brothers and sisters). Of the 1,345 members of the clergy murdered in concentration camps, 798 perished in Dachau, 167 in Auschwitz, 90 in Działdowo [Soldau], 85 in Sachsenhausen, 71 in Gusen, 40 in Stutthof, and the rest in camps such as Buchenwald, Gross-Rosen, Mauthausen, Majdanek, Bojanowo, and others.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in German-Occupied Poland*, 109–11.

<sup>34</sup> "Poland," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 481–83 (diacritical marks have been added to the quotation).

<sup>35</sup> Zenon Fijałkowski, *Kościół katolicki na ziemiach polskich w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1983), 375.

According to more recent research,<sup>36</sup> almost 2,800 out of approximately 18,000 male clergy (diocesan priests and members of religious orders) perished. This represents almost 16 per cent of their total number. Some 4,000 clergymen (and an additional 400 clerics) were imprisoned; thousands more suffered other forms of repression. Of the 20,000 Polish nuns, 289 were killed and more than 1,100 were imprisoned in camps. Of the 38 bishops and archbishops in Poland at the outbreak of the war, thirteen were exiled or arrested and sent to concentration camps; six of them were killed. Losses among the Catholic clergy, especially the diocesan clergy, under German occupation were proportionately higher than among the Christian population as a whole.

The conditions suffered by the Catholic Church in occupied Poland were incomparably worse than those in other countries occupied by the Germans, especially in Western Europe, where church institutions were scarcely interfered with. The vast majority of Christian clergy persecuted by the Nazis were Polish. Nowhere else in German-occupied Europe did the Church hierarchy come under direct assault.<sup>37</sup> According to Church historians, 4,618 Christian clergymen were imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps, 2,796 of them in

<sup>36</sup> Czesław Łuczak, *Polska i Polacy w drugiej wojnie światowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1993), 489–506; Jerzy Kłoczowski, *A History of Polish Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 297–308. According to a recent study, out of 10,300 diocesan priests, approximately 3,450 were victimized, of whom 1,874 were murdered. See Jan Sziling, “Il clero diocesano di rito latino nel periodo della guerra e dell’occupazione tedesca e sovietica (1939–1945),” in Jan Mikrut, ed., *La Chiesa cattolica in Europa centro-orientale di fronte al Nazionalsocialismo 1939–1945* (San Pietro in Cariano (Verona): Gabrielli, 2019), 523–40, at pp. 536–37.

<sup>37</sup> The massacre of Christian (mostly Roman Catholic clergy) by the Nazi Germany was not the largest massacre of Catholic clergy in the Twentieth Century. The Spanish Left, especially Communists and Socialists, managed to butcher 13 bishops, 4,184 diocesan priests, 2,365 members of religious orders of men, and 283 nuns in a shorter span, just before and during the Civil War in Spain (July 1936–April 1939). The vast majority of the victims were killed in 1936. The highest concentration of killings took place in Catalonia; virtually every Catholic church in Barcelona was set on fire. The barbaric cruelty with which the Catholic clergy of Spain were put to death often exceeded that of the Nazis. See William James Callahan, *The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875–1998* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000); Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics, from the Great War to the War on Religion* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 127–35. The magnitude of the anti-clerical bloodbath in Spain was exceeded only by the Soviet oppression of the Russian Orthodox Church over a much longer period (1918–1938), when about 600 bishops, 40,000 Orthodox priests, and probably as many monks and nuns, were physically eliminated, that is 80–85 per cent of the clergy existing at the time of the 1917 Russian Revolution. See Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime, 1917–1982* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984).



Dachau, the principal camp for clergy from all of Europe. Almost 95 per cent of the clergymen in Dachau were Roman Catholic, and almost 65 per cent were Polish. The 1,807 Polish clergymen interned in Dachau included 1,413 diocesan priests, 360 members of religious orders, and 34 clergymen of other Christian faiths. Of the 947 clergymen put to death in Dachau, 866—over 91 per cent—were Polish: 747 diocesan priests, 110 members of religious orders, and 9 clergymen of other faiths. Thus, Poles constituted almost two thirds of the clergy imprisoned in Dachau, and nine out of ten clergymen put to death there were Polish.<sup>38</sup> Of all the Christian clergy in Dachau, Polish priests were undoubtedly the most ill-treated. Together with Jews, they were used as guinea pigs in medical experiments involving hypothermia and malaria.<sup>39</sup>

The intensity of persecution of the Catholic Church varied significantly throughout occupied Poland. As historian Jonathan Huener points out, the treatment of the Catholic Church was more brutal in the so-called Wartheland (or Warthegau), comprising Greater Poland and the adjacent areas, than anywhere else in German-occupied Poland, or in German-occupied Europe. The toll

<sup>38</sup> Kazimierz Śmigiel, "Dachau," in *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 3 (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1979), cols. 965–67; Franciszek J. Proch, *Poland's Way of the Cross 1939–1945* (New York: Polish Association of Former Political Prisoners of Nazi and Soviet Concentration Camps, 1987), 32–36.

<sup>39</sup> For a detailed account of the fate of the Catholic clergy in Dachau, see Bedřich Hoffmann, *And Who Will Kill You: The Chronicle of the Life and Suffering of Priests in the Concentration Camps* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1994); Guillaume Zeller, *The Priest Barracks: Dachau, 1938–1945* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017). See also the following memoirs by Polish priests imprisoned in Dachau available in English: Stanisław Grabowski, *Follow Me: The Memoirs of a Polish Priest* (Roseville, Minnesota: White Rose Press, 1997); Cester Kozal, *Memoir of Fr. Czesli W. (Chester) Kozal, O.M.I.* ([United States]: Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 2004); Kazimierz Majdański, *You Shall Be My Witnesses: Lessons Beyond Dachau* (Garden City Park, New York: Square One Publishers, 2008); Henryk Maria Malak, *Shavelings in Death Camps: A Polish Priest's Memoir of Imprisonment by the Nazis, 1939–1945* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2012); Chester Fabisiak, *Memories of a Devil: My Life as a Jesuit in Dachau* (Coppell, Texas: n.p., 2018). The Austrian Jesuit, Rev. Johann M. Lenz, who was imprisoned in Dachau, wrote glowingly of the Polish priests. In the final years of the war, when the camp was hit with typhus epidemics, at first the infirmary was run by orderlies who would steal the contents of parcels patients received from families and friends. As the typhus epidemic progressed, some of the orderlies died while others fled along with the SS guards, so that eventually the care of the dying was left to the priests. The dauntless Polish priests "had achieved the seemingly impossible and obtained permission from the SS authorities to work among the dying in the typhus isolation block." See Johann Lenz, *Christ in Dachau, or Christ Victorious: Experiences in a Concentration Camp* (Vienna: n.p., 1960). For information on the resistance efforts of priests in Dachau and other camps, see Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Resistance in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 1933–1945* (Warsaw: PWN–Polish Scientific Publishers, 1982), chapter 13 ("Religious life in the concentration camps"), 348–65.

among the clergy was staggering.<sup>40</sup> Of the approximately 2,100 priests in 1939, 133 were murdered inside that district, 1,523 were arrested, 1,092 were sent to concentration camps, 682 were murdered in concentration camps, and around 400 were deported to the General Government. In all, 72 per cent of the clergy were imprisoned in camps and prisons, and 39 per cent perished.<sup>41</sup> The apex of German violence against the Catholic Church occurred in October 1941:

Beginning on October 5, [1941] German authorities initiated the so-called Action for the Destruction of the Polish Church, described by [German historian Martin] Broszat as the “decisive blow” against the Polish Roman Catholic clergy. A wave of arrests began that day, resulting in the deportation of some 500 remaining Warthegau priests to prisons and camps and the closure of nearly all Polish churches that had thus far remained open. In the Litzmannstadt [Łódź] diocese, for example, as of October 6, 1941, all Catholic churches were closed except six for Poles and four for Germans, while all Polish priests in the diocese, save twelve, were deported to the Konstantinów [Konstantynów] internment camp. Statistics compiled for the Posen [Poznań] archdiocese in the aftermath of the “Aktion” paint a particularly grim picture. While at the outbreak of war there were 681 secular clergy and 147 male members of religious orders, as of October 10, 1941, there remained only thirty-four priests to minister to Polish Catholics. Seventy-four priests had been shot or had died in concentration camps, 120 had been deported to the General Government, and 451 were currently interned in prisons and concentration camps. Within the Posen city limits, of the

<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Huener, “Nazi *Kirchenpolitik* and Polish Catholicism in the Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939–1941,” *Central European History*, vol. 47 (2014): 105–37, at p. 110. See also Jonathan Huener, *The Polish Catholic Church under German Occupation: The Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021). Unfortunately, the author’s discussion of the Polish Catholic clergy and the Jews in the publication (at pp. 262–63) is disappointing. First of all, he neglects to acknowledge most of the documented examples of help extended to Jews by the Catholic clergy in the Wartheland, e.g., priests in Chełmca Duża, Gostynin, Grodziec, Kępno, Łódź, Osiećciny; the Antonian Sisters in Łódź; the Antonine Sisters in Wieluń (both noted in Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 106, 125, 137); the Grey Ursulines in Łódź; the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived in Lisków. The Franciscan monastery in Niepokalanów (near Sochaczew), which is mentioned, was not located in the Wartheland. Secondly, Huener does not identify expressly the reason for the far fewer cases of help in the Wartheland, as opposed to the Generalgouvernement, even though Kurek addresses this head on in her study, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, which Huener cites, at p. 105. Almost all church institutions were shut down and religious orders were dispersed in the Wartheland, with thousands of priests and nuns arrested, killed, or deported. Except for the tightly sealed ghetto in Łódź, almost all of the Jews were expelled to the Generalgouvernement before the Holocaust got underway. This is why so little of the rescue activities occurred in the Wartheland. For the most part, such activities took place after the Final Solution was implemented in 1942, when the need for rescue became acute.

<sup>41</sup> Marcin Libicki and Ryszard Wryk, eds., *Zbrodnie niemieckie w Wielkopolsce w latach 1939–1945* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2004), 140. See also Łukasz Jastrząb, *Archidiecezja Poznańska w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej 1939–1945* (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Wydział Teologiczny, 2012).

thirty churches and forty-seven chapels open in September 1939, only two churches and one chapel remained available for Polish Catholics as of October 10, 1941—this for a population of approximately 180,000 Poles remaining in the city. In the Posen archdiocese as a whole, of the 441 churches open at the outbreak of the war, only thirty remained open for Poles in October 1941, the remaining churches having either been simply locked down or put to alternative use as warehouses, riding schools, painting studios, and the like.<sup>42</sup>

Although certainly less harsh than in Western Poland, conditions in the General-gouvernement were similarly dreadful. A confidential report filed by the U.S. Vice Consul Thaddeus Chylinski in November 1941 describes the dire situation he witnessed in Warsaw.

There is not a church in Warsaw that has not been damaged. Many of them, like the Holy Cross, were strafed from the air by Nazi machine gunners. The holes in the roofs have been patched but it will take a long time before the wrecked altars and interiors are repaired. Several churches received direct hits from bombs and shells, others were badly burned. Services in all churches are conducted regularly; sermons are restricted to the Gospel and short comments with no allusions to the political situation. A great many of the leading priests have been sent to concentration camps. Practically all priests have been arrested at one time or another and put through an intensive “neutralizing” process and released. Raids on church property are frequent. Shortly before my departure the premises of the Capucine [Capuchin] cloister in Warsaw were raided, property was confiscated and the monks were arrested.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the Polish Catholic clergy also suffered significant losses at the hands of the Soviet invaders. The Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland from September 1939 until June 1941, and re-occupied and incorporated pre-war eastern Polish territories in 1944. Approximately 240 priests and 30 seminarians were murdered, deported to the Gulag, or arrested during the first period of occupation, and several hundred more were arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in Soviet camps between 1945 and 1951.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan Huener, “Nazi Kirchenpolitik and Polish Catholicism in the Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939–1941,” *Central European History*, vol. 47 (2014): 105–37, at pp. 110, 128–29.

<sup>43</sup> Donna B. Gawell, ed., *Poland Under Nazi Rule 1939–41: A Report Written by Thaddeus H. Chylinski, Vice Consul at the US Consular Office in Warsaw November 13, 1941* (USA: n.p., 2021), 122–23.

<sup>44</sup> Roman Dzwonkowski, “Represje wobec polskiego duchowieństwa katolickiego na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP 1939–1941,” in Michał Gnatowski and Daniel Boćkowski, eds., *Sowietyzacja i rusyfikacja północno-wschodnich ziem II Rzeczypospolitej (1939–1941): Studia i materiały* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2003), 75–93; Roman Dzwonkowski, “Represje wobec polskiego duchowieństwa katolickiego pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941,” in Piotr Chmielowiec, ed., *Okupacja sowiecka ziem polskich (1939–1941)* (Rzeszów and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2005), 139–49; Roman Dzwonkowski, “Straty osobowe Kościoła katolickiego obrządku łacińskiego pod okupacją sowiecką w latach 1939–1941

The oppression of Poles was a continuation of anti-Polish policies initiated in the interwar period. As historian Timothy Snyder points out, the so-called Polish operation was in some respects the bloodiest chapter of the Great Terror in the Soviet Union in 1937–1938, when a quarter of a million Soviet citizens were shot on essentially ethnic grounds.

Of the 143,810 people arrested under the [false] accusation of espionage for Poland, 111,091 were executed. Not all of these were Poles, but most of them were. Poles were also targeted disproportionately in the kulak action, especially in Soviet Ukraine. Taking into account the number of deaths, the percentage of death sentences to arrests, and the risk of arrest, ethnic Poles suffered more than any other group within the Soviet Union during the Great Terror. By a conservative estimate, some eighty-five thousand Poles were executed in 1937 and 1938, which means that one-eighth of the 681,692 mortal victims of the Great Terror were Polish. This is a staggeringly high percentage, given that Poles were a tiny minority in the Soviet Union, constituting fewer than 0.4 percent of the general population. Soviet Poles were about forty times more likely to die during the Great Terror than Soviet citizens generally.

The most persecuted European national minority in the second half of the 1930s was not the four hundred thousand or so German Jews (the number declining because of emigration) but the six hundred thousand or so Soviet Poles (the number declining because of executions).<sup>45</sup>

Unlike the Latin-rite Catholic clergy, the Eastern-rite Catholic (or Uniate) clergy in occupied Polish territories experienced very little persecution at the hands of the Germans;<sup>46</sup> they were, however, subject to harsh repressions by the Soviets.

Conditions in Poland were not at all favourable for rescue. Village churches—usually small and without cellars—were not suitable as hideouts. Parish rectories were hectic places that were often visited by German authorities, who viewed Polish priests as natural opponents of Nazi rule. The singing of patriotic hymns in church and sermons with political overtones were strictly forbidden. Therefore, priests had to tread very carefully in order to prevent retaliation by

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i 1944–1945,” in Wojciech Materski and Tomasz Szarota, eds., *Polska 1939–1945: Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2009), 327–32.

<sup>45</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 89, 103–4.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Turchyn, “The Ukrainian Catholic Church During WWII,” *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1–2 (Summer–Spring 1985): 57–67. Out of some 2,800 priests and male religious, 25 were arrested; several priests were sent to concentration camps, where all but one survived. Rev. Omelian Kovch, of Przemyślany, who was arrested for providing false baptismal certificates to Jews, perished in the Majdanek concentration camp.

the German authorities.<sup>47</sup> Polish nuns lived in poverty and their convents were often humble lodgings, especially in the countryside. Orphanages became overcrowded with Polish war orphans and, because of very limited social assistance, increasingly destitute. The rescue efforts carried out by the Polish Catholic clergy, especially by nuns, was widely known during and after the war. Polish Catholics did not voice disapproval of their activities.

It should also be borne in mind that the number of Roman Catholic clergy (of the Latin rite) in Poland was not large. On the eve of the Second World War, they counted some 18,600 priests and male religious, and more than 20,000 women religious (nuns). They numbered considerably fewer than the Catholic clergy in Belgium, which had a much smaller Catholic population than Poland (less than half), and they were many times smaller than that of the Catholic clergy in France or Italy.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the network of parishes in Poland was far less extensive than in Western European countries. Moreover, the Catholic Church in Poland had to contend with hardships not faced in Western Europe such as the wholesale closure of churches and convents in Western Poland. In sharp contrast to Poland, the day-to-day activities of Christian churches in other occupied countries were rarely interfered with by the German authorities. Nor, with few exceptions, did the clergy in those countries suffer mistreatment. This makes the wartime fate of the Polish Catholic clergy, as well as their rescue efforts, all the more striking.

<sup>47</sup> Priests were reticent in speaking out on “political” matters during sermons. This was entirely understandable as criticizing German crimes from the pulpit would have incurred ghastly reprisals and was, therefore, counterproductive. Zenon Neumark, who frequently went to mass as part of his disguise as a fugitive Jew in Warsaw, appears to ignore this dimension when expressing his own negative—and unfair—opinion of the Church. He comments, “The continued oppression of the entire population of Poland, marked almost daily by the summary executions of hundreds of Polish patriots, was ignored; indeed, the Church’s pulpits were never used to defend the victims, Jewish or Polish, or to condemn the Nazi perpetrators and their crimes. Perhaps even more importantly, not once did he [Rev. Sztuka] appeal to the population for help and sympathy for the victims.” See Zenon Neumark, *Hiding in the Open: A Young Fugitive in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 136. The priest in question, Rev. Jan Sztuka, pastor of the Purest Heart of Mary Church in the Praga district, is mentioned in a rescue story set out later. His rescue activities—unknown to Neumark—would not have been a topic of discussion at the time.

<sup>48</sup> By way of comparison, at the outbreak of the war, there were 9,700 priests, 12,700 monks, 12,000 seminarians, and 49,600 nuns in Belgium. See Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 169. In 1929, France had some 46,500 diocesan priests (almost 50,000 in 1939), 7,000 members of male religious orders, and 117,000 nuns. The number of clergy in Italy was even greater, with 129,000 nuns in 1936.

Nazi Germany had no regard for the plight of Poland's population. As Hitler made clear even before the German invasion of Poland, "The destruction of Poland is our primary task. The aim is not the arrival at a certain line but the elimination of living forces. ... Have no pity! Be brutal! ... It is necessary to proceed with greatest brutality and without mercy. ... The war is to be a war of annihilation."<sup>49</sup>

From the outset, the German military embarked on a relentless war targeting the civilian population, both Polish and Jewish, by carrying out indiscriminate bombing and mass executions. The town of Wieluń near the German border, although neither a military nor a communication or industrial target, was bombed by the German air force in the early morning hours of September 1, 1939. The first building to be hit was the hospital. Three waves of air raids followed that morning and afternoon, in which 380 bombs were dropped on the town and some 1,200 inhabitants killed. Ninety per cent of the town centre was destroyed.<sup>50</sup>

Throughout Poland, scores of towns and villages met a similar fate. As many as 158 settlements were bombed. The bombing of Lwów, in Eastern Poland, on September 1, 1939 took 83 civilian lives.<sup>51</sup> On September 13, the Luftwaffe mercilessly bombed the county town of Frampol near Lublin.

Frampol was chosen partly because it was completely defenceless, and partly because its baroque street plan presented a perfect geometric grid for calculations and measurements. Its eighteenth-century town hall, which stood at the centre of a broad, regular square, appeared to the bomb-aimers as an ideal "bull's-eye" target. For several hours, 125 planes dropped 700 tonnes of bombs, obliterating 90 per cent of Frampol's buildings and killing almost half of its 3,000 inhabitants. For good measure, German fighters practised their strafing techniques as would-be escapees attempted to flee the inferno.<sup>52</sup>

The nearby small town of Biłgoraj was struck repeatedly. The bombing of September 8 took twelve lives. On September 11 German diversionaries set fire to

<sup>49</sup> Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 4; Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 9.

<sup>50</sup> Janusz Wróbel, ed., *Wieluń był pierwszy: Bombardowania lotnicze miast regionu łódzkiego we wrześniu 1939 r.* (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009); Joanna Żelazko and Artur Ossowski, *Wieluń 1 IX 1939 r.* (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009); Tadeusz Olejnik, *Wieluńska hekatomba: Początek wojny totalnej* (Wieluń: Muzeum Ziemi Wieluńskiej; Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Grzegorz Mazur, *Życie polityczne polskiego Lwowa 1918–1939* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2007), 426.

<sup>52</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe At War, 1939–1945: No Simple Victory* (London, Basingstoke, and Oxford: Macmillan, 2006), 297.



the town destroying hundreds of buildings. A second bombing on September 14 resulted in more than 100 deaths.<sup>53</sup>

In Warsaw, which held out under siege until September 28, 1939, as many as 25,000 residents were killed in the terror bombings (6,000 tons of bombs fell on the city). More than 10 per cent of the city's buildings were reduced to ruins, and another 40 per cent suffered significant damage.

The tenth of September 1939 marked the first time a major European city was bombed systematically by an enemy airforce. There were seventeen German raids on Warsaw that day. ... On 25 September Hitler declared that he wanted the surrender of Warsaw. Some 560 tons of bombs were dropped that day, along with seventy-two tons of firebombs. In all, some twenty-five thousand civilians (and six thousand soldiers) were killed, as a major population center and historic European capital was bombed at the beginning of an undeclared war.<sup>54</sup>

When Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels visited the city, he remarked, "this is Hell." Although very few Germans are aware of the bombing of Warsaw in September 1939, most Germans know about and bemoan as a "war crime" the bombing on Dresden in February 1945, an event of similar magnitude.

Civilians—Poles and Jews—who tried to escape in advance of the German army were machine-gunned on the roads by German planes.<sup>55</sup> A Jewish woman who witnessed indiscriminate Luftwaffe terror bombing and strafing of defenceless civilians during the Blitzkrieg wrote:

On the highways we stumble over the bodies of men and cattle killed by bombs. ... Again, a plane approaches. It flies low; spraying machine-gun bullets. ... Rows of running people have fallen. One notes various oddities: mothers holding their babies in their arms have been killed, while the little children remain alive and cry out with heaven-rending voices; little children are killed while the mothers protecting them are only wounded. The sun shines. Along the road the stench of dead men and cattle is suffocating, unbearable.<sup>56</sup>

Mass executions became a daily occurrence.<sup>57</sup> Just a few examples from the early days of the war are noted here. On September 1, a score of Poles were murdered

<sup>53</sup> Józef Niedźwiedź, *Leksykon historyczny miejscowości dawnego województwa zamojskiego* (Zamość: Regionalny Ośrodek Badań i Dokumentacji Zabytków w Lublinie–Pracownia w Zamościu and Kresy, 2003), 44.

<sup>54</sup> Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 119.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Reicher, *Country of Ash: A Jewish Doctor in Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2013), 23–24.

<sup>56</sup> Renya Kukielko, *Escape from the Pit* (New York: Sharon Books, 1947), 2.

<sup>57</sup> There is an extensive literature on this topic: Szymon Datner, *Crimes Committed by the Wehrmacht during the September Campaign and the Period of the Military Government* (Poznań: [Institute for Western Affairs] 1962); Szymon Datner, *Crimes against POWs: Responsibility of the Wehrmacht* (Warsaw: Zachodnia Agencja Prasowa, 1964); Szymon Datner,



in Kałdowo, and another score in Szymankowo, in Pomerania.<sup>58</sup> Some 75 Poles, including a dozen children, were executed in Parzymiechy, and 38 Poles, including ten children, in Zimnowoda on September 2; mass executions on September 3 were carried out in Albertów near Działoszyn (159 killed), Mysłów (22 burned to death), Pińczycze (20 killed), Krzepice (30 killed), Święta Anna (29 killed), Zrębice, and Nierada (25 killed), all in the vicinity of Częstochowa.<sup>59</sup> No German was ever punished for any of these wanton acts. In fact, democratic West Germany and its institutions by and large protected war criminals—their “own.”<sup>60</sup>

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*55 dni Wehrmachtu w Polsce: Zbrodnie dokonane na polskiej ludności cywilnej w okresie 1.IX–25.X.1939 r.* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 1967); Czesław Pilichowski, ed., *Zbrodnie i sprawy: Ludobójstwo hitlerowskie przed sądem ludzkości i historii* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1980), 262–75, 285; Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Marcin Libicki and Ryszard Wryk, eds., *Zbrodnie niemieckie w Wielkopolsce w latach 1919–1945* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2004), 30–42, 81–104; Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939–1941* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007); Maria Wardzyńska, *Był rok 1939: Operacja niemieckiej policji bezpieczeństwa w Polsce: Intelligenzaktion* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2009), 88–99; Robert Forczyk, *Case White: The Invasion of Poland 1939* (Oxford: Osprey, 2019); Roger Moorhouse, *First to Fight: The Polish War 1939* (London: The Bodley Head, 2019); Roger Moorhouse, *Poland 1939: The Outbreak of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2020).

<sup>58</sup> Piotr Semków, “Martyrologia Polaków z Pomorza Gdańskiego w latach II wojny światowej,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, nos. 8–9 (2006): 46.

<sup>59</sup> Wardzyńska, *Był rok 1939*, 98–99.

<sup>60</sup> As American historian Donald McKale points out, Germany’s record of dealing with its war criminals is nothing short of abysmal. The least likely of all Europeans to be charged and sentenced for their wartime activities were the Germans themselves. Most of those found guilty served little or no prison time. “The Federal Republic of Germany, founded in May 1949, prosecuted a tiny minority of the estimated several hundred thousand former Holocaust perpetrators. ... Altogether, from the war’s end in 1945 to 1992, the West Germans investigated 103,823 persons suspected of participating in or committing Nazi crimes. Of this number, courts convicted only 6,487 (of which 5,513, or 85 per cent, were condemned for ‘nonlethal’ crimes). Thirteen were sentenced to death (before the Federal Republic abolished the death sentence), 163 to life imprisonment, 6,197 to temporary imprisonment, and 114 to only fines. If one excludes defendants prosecuted for robbery or assault charges, the disturbingly low number shrinks further. Between May 1945 and January 1992, West German courts tried only 1,793 cases related to Nazi capital crimes during the world war. Of those, 974 led to convictions, while 819 ended with either the court acquitting the defendants or terminating the proceedings for other reasons. In May 1955 an agreement among the United States, Great Britain, France, and West Germany included the provision that German courts could not investigate or prosecute anyone whom the Allied occupation powers had investigated earlier. The overwhelming majority of [the 7,000 to 7,200] SS personnel who had served at the Auschwitz camps ... avoided postwar arrest and punishment. Of the four thousand former *Einsatzgruppen* members

From the foregoing brief overview, it is evident that the Germans neither needed nor wanted Polish approval for their policies in conquered Polish territories. This was equally true with respect to the Holocaust. As Yisrael Gutman—former director of historical research at the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, and prisoner of Auschwitz—pointed out:

Poland was a completely occupied country. There was a difference in the kind of “occupation” countries underwent in Europe. Each country experienced a different occupation and almost all had a certain amount of autonomy, limited and defined in various ways. This autonomy did not exist in Poland. No one asked the Poles how one should treat the Jews.<sup>61</sup>

The first recorded case of a Pole being murdered for coming to the aid of Jews occurred already on September 6, 1939 near Limanowa, a small town southeast of Kraków (Cracow).

... a day after the German army motor-cyclists and tanks captured the town of Limanowa, that is on 6 September 1939, nine Jews had been arrested, brutally thrown into waiting cars, kicked and insulted. There was no doubt that the group was facing danger. The local postman, Jan Jakub Semik, of the Talik family who knew a bit of German tried to intervene, arguing that those in the cars were decent people. However, the Nazis did not take up the argument, ordered Semik to get into one of the cars and then drove off in the direction of the Cieniawa woods in the village of Mordarka where they shot him together with the Jews. Thus, almost as soon as they marched into Poland the Nazis showed themselves for what they really were. In this situation the village people, not

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who, between the fall of 1939 and 1944, slaughtered well over one million Jews in Poland and the Soviet Union, nearly all escaped retribution. By 1948, the Western Allies had captured, and a U.S. tribunal had placed on trial for war crimes, barely two dozen of them. Later, Western German courts tried only a tiny number of other former *Einsatzgruppen* members. In the Federal Republic, nearly all of the convicted—in contrast to their crimes of mass murder—received light prison terms. How did such miscarriages of justice in West Germany happen? As punishment for the crime of murder, West German law mandated a maximum sentence of life in prison. But the new Bonn [democratic] government, under its first chancellor Konrad Adenauer, chose not to prosecute Nazi criminals using the charges or legal procedures of the IMT [International Military Tribunal]. Instead, the government wanted to utilize the long-standing German penal code (with its Nazi revisions repealed). ... For all these and other reasons West German courts ... seldom applied the maximum punishment. Instead, the courts judged many defendants as accomplices or accessories who, in fact, had ordered, arranged, or supervised mass killings but who hadn't been shown to have committed themselves an act of murder. More often than not, such persons received much lighter prison sentences than some of their former subordinates, whom the courts convicted of shooting or otherwise killing Jews themselves.” See Donald M. McKale, *Nazis After Hitler: How Perpetrators of the Holocaust Cheated Justice and Truth* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 216–18.

<sup>61</sup> Cited in Polin: *A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (1987): 341.

prepared to accept the racist methods of the invader, soon began to actively help the Jews from the murderers.<sup>62</sup>

Executions of Poles who dared to openly defend or help Jews increased dramatically after the Germans started liquidating the ghettos. A Jewish testimony records that an unidentified Polish woman was simply shot on the spot near Szczucin in October 1942, as she tried to hand some water to a Jewish child, whom she had helped raise, that she spotted among the Jews being marched to the railway station. The Poles had been forbidden to approach the procession.<sup>63</sup>

Although atrocities targeting Poles were often perpetrated in the open and witnessed by the population at large, including the Jews, little is known about how Jews reacted to the mistreatment of the Catholic clergy.<sup>64</sup> Until the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, rabbis—although abused by German soldiers—were not being sent to concentration camps or

<sup>62</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewin, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Earls Court Publications, 1969), 72–73.

<sup>63</sup> Testimony of Helena Aussenberg (Aussenberg), JHI, record group 301, no. 1145.

<sup>64</sup> Chaim Kaplan, a prominent rabbi, educator and author from Warsaw, wrote the following entry in his diary on September 1, 1939: “This war will indeed bring destruction upon human civilization. But this is a civilization which merits annihilation and destruction. ... well, now the Poles themselves will receive our revenge through the hands of our cruel enemy. ... My brain is full of the chatterings of the radio from both sides. The German broadcast in the Polish language prates propaganda. Each side accuses the other of every abominable act in the world. Each side considers itself to be righteous and the other murderous, destructive, and bent on plunder. This time, as an exception to the general rule, both speak the truth. Verily it is so—both sides are murderers, destroyers, and plunderers, ready to commit any abomination in the world. If you want to know the character of any nation, ask the Jews. They know the character of every nation.” See Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 19–21. Kaplan peppered his wartime diary with anti-Christian remarks directed at Poles and gave credence to German anti-Polish propaganda. *Ibid.*, 47, 133, 161. Although Warsaw did not surrender until September 27 and the Polish army continued to fight bravely still in the early days of October 1939, without Poland’s allies lifting a finger in her defence, Chaim Kaplan, both haughty and defeatist, wrote: “You get the impression ... that the Polish army is not an equipped army led by officers trained for warfare, but a flock of sheep. Whoever saw or heard of such a thing in the history of the wars of nations—that a rich country with thirty-five million citizens, with an organized army would become something to be stepped on by the German villain within five days? ... Never before in history has any people suffered a defeat as shameful as this. And even if a hundred thousand unarmed civilians should give their lives for the capital—would they say it? Only a murderous government could make such a criminal decision. ... One ally—Poland—let down all the other allies. Who ever dreamed of this kind of military catastrophe ... At their first contact with the Germans they melted like wax and proved that their valor was an empty disguise.” *Ibid.*, 26, 32.

executed publicly the way that Catholic priests were. Yet there is no record of any concern, let alone protest, on the part of rabbis regarding the treatment of the Polish Catholic clergy.

This is not surprising, given that protesting the treatment meted out by the Germans was simply not a feasible option, either for Jews or Poles. Both groups were subject to a variety of severe repressions from the outset, and these measures only escalated as the war continued. Moreover, from October 15, 1941, any aid given to Jews was punishable by death. Under the circumstances, and given the Germans' merciless indifference as to what Poles thought, protests would have been not only futile but likely counterproductive. They would have made not the slightest difference to the treatment of the Jews, and would likely have intensified the persecution of the Catholic Church. Even though the Poles did not openly protest their own mistreatment, astoundingly, Holocaust historians take them to task for not staging suicidal protests on behalf of the Jews.

## The First Years of the German Occupation: September 1939–June 1941

The German invaders perpetrated countless atrocities against both Poles and Jews from the very first days of the subjugation of Poland. This chapter focuses on the response of the Polish Catholic clergy to the plight of the Jews during that initial period, before the Holocaust got underway. Both the unexpectedness and brutality of the measures implemented by the Germans circumscribed the reactions to what was unfolding. No one foresaw what was coming, and both Poles and Jews were being targeted, sometimes together, other times separately.

On September 4, 1939, the Germans murdered some 600 civilians, including about 100 Jews, in and near Częstochowa. Killings continued for two more days throughout the city. Hundreds of Poles and Jews were rounded up and driven into the Cathedral of the Holy Family where they were shut up without food for two days and two nights. Appeals to the German authorities fell on deaf ears. Priests did their best to comfort and help the captives. Avraham Bomba, one of the interned Jews, recalled, in particular, the assistance provided by Rev. Bolesław Wróblewski, the pastor of the cathedral parish. Rev. Wróblewski is mentioned later, in accounts regarding the rescue of Jewish children.

You come into the house. Imagine yourself. ... Somebody comes in without anything, without any reason. Out from the house. Not allowed to take water, not allowed to take bread ... bread, not allowed to take anything. And in the street. In the street with guns, they start running after you until ... until you got to the place. ... they took me into a church. The church ... was the Holy Family Church. ... the people they couldn't get so fast in the back of the church. They got killed in the front going in through the door. And they killed a lot of people that way. We were there. There was no food. There was no water. There was no places, you know, for the human being ... We were over there, a priest. ... His name was Wróblewski. He was one of the finest gentlemen of the Catholic priest I have ever met. He said to us, "Children, never mind you're without any church. You do whatever you can. ..." He tried to bring in water for us. And really, I admired him as a gentleman. He knew that we are Jews ... We're there for three days ...<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Oral history interview with Avraham Bomba, September 18, 1990, USHMM, RG-50.030.0033.

In Będzin, not far from the German border, the Germans started to harass Jews as soon as they entered the city on September 4, 1939. In a public display, they forced rabbis to cut off each other's beards. According to Jakub Sender, a witness to those events, the Catholic priests were appalled by this spectacle and expressed their sympathy to the rabbis who were subjected to this ordeal. The Germans falsely accused the Jews of firing at German soldiers. In retaliation, on the evening of September 8, they set fire to the synagogue and Jewish houses on Plebańska Street and nearby streets. Jews fleeing from their burning homes were fired on by the Germans. They converged on the nearby parish church of the Blessed Trinity.

Their screams alarmed the pastor, Rev. Wincenty Mieczysław Zawadzki (usually referred to as Mieczysław Zawadzki), who immediately ran to open the gate to the churchyard in spite of the protests of German sentries. He led scores of terrified Jews to safety on Castle Hill. A dozen or more Jews were sheltered overnight in the garden of the rectory before they too were taken to Castle Hill. With the help of nuns, Rev. Zawadzki tended to the wounded.<sup>66</sup> Jews were also hidden in a nearby shelter run by the Passionist Sisters.<sup>67</sup> The Germans subsequently blamed the Poles for setting fire to the synagogue and Jewish houses. The Germans arrested 42 Poles, extracted false confessions from them, and executed them summarily that same night.<sup>68</sup>

Later in the war, Rev. Zawadzki also sheltered a Jewish family.<sup>69</sup> A Polish rescuer, identified as Jadwiga, who told a Będzin priest, perhaps Rev. Zawadzki, in confession that she was sheltering a Jew, Edward Retman, was commended by the priest.<sup>70</sup>

In 1960, a delegation of Jews presented Rev. Zawadzki with the memorial book of the Jewish community of Będzin with the following inscription:

<sup>66</sup> Rev. Mieczysław Zawadzki penned his exploits in the parish chronicle, *Kronika parafialna rzymskokatolickiej parafii św. Trójcy w Będzinie*, which is reproduced in part in Bolesław Ciepiela and Małgorzata Sromek, eds., *Śladami Żydów Zagłębia Dąbrowskiego: Wspomnienia* (Będzin: Stowarzyszenie Autorów Polskich Oddział Będziński, 2009), 162–64. See also the account and Rev. Zawadzki's testimony in Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), 770, 814; Testimony of Mieczysław Zawadzki, August 22, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 4294; Oral history interview with Morris Rosen, USHMM, RG-50.999.0421.

<sup>67</sup> Testimony of Jakub Sender, JHI, record group 301, no. 1225.

<sup>68</sup> Jan Przemsza-Zieliński, *Zagłębie Dąbrowskie w II wojnie światowej: Wrzesień 1939–okupacja–ruch oporu–wyzwolenie 1945* (Sosnowiec: Sosnowiecka Oficyna Wydawniczo-Autorska "Sowa-Press," 1995), 38–39; Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 814.

<sup>69</sup> Stanisław Wroński and Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 321.

<sup>70</sup> Testimony of Edward Retman, SFV, Interview code 32600.

To the Most Reverend and Distinguished Dean Mieczysław Zawadzki. We present you with this book, which embodies the soul of the Jewish community of Będzin, in gratitude and full appreciation for your humanitarian and courageous dedication in rescuing human lives from certain annihilation. The Jewish community of Będzin living in Israel will never forget your remarkable person, who risked his own life to tear many of our brothers out of the hands of the Nazi assassins.<sup>71</sup>

Rev. Zawadzki was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile in 2007. Icchak Turner, who lived near the synagogue, submitted the following account to Yad Vashem:

In 1939, the Nazi army invaded Będzin and settled there. On the eve of September 9, the soldiers broke down the gates of the houses surrounding the synagogue, threw hand grenades and fired shots in every direction. They ordered everyone to come out, claiming that the Jews had shot at them from the synagogue windows. Once the Jews were lined up against a wall, the soldiers told them to run away. Those who did not run were shot immediately, and those who did flee were followed by haphazard shooting as well. Then the soldiers set fire to the synagogue, condemning the Jews that had taken shelter inside to a horrible death.

Several Jews, including Icchak Turner, ran desperately for the church on the hill. The soldiers sprayed machine gunfire after them, and many were wounded. A bullet went through Icchak's arm; a friend running next to him was killed. Some of the Jews, however, managed to reach the church. The priest, Mieczysław Zawadzki, threw open the gate and told them to come inside quickly. When they were inside, he ordered several nuns to dress their wounds and administer them first aid.

Once everyone's immediate needs had been addressed, Zawadzki spoke to the Jews and explained that if the Nazi soldiers reached the church and found out what had happened, both he and his nuns would be executed. He therefore opened the back gate of the church and led the Jews out into the graveyard, where they could spend the night without being discovered.

The next day, Icchak Turner rose at dawn, left the graveyard and went to the hospital to seek medical help. He survived the war, aided by local Poles who worked in the area, including Michał Jagiełłowicz. Several other Jews who had found shelter in the cemetery that night survived as well.

The survivors from the region established an association after the war. The association erected a plaque on the wall of the church in Będzin to commemorate the brave and noble wartime act of Mieczysław Zawadzki.<sup>72</sup>

The Polish medical staff at the hospital in Będzin came to the assistance of wounded and sick Jews. Among them was Sister Rufina (Tekla) Świrska, the local superior of the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately

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<sup>71</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 321.

<sup>72</sup> Mieczysław Zawadzki, RD. For another account by a Jew sheltered in the church, see the testimony of Israel Froman, YVA, file O.3 V.T/2308 (Item 158498).



Conceived (of Stara Wieś). They worked at the hospital as nurses. Upon discovery by the Germans, they faced harsh consequences for their selfless acts of mercy.

Tadeusz Kosibowicz was ... director at the regional hospital in Będzin. During the first days of September 1939, the hospital was flooded with wounded people, including a Jewish man named Skrzypek who needed a long time to recover. However, on September 4 Będzin was occupied by the Germans, and any help offered to Jewish soldiers immediately became a capital offense. Kosibowicz decided to change the patient's name to Krawczyk and give him a fictitious job at the hospital in order to keep him there longer. Together with other wounded people, several doctors flocked to the hospital, including Ryszard Nyc and Sister Rufina Świrski, who became Kosibowicz's confidantes in his illicit attempts to save as many "outlawed" patients as possible.

Two days later, the Germans set the local synagogue on fire when it was full of Jews. Anyone who tried to escape was met with a hail of machine gunfire. Still, some managed to flee with their lives. Among them was Icchak Turner, who spent the night outside, but in the morning decided to seek help at the hospital for his wounds. The doors were blocked by the Germans, but Kosibowicz, aided by a local priest called Zawadzki [Rev. Mieczysław Zawadzki], managed to smuggle in some of the wounded Jews, among them Turner and another man named Huberfeld, whose sister Sala later testified from Israel about Kosibowicz's brave display of human kindness.

In late April 1940, a young [German<sup>73</sup>] patient was admitted to the hospital, with vague complaints. She became friends with "Krawczyk" and spent much time talking to him. Later she was heard transmitting an ambiguous message via the hospital's telephone, revealing her true identity as a spy. That same night, "Krawczyk" was taken away and killed. The next day, May 8, three Gestapo men came to arrest Tadeusz Kosibowicz. They also took his friends and helpers, Ryszard Nyc and Rufina Świrski. The three were sentenced to death for "aiding enemies of the Third Reich and Jews." However, as they stood in front of a firing squad, the sentence was commuted to deportation. Between 1941 and 1945, Kosibowicz endured five years of various concentration and death camps: Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Majdanek and Gross-Rosen. He suffered immense personal humiliation and pain, and witnessed the deaths and suffering of countless others. However, he never abandoned his humanity, tending to sufferers officially or unofficially throughout the war. In Gross-Rosen, a wounded Jewish patient from Będzin named Zvi Landau was brought in to see Kosibowicz. He told the doctor that he had heard that a year after Kosibowicz's deportation, a parcel of ashes was sent to his wife with claim that they were the remains of her husband. At this, Landau testified, Kosibowicz broke down in tears and said that while he couldn't find a job for Landau at the clinic, he would send him food. He kept his promise until Landau was sent to a different camp. In 1945, after liberation, Tadeusz Kosibowicz returned to Będzin physically and psychologically exhausted.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Tadeusz Kosibowicz, September 2014, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-kosibowicz-tadeusz>.

<sup>74</sup> Tadeusz Kosibowicz, RD.

Sister Rufina (Tekla) Świrska was arrested by the Gestapo on May 7, 1940, held in a Sosnowiec prison for two weeks and then sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she was imprisoned for six months. After her release on November 11, 1940, she fled to the Generalgouvernement, where she stayed at various homes of the congregation under an assumed identity.<sup>75</sup>

Another eyewitness from Będzin, Helen Stone recalled:

They burned our synagogue with the people inside. Opposite the synagogue was a church, and about two o'clock in the morning the priest heard that the synagogue was burning and he ran to the church, opened the door in case somebody ran out of the inferno, and quite a few people did; he saved their lives. I was moved about nine or ten times in Będzin [Będzin] as they were making streets Judenrein—cleansed of Jews.<sup>76</sup>

This same pattern was repeated throughout Poland. As the German army rolled through, Jews were systematically rounded up, abused and executed. Scores of synagogues were torched. The synagogue in Katowice was torched on September 5, 1939. The synagogue on Dekert Street in Sosnowiec was burned down on September 9, 1939, as were synagogues in Tarnów. Shortly after occupying the town of Przeworsk, 35 kilometres east of Rzeszów, the Germans searched the synagogue and claimed to have found ammunition there. In retaliation, they razed the building on September 12, 1939.

The Gestapo arrived from Jarosław and executed 30 Jews. Soon after, the Germans ordered the Jews to be gathered in a church. According to Harry Kuper,

After an elderly rabbi failed to report, the Germans selected every tenth man from among the assembled, took them away, and pretended to torture them to find out the rabbi's whereabouts. After a man disclosed his hiding place, the rabbi was arrested and thrown into a hole for execution. Observing the scene from his window, a priest was shot for intervening. The prisoners, including the rabbi, were released.<sup>77</sup>

According to Polish sources, the Jews had been gathered in the courtyard of the Bernardine (Franciscan) monastery, where they were searched and beaten. Polish sources do not confirm the shooting of a priest. The Jews were then expelled into the Soviet occupation zone. On October 3, 1939, the German authorities arrested

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<sup>75</sup> Krystyna Dębowska, et al., eds., *Siostry zakonne w Polsce: Słownik biograficzny*, vol. 1 (Niepokalanów: Wydawnictwo Ojców Franciszkanów, 1994), 280.

<sup>76</sup> Lyn Smith, ed., *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust* (London: Ebury Press/Random House, 2005), 76.

<sup>77</sup> Martin Dean, ed., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, in association with the United States Memorial Museum, 2012), 558.

24 Poles, members of town's elite, including five Bernardines. The monastery was searched periodically during the war.<sup>78</sup>

The synagogue in Cieszyn was torched on September 13, 1939, as were the synagogues in Bielsko and Żelechów. In Mielec, on September 13, 1939, the Germans set fire to the synagogue and burned dozens of Jews alive in the slaughter house. On September 14, 1939, the synagogue in Biała was set on fire and then dynamited. After staging a pogrom in Dynów in which some 200 Jews were killed, the Germans burned the synagogue to the ground on September 15, 1939, incinerating about 50 Jews. The Great Synagogue in Jasło was set on fire by the Germans on September 15, 1939, but was saved by Polish firefighters, who came and extinguished the flames. Five days later, the Germans responded by gathering the local Jews, along with the firefighters, and forcing them at gunpoint to set the building ablaze again, destroying it once and for all.<sup>79</sup>

Poles were also being burned alive by the Germans—sometimes alone, other times together with Jews. On September 10, 1939, 22 Poles were incinerated in a barn in Bądków, near Łęczycza.<sup>80</sup> Some 40 Poles and 12 Jews perished in a barn set ablaze in the village of Cecylówka, near Kozienice, on September 13, 1939.<sup>81</sup>

The following eyewitness report, published in March 1941, describes the daring but futile intervention of a priest in Szczucin, a small town near Dąbrowa Tarnowska, where the Germans burned down the synagogue on Yom Kippur, September 23, 1939.

It happened in Szczucin on the day of the Great Pardon [Day of Atonement, September 23, 1939], the most solemn of Jewish religious holidays. In spite of the German occupation, all Jews, old men, women and children, had assembled in the four or five houses of prayer. At 11 A.M., four lorries stopped before the synagogue near the Market Place and about a hundred SS. Men alighted armed with revolvers and machine guns.

Half of them surrounded the synagogue while the other half entered it and evicted the faithful. They tore their prayer vestments from their bodies, and stripped them naked to the belt. Then they threw out the sacred scrolls, the prayer books and the embroidered vestments which they tossed upon a pile of straw. Silver and gold vessels were placed in the lorries.

<sup>78</sup> Sławomir Brzozecki, "Klasztor oo. Bernardynów w Przeworsku w czasie II wojny światowej," in Marcei Ryszard Gęśla and Aleksander Krzysztof Sitnik, eds., *550 lat obecności oo. bernardynów w Przeworsku (1465–2015)* (Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: Calvarianum, 2015), 135–44, at pp. 137–38, 141.

<sup>79</sup> Sheri Shefa, "Forest Hill Shul Gets Ready to Move to New Building," *The Canadian Jewish News* [Toronto], August 10, 2015.

<sup>80</sup> Datner, *55 dni Wehrmachtu w Polsce*, 330.

<sup>81</sup> Krzysztof Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w Dystrykcie Radomskim* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej, 2004), 27, 28.

Whipped and hit with butt-ends, the Jews were compelled to dance around the pile, and the oldest among them were ordered to set fire to the straw. When the victims would not consent, they were beaten, kicked, slapped, and spat upon. The Germans pulled their beards and peyses [payes—a long beard], tore the wigs off the women, and jeered at their shaved heads. They pulled the hair of the young girls, tore off their dresses, and forced them to run naked around the Market Place. Now and then, the Nazis fired volleys into the air to scare the already panicky crowd.

At noon time, the vicar of the local Roman Catholic Church appeared on the scene in his sacerdotal vestments and implored the German officers to release the Jews and to permit them to continue their prayers. The SS. Men laughed at him and the officer told the priest that his turn would come. A few minutes later the Germans set fire to the straw pile and the synagogue which was totally destroyed within one hour ...<sup>82</sup>

Conditions in Gorlice, which was captured by the Germans on September 7, 1939, are described in the following accounts, which mention the assistance rendered by Catholic priests.

When they entered the city, the Germans took several hostages, both Poles and Jews. The Wehrmacht soldiers began taking Jews for forced labor, stealing their property and abusing them (cutting off their beards). The Jews received permission from the [new] administration to hold prayers in the synagogue on the Jewish New Year, but the local priest warned them that the Germans were planning a trap for them in the synagogue, so they didn't go there to pray. A group of Germans did arrive at the synagogue on the holiday, but when they found no Jews praying there they settled for destroying the interior of the synagogue. Around that time the Wehrmacht soldiers caught several Jews (5 or 7), took them out of the city and murdered them.<sup>83</sup>

Rabbi Moshe'ly Miller applied to the German commander of the city to permit the Jews to gather for prayers in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement. The permit was given, but the priest Swinkowski [Rev. Bronisław Świejkowski] secretly notified the Jews that they shouldn't dare gather in the synagogue on the eve of the Day of Atonement, as he had heard from a reliable source that a trap was being prepared. In the afternoon of the eve of the Day of Atonement, the first groups of the Gestapo entered Gorlice. Until then we had only dealt with the Wehrmacht (the regular army). On the night of "Kol Nidre"<sup>84</sup> they [the Gestapo] attacked the synagogue, which was empty of Jews, according to the advice of the priest, [who was] one of the righteous gentiles. [The Gestapo] took out their anger on the wood and the stones: they broke up all the furniture, smashed the light fixtures, dirtied the walls, etc. This wasn't enough for them, until they caught several Jews on the night of "Kol Nidre," took them to their office in the railroad station building, and beat

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<sup>82</sup> *The Inter-Allied Review*, no. 3 (March 1941).

<sup>83</sup> Entry for "Gorlice" in Abraham Wein and Aharon Weiss, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1984), 93–97, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pol3\\_00093.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol3_00093.html).

<sup>84</sup> The prayer beginning the evening service on the Day of Atonement.

them murderously as their wickedness dictated, but then released them. I too was among them. An entire book would not be long enough to describe the sights of those hours.<sup>85</sup>

Apart from the pastor [Rev. Kazimierz Litwin], who was favourably disposed towards Jews, there was also a prelate in Gorlice, an old man who was 83 years old at that time. The prelate's name was [Bronisław] Świejkowski. He too tried to help Jews in those critical days. His help entailed creating an appropriate atmosphere among Polish society. He preached the principles of love of one's neighbours and thus encouraged people to be favourably disposed towards Jews.<sup>86</sup>

In the town of Rawa Mazowiecka, east of Łódź, both Catholic and Protestant clergymen showed their solidarity and support for a rabbi that was cruelly mistreated by the Germans.

During the first days of WWII, Rawa was heavily bombed, and its population was severely affected. The Germans entered the town on September 8th 1939, at which time all the Jewish males were gathered in the market square, where the Germans indulged in a sadistic game. Among other things, Rabbi Rappoport [Rappaport] and the Rabbi of Oiyazed [?], who was staying in Rawa at that time, and many of the Jewish dignitaries, mostly aged, were made to run several kilometres in the direction of Tomaszów [Tomaszów Mazowiecki]. In a nearby wood [sic] the Germans threatened to kill them. Rabbi Rappoport asked for permission to return home to arrange for the burial of his son, who had been killed in the bombardment. The Nazis mocked him, abused him and dealt roughly with his daughter who had run after her father. She returned to the town to bury her brother. The two rabbis were held in the forest until late in the evening, flogged and only then released. On another occasion the Germans accused the Jews of killing a German soldier. They ordered all of the Jews to gather in the market square. The women were locked up in the church and abused by the Nazis. The men were ordered to lie face down and were threatened that whoever makes one move will be shot. They lay like that until evening, when they were made to stand against a wall; a number of them were shot. On that day the Germans searched the Jewish homes; some witnesses say that Polish homes were also searched. The total number of people killed on this day was estimated at 40, 23 of them Jews.

One day all the Jewish men were ordered to gather in the market square to have their beards shaved. Rabbi Rappoport, who was still in mourning for his son, was also brought. The rabbi's daughter asked the local Protestant priest to plead with the German authorities to let her father keep his beard. The rabbi was allowed to keep his beard but was sentenced to 100 lashes and the priest was threatened with severe punishment for speaking

<sup>85</sup> Yoel Rappoport, "This Is How We Were Taken Captive Before the Enemy," in M. Y. Bar-On, *Gorlice: The Building and Destruction of the Community*, Internet: <https://www.jewish-gen.org/yizkor/gorlice/gorlice.html>, translated from *Sefer Gorlice: Ha-kehila be-vinyana u-ve-hurbana* (Israel: Association of Former Residents of Gorlice and Vicinity in Israel, 1962), 227 ff.

<sup>86</sup> Testimony of Sabina Honigwachs Bruk, YVA, file O.3/1841 (Item 3555977), reproduced in Michał Kalisz and Elżbieta Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Rzeszowie, 2015), 109–10.

on behalf of the rabbi. After 30 lashes the aged rabbi fainted and was taken to hospital. What is noteworthy is that the Catholic priests, and the Protestant priest who spoke up for the rabbi, came to visit him. Later the Germans searched the rabbi's home and stole his property, including money and jewellery that Jews had given him for safekeeping. The rabbi fell ill as a result of these events and died shortly afterwards.<sup>87</sup>

Often, as in the small town of Poddebice near Łódź, priests were treated on a par with rabbis, so there was no question of priests being in a position to come to the defence of rabbis.

Shortly after the Nazi armies conquered the town, (on September 14, 1939, the Jewish New Year), the Germans arranged a "show." They ordered the people to organize two processions—a group of Jews with Rabbi Rothfield in front, and Poles with the local Priest. Later, they imprisoned all those who marched for three days. Finally, they forced the Rabbi and Priest to collect with their hands the excrement which had accumulated.<sup>88</sup>

Sometimes Jews were forced by the Germans to take part in repressive measures directed against Catholic priests. In Kozenice, e.g., Jews were employed to evict a priest from his rectory.

The second group of Jews were taken by the Germans to the priest. They drove the priest out of his house, threw his things out and told the Jews to prepare his dwelling for them as quarters. In doing this they beat the Jews mercilessly. Leib Bayer's son, Yisroel Shlomo, they harnessed to a plowshare and told him to pull it. As he was doing this they beat him murderously. There were also a few elderly Jews with beards, which the Germans sheared off, and in doing this they cut up their faces till they bled.<sup>89</sup>

During the Germans' siege and bombing of Warsaw in September 1939, injured Jews were brought to a make-shift hospital set up in a school at the corner of Żelazna and Leszno Streets, near the Jewish quarter. The Franciscan Sisters

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<sup>87</sup> Entry for "Rawa Mazowiecka" in Danuta Dabrowska and Abraham Wein, eds., *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976), 257–60, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland (Łódź and Its Region)*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pol1\\_00257.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol1_00257.html).

<sup>88</sup> Entry for "Poddebice," in Dabrowska and Wein, *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 1, 184–86, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pol1\\_00184a.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol1_00184a.html).

<sup>89</sup> Gershon Bornshtein, "Memories of My Birthplace," in Baruch Kaplinski, et al., eds., *Sefer Zikaron le-Kehilat Kosznitz* (Tel Aviv and New York: The Kozenice Organization, 1985), 546, translated as *The Book of Kozenice: The Birth and the Destruction of a Jewish Community*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/kozenice/Kozenice.html>. A pre-war photograph of Rev. Jan Klimkiewicz, the pastor, taken by a Jewish photographer, can be found on the Internet at: [http://www.foto.karta.org.pl/nasze-zbiory/kolekcje/ok\\_0782\\_berneman\\_chaim\\_kozenice,11922,zdjecie.html](http://www.foto.karta.org.pl/nasze-zbiory/kolekcje/ok_0782_berneman_chaim_kozenice,11922,zdjecie.html).



Servants of the Cross, who had a convent nearby on Wolność Street, tended to the injured as best they could under the harsh conditions. Given the proximity of the Jewish quarter, Jewish children would come around begging, and the nuns would provide them with food. Later on, nuns would deliver food to Jews inside the walled ghetto.<sup>90</sup>

Large numbers of Jews as well as Poles fled eastward before the advancing German army. Refugees, regardless of their origin, met with widespread sympathy and support on the part of Poles. As we shall see, they were well received at convents and monasteries too. A Jewish refugee from Aleksandrów wrote in 1940:

I want to raise here one more issue how the [local] population through which we passed [in our flight] treated us, the refugees. One must admit that regardless of our Jewishness they did whatever they could—and sometimes even more—to ease our distress. ... People we didn't even know literally dragged us to their home [saying] that they could not allow Jews to be left in the streets in those days.<sup>91</sup>

Jews often fled from their homes in search of safety and refuge in surrounding towns, as was the case for a teenage girl from Różan nad Narwią, a small town near Pułtusk, northeast of Warsaw. Many Poles, among them priests like the one in Maków Mazowiecki, came to their assistance.

When the war broke out we fled to the village of Bagatella [Bagatele] where we had many friends—the village-head among the rest. A few days later he told us to leave explaining that such were the orders he had received from the Germans, who had threatened to [take] revenge on anybody [who] would contravene—and that included his family, too. It was on Sabbath-Eve. Everything was ready to receive the holy day and the table was laid. We had to leave all this behind and went back to Rozhan [Różan], where we stayed for another few weeks. Those were dark days. Jews were walking about sullenly and downcast. Everyday the men had to go out to forced labor and you could never be sure of coming home safely. ...

At the same time another group was made to build fortifications. The murderers killed Shmuel from the oil-mill while he was working. We were bewildered and felt helpless. One of the “good” Germans advised us to try to get away: “There’ll be no life for you here.” So we moved to Makov [Maków Mazowiecki], but couldn’t stay there either. The priest, one of the honest Gentiles, bribed the Nazis in order to make them let [leave] the Jews

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<sup>90</sup> Testimony of Sister Joanna (Halina) Lossow in Jan Żaryn and Tomasz Sudoł, eds., *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Historie niezwykle* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 184–85, 188. The convent on Wolność Street was expelled to Sienna Street when the former area was incorporated into the walled ghetto.

<sup>91</sup> Cited in Havi Ben-Sasson, “Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust: A Changing Jewish Viewpoint,” in Robert Cherry and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, eds., *Rethinking Poles and Jews: Troubled Past, Brighter Future* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 91.



alone. They agreed on the condition that strangers who had arrived as refugees leave the town. So we had to clear out in all haste and come back to Rozhan. We stayed overnight with a Gentile woman, called Brengoshova ... where we also found the Greenwalds and my aunt Rebecca and her children.<sup>92</sup>

The city of Lwów, which fell under Soviet rule in September 1939, was overwhelmed with fugitives, mostly Jews, from German-occupied Poland. When Chaim Jegergarn arrived there in the fall of 1939 with his wife, Chava, and their young daughter, they could find nowhere to stay. Posing as Catholics and armed with a false story, Chava knocked on the door of a convent, asking to be taken in with her daughter for a short time until she could be reunited with her husband, with whom she had allegedly lost contact. The nuns welcomed her. When Chava disclosed that she could not help with chores on the Sabbath because she was Jewish, the nuns' attitude towards her did not change. They treated her very well, even though she had taken lodging away from Catholic fugitives.<sup>93</sup>

As a result of the destruction of the hospital during the bombardment of Sandomierz in the first days of the war, the patients were transferred to the seminary. With the permission of Rev. Jan Kanty Lorek, the bishop of Sandomierz, Jews also took refuge there.<sup>94</sup> At the behest of the Jews, Bishop Lorek dispatched Rev. Adam Szymański, the rector of the diocesan seminary, and Rev. Jan Stępień to help secure the release of about 1,200 Jews who, together with some Poles, were being held in an open-air camp in Zochcinek, near Opatów. Initially, the German authorities demanded one million złoty for their release. The Jewish community was able to collect only 63,000 złoty. After further negotiations, the German authorities agreed to accept 100,000 złoty. Bishop Lorek paid the difference, the large sum of 27,000 złoty, from diocesan funds. (There is more about Bishop Lorek's subsequent efforts to help Jews later in the text.) After the war, Bishop Lorek received letters of gratitude from Jews who survived, at least in part, because of his assistance.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Rachel Weiser-Nahel, "I Was Just Thirteen," in Benjamin Halevy, ed., *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Rozan (al ha-Narew)* (Tel Aviv: Rozhan Societies in Israel and the USA, 1977), 40 (English section), translated as *Rozhan Memorial Book*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rozan/Rozan.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Testimony of Chaim Jegergarn, SFV, Interview code 54858.

<sup>94</sup> Testimony of Izrael Kaiser, February 3, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 2350.

<sup>95</sup> Eva Feldenkreis-Grinbal, ed., *Eth Ezkera—Whenever I Remember: Memorial Book of the Jewish Community in Tzoyzmir (Sandomierz)* (Tel Aviv: Association of Tzoyzmir Jews and Moreshet Publishing, 1993), 565–66; Testimony of Izrael Kaiser, February 3, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 2350; Zygmunt Zieliński, ed., *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, 1982), 444.

In his memoirs, Rev. Stępień, a professor at the diocesan seminary, recalls Bishop Lorek's and his own role in dealing with the Germans in September 1939.

All the men of military age, including Jews, numbering around 2,000, were taken from Sandomierz and interned in an open-air camp in Zochcinek near Opatów. With the authorization of Bishop Jan Kanty Lorek, I attended there and pleaded with the commander of the camp to release them. After lengthy negotiations he agreed to their release on the payment of 20 zlotys per person. I collected contributions with Mr. Goldberg, a shoemaker from Sandomierz. After collecting half the sum, we went to Zochcinek. The commander refused to release the Jews. I stated that the Jews too were citizens of the town and that I had come in the name of the town council and would not leave without our Jewish citizens. We were successful. I remember that autumn evening when long columns of men passed by me. Although it was dark, the eyes of those men glowed with sincere appreciation. Prayers in my intention and that of Bishop Lorek took place in the Sandomierz synagogue for a week.<sup>96</sup>

Jewish sources confirm the assistance extended by the Sandomierz clergy in these rescue efforts.

After our release, we heard that Nuske Kleinman and Leibl Goldberg, who had miraculously evaded the march to Zochcin, asked the Polish priest, professor Szymanski [Rev. Adam Szymański, the rector of the diocesan seminary], who was known as a friend of Jews, to intervene with the Germans on our behalf. He immediately got in touch with the German authorities in town. We also heard that the Sandomierz Bishop, Jan Lorek, intervened with the authorities on our behalf.<sup>97</sup>

During an emotional ceremony at Boston College, the remarkable recovery of a Torah scroll—salvaged by a Polish priest from a synagogue set on fire by the German invaders in September 1939—came to light.

In 1939 in Poland, shortly after Nazi troops had invaded, a Catholic priest saved a Torah scroll from a burning synagogue. The name of the priest is not known, nor the location of the synagogue. What is known is that in 1960, the priest told another Pole that he would like to entrust the Torah to an American Jew. And so he was led to the U.S. embassy in Warsaw, where he handed the Torah in its green velvet slipcover to Yale Richmond '43, a career foreign service officer who was the embassy's cultural attache.

Richmond held the Torah for 42 years, not quite knowing what to do with it, until the day recently when he was surfing the Web from his home in Washington, D.C., and discovered that his alma mater hosted a small but vital Jewish student group and had founded the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning to advance understanding between the two faiths. One of the center's directors was Rabbi Ruth Langer, also a member of BC's theology department. "I sent [Langer] an e-mail asking, 'Would you like a Torah?'" he recalled.

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<sup>96</sup> Julian Humeński, ed., *Udział kapelanów wojskowych w drugiej wojnie światowej* (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1984), 282.

<sup>97</sup> Feldenkreis-Grinbal, *Eth Ezkera—Whenever I Remember*, 565–66.

And so, on October 11, Boston College was the site of an ancient and traditional “Greeting of the Torah” ceremony, as about 80 people—members of BC’s Jewish community, representatives of its other religious communities, and guests and friends—gathered on a Friday afternoon to mark the completion of the scroll’s long journey. ...

Richmond, 79, a bearded Boston native who also served in Germany, Austria, Laos, and the Soviet Union before retiring from the foreign service, was one of four Jews in his BC graduating class. He explained his gift of the scroll to the University by saying, “Catholic Poland sheltered its Jews for more than 500 years, a Catholic priest rescued the Torah from a synagogue torched by the Nazis in 1939 and sheltered it for 21 years, and Boston College sheltered me for four years and awarded me the degree that enabled me to make a start on a 30-year career.” ...

While the provenance of the Torah—its synagogue and town—are not known, an expert’s evaluation in September determined from various stylistic touches and dedicatory inscriptions that the Torah was of Polish origin, that its creator was Rabbi Shmuel Shveber, a highly regarded scribe of his time, and that it was completed in 1919.<sup>98</sup>

Yale Richmond’s sentiments about Poland are shared by historians who are well aware that Poland welcomed Jews from the 14th century onward, when they began to arrive in large numbers, fleeing the expulsions and pogroms in Western Europe.<sup>99</sup> The next few centuries were a period when Jews of Poland

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<sup>98</sup> Ben Birnbaum, “Journey’s End: Torah Scroll Rescued by Priest Finds Home among BC’s Jews,” *Boston College Magazine*, Fall 2002, Internet: [https://bcm.bc.edu/issues/fall\\_2002/11\\_journey.html](https://bcm.bc.edu/issues/fall_2002/11_journey.html).

<sup>99</sup> Jews first came to Poland in the 10th century as traders in—among other commodities, but primarily—Christian slaves, which certainly did not augur well for mutual relations between Poles and Jews. In the early medieval ages, the international slave trade was monopolized by Iberian Jews known as Radhanites, who transferred slaves (Slavs) from Central Europe through Western Europe centres such as Mainz, Verdun and Lyons, where they were often castrated, to Islamic buyers in Muslim Spain and North Africa. According to *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, “The first information about Jewish merchants in Eastern Europe dates from about the tenth century. In this period, Jews took part in the slave trade between Central Asia, Khazaria, Byzantium, and Western Europe (in particular the Iberian Peninsula). Important stopping points on the trade routes included Prague, Kraków, and Kiev, towns in which Jewish colonies developed.” See Adam Teller, “Trade,” *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Internet: <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Trade>. According to historian Zofia Kowalska, “In the early Middle Ages the Jews kept a high profile in various branches of long-distance and overseas trade, in which slaves were, for at least three hundred years, the chief commodity. ... The accounts of travellers (Ibn Kordabheh, Ibrahim ibn Yacub), passages in the works of other Arab and Jewish authors (Ibn Haukal, Ibrahim al Quarawi, Yehuda ben Meir ha-Kohen), documents issued by ecclesiastical and secular authorities, charters of municipal privileges and customs tariffs build up a massive body of evidence corroborating the involvement of the Jews in the slave trade. Their ‘goods’ came mostly from the Slav nations; their trade routes led to and crossed in Eastern and Central Europe. Slaves of Slav origin would be taken westwards across the Frankish lands to Arab Spain and from there to other

enjoyed a golden age. Not only did Jewish religion, culture and communal life flourish in pre-partition Poland, but as historian Barnet Litvinoff compellingly argues, “Conceivably, Poland saved Jewry from extinction.”<sup>100</sup>

In September 1939, the Germans forced Jewish and Polish prisoners to march from Łomża to the town of Kolno. Upon their arrival in Kolno, the inhabitants came out into the street and threw food to the prisoners. Yehuda Chmiel, one

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countries in the Mediterranean. The main centres of the slave trade were Prague (from the 10th century onwards); Magdeburg, Merseburg, Mainz and Koblenz in Germany; Verdun in northern France and a number of towns in southern France. In spite of the vociferous debates that the slave trade provoked in both secular and church circles, the Jews were undismayed and went on with their business.” See Zofia Kowalska, “Handel niewolnikami prowadzony przez Żydów w IX–XI wieku w Europie,” in Danuta Quirini-Popławska, ed., *Niewolnictwo i niewolnicy w Europie od starożytności po czasy nowożytne* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1998), 81–92. So many Slavs were enslaved for so many centuries that the very name “slave” derived from their name, not only in English but also in other European languages as well. The slave trade was strongly opposed by the Catholic Church, which prohibited the export of Christian slaves to non-Christian lands. English language literature on this topic includes: Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History: The Rise of Jews as a Nation from Congressus Judaicus in Poland to the Knesset in Israel* (New York: Hippocrene, 1993; Rev. ed.–1998), 257–66; M. M. Postan and Edward Miller, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. 2: *Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 416–18, 485–87; Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, vol. 6: *Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads*, Part 2: *Medieval Slavic Studies* (Berlin, New York, and Amsterdam: Mouton, 1985), 864; Timothy Reuter, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3: *c.900–c.1024* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 69–70; Haim Hiller Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 394–98, Plate 31; Joseph Adler, “The Origins of Polish Jewry,” *Midstream*, October 1994, 26–28; Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 8; Ahmed Nazmi, *Commercial Relations between Arabs and Slaves (9th–11th Centuries)* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 1998), 114–83. Additional literature on this topic published in Polish includes: Tadeusz Lewicki, “Osadnictwo słowiańskie i niewolnicy słowiańscy w krajach muzułmańskich według średniowiecznych pisarzy arabskich,” *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 43, nos. 3–4 (1952): 473–91; Tadeusz Lewicki, “Handel niewolnikami słowiańskimi w krajach arabskich,” in *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich: Encyklopedyczny zarys kultury Słowian od czasów najdawniejszych*, vol. 2 (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1964), 190–92; Iza Biezuńska-Malowist and Marian Małowist, *Niewolnictwo* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1987), 267–77; Zofia Borzymińska, *Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce* (Warsaw: DiG, 1995), 14–26; Hanna Zaremska, “Aspekty porównawcze w badaniach nad historią Żydów w średniowiecznej Polsce,” *Rocznik Mazowiecki*, vol. 13 (2001): 177–91, at p. 178; Robert Szuchta, *1000 lat historii polskich Żydów: Podróż przez wieki* (Warsaw: POLIN Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, 2015), 17–19. POLIN The Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw devotes a panel to the slave trade in its exhibit on the early Jewish presence in Poland.

<sup>100</sup> Barnet Litvinoff, *The Burning Bush: Antisemitism and World History* (London: Collins, 1988), 92.

of the Jewish prisoners, remembered a Catholic priest, “who pushed himself into the rows of captives and distributed bread and fruit among them, without discriminating between religions and races. ... After a time, we heard that the Germans had tortured and executed him.”<sup>101</sup>

In September 1939, in Biłgoraj, Dawid Brenner brought to the local hospital a German soldier who had been wounded in a skirmish with Polish soldiers. In the meantime, the Germans retreated and the Soviets entered the city. After their return to Biłgoraj in October 1939, the Germans accused Brenner of shooting the German soldier. Despite the pleas of the Jewish community and the intervention of Rev. Czesław Koziółkiewicz, the local pastor, Brenner was executed.<sup>102</sup>

The public mistreatment of Jews by German soldiers raised consternation among the Polish population and caused priests to intervene. Professor Karol Estreicher, of the Jagiellonian University, witnessed the following scenes in Drohobycz, in southeastern Poland, in September 1939.

The first scene which struck me as I came to the Market Square was the sight of a group of Jews loading manure on a cart with their hands. The work was supervised by a Storm Trooper with a whip in his hand. He was whistling a gay tune and now and then striking some of the Jews, or pulling their beards. Sometimes he gave one of them a well-aimed kick.

The Polish population looked on with indignation on such treatment of human beings, and many peasants or workmen expressed their disapproval. In the afternoon the Germans began a looting of the Jewish shops. ... The Jews stayed at home, afraid to go out. But the Germans, using revolvers and riding-crops, forced the younger Jews to help in the loading of the robbed goods.

The Germans took a particular delight in forcing the Jews to perform revolting or filthy tasks. The Jews were told to clear away manure, dead animals and men, and every kind of dirt, without using any implements which might help them not to soil their hands. The population of Drohobycz was definitely against such methods. The local parson—who before the war did much to help the Polish co-operatives to take business out of Jewish hands<sup>103</sup>—called on the commander of the garrison and protested against such public indignities. The commander made a gesture of helplessness—a well-known trick of the

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<sup>101</sup> Yehuda Chamiel, “On the Brink of the Holocaust,” in Yitzchak Ivri, ed., *Book of Kehilat Ostrolenka: Yizkor Book of the Jewish Community of Ostrolenka* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotzei Ostrolenka in Israel, 2009), 343.

<sup>102</sup> Abraham Kronenberg, ed., *Khurbn Bilgoraj* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1956), Polish translation: *Zagłada Biłgoraja: Księga pamięci* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz.terytoria, 2009), 179, 182.

<sup>103</sup> The promotion of business initiatives (such as cooperatives) for ethnic Poles, who were grossly underrepresented in Polish commerce, was unfairly labeled by many Jews as anti-Semitic.

Germans—and listened sympathetically to the complaint, but said that the Gestapo alone were responsible for the whole business. He advised bribery.<sup>104</sup>

In some areas sandwiched between the German and Soviet invaders, local Polish authorities fled or ceased to function during the turmoil. The ensuing breakdown in law and order was seized upon by criminal elements and riff-raff to loot property, often belonging to Jews. Priests spoke out to curb these abuses. Rev. Michał Jabłoński, the pastor of Tarnogóra, near Izbica, condemned the looters and demanded that they cease their activities.<sup>105</sup>

The following account likely pertains to Rev. Józef Czarnecki, the pastor of Grabowiec: “I must mention here a courageous priest, who warned the faithful, from the pulpit, not to plunder the Jews or attack them. Such acts were against Christianity and Humanity, the priest admonished.”<sup>106</sup>

There is a similar account from Dąbrowa Białostocka. At the behest of the rabbi and Jewish town elders, a priest dissuaded a group of villagers from looting Jewish property after the Germans had retreated and before the Soviets took control of the area in mid-September 1939.<sup>107</sup>

In October 1939, the Germans demolished the interior of the synagogue and study hall in Golub and converted them into horse stables. The furnishings were thrown out onto the street. When looters began to take these items, the reaction of Rev. Ignacy Charszewski, the pastor of nearby Dobrzyń (nad Drwęcą), was immediate. “The priest, Chorczewsky [Charszewski], learned of this and rushed to the scene. He castigated the assembled Poles, ordered them not to touch any of the Jewish holy things, and told them to return whatever they had taken.”<sup>108</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Dominik Wegierski, *September 1939* (London: Minerva, 1940), 151. In order to protect his family in Poland from retaliation by the Germans, Professor Karol Estreicher published his memoir in 1940 under the pseudonym of Dominik Węgierski.

<sup>105</sup> Ryszard Adamczyk, *Izbicy dni powszednie: Wojna i okupacja: Pamiętnik pisany po latach* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2007), 64. The events in question occurred after the departure of the Red Army on October 6, 1939. When the Red Army entered Izbica on September 27, 1939, according to Jewish sources, they were given a friendly welcome by the Jews. Some young Jews joined the Red militia and wore red armbands. Together with Soviet soldiers, they immediately set off to capture and disarm Polish soldiers still in the area. See Henryk Grynberg, *Children of Zion* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 52; Thomas Toivi Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 11–12.

<sup>106</sup> Sh. [Shimon] Kanc, ed., *Memorial Book of Grabowitz* (Tel Aviv: Grabowiec Society in Israel, 1975), 17.

<sup>107</sup> Michael A. Nevins, *Dubrowa–Dąbrowa Białostocka: Memorial to a Shtetl*, 2nd ed. (River Vale, New Jersey: n.p., 2000), 19.

<sup>108</sup> Shimon Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House; New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1987), 317.



Rev. Charszewski, who had the reputation of being an anti-Semite, was arrested by the Germans in November 1939 and sent to the Stutthof concentration camp. He was transferred to Sachsenhausen, where he perished in April 1940.<sup>109</sup> One should bear in mind that looting is a universal phenomenon that is especially prevalent in times of turmoil and war, and that members of all nationalities and social groups take part. Looting is generally motivated by need or greed, and is often a crime of opportunity.<sup>110</sup>

In Garbatka near Radom, the Germans incited local Christians to start up a petition calling for the removal of the Jewish population. The Germans turned to the local priest to endorse the petition, but he refused to put his signature on it thus torpedoing the project.<sup>111</sup> This was part of a strategy to make it appear as if the Germans were acting at the behest, or to placate the wishes, of the conquered people, for whom they otherwise displayed nothing but contempt. Another form of incitement, equally unsuccessful, was to compel the local rabbi to go to the church in the town of Dąbie on the Ner River, mount the pulpit, and yell out that the Jews were responsible for the war.<sup>112</sup>

According to the Szczeczeszyn memorial book, a number of Poles came to the assistance of the Jews, including Rev. Józef Cieśliński, the pastor, and an unnamed vicar, probably Rev. Franciszek Kapalski.

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<sup>109</sup> "Charszewski Ignacy Loyola," in Ludwik Grzebień, ed., *Słownik polskich teologów katolickich 1918–1981*, vol. 5 (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1983), 176–95; Józef Dębiński, "Z dziejów miasta Golub-Dobrzyń," *Studia Włocławskie*, vol. 17 (2015): 311–28, at p. 318.

<sup>110</sup> A Jewish eyewitness recalls that, in September 1939, Jews in Lublin looted property belonging to foreign firms: "Even the rich came in their carriages and drove away with the hogs inside. I went up to Shlomo Biderman: 'What has come over you?' I demanded. 'You, the richest Jew in Lublin, grabbing hogs and selling them!' ... 'You,' he said in reply, 'are a fool.'" See Shiye Goldberg (Shie Chehever), *The Undefeated* (Tel Aviv: H. Leivick Publishing House, 1985), 79–80. In Sokołów Podlaski, the merchant Herszel Fiszer sent two Jews to steal the goods of a wealthy merchant, Symcha Sender, who had fled to the Soviet zone. When the latter returned soon after and learned of the theft, he confronted Fiszer. Fiszer warned Sender not to say anything to the German authorities as he would accuse him of taking goods illegally into the Soviet zone. See the testimony of Josek Kopyto, JHI, record group 301, no. 4085.

<sup>111</sup> Magdalena Siek, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego*, vol. 8: *Tereny wcielone do Rzeszy: Okręg Rzeszy Gdańsk-Prusy Zachodnie, rejencja ciechanowska, Górny Śląsk* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012), 321.

<sup>112</sup> Magdalena Siek, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego*, vol. 9: *Tereny wcielone do Rzeszy: Kraj Warty* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012), 71.



26 September 1939,—In such a hiding place in an attic, Abraham Reichstein's son-in-law, going up into the attic, wanted to take up the ladder. However, seeing an SS trooper below, out of fear, he let the ladder down on the German's hand, and injured him.

After this incident, an order was issued immediately, that Jews were not permitted to leave their homes. All of the Jews, men and women, were pursued like animals across the town, to the city hall, heavily guarded on all sides.

The lawyer, Popracki [Henryk Paprocki, a member of the National Party] learned of this. He went off to the priest, Cieslicki [Józef Cieśllicki] and both went to the burgomaster [mayor] Franczek [Jan Franczak]. All three made their way to the German commandant, and declared to him, that the incident with the ladder was just an accident, and represented that such an incident will not happen again. The commandant went out to the people with a long speech, and warned, that if this ever happened again, or there was a similar incident, that every tenth Jew would be shot. Until the commandant appeared, the Rabbi, Yekhiel Blankaman and Shlomo Maimon had been beaten, among others. ...

I wish to add, that there were Christians, who sympathized with the Jews, and gave them help, and many times suffered themselves because of it.

Such a person was the Milliner Brylowski [Bryłowski], whose garden bordered on the hospital garden. He showed us a way where we could flee if an automobile full of Germans arrived to take us away: behind the stable he set aside the obstacles, and freed up the way for us, down to the river.

I also wish to mention Dr. [Józef Kazimierz] Spoz, the Canon Cieslicki, the Vicar, the organist [Bolesław] Stec and his daughter, the Komornik, and the Pharmacist [Jan Szczygłowski], who helped Jews. At a number of these, hidden Jewish articles were found, and because of this they suffered greatly.<sup>113</sup>

In his wartime diary, Dr. Zygmunt Klukowski recorded the following on October 22, 1939 concerning Rev. Cieśllicki: "Eleven Jews were arrested, taken to court martial and prepared for further measures. A group of Jews went to see the canon, Rev. Cieśllicki, pleading with him to intervene with the Germans. A committee [of Poles] promptly approached the German authorities ..." <sup>114</sup>

Rev. Cieśllicki was arrested by the Germans in June 1940, and after his release, he hid from them in the Tarnów area. With time, as German acts of terror became commonplace, interventions proved to be less and less effective, and eventually futile. The vicar, Rev. Kapalski, headed the Welfare Committee (Komitet Opiekunczy) in Szczebrzeszyn, which extended assistance to both Poles and Jews.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Dov Shuval, ed., *The Szczebrzeszyn Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2005), 149–51, 155.

<sup>114</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 645.

<sup>115</sup> Regina Smoter Grzeszkiewicz, "Kapłani Zamojszczyzny prześladowani i zamordowani podczas II wojny światowej," Internet: <http://horajec.republika.pl/okup45.html>.

Sometimes priests could do no more than console the victims of German executions, as in Konin in the so-called Wartheland, as related by Issy Hahn.

The next day, Thursday 21 September [1939], the Germans began arresting influential people from the town as hostages; the reason given was that two German soldiers had been found shot dead. Another poster went up on the tower: "Tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock the execution of two hostages will take place."

The next morning just before 11 o'clock Liberty Square was crowded; there were 300 or 400 people there. I pushed my way through the crowd to get to one of the two public water pumps in the square and climbed on top to have a good view of the spectacle. Over the heads of the crowd I saw the two condemned men being marched by six soldiers and one officer of the German army from the town prison to the square. The hostages came to a stop, facing the blank white wall of the old gymnasium. The crowd was silent. The men were told to turn and face the crowd.

One of the hostages, Mordechai Slodki, was a religious Jewish man of 70 who owned a fabric shop; I knew him well. The other was Aleksander Kurowski, a Polish Catholic who owned a posh restaurant near the main coach station. ...

A Catholic priest wearing a long mauve robe and a scarf around his neck approached the prisoners. He spoke first to the Jewish man. Then, with his Bible raised, he said a prayer with the Catholic man and made the sign of the cross. Then he turned and walked away. One of the Germans blindfolded the hostages.

The officer in charge ordered the firing squad to retreat 20 metres from the two men and take up their firing position. ... The officer in charge gave the order and the soldiers lifted their guns. ...

Some of the crowd moved towards the dead men. When I got close enough to see the bodies I couldn't believe my eyes: the men's arms and legs were still moving. Everyone was wiping tears from their faces as they passed the blindfolded corpses to show their last respects. Some made the sign of the cross.<sup>116</sup>

The opposite situation was not unthinkable, as the following, highly unusual case shows. On September 1, 1939, Leon Schönker, the wartime leader of the Jewish community in Oświęcim, hid and cared for a wounded German pilot who had parachuted from a crashing plane, without informing the Polish authorities of his presence. When the German army entered the town several days later, the Jews led them to the wounded man who, it turned out, was an important Nazi officer. This officer reciprocated by intervening with the local German military commander to alleviate conditions for the Jews, at least for a time. Later, when some old, defective rifles once used for mandatory, military drills before the war were found in a school run by the Salesian Fathers, the Germans arrested a dozen priests and threatened to execute them. Leon Schönker intervened on their behalf with the local commander. He persuaded the commander that the

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<sup>116</sup> Issy Hahn, *A Life Sentence of Memories: Konin, Auschwitz, London* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001), 11–12.

rifles were useless as weapons. The priests were released from jail. Word of this deed spread through the town, and Schönker became a local hero.<sup>117</sup>

Felix Kaminsky, who served in the Polish army in September 1939, recalled that, after the army's defeat, the captain told everyone to make their way home on their own. Kaminsky set off with a Polish friend, and "a priest gave us two old priests' robes to use as disguises."<sup>118</sup>

Sympathy for downtrodden prisoners-of-war, both Poles and Jews, taken during the September 1939 campaign and guarded by the Germans in a school courtyard in Rzeszów, was openly expressed by Polish nuns.

Twice we received nourishment in the form of a bowl of soup from the German military kitchen. The Catholic nuns brought kettles of food for the Polish prisoners. The Jewish hostages from Kolbuszowa refused to eat non-kosher food and literally starved. I owned a few "złoty" [złoty] (Polish currency) and asked the nuns if they could possibly buy me some chocolate in town. They fulfilled my request and that chocolate was the only food the Jewish hostages would eat. The nuns let me know of the horrible misfortune befalling the Jews of Rzeszow caused by the German army right after the beginning of the invasion.<sup>119</sup>

Sydney W. from Pułtusk, who was interned by the Germans after the September 1939 campaign at a prisoner-of-war camp for Polish soldiers in Radom, recalled the assistance he received from a Polish priest.

The Germans took us to a POW camp in Radom. It was November [1939] and already cold. My leg was terribly swollen and the wound festered; I could barely walk.

... In the car with me was a Pole, an officer from my unit who was also wounded, and looking at me one day, he said, "If the Germans find out that you are Jewish, it will be

<sup>117</sup> Moshe Weiss, "To Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Liberation from Auschwitz," *The Jewish Press* [Brooklyn], January 27, 1995; Henryk Schönker, *Dotknięcie anioła* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2005), 28–30, translated as *The Touch of an Angel* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2020), 17–23. Leon Schönker's son, Henryk, also became a local hero of sorts when a story spread that he had smashed a bicycle belonging to a German soldier. Although this rumour proved to be untrue, no one betrayed him to the Germans. Henryk Schönker also describes the murder by an SS officer of John Got-towt (Isidor Gesang), an Austrian actor and director of Jewish origin, who was hiding in Wieliczka in 1942, disguised as a German Catholic priest.

<sup>118</sup> Laura Zelle and Joni Sussman, eds., *Witnesses to the Holocaust: Stories of Minnesota Holocaust Survivors and Liberators* (Minneapolis: Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, 2017), 87; Rhoda G. Lewin, ed., *Witnesses to the Holocaust: An Oral History* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 139.

<sup>119</sup> Testimony of Chaim Bank in Abraham Levite, ed., *A Memorial to the Brzozow Community* (Israel: The Survivors of Brzozow, 1984), 95–96.

your end. I advise you not to reveal that you are Jewish; our service books don't show our nationality. ..."

In the camp at Radom, I met a good friend, a former neighbor, a classmate of mine at school. In the Polish army he was a medic, the Germans too used him as such in the camp. He promised to help me in any way possible. First of all, he would see to it that I would be admitted to the hospital; to do this he intended to engage the help of another fellow from our town, who was a nurse at the camp hospital. When he told me who the other fellow was, I became frightened, because I remembered him from before the war, when he was an Endek [i.e. a supporter to the right-wing National Democracy, from 1928 formally the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe)] who organized and took part in anti-Jewish brawls in our town. My friend, however, assured me that I had no reason to be afraid of him, because he'd changed and now hated the Germans more than the Jews. He would help me.

In fact, the next morning, when all the prisoners seeking admittance to the hospital had lined up in front of the entrance gate, the line was so long that joining it seemed to me to be a hopeless undertaking. I realized I would not be able to stand there for hours on my wounded, aching leg, and left the line in despair. My landsman, the Endek, saw me hopping back to the barracks. He came up to me and told me not to worry. He led me through a back door into the hospital and to the admitting desk, where he persuaded a Polish doctor, himself a prisoner, to admit me as an emergency case.

The next day I was on the operating table. A big chunk of steel was taken out of my leg. The doctor told me that a few more days of neglect would have led to gangrene, which would have resulted in the loss of my leg.

My classmate told me that he had spoken to a Polish priest, who visited sick prisoners in the hospital every day, and the priest promised him that he would do everything possible to help me.

Two Gestapo men came into the ward and took away a friend of mine by the name of Kraemer, and all other prisoners with Jewish names. I was spared because my name doesn't sound Jewish.

The next day, when the priest came into my ward, he approached my bed and asked me if I wanted to confess. I understood that by pretending that it was a confession, we wouldn't have any witnesses to our talk. When we were alone I told him that, as he knew from my friend, I was a Jew and therefore in great danger, and begged him to help me. He was a kind man and told me that all is in God's hand and that I should not lose hope. He gave me a small cross to wear, and having learned from my friend that I was in the military orchestra, he also gave me a little hymn book. "Tomorrow," he said, "I will be saying mass in the hospital, as I do every Sunday. Before the services I will ask if there are among the worshippers some with good voices, or from the music band. You should step forward and I will ask you to join the choir." He said I should behave like all the others, cross myself and kneel when the others did, and with God's help he hoped that there would be no suspicion of my being Jewish. Since then I became known in the hospital as the choir boy. ...

However, after about six weeks in the hospital, an ordinance was received to dissolve the camp and to release the Polish prisoners, allowing them to return home.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Joachim Schoenfeld, ed., *Holocaust Memoirs: Jews in the Lwów Ghetto, the Janowski Concentration Camp, and as Deportees in Siberia* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, 1985), 293–95.

Karol Kewes, a 15-year-old Jewish boy from Łódź, was attending a course for baccalaureate candidates in a military training camp when the war broke out. Manoeuvring between the German and Soviet invaders, Kewes's eye was injured by German fire just before his detachment was captured by the Germans on October 5, 1939 and taken to a prisoner-of-war camp in Dęblin Fortress. He was sent to a hospital in Radom where he was attentively cared for by Polish nuns, who kept silent about the Jewish origin of their charges. Kewes described his experiences in his memoir:

At St. Casimir Hospital in Radom, where I was finally sent to have my eye attended to, the groans of the wounded seemed restful to my ears after the screams of Demblin [Dęblin]. The atmosphere of this hospital was tense and a little surrealistic: The Germans had taken charge of everything, from surgery to administration, but they had left the religious at their posts. The nuns were excellent nurses and especially strong Polish patriots, conspirators even. The sister who looked after me had a German-sounding first name, Kunegunda [actually, this would have been an assumed religious name, that of Blessed Kinga or Kunegunda, the Hungarian-born wife of King Boleslaus V the Shy of Poland], but she would rather have had her tongue torn out than pronounce a word in that language. As with all the other religious, the occupiers had to speak to her through an interpreter. The German military doctors didn't believe in talking to the wounded. I only learned the details of my operation from Sister Kunegunda. ...

Sister Kunegunda was very kind to me, perhaps in the hope of bringing me to religion, or more simply because of my relative youth. She sometimes brought me sweets and promised to contact my family with the help of another sister who happened to be traveling to Łódź. I wrote my parents a long letter, which ended by declaring my irrevocable decision to move to the provinces incorporated in the USSR, beyond the River Bug. ... Then one morning the doctor announced the arrival of "eine Dame," my mother. ... He left us alone for a moment, then he returned to announce to my mother that she could take me home ...

At the home of some friends of Sister Kunegunda in Radom, my mother gave me a suitcase with all my things carefully arranged, and directions on the best way to cross the Bug [River]. ...

Sister Kunegunda's last piece of advice still resounded in my ears: "Badz Polakiem" [Bądź Polakiem] ("Be Polish"), with its unspoken implication: "Fight for Poland." ...

[In Lwów] I managed to find a modest job in a chemist laboratory where I washed test tubes, and even more modest lodgings (a kitchen commode on which I stretched out at night, my feet dangling in the air) at the home of a retired Polish lady who was poor but very obliging; if I remember, correctly, she was an acquaintance of Sister Kunegunda.<sup>121</sup>

William (Wolf) Ungar, a soldier in the Polish army who was injured during the September 1939 campaign, recalled waking up in a make-shift hospital in Gostynin and being comforted by a Catholic priest.

<sup>121</sup> K. S. Karol, *Between Two Worlds: The Life of a Young Pole in Russia, 1939–46* (New York: A New Republic Book/Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 19–23.

I came out of the dream with the strange feeling that someone was hovering over me. I opened my eyes. A priest was kneeling down, speaking to me in Latin. In nomine domine et filio et spiritu sancto [actually, In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti] ... words linked themselves together in a singsong drone. For a moment I thought I was hallucinating. Then I realized the priest was flesh and blood and he wasn't speaking to me, but was giving me last rites. When he saw my eyes were opened he looked at me sorrowfully and made the sign of the cross.

A priest making a cross in the air over me was the last thing I expected. I was drowning in my own misery and sorrow, in pain, and a priest wasn't someone I wanted to see at that moment. I wondered if I was really so near death that I needed the last rites? I raised my hand and motioned for him to stop. The priest looked at me, his eyes widening slightly, surprised that I would interrupt him in the process of saving my eternal soul.

"What's the matter, my son?" he asked, putting his ear down near my mouth. "Are you in great pain?"

"No, Father."

"Then what's wrong, my child?"

"I'm Jewish, Father."

He looked into my blue eyes. "You're Jewish, my son?"

"Yes, Father."

"I'm truly sorry, my son."

"I understand, Father."

Then he stood up and walked away.<sup>122</sup>

**M**endel (Martin) Helicher, a Jew from Tarnopol who served as an officer in the 54th battalion of the Polish army, was taken captive by the Germans in September 1939 and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Gorlice. After a medical examination, Helicher was identified as a Jew and imprisoned. He was protected by his division commander, Zygmunt Bryszewski, and other Poles, including a priest, Rev. Józef Czach, the battalion's chaplain. The chaplain maintained that Helicher was a Catholic who had been circumcised as a result of an operation, and they were thus able to secure his release.

The Hitlerists [Hiterites] never stopped looking for Jews among the prisoners. ... One night in September 1939, at midnight, a gang of Hitlerists stormed into the hut and demanded a medical examination of every prisoner. They were looking for Jews. Everyone who passed the examination and was found to be Gentile received a tag entitling him to receive food. "I, too, stood, in the long line," Helicher said, "completely naked. My heart trembled. In a matter of minutes, the German murderers would know that I was a Jew." At that point, a miracle happened. A man named Bigada, formerly a judge in Tarnopol, came over to the Jew. He had already passed the physical. The judge, a lieutenant, held out his tag to the Jew. Slowly, the Jew moved out of the line. The Polish judge, who passed the exam a second

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<sup>122</sup> William Ungar with David Chanoff, *Destined to Live* (Lanham, Maryland, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 2000), 63–64.

time and got a new tag, was a close friend of Zigmund Brishevski [Zygmunt Bryszewski]. If the Nazis had ever found out, Bigada would have been shot.

Danger was not over for Martin—Mendel Helicher and waited for him anew around every bend. Once, when Helicher was standing in line for food, a Ukrainian named Olenik recognized him. They had served together in the Polish army and Olenik knew Helicher was Jewish. The Ukrainian went to the Nazis and informed on Helicher. The Nazis examined him and when they found that he had been circumcised they branded a Jewish star on his left hand so that everyone would know that he was Jewish. They incarcerated him in the Garliz [Gorlice] prison. But his good and kind-hearted friend did not desert him. He made sure his Jewish friend got out of danger.

Among the Polish officers at Garliz was the judge from Tarnopol Pisterer. He was a “volksdeutsche” (literally a son of the German people) and served as an interpreter for the Nazis who liked him very much. He even wore a German uniform. “Judge Pisterer went to the judge I mentioned previously, Bogada,” Helicher explained, “together with the clergyman Tsach [Rev. Józef Czach], who had been the chaplain of the 54th battalion in Tarnopol. The three of them went to see the Nazis in charge of the camp. The chaplain said that I had been a Catholic all my life and belonged to his church. My circumcision, he explained, was the result of an operation. I was released on the strength of his testimony.” To this day, he bears the Jewish star on his left hand and survived the Nazis as a devout Catholic.

When he was released from prison, he was returned to the P.O.W. camp, where he lived as a Catholic among the officers and men. The Nazis no longer hurt him as a Jew.<sup>123</sup>

In Polish Pomerania (the so-called Polish corridor), in the fall of 1939, thousands of Poles, as well as some Jews, were rounded up and killed in mass executions in the forests near Piaśnica. One group of 300 prisoners, transported there in November from the jail in the nearby town of Wejherowo, included Jewish children. Sister Alicja, born Maria Jadwiga Kotowska, the superior of the convent of the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Resurrectionist Sisters) in Wejherowo and school principal, took them under her wing. She led them by their hands like Janusz Korczak would later lead his Jewish orphans from the Warsaw ghetto onto a train headed for Treblinka.

On the entry of the Wehrmacht into Wejherowo (on September 9), the extermination action began. The jails were overcrowded, and prisoners occupied not only the cells but also the corridors and the chapel. There were over 3,000 of them ...including members of the clergy ...

The Sisters were also blacklisted. They were placed in isolation in their convent, which had been taken over by the German army. ... At 3:30 in the afternoon [of October 23] ...

<sup>123</sup> From an article by Y. Shmulevich published in *Forward* on January 17, 1966 and reproduced in Haim Preshel, ed., *Mikulince: Sefer yizkor* (Israel: Organization of Mikulincean Survivors in Israel and in the United States of America, 1985), 104–13, translated as *Mikulince Yizkor Book*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/mikulintsy/Mikulintsy.html>.



during prayer, the Gestapo burst into the convent, causing an uproar, with the aim of terrorizing the Sisters. They demanded that Sister Alicja leave. As she left, they arrested her and took her to the courthouse. ... The next day, the Sisters ... learned that Sister Alicja was in the local jail [where she remained despite numerous interventions] ...

Beginning November 5, every day, six or more automobiles left the jail for Piaśnica ... On November 11, a large transport counting 300 prisoners left for Piaśnica. Among them was Sister Alicja Kotowska. Before entering the automobiles, the prisoners had to empty their pockets ... Sister Alicja was the last member of the group to enter the courtyard of the building. She approached a group of Jewish children, took them by their hands and led them into the automobile.

In Piaśnica forest, the prisoners, stripped to their undergarments, were lined up in front of the graves that had been prepared. They were forced to kneel [before being shot] ... Their bodies were covered over with a thick layer of lime and soil over which sod was placed.<sup>124</sup>

The Germans began abusing the Jewish population as soon as they occupied Żelechów, near Garwolin. After a brief respite, matters came to a head again in November 1939, when hundreds of Jews were rounded up and on the verge of being killed. A priest intervened with the Germans on behalf of the endangered Jews.

The Germans entered Zelechów [Żelechów] on 12 September 1939. Immediately upon their arrival, they seized Jews on the street, subjected them to harsh abuse, plundered their property, and set several of their houses on fire. The next day, the synagogue was set afire, and the blaze claimed the life of Hayyim Palhendler, who before the war had been a member of the municipal council. At the same time, the Germans seized Jewish and Polish public figures as hostages and imprisoned them for twenty-four hours. After a few days, the Germans gathered a group of Jews and sent them to Ostrow-Mazowiecka [Ostrów Mazowiecka]; on the way, they shot many of them to death. ...

In November 1939 ... That month also saw a serious incident that jeopardized the lives of hundreds of Jews in Zelechów. On a market day in town, a former Polish soldier shot at a German. The Germans immediately gathered hundreds of Jews and prepared to kill them, but through the lobbying of the priest, and after the actual culprit was captured, the Jews were set free.<sup>125</sup>

Rev. Stefan Wilk, pastor of Chełmicka Duża near Włocławek, issued false baptismal and birth certificates to three Jewish families from Włocławek: Paljard, Dyszel and Milner. They lived under their assumed identities in Łochocin, north of Włocławek, before fleeing to Eastern Poland in 1941. From there, they made

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<sup>124</sup> Maria Lucyna Mistecka, *Zmartwychwstanki w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, 1983), 94–96.

<sup>125</sup> “Zelechów,” *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Communities in Poland*, vol. 7, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pol7\\_00199b.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00199b.html), translation from *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 199 ff.

their way to Palestine. Rev. Wilk was arrested by the Germans on October 23, 1939. He was imprisoned in Fort VII in Poznań, Stutthof, Sachsenhausen, and Dachau. He perished in Dachau on February 9, 1943.<sup>126</sup>

In early November 1939, in Łódź, the Gestapo carried out mass arrests of the intelligentsia, Catholic clergymen, and political and social activists, interning them in a concentration camp in nearby Radogoszcz. Some 50 Catholic priests, including Bishop Kazimierz Tomczak, were swept up on this operation. Józef (Josef) Saks, a Jewish prisoner who arrived at the camp some weeks later, recalled the atmosphere of solidarity among the prisoners.

On December 23, 1939, I arrived with a group of 39 Jews and 40 Poles from the [Gestapo] prison on Sterling Street (also some people from the prison [police detention for arrests] on Kopernik Street). There were a few dozen women in the camp, including a few Jewish ones. ... In the camp, there were 4 big rooms. The Jews were in two rooms, but there were no special ghettos.

The Poles' attitude to the Jews, with the exception of particular individuals, was generally good. It should be pointed out that there were a few dozen priests in the camp. Most of the Poles were from the intelligentsia. The prisoners' honesty toward each other is a characteristic feature worth emphasizing. I know of only one instance of something being misappropriated. During this period, the gendarmerie and auxiliary police treated the prisoners well. The Jewish prisoners and the Poles made an agreement that on Christmas Day, the Jews would do all the work in the camp. The next two days, however, the Jews were not called on to do any work at all. ... The Polish prisoners, knowing that we wouldn't get any meals, had left us their bread and had hidden coffee for us.<sup>127</sup>

During the evacuation of Jews from Lubartów and Firlej in December 1939, while driving them back to Kock, the Germans made them undress to check whether the harsh orders regarding what possessions they could take with them had been heeded. Those Jews who were found to have more than allowed were beaten mercilessly. Incensed by the treatment of the Jews, Poles turned to their priest to intervene with the Landrat (the chief German administrator of the area) on behalf of the Jews. Surprisingly, this intervention had some effect, as the Germans no longer forced the Jews to strip naked.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Gabriel Michalik, "Lwy pana hrabiego," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 29, 2005.

<sup>127</sup> Testimony of Józef Saks, JHI, record group 301, no. 1023.

<sup>128</sup> Testimony of Mojżesz Apelbaum, JHI, record group 301, no. 2013. The Germans "stripped women and men naked. Whenever they found more than 150 złotys on someone, they beat and butchered [them]. This conduct sparked protest among the Poles, who intervened at the Landrat Office through their priest. This proved successful and people were no longer stripped bare in the road. Personal searches were conducted on people wearing clothes."

In December 1939, 2,000 Jewish men from Chełm were force-marched to the town of Hrubieszów, some 50 kilometres away; many were shot by the SS and German police (Selbstschutz) along the way. In Hrubieszów, another 2,000 Jewish men were rounded up and forced to join the Jews from Chełm. They were then ordered to cross the Bug River, but the Soviets shot at them from the other bank. Most of the Jews turned back. Those who made it to Bełż, under Soviet occupation, were cared for by a women's committee with the encouragement of a local priest.<sup>129</sup>

The accounts attesting to widespread sympathy on the part of Poles toward persecuted Jews are borne out by a report filed by Wehrmacht General Johannes Blaskowitz. On February 6, 1940, he wrote to General Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, "The acts of violence carried out in public against Jews are arousing in religious Poles [literally, "in the Polish population, which is fundamentally pious (or God-fearing)"] not only the deepest disgust but also a great sense of pity for the Jewish population."<sup>130</sup>

The Catholic clergy was equally repulsed by the violence directed at Jews, as were most Poles. When, for some unknown reason, probably because of a German provocation, an anti-Jewish disturbance broke out in Głowno near Łódź in January 1940, the local priest together with some other Poles interceded and condemned the violence.<sup>131</sup> In the Montelupich prison in Kraków, incarcerated priests looked sternly as the Jews were physically abused—deliberately in their presence—by the German guards.<sup>132</sup>

In 1939–1940, tens of thousands of Poles and Jews were deported to the Generalgouvernement from western Polish territories incorporated directly into the German Reich. Many of these Jewish refugees passed through the monastery of the Conventual Franciscans in Niepokalanów, near Sochaczew, where they were dumped by the Germans before being resettled. Some 1,300 Jewish refugees

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<sup>129</sup> David Silberklang, "Refleksje na temat losu Żydów w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1945," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2008): 113–26, at p. 117 ("za przyczyną księdza").

<sup>130</sup> Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Reiss, *Those Were the Days: The Holocaust through the Eyes of the Perpetrators and Bystanders* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), 4; Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, vol. 2: *Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination* (New York: Schocken, 1988), 939.

<sup>131</sup> Entry for "Głowno," in *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 1, 81–84, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pol1\\_00081.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol1_00081.html).

<sup>132</sup> Alicja Jarkowska-Natkaniec, *Wymuszona współpraca czy zdrada?: Wokół przypadków kolaboracji Żydów w okupowanym Krakowie* (Kraków: Universitas, 2018), 254.

expelled from the Poznań area at the beginning of November 1939 were among the first groups of Jews to arrive at Niepokalanów. One of the refugees recalled:

The hosts of this settlement were monks ... Common poverty has bound us together. They tried to care for us; they gave us warm food; they set up iron stoves for wood chips; there was also medical attention and medicines. Later, Jews from Kowal and Lubień arrived here wearing yellow patches and driven by whips. The Poles told them to tear off those patches, or the Jews tore them off themselves.<sup>133</sup>

Emanuel Ringelblum's diary entry for January 2–3, 1940, set out below, which appears to have been based on the above account, misidentifies the location of the monastery (as Limanowa).

At Limanowa [Niepokalanów], the Franciscan monks have been very good to 1,300 Jewish refugees (500 from Kalisz and 500 from Lublin [Lubień], about 300 from Poznań). They have found accommodation for them in their buildings and helped them. They have given them a whole calf to kill and are very good to them altogether. The same misfortune has befallen us all, we are equals.<sup>134</sup>

What was once Poland's largest monastery had been essentially disbanded by the Germans in September 1939, when most of the friars were arrested and shipped off to places of detention. Some thirty friars, released in December 1939, returned to Niepokalanów with their guardian, Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, and rejoined the 44 who had stayed behind. More friars continued to trickle back in defiance of German orders, until their number reached almost 400. Some 2,000 refugees from the Poznań area, among more than 1,000 Jews, arrived at the Franciscan monastery in Niepokalanów at the end of 1939 and remained until the early months of 1940. (It bears noting that the Jews of Poznań, Poland's first historic capital, had largely favoured Germany over Poland when Poland regained its independence after First World War.)

After those refugees had been resettled, another 1,500 refugees, mostly from Pomerania, arrived in April 1940 and remained until July of that year. The monastery was confronted with—and wholeheartedly took on—the enormous task of caring for the refugees, above all providing them with food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. In a biography entitled *A Man for Others: Maximilian Kolbe, Saint of Auschwitz*, Patricia Treece has documented the extensive assistance provided to Jewish refugees in Niepokalanów.

<sup>133</sup> "Wysiedlenie Żydów poznańskich do powiatu Sochaczew-Błonie," in Siek, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 9, 256–58, at p. 258.

<sup>134</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 37. See also Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikova, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego*, vol. 29: *Pisma Emanuela Ringelbluma z getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2018), 45.

Truckloads (Brother Juwentyn [Juwentyn] estimates as many as 1,500 Jews and 2,000 gentiles at one time) were dumped at the friary by the Nazis, displaced persons who had been forced from their homes as “undesirables” in territory annexed by the Reich. The first group (Jews and gentiles from the Poznan [Poznań] area), many times outnumbering the Franciscans, was practically waiting on the doorstep when Kolbe and his malnourished friars returned from [their first] imprisonment. ... Kolbe and the Brothers somehow managed to feed their bedraggled guests until the Germans began allotting food for them. To do so, the friars begged in the neighborhood. ... Kolbe not only provided housing (the guests were given about three-fourths of the friary) and food, but clothing and every other kind of assistance as well.

Kolbe himself mentions in a letter the following services to refugees sheltered at Niepokalanow in May 1940: the infirmary was caring for sixty to seventy daily, the pharmacy was dispensing medicine to twenty daily, the little hospital for lay people was housing thirty daily, and the friary kitchen was feeding 1,500. Additionally, furniture was being made for them in the carpentry shop. Even their shoes were being repaired. Brother Pelagius [Popławski] adds:

For the displaced persons he also organized spiritual care—complete pastoral assistance—and he used to visit them [both gentile and Jew, notes Father Florian] to lift their spirits.

... Even after the Germans began allotting rations to the displaced persons from the Poznan area, Kolbe, knowing firsthand the inadequacy of these official amounts, added to them. Father Florian [Koziura] recalls:

Daily he gave twenty kilos of our bread to the displaced persons to supplement what the authorities supplied. At Christmas, too, he ordered a distribution of gifts for the poor children of these families (we had around 3,000 people in the friary at that time).

... At Father Kolbe’s request, a second, non-Christian celebration was put on for the touched and grateful Jewish families on New Year’s Day.

Brother Mansuetus Marczewski had noticed that Father Maximilian had an especially tender love for the Jews. This love was reciprocated. Early in the new year (1940), the Poznan deportees were resettled away from the monastery. Before leaving, the Jewish leaders sought out Father Maximilian. According to Brother Juwentyn [Juwentyn Młodożeniec], a spokesperson (Mrs. Zajac [Zajac]) said:

Tomorrow we leave Niepokalanow. We’ve been treated here with much loving concern. ... We’ve always felt someone close to us was sympathetic with us. For the blessing of this all-around kindness, in the name of all the Jews present here, we want to express our warm and sincere thanks to you, Father Maximilian, and to all the Brothers. But words are inadequate for what our hearts desire to say. ...

In a loving gesture to Kolbe and his Franciscans, she concluded by asking that a Mass of thanksgiving be celebrated to thank God for his protection of the Jews and the friary. Another Polish Jew added, “If God permits us to live through this war, we will repay Niepokalanow a hundredfold. And, as for the benevolence shown here to the Jewish refugees from Poznan, we shall never forget it. We will praise it everywhere in the foreign press.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Patricia Treece, *A Man For Others: Maximilian Kolbe Saint of Auschwitz (In the Words of Those Who Knew Him)* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982; reissued by Our Sunday Visitor,

Fr. Kolbe continued to support the Jews until he was arrested again in February 1941 and taken to the Pawiak prison in Warsaw.

A woman living in the neighborhood of Niepokalanów has also left her testimony of Father Maximilian in this period [i.e., 1940–1941]. She reports how she came to the friary to ask him ... whether it was “all right” to give handouts to war-impovertised Jews who were begging at her door. Patiently Father Maximilian Kolbe urged her, she reports, to help the Jews. She quotes the reason he gave her: “We must do it because every man is our brother.”<sup>136</sup>

Fr. Kolbe’s extensive and unabashed assistance to Jews was undoubtedly a factor in the repressions suffered by him and the monastery. Among the hundreds of testimonials of gratitude for the assistance he generously extended to everyone in Niepokalanów, several were written by members of the Polish Jewish community.<sup>137</sup> Fr. Kolbe is nonetheless often vilified as an avowed anti-Semite.<sup>138</sup>

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Huntington, Indiana), chapters 7–9, at pp. 91–93. According to a report of the order’s provincial superior from October 1940 found in the Niepokalanów archives: “During the course of the year 1940, Niepokalanów housed and fed many refugees. Among the first group of 3,500 refugees were 2,000 Jews. After the departure of the first group of refugees in the spring of 1940, a second group of exiles from Pomerania was housed in the friary. This group now also has departed. At the writing of this report, the monastery awaits the arrival of another 2,000 displaced persons. Individual Jews and families were also hidden at the friary. Saul [Szymon] Wiesenthal, a Jewish convert, and his Polish wife lived in the monastery for eleven months. After his arrest by the Gestapo, together with seven Franciscan brothers, Brother Longin Chałciński visited Wiesenthal regularly at the prison in Łowicz for about half a year (until his death), and brought him food. Fr. Kolbe personally encouraged local residents to extend help to Jews. One such Jew was an injured fugitive from the Warsaw ghetto who had been brought to the monastery by Brother Hieronim Wierzbka. After he was nursed back to health, he was taken in by a local resident.” See Claude R. Foster, *Mary’s Knight: The Mission and Martyrdom of Saint Maksymilian Maria Kolbe* (West Chester, Pennsylvania: West Chester University Press, 2002), 630, 632–33. (This book was republished by Marytown in Libertyville, Illinois in 2013 under the same title.) Four Jews were engaged by the monastery as workers in 1944. See Zdzisław Gogola, “Franciszkanie pomagali ludności żydowskiej,” *Życie Konsekwane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 162–71, at p. 167.

<sup>136</sup> Treece, *A Man For Others*, 104.

<sup>137</sup> Antonio Ricciardi, *St. Maximilian Kolbe, Apostle of Our Difficult Age* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1982), 248.

<sup>138</sup> Fr. Maximilian Kolbe’s beatification (1971) and canonization (1982) gave rise to an ugly campaign of vilification by uninformed sources. The pernicious charges against Fr. Kolbe were thoroughly discredited at the time but have been revived. Fr. Kolbe rarely touched on the topic of Jews in his writings, and only on a few occasions expressed restrained criticism about their influence on Polish society. In 1982, two historians—Daniel L. Schlaflly, Jr., a Catholic, and Warren Green, a Jew—undertook extensive research on Fr. Kolbe’s prewar activities. In their report, “The Charges and the Truth,” published in the *St. Louis Jewish Light* (June 30, 1982), they stated that, in all of Fr. Kolbe’s published works, there were only 14 references to Jews, some very positive, five negative, and none racist. Another



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charge levelled at Fr. Kolbe had to do with *Mały Dziennik*, the popular daily newspaper produced at his friary, which was accused of promoting anti-Semitism. Fr. Kolbe was away in Japan for much of the 1930's and issued instructions not to publish articles that could be construed as anti-Semitic. See Michael Schwartz, "The Deputy Myth," *The Persistent Prejudice: Anti-Catholicism in America* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1984), 235–38.

The tone for the hatred spewed toward Fr. Kolbe was set by Rabbi Lev K. Nelson, who wrote in the Boston *Jewish Advocate*, November 4, 1982: "... the sainted Kolbe was a notorious anti-Semite during the Hitler regime in Poland ... How can we possibly say that Kolbe is Kosher when his whole life has been unclean—seared by the disease of anti-Semitism and sullied by the spewing of hatred towards human beings of a different faith? Is it irony or poetic justice that the man who was indirectly responsible for crowding Auschwitz with its victims, was in turn compelled to share their bitter lot and witness the result of the preaching of hatred!," Anne Roiphe, a literary editor of the liberal Jewish-American periodical *Tikkun*, who appears not to appreciate that the Nazis also built camps for, and engaged in the systematic destruction of Christian Poles, especially the clergy, made the following remarks in *A Season For Healing: Reflections on the Holocaust* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), at p. 130: "Father Kolbe was a nationalist of great fervor. His objection to the Nazis was nationalistic not moral ... A known anti-Semite, even one caught in the machinery to kill the Jews, hardly seem a candidate for sainthood, at least to Jews. In making a pilgrimage to the camp and marking the death of Fr. Kolbe, [Pope John Paul II] seems once again to diminish the death of all Jews who died there."

Joseph Polak, director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at Boston University, called a modest shrine erected in the Auschwitz cell where Fr. Kolbe was put to death "a landmark etched only in thoughtlessness and cruelty." See Joseph Polak, "Auschwitz Revisited: Icons, Memories, Elegies," *Midstream* (June–July 1990), 17–18. In his best seller, *Chutzpah* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), Alan M. Dershowitz wrote, at p. 143, that Fr. Kolbe was "a notorious anti-Semite who almost certainly would never have sacrificed his life for a condemned Jewish inmate. (In fact, it is unlikely that Kolbe ever even *met* a Jew at Auschwitz, since the Polish prisoners were kept entirely separate from the Jews.)" In fact, Polish and Jewish prisoners did interact in Auschwitz at the time of Fr. Kolbe's imprisonment. On August 1, 1994, *The New York Times* ran a letter from Alfred Lipson, Senior Researcher, Holocaust Resource Center and Archives, City University of New York, in which he stated: "The Polish priest's canonization caused a controversy because of past anti-Semitism, especially his attacks on Jews in his popular publications and preachings." David M. Crowe, an American historian and former member of the Education Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, expanded on this theme in his study *The Holocaust: Roots, History, and Aftermath* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2008), at p. 371: "Kolbe was a Franciscan priest from Łódź who operated a religious center near Warsaw. He was arrested on several occasions by the Germans for helping refugees. [Crowe neglects to point out that many, if not most, of the refugees were Jews. —Ed.] But most of Father Kolbe's fame came from his willingness to die in place of another prisoner in Auschwitz. In 1971, questions were raised about his beatification after it was discovered that Kolbe was an anti-Semite who accepted the fictitious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as authentic. [Many people did at the time, including Winston Churchill. —Ed.] He wrote about the 'perverse Jewish-Masonic press' and claimed that the *Talmud* 'breathes hatred against Christ and Christians.' [It is unlikely that those were Fr. Kolbe's words. In any event,



In May 1941, Fr. Kolbe was deported to Auschwitz, where he perished. Auschwitz was established as a concentration camp for Polish political prisoners. The majority of prisoners in the early years of the camp's existence were Christian Poles. The first group of Polish prisoners arrived in June 1940. By year's end, as a result of the constant arrival of new transports, nearly 8,000 prisoners were registered in the camp. Almost all of them were Christian Poles. In 1941, the camp held more than 26,000 prisoners, including 15,000 Poles, 10,000 Soviet prisoners-of-war, and about 1,000 Jews.<sup>139</sup> The prisoners included 500 members of the Catholic clergy, almost all of them Polish priests.

At the end of July 1941, three prisoners disappeared from the camp, prompting SS-Hauptsturmführer Karl Fritzsche, the deputy camp commander, to pick ten men to be starved to death in an underground bunker as a warning against further escape attempts. When one of the selected men, Franciszek Gajowniczek, cried out, "My wife! My children!" Fr. Kolbe volunteered to take his place. Fr. Kolbe died on August 14, 1941, by lethal injection, after a prolonged period of starvation. While imprisoned in Auschwitz, Fr. Kolbe befriended Sigmund

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reputable scholars acknowledge that that description of the Talmud is accurate. See, e.g., Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, New Jersey and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007). —Ed.] He also thought that the Holocaust was God's punishment for Jewish sins. [A totally preposterous charge that goes contrary to all the evidence. The Holocaust did not get underway until *after* Fr. Kolbe's death in August 1941. — Ed.] In 1982, Pope John Paul II canonized him as a 'martyr of charity.'"

The topic of Fr. Kolbe came to the fore again when Pope Francis visited Auschwitz, in reverent silence, on July 29, 2016. The leftist-liberal Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* used this as another occasion not only to lash out at Fr. Kolbe, but also to decry Pope Francis for remaining silent in Auschwitz not about Germany's Holocaust, but—unbelievably—Poland's alleged role: "If the pope had spoken at the Nazi death camp last Friday, the world might have also heard about anti-Semitism stoked by his church in Poland. ... It's too bad that Francis kept his silence. If he'd spoken out while touring the very camp in which a million Jews were murdered ... perhaps the world would have heard about the hostile anti-Semitic legacy that was nurtured by the church in Poland for centuries, and which paved the way for the persecution and murder of Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. ... The Catholic Church canonized [Fr. Kolbe], turning him into a martyr nearly 35 years ago. It ignored the fact that he was actually an anti-Semite ... What message was Francis trying to send to the Catholic world through the respect he paid to Friar Kolbe? To the outsider, it looked like the pope was coming to Auschwitz as the representative of a persecuted religion, not a persecuting one that has yet to come to terms with its own contribution to the murder of the Jewish people during the Holocaust." See Ofer Aderet, "Why Pope Francis Needed to Speak Out at Auschwitz," *Haaretz*, August 1, 2016.

<sup>139</sup> "The Number of Victims," Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, Internet: <http://auschwitz.org/en/history/the-number-of-victims/>.

Gorson (Zygmunt Gruszkowski), a Jewish teenager.<sup>140</sup> Many years later, Gorson recalled their relationship.

I was from a beautiful home where love was the key word. My parents were well-off and well-educated. But my three beautiful sisters, my mother—an attorney educated at the University of Paris—my father, grandparents—all perished. I am the sole survivor. To be a child from such a wonderful home and then suddenly find oneself utterly alone, as I did at age thirteen, in this hell, Auschwitz, has an effect on one others can hardly comprehend. Many of us youngsters lost hope, especially when the Nazis showed us pictures of what they said was the bombing of New York City. Without hope, there was no chance to survive, and many boys my age ran onto the electric fences. I was always looking for some link with my murdered parents, trying to find a friend of my father's, a neighbor—someone in that mass of humanity who had known them so I would not feel so alone.

And this is how Kolbe found me wandering around, so to speak, looking for someone to connect with. He was like an angel to me. Like a mother hen, he took me in his arms. He used to wipe away my tears. I believe in God more since that time. Because of the deaths of my parents I had been asking, "Where is God?" and had lost faith. Kolbe gave me that faith back.

He knew I was a Jewish boy. That made no difference. His heart was bigger than persons—that is, whether they were Jewish, Catholic, or whatever. He loved everyone. He dispensed love and nothing but love. For one thing, he gave away so much of his meager rations that to me it was a miracle he could live. Now it is easy to be nice, to be charitable, to be humble, when times are good and peace prevails. For someone to be as Father Kolbe was in that time and place—I can only say the way he was is beyond words.

I am a Jew by my heritage as the son of a Jewish mother, and I am of the Jewish faith and very proud of it. And not only did I love Maximilian Kolbe very, very much in Auschwitz, where he befriended me, but I will love him until the last moments of my life.<sup>141</sup>

Another Jewish survivor, Eddie Gastfriend, also expressed tender gratitude and admiration for the Polish priests in Auschwitz, who, it must be emphasized, were targeted by the Germans for particularly brutal and degrading treatment.

There were many priests in Auschwitz. They wore no collars, but you knew they were priests by their manner and their attitude, especially toward Jews. They were so gentle, so loving.

Those of us Jews who came into contact with priests, such as Father Kolbe (I didn't know him personally, but I heard stories about him), felt it was a moving time—a time when a covenant in blood was written between Christians and Jews.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Sigmund Gorson was born on February 4, 1925, so he would have been 16 during the period of Fr. Kolbe's incarceration in Auschwitz from May to August 1941. He died in October 1994.

<sup>141</sup> Cited in Treece, *A Man for Others*, 152–53.

<sup>142</sup> Treece, *A Man for Others*, 138.

Other prisoners who came into contact with Fr. Kolbe confirm his legendary altruism.

The boxer [Tadeusz "Teddy" Pietrzykowski] also met Father Maximilian Kolbe, who was later venerated as a saint for volunteering to die in the place of a stranger in the camp. He noticed a guard bullying the priest and told the SS officer to pick on him instead.

In the next moment, the guard was knocked out on the ground from one hit, some reports of the incident suggest, while adding that the beaten Father then asked Teddy to leave the man in peace.

The fighter met the priest once more, sharing a piece of bread with him. But the next day, when learning that someone had stolen it, Teddy became enraged and seized the thief.

However, Father Maximilian Kolbe insisted that the thief not be hurt, with Teddy later recalling: "As I had a piece of bread in a pocket, I gave it to Kolbe and he, before my very eyes, gave it to the thief saying, 'He is also hungry'."<sup>143</sup>

Both Jews and priests were singled out for particularly brutal and humiliating treatment. Fr. Józef Kowalski was doomed because he would not step on a rosary crucifix. Fr. Piotr Dankowski was tortured and killed on Good Friday by a kapo (i.e., a prisoner functionary) who sneered, "Jesus Christ was killed today and you also will perish this day."<sup>144</sup> A Polish inmate recalled:

Right after my arrival at Auschwitz, a young priest was murdered. His body, in a cassock, was laid out on a wheelbarrow. A mock funeral was staged by the SS men, who forced several priests and a few Jews to sing funeral hymns as they followed another cassock-dressed priest. He wore a hat turned upside down, a straw rope was tied about his neck, and they made him carry a broom as his cross. We were forced to stand there looking at this mockery while the SS men jeered at us hoping to arouse fear, to subjugate us: "Your god and your ruler; that's us, the SS and the capos and the camp commander. There is no other god!"<sup>145</sup>

To some extent, Catholic priests and Jews were lumped together in the Nazi mindset. A Polish prisoner recalled:

In May 1941 we were working in a torn-down house when one of the prisoners found a crucifix. SS Storch got ahold of it and he called Father Nieweglewski [Stanisław Niewęglowski].

"What is this?" he asks the priest. Father remains silent, but the guard insists until he says, "Christ on the cross."

Then Storch jeers: "Why you fool, that's the Jew who, thanks to the silly ideals which he preached and you fell for, got you into this camp. Don't you understand? He's one of the Jewish ringleaders! A Jew is a Jew and will always be a Jew! How can you believe in such an enemy?"

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<sup>143</sup> Jessica Green, "The Polish Champion Who Survived Auschwitz Thanks to His Fists," *Daily Mail*, July 1, 2021.

<sup>144</sup> Treece, *A Man for Others*, 137–38.

<sup>145</sup> Treece, *A Man for Others*, 137.

Father Nieweglewski is silent.

Then Storch says, “You know, if you’ll trample this Jew”—and he throws the crucifix on the sand—“I’ll get you transferred to a better job.”

When the priest refused, the SS man and the capo threw him a couple of times on the crucifix; then they beat him so badly that, shortly after, he died.<sup>146</sup>

Wilhelm Brasse, who arrived in Auschwitz in August 1940, recalled that the Germans selected Jews and Catholic priests and told them to chant religious songs and hymns. They would beat the priests and then the Jews, and would yell at them that they were lazy because they didn’t chant loud enough.<sup>147</sup>

**F**r. Czesław Fabisiak, a Jesuit from Poznań and survivor of Dachau, personally endured the same kind of mistreatment when he was imprisoned on Sterling Street in Łódź in 1941.

Every Saturday at about 2:00 p.m., after our meal of a disgusting liquid, we faced another type of threat. The soldier on duty would pass through the corridors, screaming at us in his loudest voice, opening doors and treating us roughly, wanting all the priests and Jews to step out. When he entered our cell and asked if there were any priests or Jews, the prisoners answered “no.”

At first, we did not understand the true reason for these events. Anyone who was taken out was forced to sing and dance and march and jump around, creating a farcical entertainment for the Germans. We finally realized they were mocking our religious beliefs in the only stupid way they could invent. Saturdays were the days we priests honored the Blessed Virgin Mary, traditionally the day to honor her through Mass and prayer. In addition, Saturday was a religious day of observance for the Jews, their Holy Sabbath. Was this good entertainment? I guess that depended upon who was judging the spectacle. For the prisoners, those days were filled with fear and humiliation, as we never knew we would be taken or what would happen to us outside the cell. For the Germans, those were days that were entirely appropriate and natural, days when they could enjoy the suffering of innocent men and behave exactly like those who they were: first-class demons.<sup>148</sup>

**R**ev. Marian Józef Wojciech Morawski, a renowned theologian, was arrested by the Gestapo in Kraków on November 10, 1939, together with 24 other Jesuits. He was transferred to the Auschwitz concentration camp on June 20, 1940. As part of a penal company (Strafkompanie), priests and Jews were harnessed to a large barrel that they were forced to pull—beaten with sticks as they ran with barrel—in order to compact the soil for the construction of an area to be used

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<sup>146</sup> Treece, *A Man for Others*, 137.

<sup>147</sup> Laurence Rees, *The Holocaust: A New History* (New York: Public Affairs, 2017), 173.

<sup>148</sup> Fabisiak, *Memories of a Devil*, 144. Already in 1939, Fr. Czesław Fabisiak came to the aid of a young Jewish man who took refuge in his home. *Ibid.*, 33–34, 391.

for roll calls. It was forbidden to help those who stumbled or fell; they were left to be crushed by the barrel. Fr. Morawski tried to support a Jew who had lost his balance, holding him up by his shoulder to prevent him from falling. A German guard who noticed this beat Fr. Morawski to such a degree that he had to be taken to the infirmary. Fr. Morawski continued to be assigned to hard labour; he was abused, starved, and beaten horribly. He died on September 8, 1940.<sup>149</sup>

In July 1940, the Germans expelled the Jews from the town of Konin, in western Poland, an area incorporated into the Reich, to the surrounding villages. The following year, they were deported to the Generalgouvernement. A wartime report by an anonymous Jewish author describes the expulsion of the Jewish population and their reception by Polish villagers, among them a priest.

From there, after marching all night, they were all taken to three villages: Grodziec, Zagórow and Rzgów ... One must admit that the attitude of the Polish inhabitants of these villages toward us was more than sincere ... they provided the expellees with bread and potatoes, and refused to take payment. The priest from Grodziec, who told [his parishioners] to bring bread and milk to the expellees and later called out from the pulpit to “help our Jewish brothers,” was put in the concentration camp in Dachau.<sup>150</sup>

According to another wartime account:

The attitude of the peasants [in Zagórow] toward the expelled Jews was on the whole very favourable. They allowed them use of empty rooms and barns, and they provided unused tables and commodes. The expellees began to come to terms with their fate. The charges for the dwellings and food products were relatively low. ... The expellees spent more than half a year in this village entirely peacefully. One day, [German] gendarme units appeared in the village.<sup>151</sup>

Francesca Bram (née Grochowska) provides the following testimony regarding the activities of Rev. Franciszek Jaworski, the pastor of Grodziec, near Konin.

One ought to emphasize the help we received from the priest of Grodziec, who occupied himself with handing out coffee and tea to us, and distributing milk to the children. Until late into the night there were warm kettles in the square. Bread was also given out. Besides that, the priest went around appealing to the peasants to give accommodation to the deportees, and help to the homeless. ... The Germans sought an opportunity to arrest

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<sup>149</sup> Stanisław Cieślak, “Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji,” *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at pp. 141–42.

<sup>150</sup> Siek, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 9, 78.

<sup>151</sup> Siek, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 9, 85.

him and this happened after he helped the Jews in Grodziec. Soon afterwards came news of his death.<sup>152</sup>

Rev. Jaworski was arrested by the Germans on August 26, 1940 and deported to Sachsenhausen. Afterwards he was transferred to Dachau. Fortunately, he managed to survive the war.<sup>153</sup>

In the spring of 1940, the Germans set fire to the synagogue in Bodzanów, near Płock, and then ordered local Poles to demolish what remained standing. In his sermon, Rev. Adam Goszczyński, the pastor, reproached those who were forced to take part, even though they had little choice but to obey. “The Germans ordered you to dismantle the synagogue, but why did you do it? The place where people pray is sacred.” Rev. Goszczyński was arrested by the Germans in October 1939, and again in March 1941. He was imprisoned in the Soldau concentration camp in Działdowo, where he perished on August 11, 1941.<sup>154</sup>

On “Bloody Wednesday,” July 31, 1940, the Germans staged a massive assault on the civilian population of Olkusz, in retaliation for the shooting of a German police officer earlier that month. (Twenty Poles were executed immediately after that incident.) Hundreds of men between the ages of 15 and 55, both Poles and Jews, were forced to assemble in public places and were abused and mistreated. When Rev. Piotr Mączka, the pastor of the Church of St. Andrew the Apostle, tried to intervene, he was beaten savagely. He died ten days later. Jacob Schwarzfitter, a Jew from Olkusz, recalled those events which he had lived through, in an interview given in 1946.

I had come to my (little) town Olkusz. That’s my place of birth. There I remained until the evacuation (depopulation) of the town. Before speaking about the depopulation, I shall narrate, report one incident. On the 31st of July 1940, there took place a punitive expedition against my town. On an early morning at four o’clock, at daybreak, on a Wednesday, the whole town was aroused from sleep and put on its feet. And all men without distinction, Jews, from sixteen to fifty years of age, were taken out to various squares. They were taken out by the Gestapo. A few thousand Gestapo men arrived, in a town which had a population of only about fifteen thousand, and they started a punitive expedition.

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<sup>152</sup> Theo Richmond, *Konin: A Quest* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 163, based on the Konin Memorial Book.

<sup>153</sup> Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 4, 460.

<sup>154</sup> Testimony of Dyna Perelmuter Reichental in Myrna Goldenberg, ed., *Before All Memory Is Lost: Women’s Voices from the Holocaust* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2017), 175; “Bodzanów: Synagogue,” Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/towns/b/550-bodzanow/112-synagogues-houses-of-prayer-and-others>; Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 2 (Adam Goszczyński).

The punitive expedition took place because sixty kilometers from the city were murdered by bandits two gendarmes. But they felt it useful to make of it a political incident. And it was ordered to make responsible for it the peaceful (civilian) population. We were led out at daybreak, with our hands up, they jabbed us with bayonets and we were compelled to run. When we arrived at the square, we had to pass a cordon. On both sides stood SS men, with (metal) rods, belts, rubber truncheons, clubs, and they beat us. Everyone had to go through. People went through the cordon, and emerged covered with blood. ...

Women were not taken, that time, only men. Then afterwards each had to show his fingerprint. After giving his fingerprint (it is possible that they had to surrender their identification cards which bore a single fingerprint) each one was tripped from the front over a leg and thrown down to the ground. We were made to lie on the stomach, the face deeply pressed to the earth, with the hands on the back. So we remained lying until twelve o'clock. And the SS men were passing back and fro, and when it pleased him he trampled (the person). I personally was hit several times with the boot on the head. At twelve o'clock they came ...

Twelve o'clock noon, after lying for eight hours we were ordered to get up. Everyone was pale and black. We all looked like dead men. So there spoke to us a Gestapo man, while another explained (interpreted) in the Polish language. That we are being treated most humanely, because they are still able to prove who is against God and against humanity. I and those others present, could of course, not understand that people could be treated still worse, but that we have learned in the future.

Afterwards he explained to us the reason for the event. It was because two gendarmes were murdered. Among those present was a Polish "prister" (the word was not clear, and caused a question).

No "Prister" is a priest, a clergyman.

Yes. He explained, among other things, that those here present are not criminals, that they are simply peaceful citizens. For that he was murderously beaten ...<sup>155</sup>

Throughout German-occupied Poland, the Jews were being confined in ghettos, walled or fenced off from the remainder of the cities and towns where they were located. (In smaller towns and villages, the Jewish sector was generally not enclosed.) The creation of the largest ghetto, in Warsaw, is described by British historian Martin Gilbert.

Of the 400,000 Jews of Warsaw, more than 250,000 lived in the predominantly Jewish district. The remaining 150,000 lived throughout the city, some Jews in almost every street and suburb. On 3 October 1940, at the start of the Jewish New Year, the German Governor of Warsaw, Ludwig Fischer, announced that all Jews living outside the predominantly Jewish district would have to leave their homes and to move to the Jewish area. ...

Warsaw was to be divided into three 'quarters': one for Germans, one for Poles, and one for Jews. ... More than a hundred thousand Poles, living in the area designated for

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<sup>155</sup> David P. Boder Interviews Jacob Schwarzfitter, *Voices of the Holocaust: A Documentary Project*, Illinois Institute of Technology, Internet: <https://voices.library.iit.edu/front>.



the Jews, were likewise ordered to move, to the ‘Polish quarter’. They too would lose their houses and their livelihoods. On October 12, the second Day of Atonement of the war, a day of fasting and of prayer, German loudspeakers announced that the move of Poles and Jews into their special quarters must be completed by the end of the month.<sup>156</sup>

The creation of ghettos propelled members of the clergy to organize assistance for Jews in need. In the village of Piaski Wielkie, near Kraków, Rev. Franciszek Dźwigoński took an active part in organizing such help.

After the war [began], the residents of the village established the Committee for the Care of Victims of War. Its head became the vicar of the parish—priest Franciszek Dźwigoński. In March 1940 the priest made contact with the Council of State Care in Cracow and became its delegate. He was the organizer and chaplain of the troops of the National Army in those territories. He also organized support in sending food and monetary donations for the needs of army units and for Jews in the Cracow ghetto. Józefa [Czort] took an active part in collecting food and financial donations. They were packing big bags and bringing them to Council’s Main Concerns in Cracow.<sup>157</sup>

The Germans also established forced labour camps for Jews throughout Poland. One such camp was Buchenhof (Boguszyń), near Leszno. Rev. Jan Jazdończyk, the pastor of Bronikowo and one of the few remaining Polish priests in the area, managed to provide medicines to the inmates.<sup>158</sup>

Escaping dire conditions in the Warsaw ghetto, Meyer Dragon found employment as a farmhand with a Polish family just outside of Płońsk. Mayer recalled that this family was very good to him, particularly one of the sons, who was a priest. Fortunes changed. Mayer rejoined his family in the Mława ghetto, where conditions were more bearable than in Warsaw. When he was deported to Auschwitz much later, he ran into the priest who had helped him. Meyer learned that the Germans had killed the priest’s brother and taken the farm. He believes the priest perished in Auschwitz.<sup>159</sup>

A traditional Jewish upbringing could give rise to insurmountable psychological obstacles on the part of Jews who sought refuge in Catholic institutions,

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<sup>156</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1986), 127–28.

<sup>157</sup> “Józef and Józefa Biernatowie...,” Memory and Identity, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/jozef-and-jozefa-biernatowie-jozef-and-julian-czortowie-jozef-zurek-tadeusz-and-cecylia-rewilakowie-priest-franciszek-dzwigonski-adam-wajda>.

<sup>158</sup> Jastrząb, *Archidiecezja poznańska w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej 1939–1945*, 331.

<sup>159</sup> Oral history interview with Meyer Dragon, USHMM, Accession number 1989.228.12, RG-50.060.0012.

as was the case with a young yeshiva student from Zduńska Wola who was welcomed into a local monastery.

On my way home that cold December morning [of 1940] ... I wandered into a relatively unfamiliar neighborhood. When I realized where I was, the yellow star on my jacket began to feel very large. ... Then I saw something I had not noticed before: a small monastery, its courtyard slightly ajar. I had never been inside either a church or a monastery; as a yeshiva student, I did not enter churches and didn't know much about Christian rituals. Yet the half-open gate beckoned. "Just for a minute," I said to myself, "until I thaw out. And then I can continue home."

I slipped through the gate, crossed the courtyard, and entered a dimly lit chapel. It was empty. ... On the altar stood a triptych of scenes that, I concluded, depicted the life of Jesus. The woman with the infant at her breast must be Mary, I thought. I also noticed a picture of the Crucifixion. After wondering how Reb Mendel would describe these representations, I sat down in a forward pew and took off my jacket so that the yellow star was hidden. Long before, I had cut off my earlocks, hoping thereby to look more like a Pole or at least to draw less attention to myself. I must have sat there, alone and in silence, for twenty minutes. ... Gradually my limbs thawed.

I was about to stand up when I felt a hand descend on my left shoulder. I had heard nothing, no footsteps, no breathing, nothing. He was just there. He kept his hand on my shoulder as I turned to look at him. I knew that I shouldn't move, get up, or try to flee. "And now the Gestapo," I said to myself, "for being in a forbidden place." But the monk's face was kind. "My son," he asked softly, "are you hungry?" I nodded. He gestured for me to follow him. I walked behind his billowing, thick, dark robe, out of the chapel and down a long, bare corridor.

The silence seemed to intensify as we went further into the monastery. We crossed a small courtyard and came to a low pig shed. He led me inside and asked me to sit and wait for him. I sat and looked at the pigs in the shed with me. They appeared content and well fed. They were obviously indifferent to the German soldiers occupying Zduńska Wola [Zduńska Wola]. For a moment, just for a moment, I wanted to be one of those pigs. ...

The monk returned with a bowl of potato soup. "I am brother John," he said, handing me the bowl and a spoon. "Eat in peace." He watched as I squatted on the floor and ate until my spoon scraped bottom. Then, from somewhere in the vastness of his robe he took out a piece of bread and gave it to me. I wiped the bowl with that bread until the entire surface shone. Watching my eyes and moving slowly, Brother John reached for my jacket, which still was inside-out on the floor beside me. His finger traced the outline of the yellow star. It was barely visible to the eye, although its six points were unmistakable to the touch. ...

"I see you are a Jew," Brother John said.

I nodded, not trusting my voice. At any moment I expected either to be tied up and handed over to the Gestapo or booted down the corridor through the chapel and out the courtyard gate. At least, I thought to myself, I had eaten a meal.

Then, only half intending to say what I said, I blurted out, "Perhaps these pigs need looking after. I could also help around the monastery. I could sweep and clean and light the stoves in the mornings. I am used to getting up early."

"Oh?" said Brother John, "and why does a young boy like you get up so early?"

I told him about my duties at the stiebel, about lighting the stove every morning at five, and about Reb Mendel and my months of study with him. After recounting how Reb Mendel had died, I fell silent again, thinking that I had said too much. The silence between us grew.

Finally Brother John said, "We could use a boy like you, but you must promise me two things. First, while you work for us you must not leave the monastery. Second, you must tell no one else here that you are a Jew. And, of course, you must not mind sleeping out here with the pigs."

I told him that I would agree to those conditions after I had spoken with my mother and father, for I did not want them to worry about my sudden disappearance. Brother John asked me not to tell my parents where I would be or even that I would be working in a monastery, any monastery. I agreed to that, too, and with some relief, for I was sure that my father would have been upset to know that I was working in a Christian house of worship.

That very afternoon, after assuring my parents I would be safe, I came back to the monastery. Before entering through the same half-open gate, I carefully looked around to make sure no one had seen me. In a small satchel I had packed a toothbrush and one change of clothing as well as my phylacteries and a prayer book. As dangerous as it was to bring the very things that would betray my origins, I did not consider leaving them behind. Brother John was waiting for me in the chapel. Together we walked down the same long corridor as that morning. The silence now felt inviting and safe.

In the pig shed, I noticed that Brother John had brought in some new straw and heaped it in a corner, along with two thick blankets. After bringing me another bowl of soup, this time with some kind of meat in it, and a piece of bread and cheese, he said goodnight and left me alone. Despite the cold, the blankets were sufficient protection, because I slept buried in the straw rather than on top of it. In the morning I hid my satchel under the straw and began my duties. I scrubbed floor, cleaned the kitchen, and lit the stoves every morning at five. I fed the pigs and cleaned the shed once a day. Every morning also, as soon as it was light enough for me to see my hand and I knew that I was alone, I would say my morning prayers.

None of the other ten or twelve monks spoke to me. I don't know what Brother John told them, but it must have satisfied them, for none paid attention to me—none, that is, except Brother Peter. His dark and sad eyes, set close in a thin face, narrowed when he saw me, and soon I began to fear that he would report me to the Gestapo. But aside from staring at me at odd moments during the day, Brother Peter said and did nothing, and within three days I felt relatively secure in the monastery. Although I missed my family, I was glad to live without daily fear and grateful to have enough to eat. Every day the soup had meat in it, and some of it tasted unfamiliar, I decided not to worry about that. I felt increasingly at ease until I remembered that in two evenings it would be Hanukkah.

The burden of that thought coincided with a request that the monks made, and the confluence of the two disturbed me. One morning, Brother John asked me to take the place of a regular altar boy who was ill. Of course, I could not refuse, and I trembled as I put on the clothes of the absent altar boy, wondering what I would be asked to do. Immediately I regretted not having paid more attention to the boys. Although they were my size, they were somewhat younger, and I had not spoken to them since entering the monastery. I had

not even watched them as they went about their duties. They regarded me, I hoped, as some sort of peasant boy brought in to do the heavy work of the monastery. At any rate, they paid me as little attention as I paid them.

Now I also began to regret having entered the monastery in the first place. Here I was, a yeshiva student, about to participate in church worship. I felt doubly hypocritical, first because I was pretending to be a Christian in the company of people who were believers and second because I was a Jew. I wondered what the law said about my actions. I racked my brain but had difficulty finding something that discussed my situation. So I did as I was asked. Yet when I carried a portrait of the Madonna, I hoped Reb Mendel was not watching. I also sought to ease my conscience by talking to the figure in the painting, "You're a Jewish mother. You understand, don't you?"

My silent comments to an image on canvas somehow eased my mind, but I soon experienced other moments of unanticipated theological delicacy. As I stood at the altar with the other boys and heard the mass being conducted, I tried to counteract that influence by whispering Hebrew prayers under my breath. By far my greatest fear was that I would be asked to carry the crucifix. That action, I was convinced, could not be balanced by Hebrew prayers on my part. Fortunately, I did not have to face the prospect of such apostasy, for after three days the ill boy returned to the monastery and I returned to scrubbing floors, lighting stoves, and feeding pigs.

At the same time I was carrying the Madonna, I was wondering how I could celebrate Hanukkah in the monastery. Hanukkah had wonderful memories for me. ... Although Hanukkah was not a major holiday in my community, it was celebrated with joy. ...

Again, I began to miss my family and resolved to take advantage of my special circumstances. Carefully, I began gathering wax from the drippings of the votive candles. After I had enough, I made one candle, using for a wick one of the fringes from my tallis-kattan (prayer shawl), which I had worn under my shirt since entering the monastery. Jewish custom requires that the tzitzis (fringes) have eight ends, but seven are also acceptable, so I felt it was kosher to use one as a candlewick. I also was concerned about taking wax meant for the Virgin Mary and St. Teresa and transforming it into a Hanukkah candle. Here I found justification in a talmudic law that states that when something is thrown away it is no longer owned by anyone, so the drippings from the votive candles were no longer the property of the monastery, the Virgin, or another saint. The wax, that is, no longer belonged to anyone, and thus making a Hanukkah candle from it was permissible.

Once I had made the candle, I wondered where I could celebrate the ritual of Hanukkah. A light, even from a candle, would surely be noticed, and my singing might be heard. I began to look around the monastery. Every place I considered seemed to be too public. Then I discovered that one of the smaller buildings used as a dormitory for the monks had a trap door leading to a small attic. ... Entering the attic, I felt my way in the darkness along the woodwork until I reached an open space next to the chimney, a crawl space large enough for me to stand. ... Lighting a match, I surveyed my domain. For the first time since beginning to live in the monastery I felt at home. No one would bother me here. Taking my candle from my pocket, I lit a match to its bottom. As soon as the wax melted, I placed the candle on the ledge, pressing it into the brick. The light from my Hanukkah candle cast a gentle glow.

Almost delirious with joy, I began to chant the Maoz Tzur. For just a moment I was back home and younger in age. ... The monastery vanished. My struggles with the Madonna and the crucifix faded.

So concentrated was I on the traditional Hanukkah song that I heard neither the creak of the trap door nor the shuffling of feet. But suddenly I saw my shadow cast on the chimney in front of me and turned to see the intense, narrow stare of Brother Peter. I knew he had heard me singing the Maoz Tzur. I wasn't frightened as I turned to face him, although I don't know why I wasn't. Perhaps I had become accustomed to the intensity of Brother Peter's dark eyes, or perhaps I sensed a bond between us. We stood and looked at each other for a long, long minute.

Just as I was about to blurt out some improbable explanation, Brother Peter said: "Let us sing together, let us sing the Maoz Tzur." And so we did. Brother Peter knew the Hebrew words and the melody. We sang about wanting to reestablish the Temple and to rededicate the altar. ... As we sang, I watched our shadows on the wall. For a moment, just a moment, they seemed to merge into one.

I did not ask Brother Peter why he knew the melody, and he did not volunteer a reason. The next morning, I did not tell Brother John about Brother Peter and the singing, but I knew I had to leave the monastery. I told Brother John that my family needed me at home and that I felt I had to return. He thanked me for my work and told me that I could return whenever I liked. I thanked him and said that my father would call him one of the righteous men. Brother John blushed and said nothing.

I left the monastery that morning through the same half-open courtyard gate through which I had entered. As I left, I was very much aware that I had received one of the rarest gifts of life in the ghetto: kindness from a gentile stranger. In December 1940 any acts of kindness toward Jews would be punished in some way; by 1941 the punishment would be much more severe and specific. By then, anyone in Poland caught aiding a Jew outside the ghetto, either by offering food or lodging or transportation, would be subject to the death penalty. ...

I was home for the final night of Hanukkah. As we sang the melodies, I thought of Brother John and Brother Peter and of my weeks of peace under the shadow of war and occupation. The festival now seemed deeper somehow, denser, and richer. I did not imagine that it would be the last Hanukkah I would celebrate with my family.<sup>160</sup>

**P**riests in many parishes spontaneously provided assistance to Jews in need. Rev. Stanisław Cieśliński, the pastor in the village of Kampinos outside Warsaw, came to the assistance of Jews brought to the nearby labour camp in Narty, which was in operation 1940–1941, urging his parishioners to help the unfortunate. Rabbi Shimon Huberband, who was an inmate of the camp in April and May 1941, wrote:

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<sup>160</sup> Isaac Neuman with Michael Palencia-Roth, *The Narrow Bridge: Beyond the Holocaust* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 56–64.

We received through some Christians the encouraging news that the priest of Kampinos had been giving fiery sermons about us in church every Sunday. He forcefully called upon the Christian population to assist us in all possible ways. And he also attacked the guards and the Christian camp administrators, referring to them as Antichrists. He harshly condemned the guards who beat and murdered the unfortunate Jewish inmates so mercilessly.

As a result, the peasants began to bring various food items to the labor sites. Any inmate who could manage to steal himself over to a peasant while at work received all sorts of delicious foods from him, and several dozen Jews owed their survival to the humane acts of the priest. ...

We marched through the village. We were given a warm farewell by the entire Christian population. Dr. Kon told us that when we passed the home of the Christian priest, he would greet us, and that we, in turn, should tip our hats. And that is what occurred. The honorable priest came out of his house with a bouquet of white roses in his hand. He did not say a word, because there were Germans in his home. As we passed by his house we tipped our hats. He answered by nodding his head.

We owed him, the priest of Kampinos, a great deal. Many of us owed our lives to the warm and fiery sermons of this saintly person. His unknown name will remain forever in our memory.<sup>161</sup>

Rev. Marian Stefanowski, the pastor of the nearby village of Leszno, also helped the local boy scouts organization to gather food and medicine for Jews in the work camp near Kampinos forest.<sup>162</sup>

Such open displays of solidarity by Poles were not isolated even in mid-1941, when the Germans were on the verge of implementing a mandatory death sentence for helping Jews. Poles continued to defy repeated warnings not to assist Jews in any way. In July 1941, the Germans created a transit camp in Pomiechówek, just north of Warsaw, where Jews were collected from neighbouring towns before being shipped to the Warsaw ghetto. Approximately 4,000 Jews lived in extremely harsh and cramped conditions, with no access to either drinking water or food. The situation was further exacerbated by cruel treatment from German storm troopers, local ethnic Germans and Jewish order policemen.

In a report prepared by the Jewish underground in August 1941, Jewish witnesses attested to the widespread and spontaneous assistance of Christian Poles who were moved by the plight of the Jews.

The local population showed great concern for the Jews locked up in the camp. Both Jews, as well as Poles. Already the day after the arrival [of the Jews] at the camp, people were throwing loaves of bread over the fence, states Abram Blaszk. Szajndla Gutkowicz describes how the Polish population gathered near the fence, bringing bread and cherries, but the authorities did not allow the Jews to approach them. Those [Jews] who were sent to get

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<sup>161</sup> Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem*, 95, 101.

<sup>162</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 242–43.

water [outside the camp] were given gifts of bread, milk and whatever else the farmers could give. Farmers who were ordered to transport Jews to Ludwisin gave them all the bread that they had with them.<sup>163</sup>

Displays of solidarity of this kind would have been unthinkable in Germany or Austria at the time, not because it was against the law (which it was not), but because it would have offended public opinion (societal norms) in those countries.

Michael Kossower, an eyewitness and chronicler of the Jewish community of Radzymin, near Warsaw, wrote about the assistance provided by Rev. Maksymilian Kościakiewicz, the local pastor, and various other Poles when a typhus epidemic struck the ghetto in April 1941. The following passage is from that community's memorial book.

Apart from the president [of the regional court] Gasinski [Jerzy Gasiński], the commander of the Polish police lent his support to this safety operation [i.e., smuggling into the ghetto Dr. Henryk Janowski, a Jewish specialist from Warsaw]. It is also necessary to recall the boundless devotion of the pastor of Radzymin parish, Rev. Kaszczalkiewicz [Kościakiewicz], who distributed hot meals to Jewish children in the church courtyard. After receiving threats from the Germans, he had to stop providing the service of his kitchen, but nevertheless continued to distribute dry food and also gave sums of money to the Jewish self-help committee. ...

In the fight against the typhus epidemic, the Jewish doctor Abraham Deutscher of Skerniewice [Skierniewice] distinguished himself. He also managed to prepare medication from materials that he came by illegally from a pharmacy located in the "Aryan" quarter. ... He was also aided by several Polish doctors, such as Dr. Władysław Zasławski [Władysław Zasławski], and Doctors Tucharzewski, Szymkiewicz, Truchaszewicz and Karpinski [Karpinski] of Warsaw, who entered the ghetto secretly at night bringing medicine and administering care to the most needy of its residents.<sup>164</sup>

In the early months of 1940, Eta Chajt Wrobel, who was part of the nascent underground movement in Łuków, undertook a mission to Łódź, where she had lived previously and, with the help of a Pole, managed to steal some guns from German officers. On the way back, she had an encounter with an unknown Polish nun—a chance meeting that saved her life.

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<sup>163</sup> Ewa Wiatr, Barbara Engelking, and Alina Skibińska, eds., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego*, vol. 13: *Ostatnim etapem przesiedlenia jest śmierć: Pomiechówek, Chełmno nad Nerem, Treblinka* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2013), 61–62.

<sup>164</sup> Guerchon Hel, ed., *Le livre du souvenir de la communauté juive de Radzymin* (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Encyclopédie de la Diaspora, 1975), 48–49.



In the meantime I decided that it would be prudent to go back to Lodz [Łódź] and get the guns that Janek was still hiding for me. And this time I didn't wear any yellow stars; I wore instead the crucifix [her Polish girlfriend] Lola's mother had given me. ...

At Janek's house, I knocked, and he answered the door. When he saw me, he pulled me into his apartment. I told him I'd come for the guns. He gave me two guns wrapped in women's clothing and put them in my handbag. We decided it would be best for me to make several trips to pick up the rest ... taking only two guns at a time.

On my way back to Lukow [Łuków], as we pulled into one station, I noticed Gestapo agents surrounding the train. I was terrified. I had no papers and if they searched my bag, I would have been shot on the spot. Though I tried to keep my demeanor cool and calm, something must have shown in my face. A nun sitting across the aisle noticed me and looked into my eyes. I still remember how beautiful her young face was underneath the cowl of her habit. Suddenly, she got up and ordered me to take her suitcase. I obeyed without saying a word. She pushed her way past the Germans as I followed behind her like a maidservant. The Gestapo agents had no time to react to her leaving the train so quickly and never asked her or me for our papers—after all, she was obviously not Jewish, and I was wearing a crucifix.

I walked with her for at least two blocks before she stopped, turned, and looked straight at me. "What are you up to?" she asked. "I can see death in your eyes." She also saw the cross I was wearing, blessed me, and sent me on my way. She knew exactly what I was up to, and must have guessed I was a Jew, but yet didn't give me up. That woman, whoever she was, saved my life.

The second trip I took for guns was uneventful; the third trip was something else again.<sup>165</sup>

Later, when the ghetto in Łuków was being liquidated in 1943, Eta Wrobel declined an offer of assistance extended to her by Balbina Synalewicz, a Polish acquaintance.

A few days later, one of the women who sometimes let me stay at her house brought me a birth certificate from a Polish girl who had died. She asked me to leave and live with her as a Christian, and that her priest would help me. Again, I had to say no—I didn't want to leave my Tateh [i.e., dad] and brothers.<sup>166</sup>

Seven Jews seized from a nursing home in Płock—run by the Passionist Sisters—were among the 36 sick and disabled persons executed by the Germans in Lasy Brwilskie, outside of Płock, on January 7, 1941.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Eta Wrobel with Jeanette Friedman, *My Life My Way: The Extraordinary Memoir of a Jewish Partisan in WWII Poland* (New Milford, New Jersey: The Wordsmithy; New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2006), 53–54.

<sup>166</sup> Wrobel, *My Life My Way*, 75.

<sup>167</sup> "Płock: Jewish Community: History," Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/towns/p/414-plock/99-history/137854-history-of-community>.

The assistance provided to a number of Jews by the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (of Pleszew), who worked as nurses at the Holy Trinity Hospital (Szpital Świętej Trójcy) located near the ghetto in Piotrków Trybunalski, is described by Charles Kotkowsky, a survivor from that town.

Five women escaped from the synagogue and succeeded to climb the fence into the nearby hospital [of] Świętej Trójcy [Szpital Świętej Trójcy]. The nuns of that hospital, seeing the distraught five women, had pity on them and let them in.

According to the German “laws,” they were not allowed to harbor or aid Jews, but the nuns risked their lives and hid them. They provided them with food, clothing and shelter for a few days. When the escapees recovered sufficiently from their harrowing experience, one nun from eastern Poland, Franciszka Narloch, helped them in their further escape. At night she led them past the Ukrainian guards to a safer place.

When the Germans kept their Jewish prisoners a whole day waiting for their execution, the nuns clandestinely provided them with food and water. Franciszka Narloch, with other nuns, also helped a Mr. Kimmelman [Leon Kimmelman] get out of the ghetto when his stay became too dangerous. They placed his two children, who were outside the ghetto, in a more secure hiding place.<sup>168</sup>

Sister Franciszka Narloch described her rescue efforts in similar terms.<sup>169</sup> Dr. Leon Kimmelman, a member of the Bund, had to leave the ghetto in Piotrków Trybunalski when the Germans started to arrest underground activists in the summer of 1941. He and his wife made their way to Warsaw. However, they were rounded up during the Great Deportation the following summer and perished in Treblinka.<sup>170</sup> In the diabolical conditions that the Germans created in occupied Poland, one escape from their clutches was seldom enough to ensure survival.

The Franciscan Sisters of the Suffering (*franciszkanki od cierpiących*) ran a hospital in Kozienice whose staff extended care to Jews, supplied medicine, food and clothes to the ghetto, and sheltered several Jews after the liquidation of the local ghetto. Apart from the Polish doctors, the rescue activities of Sisters Sabina Kaczyńska and Maria Lewandowska as well as the chaplain, Rev. Jan Wronka, stand out.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Charles Kotkowsky, *Remnants: Memoirs of a Survivor* (Montreal: Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies, 2000).

<sup>169</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, eds., *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej: Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, 1st ed. (Kraków: Znak, 1966), 166.

<sup>170</sup> Mira Ryczke Kimmelman, *Echoes from the Holocaust: A Memoir* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 145.

<sup>171</sup> Agata Mirek, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący*

Marta Bik-Wander (b. 1919) was directed by her former high school principal, Gustaw Leśniadorski, to his friend Rev. Jan Kanty Szymeczko, a catechist at a high school in Kraków, from whom she obtained a false baptismal certificate. She then moved with her parents to Prokocim, a suburb of Kraków, where they were sheltered by Fr. Ludwik, an Augustinian priest. Because they were recognized there as Jews, she and mother moved to Lwów. After arriving in Lwów, two Ukrainian officials refused to accept her identity card (Kennkarte) when Marta went to register with the municipality and demanded a bribe. She turned to Fr. Beniamin, a Bernardine priest whom she knew. He accompanied her to the criminal police (Kripo), where she filed a complaint against the Ukrainian officials. A Polish police officer urged her to leave Lwów because she would continue to face extortion from these officials, and he escorted her to the train station. Marta returned to Kraków. She survived the war, passing as a Christian Pole.<sup>172</sup>

The Augustinian monastery in Prokocim was raided by the Gestapo on September 20, 1941. Seven priests and one brother were arrested, putting a stop to the monastery's activities. After being interrogated at the notorious Montelupich prison in Kraków, the clergymen were deported to Auschwitz and Dachau. Five of them perished as prisoners in the German camps: Fathers Wilhelm Gaczek, Józef Gociek, Krzysztof Olszewski, and Edmund Wilucki, and Brother Wojciech Lipka. Fathers Jacek Tyłżanowski, Jan Pamuła, and Bonifacy Woźny eventually returned to Prokocim.

Edith Lowy (b. 1928), her parents, and her younger brother, Erik, refugees from Czechoslovakia, hid in the cellar of a warehouse in Prokocim near Kraków in 1942. The family's former Polish neighbours and two unidentified priests from Prokocim, likely Augustinians, were aware of their hideout and provided them with food. The priests offered to provide false birth and baptismal certificates. But Edith's parents decided to take the family to a labour camp in Prokocim, thinking it would be easier to survive there than in hiding. They did not consider returning to their hometown near Ostrava, in German-occupied Czechoslovakia, where they had left their house in the care of neighbours.

The cellar, all that was in the cellar were crates, huge crates like from some machines. And the entrance to this was from the front of the building. No windows. ... So, we didn't know what weather was outside, we didn't know anything. The only people that knew that we are there were our Polish neighbors, former Polish neighbor. And I'm also forgot

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Żydów, 135–60, at p. 155; "Hospital Staff in Kozienice," *Memory and Identity*, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/hospital-staff-in-kozienice>.

<sup>172</sup> Testimony of Marta Bik-Wander, JHI, record group 301, no. 1333.

to tell you that my parents were so desperate to get [my brother] Erik and me out when there was so much fear that we'll be deported, or whatever, that the Polish neighbors send once their son, in the early 20s to bring Erik and me to their house to hide. It was before we were hiding in the other places. ... he came, and we were sitting on the train, Erik and I already, with this Polish guy, when I decided I'm not going anywhere ... without my parents. So I ran out of the train, of course, Erik—behind me, and the guy behind me, and my parents were very, very distraught that here—again we are here in danger, that we didn't go into hiding. So, the only people that knew that we are hiding there were the Polish family, and two priests from a nearby church. And once in a while they used to bring something and hide in the shrubs, soups, coffee, you know, in the shrubs. So, my father or uncle took it out from under the shrubs at night. ... The priests were wonderful, and they offered to do Aryan paper for us. And we decided maybe that would be another possibility to save ourself.<sup>173</sup>

In Lithuanian-occupied Wilno, as early as October 1939, the Polish underground set up a document falsification cell (*komórka legalizacyjna*), known by the code name “Kuznia,” which produced thousands of false documents for endangered Poles and Jews. Jews used these documents to leave Lithuania in 1940 and 1941. (Japan's vice-consul in Kaunas, Chiune Sugihara, issued thousands of transit visas to Jews allowing them to travel through Japanese territory on their way to other destinations.<sup>174</sup>) Rev. Kazimierz Kucharski, the pastor of St. Casimir's Church, played a key role in this undertaking. Rev. Kucharski entrusted the cell's organization to Stanisław Kiałka, a cleric at the Jesuit College. Also involved with “Kuznia” were the Jesuit clerics Stefan Dzierżek and Edward Kuczyński, as well as lay Poles such as Jerzy Hoppen and the brothers Michał and Romuald Warakowski. After the war, Romuald Warakowski entered the Carmelite Order.<sup>175</sup>

In the Wartheland and Pomerania, which were incorporated into the Reich, rescue activities by the clergy were not extensive and soon came to a halt. Except for the tightly sealed Łódź ghetto, the Jewish population was deported from those territories into the Generalgouvernement. The unusually severe repression of the Catholic Church and Polish clergy in the Wartheland and Pomerania

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<sup>173</sup> Oral history interview with Edith Lowy, USHMM, Accession no. 2010.248, RG-50.030.0584.

<sup>174</sup> On the role of Polish officials in this operation see Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, “Polish-Japanese Secret Cooperation During World War II: Sugihara Chiune and Polish Intelligence,” adapted from *The Asiatic Society of Japan Bulletin*, no. 4 (April 1995), Internet: [https://web.archive.org/web/20110716023152/http://www.tiu.ac.jp/~bduell/ASJ/3-95\\_lecture\\_summary.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20110716023152/http://www.tiu.ac.jp/~bduell/ASJ/3-95_lecture_summary.html).

<sup>175</sup> Stanisława Lewandowska, *Losy wilnian: Zapis rzeczywistości okupacyjnej: Ludzie, fakty, wydarzenia 1939–1945*, 3rd ed. (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN), 234–35; Stanisław Cieślak, “Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji,” *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at pp. 147–48; Wojciech Cieśla, “Ojciec od spraw beznadziejnych,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 29, 2000.

was another significant factor in limiting the clergy's scope for helping anyone. Almost all church institutions were shut down and religious orders dispersed, with thousands of priests and nuns arrested, killed, and expelled. This is why documented cases of Polish clergy rendering assistance to Jews occur overwhelmingly in the Generalgouvernement. Furthermore, and for the most part, this took place after the Final Solution was implemented, when the need for rescue became most acute.

As historian Ewa Kurek explains,

The main reason why the territories incorporated into the Reich in 1939 show no convent activity is Germany's particularly repressive policy toward the Polish Church, including the Polish nuns. A large scale displacement of the Polish population and severe restrictions imposed on Poles were accompanied by the ruthless persecutions of priests and nuns, plundering of convents and sacred buildings, closing of churches, raids on churches during services, and desecration of sacred objects.

The effects of this policy toward the Church in Wielkopolska [Greater Poland, i.e., the westernmost part of Poland] and Pomerania were devastating to women's religious orders. This is best exemplified by the fate of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate (Pleszew), of whose sixty-eight homes sixty were in the territories incorporated into the Reich. By September 1942, of the forty-five homes in the region of Wielkopolska, the nuns were working only in the alms-house and hospital in Szamotuły. They had been displaced from eighteen homes, expelled from another eighteen, and, after prior repressions, they were sent from eleven homes to the labor camp in Bojanowo. In the region of Pomerania, out of the fifteen existing homes, up until October 15, 1941, the nuns were working in only five. Of the five orphanages existing in Wielkopolska and Pomerania before the war, all run by the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate (Pleszew), not one was left. The only convent home in the discussed territory which was known to have rescued Jewish children, was the Lodz [Łódź] orphanage on Karolewska Street, run by the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate (Stara Wies [Wieś]). They did this until they themselves were expelled from their home and sent to the labor camp in Bojanowo. Anticipating they would be expelled from their home, they wanted to protect the children from getting into the Germans' hands and managed to give the Polish and Jewish children to Polish families.<sup>176</sup>

The Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus (Grey Ursulines) sheltered Jewish children at two institutions in Łódź, located on Obywatelska and Czerwona Streets, among the Polish children under their care. A number of the Jewish children, perhaps seven or eight, were seized by the Germans and taken to the Łódź ghetto. Mieczysław Ambroziak (b. 1934), an assumed name, was one of the nuns' Jewish charges. Apart from his marked Semitic features, like some of the other Jewish children, he did not speak Polish when he arrived at the institution. After a short stay in the ghetto, where he experienced hardship,

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<sup>176</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 105–6.

Mieczysław returned to the nuns, who treated him well. He remained with them until the institution was shut down towards the end of 1941, possibly longer. At that time, the nuns were interned in a camp in Bojanowo, and the Polish children, among them Mieczysław, were sent to a camp for children, where they remained for the duration of the occupation.<sup>177</sup>

The Germans encouraged and exploited friction among the conquered peoples. Theodor Oberländer, a principal Nazi strategist, advocated a divide-and-conquer strategy for Poland, pitting the country's national groups against one another. For example, in November 1939, the Germans conscripted some Jews to help destroy the Kościuszko monument in Wolności Square in the city of Łódź. The Germans then set fire to two synagogues and blamed the Poles for burning them down in retaliation for the destruction of the Kościuszko monument.<sup>178</sup>

In the spring of 1941, the Germans ordered the Jews to demolish a Catholic church in Sanniki near Kutno. They took photographs and used the incident to foment anger among the Poles against the Jews.<sup>179</sup> Jews were also employed to demolish a Catholic church in Gąbin.<sup>180</sup> After being fingered by some Jews in the service of the German militia, Jan Dudziński and two of his friends were picked up by the Gestapo in Sanok and sent to Auschwitz, where only Dudziński survived.<sup>181</sup>

Fr. Czesław Fabisiak, a survivor of Dachau, recalled, "When I was condemned to the workforce at Kotzine, I worked alongside seven Jews who had been sent there for the same purpose. Unaccustomed to physical labor, I was falsely accused by one of the men of being lazy, a denouncement that almost cost me my life."<sup>182</sup>

A Jew dressed in traditional garb—on his way from Pruszków to Żbików—was struck by rock on his temple thrown by a young hoodlum. A Pole who witnessed this came to the man's assistance and took him to the local rectory. The priest tended to the man's wound until he felt strong enough to return

<sup>177</sup> Testimony of Mieczysław Ambroziak, SFV, Interview code 16730. Mieczysław Ambroziak's records were destroyed by the nuns in order to protect his identity. He remained in contact with the nuns after the war and, out of gratitude for their kindness, supported them financially decades later. According to another source, a Jewish boy identified as R.H. was sheltered at the "St. Ursula house" in Łódź from 1943 and survived the war. See Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post-Holocaust Years* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 241 n.88.

<sup>178</sup> Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem*, 323; Janina Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Słownik* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 87 n.191.

<sup>179</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 101.

<sup>180</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 415 n.24.

<sup>181</sup> Treece, *A Man For Others*, 128; Testimony of Jan Dudziński, SFV, Interview code 43153.

<sup>182</sup> Fabisiak, *Memories of a Devil*, 391.



home, and apologized to him for what had happened. At the mass the following Sunday, the priest spoke out strongly against such behaviour.<sup>183</sup>

The Germans instigated or organized anti-Jewish violence and riots throughout occupied Europe.<sup>184</sup> In the spring of 1940, the Germans assembled gangs of unemployed young ruffians to attack Jews, and sometimes Poles, in the streets of Warsaw. These hoodlums, who were intoxicated, were paid by the Germans in what, by all accounts, was an orchestrated and closely monitored event. One Jew described the scene he witnessed during the so-called Passover pogrom.

The Passover pogrom continued about eight days. It began suddenly and stopped as suddenly. The pogrom was carried out by a crowd of youths, about 1,000 of them, who arrived suddenly in the Warsaw streets. Such types have never before been seen in the Warsaw streets. Clearly these were young ruffians specially brought in from the suburbs. From the characteristic scenes of the pogrom I mention here a few: On the second day of Passover, at the corner of Wspólna and Marszałkowska Streets, about 30 or 40 broke into and looted Jewish hat shops. German soldiers stood in the streets and filmed the scenes. ...

The Polish youngsters acted alone, but there have been instances when such bands attacked the Jews with the assistance of German military. The attitude of the Polish intellectuals toward the Jews was clearly a friendly one, and against the pogrom. It is a known fact that at the corner of Nowogrodzka and Marszałkowska a Catholic priest attacked the youngsters participating in the pogrom, beat them and disappeared. These youngsters received two złotys daily from the Germans.<sup>185</sup>

Archbishop Stanisław Gall, the Vicar Capitular and later Apostolic Administrator of the vacant Warsaw archdiocese, who died in September 1942, was greatly troubled by these events and urged the clergy to join in condemning these

<sup>183</sup> Chana Gelberd, "From the Diary of a *Halutza*," in David Brodsky, ed., *Sefer Pruszkow, Nadzin ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Pruszkow in Israel, 1967), 213 ff.

<sup>184</sup> In the early part of the war, many of Europe's major cities witnessed anti-Jewish riots and pogroms carried out by the local population. Such occurrences were instigated or orchestrated by the Germans in Prague, Paris, the Hague, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Oslo, and Kaunas. After the outbreak of the violence, the Germans assumed the role of "protectors" of the Jewish population. See Tomasz Szarota, "Anti Jewish Pogroms and Incidents in the Occupied Europe," in Daniel Grinberg, ed., *The Holocaust Fifty Years After: 50th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Papers from the Conference Organized by the Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw, March 29–31, 1993* (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw, n.d.), 108–23; Tomasz Szarota, *On the Threshold of the Holocaust: Anti-Jewish Riots and Pogroms in Occupied Europe: Warsaw–Paris–The Hague–Amsterdam–Antwerp–Kaunas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015).

<sup>185</sup> Jacob Apenszlak, ed., *The Black Book of Polish Jewry* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1943), 30–31.



outrages.<sup>186</sup> In December 1940, after the creation of the Warsaw ghetto, appeals were made in Warsaw churches for the faithful to put aside their differences with the Jews and not allow themselves to be incited by enemies intent on sowing discord.<sup>187</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum notes in his diary, on December 31, 1940, that “priests in all of Warsaw’s churches exhorted their parishioners to bury their prejudice against Jews and beware of the poison of Jew-hatred preached by the common enemy, the Germans.”<sup>188</sup>

Public interventions by the clergy on behalf of Jews, though invariably futile and potentially suicidal, were known to occur from time to time. The following example is recalled by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, co-founder of the wartime Council for Aid to Jews.

On Nowy Świat Street, a German officer grabbed an emaciated Jewish boy, no more than six years old. Holding him by the scruff of the neck like a pup, he raised the cover of a sewer with his other hand and pushed the child in. The passers-by looked on with horror. A priest who had witnessed this started to beg for mercy for the child. The officer glared at him in wonder and stated officiously, “Jude.” He slammed down the hatch and calmly walked away.<sup>189</sup>

In the summer of 1940, the Main Welfare Council (Rada Główna Opiekuńcza—RGO), a legally functioning social welfare agency for Poles, together with Adam Sapieha, the archbishop of Kraków (Cracow), appealed to Hans Frank, the Governor-General of the Generalgouvernement, to suspend the mass resettlement of Jews from Kraków. Not only did this intervention fail to achieve its desired effect, but the three rabbis who had requested it—Smelkes Kornitzer, the chief rabbi of Kraków, Szabse Rappaport and Majer Friedrich—were arrested and deported to Auschwitz, where they perished. The Jewish community leaders made no further requests to the Catholic Church for interventions on their behalf with the German authorities. Such interventions were clearly counterproductive. Archbishop Sapieha’s courageous, but ultimately disastrous intervention is de-

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<sup>186</sup> According to some reports, Archbishop Gall raised this matter with the German authorities and also intervened on behalf of Jewish converts confined in the Warsaw ghetto. See Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 554, 641; Damian Bednarski, “I vescovi polacchi e la salvaguardia degli ebrei,” in Mikrut, *La Chiesa cattolica in Europa centro-orientale di fronte al Nazionalsocialismo 1939–1945*, 741–62, at p. 750.

<sup>187</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943*, 2nd ed. (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1988), 227: “żeby puszczano w niepamięć nieporozumienia z Żydami ... Nie należy pozwolić się podszczuwać przez wrogów, którzy chcą siać nienawiść między narodami.”

<sup>188</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 125.

<sup>189</sup> Teresa Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982), 200.

scribed by Aleksander Bieberstein, a Jewish community leader, in his chronicle of the wartime fate of the Jews of Kraków.<sup>190</sup>

Archbishop Adam Sapieha also endeavoured to intervene on behalf of Jewish converts to Catholicism, again without success. At the turn of 1940–1941, he appealed to the German authorities to exempt converts from forced labour, resettlement into ghettos, and the requirement to wear distinctive armbands. In November 1942, he sent a letter to Governor-General Hans Frank, protesting the Germans' conscription of young Polish men into the Baudienst labour battalion, where they were plied with alcohol, used in the liquidation of the Tarnów ghetto and the mistreatment of Jews. Archbishop Sapieha also informed the Vatican on two occasions about the German policy of exterminating the Jews in occupied Poland.<sup>191</sup>

Despite the tragic failure of these interventions, Archbishop Sapieha continued his relief work on behalf of Jews clandestinely. In his homilies and pastoral letters, he appealed to his flock to help everyone, regardless of their religion. Through the mediation of Rev. Ferdynand Machay, the pastor of the Most Holy Redeemer (Najświętszy Salwator) Parish and coordinator of the archdiocese's rescue activities, Archbishop Sapieha supplied false baptismal and birth certificates to Jews. Among the recipients were eleven members of the Kleinmann family, who were sheltered in the suburb of Prądnik Czerwony.

Notwithstanding the ban on conversions introduced by the Germans in October 1942, Archbishop Sapieha allowed priests to baptize Jews secretly and to forge baptismal certificates. He steadfastly refused to hand over to the Germans the relevant church records that they had demanded in order to monitor such activities.<sup>192</sup> Prior to the ban,<sup>193</sup> the Kraków archdiocesan curia had approved 220

<sup>190</sup> Aleksander Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 38–39, 223; Aleksander Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, 2nd ed. (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), 43, 255.

<sup>191</sup> Damian Bednarski, "I vescovi polacchi e la salvaguardia degli ebrei," in Mikrut, *La Chiesa cattolica in Europa centro-orientale di fronte al Nazionalsocialismo 1939–1945*, 749–50.

<sup>192</sup> Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1963), 40; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 824; Tomasz Pawlikowski, *Adam Stefan Kardynał Sapieha* (Lublin: Test and Towarzystwo im. Stanisława ze Skarbimierza, 2004), 82–86; Andrzej Chwałba, *Okupacyjny Kraków w latach 1939–1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011), 157; Jarosław Sellin, "Arcybiskup Adam Stefan Sapieha a Holokaust," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (2014): 774–85; Łukasz Klimek, ed., *Kościół krakowski 1939–1945* (Kraków: Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, 2014), 148.

<sup>193</sup> The Governor General's order of October 10, 1942 prohibiting baptisms for Jews is set out in Tomasz Domański, "Conversions of Jews to Catholicism in the General Government: The Example of the Diocese of Kielce," *Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (2021): 208–25, at

petitions involving 351 Jews between September 1939 and October 1942. The following priests submitted the most petitions: Rev. Władysław Kulczycki, pastor of St. Michael's parish in Kraków; Rev. Brunon Boguszewski of St. Michael's parish in Kraków (who was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile); Rev. Józef Niemczyński, pastor of St. Joseph's parish in Kraków; Fr. Jan Bieda, a Jesuit, who served in Kraków and Nowy Targ; Fr. Wojciech Trubak, a Jesuit; Rev. Julian Grzegorz Łaniewski of the Nowa Wieś district of Kraków; Fr. Eugeniusz Grzegorz Świstek, a Capuchin; Rev. Szczepan Samerek of St. Mary's parish in Kraków; Rev. Roman Stawinoga of Rakowice; Rev. Czesław Skarbek of St. Stephen's parish in Kraków; Rev. Jan Masny of St. Anne's parish in Kraków; Fr. Brunon Jagła, a Reformed Franciscan, of Bronowice Wielkie; Rev. Franciszek Grabiszewski of Corpus Christi parish in Kraków; Rev. Jan Szymeczko; Rev. Władysław Mól of Prądnik Czerwony; Fr. Ernest Łanucha, a Capuchin; Rev. Władysław Miś, pastor of All Saints Parish in Kraków; Rev. Władysław Mączyński of Borek Fałęcki; Fr. Joachim Bar, a Franciscan; Rev. Stanisław Proszak of Biały Kościół; Rev. Jan Mayer; Fr. Zygmunt Nestorowski, a Capuchin; Rev. Stanisław Czartoryski, pastor of Maków Podhalański; Fr. Alfred Eugeniusz Bury, a Reformed Franciscan; Rev. Stanisław Mizia of Niepołomice; Rev. Wojciech Bartosik of Wawrzeńczyce; Rev. Wincenty Piątkiewicz, pastor of Luborzyca; Rev. Stanisław Dunikowski of Rabka; as well as 40 other priests.<sup>194</sup>

Rev. Józef Niemczyński, the pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in the Podgórze district of Kraków, provided false baptismal and birth certificates to a number of Jews, among them Józef Seweryn (whose real surname was Kraus). When most of St. Joseph's parish was incorporated into the ghetto, Rev. Niemczyński, with the support of the archdiocesan curia, protested the appalling living conditions for Jews.<sup>195</sup>

Towards the end of 1941, Rev. Franciszek J. Gabryl was arrested—as a *Judentäufel*—for the “crime” of baptizing a Jew who had expressed an intention to convert several years before the war. After his detention and repeated beatings

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pp. 220–22. From September 1939 to October 1942, the Kielce diocesan curia received only 25 petitions for baptism (involving 45 persons) from parishes in the diocese.

<sup>194</sup> Jarosław Sellin, “Arcybiskup Adam Stefan Sapieha a Holokaust,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (2014): 774–85. On Jewish converts in Kraków, see also Martyna Grądzka-Rejak, “Od dłuższego czasu straciłem wszelki kontakt z żydami i żydostwem”: Neofici w okupowanym Krakowie w świetle materiałów Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie,” *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 13 (2017): 342–71; Martyna Grądzka-Rejak, “‘Zapewniają, że szukają tylko Boga i swego zbawienie’: Konwersje wśród Żydów w okupowanym Krakowie w latach 1939–1942,” in Michał Wenkлар, ed., *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici: Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej* (Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Oddział w Krakowie; Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2021), 103–24.

<sup>195</sup> Barbara Engelking, *Na łące popiołów: Ocaleni z Holocaustu* (Warsaw: Cyklady, 1993), 73.

in the Montelupich prison in Kraków, Rev. Gabryl was sent to Auschwitz, and then to Dachau.<sup>196</sup>

Rev. Władysław Miś was arrested for that reason in September 1942. He was sent to Auschwitz, and then to other concentration camps. He survived his ordeal.<sup>197</sup> Rev. Feliks Zachuta was arrested towards the end of 1943 for the same reason. He was executed in the Płaszów concentration camp in May 1944.<sup>198</sup>

Some of the aforementioned priests, as well as Rev. Edmund Nowak, the chaplain of St. Lazarus Hospital in Kraków, Rev. Eugeniusz Śmietana, and Rev. Władysław Bajer, a school prefect, provided Jews with false documents, found shelters for Jews, and assisted them in other ways. Together with Rev. Julian Groblicki, the postwar auxiliary bishop of Kraków, on Christmas Eve in 1942, Rev. Bajer was sent by Archbishop Sapieha to say mass and hear the confessions of Poles interned in the Liban camp in the Podgórze suburb of Kraków. Among the Polish prisoners were Jews passing as Poles who came to confession in order not to betray themselves as Jews. Afterwards, the Gestapo interrogated the priests to find out which of the prisoners were Jews. But the priests refused to cooperate.<sup>199</sup>

Churches in Lwów also experienced a run on conversions. According to historian Grzegorz Chajko,

Among the Lviv [Lwów] parishes, the one that was certainly involved in creating documents was St Nicholas Parish. The campaign was led by Rev. Kazimierz Gumol, Rev. Władysław Makarczuk and Rev. Franciszek Siekierski. As a cover-up, they resorted to the late Rev. Franciszek Janicki so that in case of trouble they could shift the blame onto the deceased. They also administered baptism to applicants, as records show that on 30 September 1941, a young Jewish girl, Zofia Spatz, who was raised in a Catholic home had received her baptism into the Church.

In the Lviv monastic parishes the situation was similar. For instance, the parish of the St. Vincent de Paul Congregation of the Mission provided religious education for the Jews with an intention of preparing them for baptism. The meetings enjoyed unswerving interest. The Superior Rev. Stanisław Kałużny made the following entry for 2 July 1941: "Large numbers of Jews are applying for baptism. There were 50 applications at St Vincent Parish within one week; formerly there were 4 or 5 within one year."<sup>200</sup>

<sup>196</sup> Antoni Gładysz and Andrzej Szymerski, eds., *Biografia byłych więźniów politycznych niemieckich obozów koncentracyjnych*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Promyk, 1972), 70–71.

<sup>197</sup> Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 3, 106.

<sup>198</sup> Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 3, 119; Andrzej R. Małeki, "65. rocznica tajnego nauczania UJ (Part 2)," *Alma Mater*, no. 92 (May 2007): 50–55, at p. 54.

<sup>199</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 342–43.

<sup>200</sup> Grzegorz Chajko, "The Clergy of the Archdiocese of Lviv [Lwów] of the Latins in Aid of the Jewish Nation during the Years of the German Occupation from 1941–1944: An Outline

Armed with her new baptismal certificate (her father had agreed to the conversion), the aforementioned Zofia Spatz (later Heimrath, b. 1929) was taken by her nanny to her village, where she was presented as her nanny's illegitimate child.<sup>201</sup>

Jewish sources also attest to the widespread practice of Catholic institutions providing Jews with false documents. For example, many false baptismal certificates were produced at the Carmelite monastery in Kraków for the benefit of Jews and other endangered persons. The “factory” was eventually discovered.<sup>202</sup>

It must be borne in mind, however, that while conversion (which also posed a risk for the persons acting as witnesses) or obtaining a false baptismal certificate may have assisted some Jews in passing as Christians, in occupied Poland, these documents did not shield anyone from the impact of German genocidal policies, which extended to *all* persons considered to be Jews under German decree. This was not the case in many other countries, like the Netherlands and France and even the Reich itself, where there were various exempt or protected categories of Jews (e.g., those married to non-Jews, persons of mixed Jewish and non-Jewish origin). In Slovakia, 8,000 Jews were able to avoid deportation in 1942 by simply converting (most often these were sham conversions) or obtaining baptismal certificates, which enabled them to live openly and out of danger.<sup>203</sup>

Interventions on behalf of Jewish converts in Przemyśl also proved to be futile, and indeed they were counterproductive. In July 1942, the Episcopal Curia of Przemyśl, at the direction of Bishop Franciszek Barda, petitioned the town's commissar Bernhard Giesselmann, through Monsignor Zygmunt Męski and Rev. Jan Kwolek, to allow Jewish converts to remain outside the ghetto. Giesselmann gave assurances that they would be allowed to do so and would not be

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of the Events,” *The Person and the Challenges*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2013): 143–55, at 147–48.

<sup>201</sup> Stanisław Bizuń, *Historia krzyżem znaczone: Wspomnienia z życia Kościoła katolickiego na Ziemi Lwowskiej 1939–1945*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (Lublin: Instytut Badań nad Polonią i Duszpasterstwem Polonijnym Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, and Oddział Lubelski Stowarzyszenia “Wspólnota Polska,” 1994), 125–26; Eliyana R. Adler and Kateřina Čapková, eds., *Jewish and Romani Families in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2021), 238 n.44.

<sup>202</sup> Zvi Szner, ed., *Extermination and Resistance: Historical Records and Source Material*, vol. 1 (Haifa: Ghetto Fighters' House in Memory of Yitzhak Katznelson and Kibbutz Lohamei Haghettaot, 1958), 83.

<sup>203</sup> Peter Borza, “Righteous Among Nations from Slovakia and the Czech Republic,” in Wacław Wierzbieniec and Elżbieta Rączy, eds., *Righteous Among Nations: The Scope and Forms of Help to Jews in East Central Europe During Occupation by the Third Reich* (Jarosław: The Bronisław Markiewicz State Higher School of Technology and Economics, 2014), 97, 100–1.

required to wear distinctive armbands, on condition that he was provided with a list of Jewish converts. Upon receiving the list, the converts, among them the Goldschmidt family, were arrested. Some of these Jews were executed immediately; the rest were sent to the ghetto.<sup>204</sup> Bishop Barda provided false birth certificates to non-converts, among them Stanley and Lusia Igel (Igiel) and their daughter Tonia (later Toni Rinde).<sup>205</sup>

Early in the war, Archbishop Adam Sapieha, who headed the Catholic Church in Poland after the Primate's departure, asked Pope Pius XII for a forceful statement in support of Poland against the Nazis. However, the futility of making a public statement along those lines became all too apparent as conditions got progressively worse. When, in August 1942, the Pope had such a letter smuggled into Poland to be read from the pulpits, Archbishop Sapieha burned it, fearing it would have no lasting positive impact and that it would only bring about severe repercussions.

The Pope's messenger, Monsignor Quirino Paganuzzi reported the following about this sensitive mission.

As always, Msgr. Sapieha's welcome was most affectionate. ... However, he didn't waste much time in conventionalities. He opened the packets [from Pius XII, with statements condemning Nazi Germany], read them, and commented on them in his pleasant voice. Then he opened the door of the large stove against the wall, started a fire, and threw the papers into it. All the rest of the material shared the same fate. On seeing my astonished face, he said in explanation: "I'm most grateful to the Holy Father ... no one is more grateful than we Poles for the Pope's interest in us ... but we have no need of any outward show of the Pope's loving concern for our misfortunes, when it only serves to augment them. ... But he doesn't know that if I give publicity to these things, and if they are found in my house, the head of every Pole wouldn't be enough for the reprisals Gauleiter Frank will order."<sup>206</sup>

<sup>204</sup> Marcin Janowski, "Polityka niemiecka władz okupacyjnych wobec ludności polskiej i żydowskiej w Przemyśle w latach 1939–1944," *Kresy Południowo-Wschodnie: Rocznik Przemyskiego Centrum Kultury i Nauki Zamek*, vols. 3–4, no. 1 (2005–2006): 215; Elżbieta Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2008), 79; Elżbieta Rączy and Igor Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2011), 167; Sławomir Zych, *Diecezja przemyska obrządku łacińskiego w warunkach okupacji niemieckiej i sowieckiej 1939–1944/1945* (Przemyśl: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Przemyskiej, 2011), 199–200.

<sup>205</sup> Oral history interview with Toni Rinde, October 7, 2010, Florida Holocaust Museum, in conjunction with the University of South Florida Tampa Library and Holocaust and Genocide Studies Center; Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 76 n.80.

<sup>206</sup> Ronald J. Rychlak, *Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII and the Catholic Church Saved Half a Million Jews from the Nazis* (Dallas: Spence, 2005), 153. See also Margherita Marchione,



Archbishop Sapieha went on to comment about the dire situation of the Jews and the inability of the Poles to offer them, or anyone for that matter, meaningful assistance:

Thus the astonished Vatican prelate listened to Archbishop Sapieha describe the apocalyptic spectacle of the horrors of the ghetto of Cracow: "Do you see, Monsignor Paganuzzi, what we have been reduced to? But the saddest fact is that we have to leave those unfortunate people without help, isolated by the entire world. They are people dying for whom even a word of comfort is lacking. In order not to abbreviate their days we cannot, we must not speak. We live the tragedy of those unfortunate people and no one more than the Poles would like to help them: no one is in such an impossible situation of trying to help the Jews. ..."<sup>207</sup>

Indeed, Poles could not have done anything to have fundamentally changed the fate of the Jews, or their own fate for that matter, under Nazi German occupation.

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*Consensus and Controversy: Defending Pope Pius XII* (New York and Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2002), 25–27.

<sup>207</sup> Marchione, *Consensus and Controversy*, 27.





## Germany Attacks the Soviet Union: June 1941

On August 23, 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union entered into a Non-Aggression Pact (the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), which paved the way for the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. (The Soviet attack began on September 17, while the Polish army was still engaged in battle with the German army.) A Secret Protocol to Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact provided for the partition of Poland, as well as for Soviet domination of the Baltic States and Bessarabia. After overrunning Poland, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin agreed, under the terms of a Secret Supplementary Protocol to the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, to a redrawn common border. Each side seized roughly half of Poland, thus ensuring that the country would be once again wiped off the face of Europe. The Nazi-Soviet alliance lasted for over a year and a half, until Germany turned on its erstwhile ally and invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.

The Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland proved to be as repressive as the German occupation of Western Poland. Incited by Soviet propaganda, members of the country's minorities murdered several thousand ethnic Poles in the latter part of September 1939;<sup>208</sup> the Soviets executed thousands of Polish government

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<sup>208</sup> Although almost all the actual killing was done by Ukrainians and Belorussians, Jews were also among those who turned on their Polish neighbours. The legendary Polish courier Jan Karski, who was honoured by Israel for his efforts to inform the West about the Holocaust, paints a stark and alarming picture of what he had witnessed, in a report filed in February 1940, before the Holocaust got underway: "The Jews have taken over the majority of the political and administrative positions. But what is worse, they are denouncing Poles, especially students and politicians (to the secret police), are directing the work of the (communist) militia from behind the scenes, are unjustly denigrating conditions in Poland before the war. Unfortunately, one must say that these incidents are very frequent, and more common than incidents which demonstrate loyalty toward Poles or sentiment toward Poland." For the full report, see Norman Davies and Antony Polonsky, eds., *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 260–71. The behaviour of some Jews in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland in 1939–1941 inhibited Polish sympathy for the Jews subsequently. For more on this

officials, army officers, and soldiers (POWs) in the fall of 1939, and arrested tens of thousands more; some 22,000 Polish government officials and army officers (including professionals who were reserve officers in the Polish army) held in camps and prisons were murdered in mass executions in Katyn, Kharkov, Kalinin (now Tver), and other locations in April and May of 1940; throughout this period, several hundred thousand civilians (mostly ethnic Poles) were deported to the Gulag (in the Soviet interior), where many of them perished.

Among those subjected to repressive measures were members of the Christian clergy, though not nearly to the degree they endured under German occupation. Scores of priests were arrested; some of them were executed locally, and many others perished in prisons and camps. Eight Dominicans were executed in Czortków, in Eastern Galicia, on July 2, 1941, just a few days before the German army entered the town.<sup>209</sup>

With the rapid flight of the Soviets, the ensuing breakdown of law and order, in the latter part of June and the early part of July 1941 gave an opening

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little-known chapter of wartime, see Mark Paul, *Neighbours on the Eve of the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Relations in Soviet-Occupied Eastern Poland, 1939–1941*, Internet: <http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia>; Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim*.

Several thousand Poles were murdered in Eastern Poland by their non-Polish neighbours in September 1939. In Zelwa, a revolutionary committee composed of Jews and Belorussians executed Rev. Jan Kryński, the 78-year-old Catholic pastor, Rev. Dawid Jakubson, the pastor of the Orthodox parish, and a dozen other prominent Poles. See Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim: Stosunki polsko-białoruskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2000), 86–87, 147–48, 162–63; Mariusz Filipowicz, “Zbrodnia w Zelwie,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 12 (December 2004): 80–83; Tadeusz Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem: Duchowni archidiecezji wileńskiej represjonowani w latach okupacji sowieckiej (1939–1945)* (Białystok: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne–Oddział w Białymstoku, 2005), 68. In the nearby town of Dereczyn, in September 1939, a Catholic priest, likely Rev. Antoni Diczkaniec, intervened with the local rabbi to secure the release of Polish officers interned by pro-Soviet Jews who were planning to hand them over to the Soviet invaders. After the officers’ release, revolutionary elements wanted to seize and murder the priest but their plans were thwarted because of the intervention of a local Jew and Soviet officials. The priest was said to have calmed those who wanted to take revenge against the collaborators. See Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim*, 162–64; *Dereczyn* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2000), 196, 206, 324–25, 328.

<sup>209</sup> Local Jews in the service of the NKVD—among them Ignacy Blum and Klemens Nusbaum—are believed to have played a significant role in this horrific murder. See Zygmunt Mazur, “Prawda o zbrodni w Czortkowie,” *W Drodze*, nos. 11–12 (1989): 50–59; Marek Miławicki, “Być prorokiem—dominikanie czortkowscy,” in Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski, ed., *Prorocy Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej XX wieku: Materiały III i IV Forum Teologów Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2009), 901–34, at p. 924.

for some to loot and to settle scores with those believed to have supported the Soviet occupiers. Jewish accounts record that priests spoke out against, and intervened to curb, abuses of the rabble against Jews in several localities in the Łomża and Wilno regions. Among the most outspoken priests were Rev. Cyprian Łozowski of Jasionówka, Rev. Franciszek Bryx (sometimes spelled Bryks) of Knyszyn, Rev. Franciszek Łapiński of Rutki,<sup>210</sup> Rev. Józef Kębliński of Jedwabne,<sup>211</sup> Rev. Hipolit Chruściel of Worniany,<sup>212</sup> and Rev. Kazimierz Radziszewski of Szarkowszczyzna.<sup>213</sup> Another account mentions the intervention of an unidentified priest from Naliboki who attempted to dissuade a band of instigators from attacking Jews.<sup>214</sup>

Rev. Henryk Wojnusz, the pastor of Kiemieliszki, is mentioned in several accounts. Masza Rudnicka, a Jewish survivor, wrote: "In his church sermons he repeatedly spoke about the love for humanity and requested his religious believers to respect their neighbours. At every troublesome moment, the Jews ran to the priest to intervene." Masza's sister, Rachela, refers to assistance provided by Rev. Wojnusz in her testimony as well.<sup>215</sup> Another rescue story mentions the

<sup>210</sup> Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2002), 58, 119–20, 202–3, 206, 409; vol. 2, 196–98, 238–39, 330, 517. See also Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 898 (Jasionówka), 909 (Knyszyn). A similar protective attitude was displayed by priests in Lubotyń, Nowy Dwór and Ejsymonty Wielkie. See Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 119 n.111 (Lubotyń); Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 647 (Nowy Dwór and Ejsymonty Wielkie).

<sup>211</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 900. At the time of the massacre of Jews in Jedwabne on July 10, 1941, Rev. Józef Kębliński, who administered the local parish, approached a high-ranking German officer to intervene on behalf of the Jews, imploring him to spare the women and children. He was told that they had an order to carry out, rebuffed and threatened with repercussions. See the testimony of Rev. Edward Orłowski, Institute of National Remembrance Jedwabne investigation, July 25, 2001.

<sup>212</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej: Studia i szkice* (Białystok: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Oddział w Białymstoku, 2014), 111.

<sup>213</sup> Samuel D. Kassow, "When Their Neighbors' Indifference Gave Way to Massacre," *Forward* (New York), April 20, 2001. According to another account, the local priest later warned the Jews of an imminent Aktion and helped some Jews to escape during the liquidation of the ghetto in Szarkowszczyzna. See the testimony of Benjamin Estrin, SFV, Interview code 38858.

<sup>214</sup> Shalom Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorrussia during World War II* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 272.

<sup>215</sup> M. Kuritzki-Shulzinger, "Destruction and Holocaust," in Shimon Kanc, ed., *Svinzian Region: Memorial Book of 23 Jewish Communities*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/svencionys/svencionys.html>, translation of *Sefer zikaron le-esrim ve-shalosh kehilot she-neh-revu be-ezor Svintsian* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Sventzian in Israel and the U.S.,

priest from Kiemieliszki, as well the Dominican Sisters of Kolonia Wileńska, near Wilno.

Jozef [Józef] and Maria Kmiecinski [Kmieciński] lived in Vilna [Wilno], where their daughter, Sabina, studied at the local high school. One day a Jewish student joined her class—a Jewish boy called Ludwik Kupferblum (later Miedzinski [Miedziński]). He had come to Vilna from Warsaw in 1939 with his parents, Josef and Felicia, and his brother, Viktor, after the Germans invaded the city. When the Nazis entered Vilna [in June 1941], persecution of the Jews began. ... Together with the other young Jews, Ludwik and Viktor worked outside the ghetto, where they lived with their parents. Sabina would meet Ludwik and bring him food and she and her parents formulated a plan for getting his parents out. They obtained papers in the name of Miedzinski, and on the appointed evening at a specific time on their way to work Viktor and Ludwik led their parents outside and took them to the Kmiecinskis. That night, the whole family was taken by cart to Maria's mother's estate in the district of Swiecziany [Święciany]. The family hid there until strangers turned up in the vicinity, at which point it was considered too dangerous and they were taken to friends of the Kmiecinskis, Wanda and Waclaw [Wacław] Kanczanin, who had an estate called Malinowka [Malinówka] near Kiemieliszki. Josef Kupferblum had cancer and Maria Kmiecinska's sister, Jadwiga Bydelska, provided him with drugs but his condition worsened and he died. The problem of his burial was solved when the local priest in the parish of Kiemelin [Kiemieliński] agreed to bury him in the Catholic cemetery at Kiemieliszki. The Kmiecinskis decided that it was too dangerous for Viktor, Ludwik, and Felicia to stay at Malinowka and took them to Maria's sister, Helena Frackiewicz [Frąckiewicz], in Vilna. Helena arranged for Viktor to work as a janitor at the Dominican [Sisters'] monastery near Vilna. Ludwik joined the Polish army and managed to meet his brother in Lodz [Łódź]. In 1945, Felicia, who was already registered officially in Vilna, went to Poland on one of the first repatriation transports. In 1946, the whole family moved to Paris.<sup>216</sup>

A German report mentions an unidentified priest in Wilno who condemned the shooting of Jews and those who shot them; he even entered a synagogue to console and offer support to the Jews who were being held there.<sup>217</sup>

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1965), col. 1463. Masza Rudnicka recalled, in her testimony, that Rev. Henryk Wojniusz was a balding, chubby old man, who was not too good at theology or at making poignant speeches, but he “spoke right from the heart.” Thanks to that, his words truly reached his parishioners. At the time of the liquidation of the ghetto in Kiemieliszki by German and Lithuanian forces, Masza and her sister, Rachela, were hidden in the barn of local farmers. Later, they were sent to labour camps. After they were liberated and returned to Kiemieliszki, Rev. Wojniusz offered them his assistance and took care of them. See the testimony of Masza Szvizinger Rudnicka, YVA, file O.3/2333 (Item 3560123); Testimony of Rachela Rudnik, YVA, file O.3/1833 (Item 3739741).

<sup>216</sup> Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, vol. 4: Poland, Part 1 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 355. (Hereinafter cited as *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4.)

<sup>217</sup> Documentaion of the Sicherheitspolizei und S.D., including reports of the Einsatzgruppen in the Soviet territories, 1941–1942, YVA, file O.53/3 (Ludwigsburg, USSR Collection, Item 3656462).

With the takeover of Eastern Poland in June 1941, the Germans began to round up, mistreat and execute Jews. A number of priests attempted to intervene with the German authorities to curb these abuses. Rev. Cyprian Łozowski of Jasionówka assured a German official that all the Communists had escaped with the Soviets, thus protecting the Jewish population for a time.<sup>218</sup>

Rev. Franciszek Bryx of Knyszyn, who called on the faithful to help Jews, was part of a local Polish delegation that, in the fall of 1941, appealed successfully to the German authorities to suspend their order to create a closed ghetto in Knyszyn.<sup>219</sup>

More often, however, interventions proved to be unsuccessful. When the Germans started to shoot Jews in Landwarów in July 1941, a Jewish delegation turned to the local pastor for help. Rev. Kazimierz Kułak sought to intervene with the German commander and almost paid with his own life as a result.<sup>220</sup>

Rev. Aleksander Pęza of Grajewo joined a local delegation that appealed to the German military authorities in July 1941 to put a halt to the murders and robberies of Jews.<sup>221</sup> According to the Grajewo memorial book, Rev. Pęza “tirelessly” called on the Christian population, at the daily masses, not to cooperate with the Germans and succumb to their anti-Semitic provocations.<sup>222</sup>

Similar reports of clerical interventions on behalf of Jews come from Michaliszki,<sup>223</sup> northeast of Wilno, Powursk (Powórsk), near Kowel, in Volhynia,<sup>224</sup> and from Tłuste, in Eastern Galicia.<sup>225</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, “Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell’arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944,” in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 647.

<sup>219</sup> Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 119; vol. 2, 238–39, based on the testimony of Samuel Suraski, JHI, record group 301, no. 3959.

<sup>220</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 52; Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 111. For confirmation of Rev. Kazimierz Kułak’s rescue activities based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, see Viktorija Sakaitė, “Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai,” *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32.

<sup>221</sup> Władysław Świacki, *Pamiętnik przechowany w beczcze* (Grajewo: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół 9 PSK, 2007), 173–76.

<sup>222</sup> George Gorin, ed., *Grayever yizker-bukh (Grayevo Memorial Book)* (New York: United Brayever Relief Committee, 1950), xxxii–xxxiii. The information found in the Grajewo memorial book regarding the death of Rev. Aleksander Pęza—allegedly instigated by “Polish hooligans” in July 1941—is incorrect. The most authoritative source—that on his tombstone—gives the date of his death as July 15, 1943. Rev. Pęza is believed to have been murdered for his Polish underground involvement. See Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 2, 184.

<sup>223</sup> Testimony of Ora Bleicher (Bleucher), YVA, file O.33/286. The pastor of Michaliszki was Rev. Adolf Sokołowski.

<sup>224</sup> Asher Tarmon, ed., *Memorial Book: The Jewish Communities of Manyevitz, Horodok, Lishnivka, Trojanuvka, Povursk, and Kolki (Wolyn Region)* (Tel-Aviv: Organization of Survivors

After the German entry into the village of Pohost Zahorodny (or Pohost Zahorodzki), near Pińsk, in Polesie (Polesia), Jews started to flee and found shelter in the garden of a Catholic priest, likely Rev. Hieronim Limbo, the local pastor. The following semi-fictionalized account with imagined dialogue is a plausible recreation of a factual event.

Their numbers had now swelled to over forty and included young men and children as well.

Nearing the mansion of the Polish priest, Drogomish, they heard the galloping of horses.

The mansion, where the priest lived with a housekeeper, was also the church where he held services for all of the Catholics in Pohost Zagorodski.

Drogomish, in his black robes and white collar, saw them from the window and rushed outside. The priest was old and bent, and known throughout the village to be a good-hearted man. ... People would come from miles away to tour his gardens and catch the smell of jasmine and orange blossoms.

He had been sitting alone in his garden alcove sadly contemplating the growing turmoil in his village and apparently trying to think of some way to help. Now the disturbance had come to his front yard. He rushed out to see how he could aid the fugitives.

Urgently, he motioned the Jewish men and boys into his garden. The garden spread over two acres, but was dwarfed by the potato patch, which was a quarter-of-a-mile wide and half-a-mile long, stretching all the way to Bobric [Bobryk] Lake and filled with two-foot-high potato plants.

Quickly, the fugitives left the road, following the priest down the furrows between the plants to the edge farthest from the road. There, in the weeded dirt furrows between rows of potato plants, they lay down to hide. From this position, they could probably hear the passing of the SS riders moving into the shtetl.

Nazis from Borki now entered Pohost Zagorodski from the north, riding past the Polish school on Mieschchanska [Mieszczkańska] Street. Both groups converged on the marketplace and dismounted. ....

The soldiers started moving house to house, brandishing their machine guns and whips ... Accompanied by the local [Belorussian] police force, they forced all the men they found into the street. ...

In the village hospital, those men who were too sick or infirm to move were shot on the spot.

Almost ninety men and young boys were rounded up and forced to the marketplace. ...

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of Manyevitz, Horodok, Lishnivka, Troyanuvka, Povursk, Kolki and Surroundings Living in Israel and Overseas, 2004), 418.

<sup>225</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 841. See also Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 40; Joseph J. Preil, *Holocaust Testimonies: European Survivors and American Liberators in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 193, 196; Testimony of Berl Glik in Michał Grynberg and Maria Kotowska, comp. and eds., *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945: Relacje świadków* (Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 2003) 369–70; Oral history interview with Adela Sommer, USHMM, Accession no. 1993.A.0088.26, RG-50.002.0026.



In the center of the village, the Obersturmbannführer called to his sergeant, "Is that all you found?"

"Yes, Herr Obersturmbannführer," the sergeant replied. "That's it."

This was not good enough for him. ...

Twenty SS troopers mounted their horses ... down Dworska Street to the church. When they reached the old mansion that now served as the Catholic Church ...

As the sergeant and his men started into the garden on their horses, Drogomish ran out once more.

"What are you doing in my garden?" he yelled. "You are stomping on the plants. You'll destroy them."

"There are Jews hiding in the garden," the sergeant said.

"There is nothing here except the potato plants. And you're ruining them," the priest said, moving in front of the horses of the sergeant and his men, trying to block their way.

"Get out of the way, Father," the sergeant demanded.

"No," Drogomish said, defiantly. "You have no right. This is a holy place, the grounds of the church."

"Toss him out of the way," the sergeant said to his men. Four soldiers dismounted and threw the frail priest to the ground.

"Jew lover," the sergeant snarled.

The soldiers then searched the field, knocking over the plants, trampling on others and tearing up the dirt and crops. Thus they combed the field while the forty Jews lay trembling in the dirt.

Finding the men, the SS forced them to their feet, whipping and beating them with sticks as they herded them back to the marketplace.

When a hundred and thirty Jewish men and boys were finally assembled in the Rynek [Rynek] marketplace, the SS soldiers mounted their horses and formed a circle around them to prevent any escape attempts. Then they made them run down Dworska Street across the Bobric River bridge out of town. ...

The SS troops took the Jews past the Bobrow lumberyard to an old Jewish cemetery. In the cemetery, the soldiers lined them up in groups of ten. ...

The Jews, in their lines of ten, were marched to a row of tombstones ... There they were made to kneel down with their backs towards the soldiers. The SS shot them with their machine guns.<sup>226</sup>

In Dąbrowica, Volhynia, the mayor and a Catholic priest, probably Rev. Wiktor Zabiegło, the local pastor, appealed to the German authorities to release the Jews that they seized on entering the town in June 1941. Manya Auster Feldman recalled:

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<sup>226</sup> Abraham Bobrow and Julia Bobrow, as told to Stephen Edward Paper, *Voices from the Forest: The True Story of Abram and Julia Bobrow* ([Bloomington, Indiana]: 1st Books, 2004), 30–33.

They [the Germans] took, they took 200 Jews—males, middle-aged, not young ones. And they brought them into the center of the city. The cities had always a square where the marketplace was. They brought them and they sat on the ground and they had their machine guns pointed at them, ready to shoot. ... So the women whose husbands were caught started running and to the priest, to the mayor of the city who was appalled. ... There was a Polish priest and the ministers of the Ukraine churches. And they started begging them, “Do something for us.” So the Germans did it as a matter of fact, as a preventive to show that they will not tolerate anything that will be done against them. So they first grabbed the Jews. And then they said that this happens to be a communistic town, these are all communists and they’re going to get rid of them, of this group. So my mother and I and the women started running. And the priest and the mayor came to the Germans and said, “Yes, there were communists, but they all escaped into Russia, so these are all good Jews.” So towards the evening they released all of them except they held twenty-two. They sort of picked at random twenty-two people. And the rest of them they sent home. And the twenty-two people they kept as hostages in case during the next few days if something will happen to a German soldier, this is what they’ll do, they’ll kill them. ... And after a day, they took them out into the marketplace and we heard that they are digging like a grave. So everybody was sure that this is what they are going to do, they are going to kill the Jews and that’s where they’ll bury them. But a different thing happened. ... And they released the twenty-two Jews.<sup>227</sup>

Rev. Kazimierz Baniewicz, pastor of Hoduciszki, located between Postawy and Święciany, northeast of Wilno, tried repeatedly to intervene on behalf of Jews with the local Lithuanian authorities. His best efforts were frustrated. Hoduciszki was a town of some 2,000 populated mostly by Jews and Lithuanians, with a small Polish minority.

[End of June 1941]: Most of the peasants who did the looting were Lithuanians from the surrounding Lithuanian villages. The Polish priest reproached the peasants, trying to prevent them from stealing the Jew’s possessions [who had escape to hide in the countryside]. However, he was unsuccessful.<sup>228</sup>

On Friday, September 26, 1941 ... the Jews in Adutiskis [Adutiškis, i.e., Hoduciszki] noticed that the police and partisans were beginning to assemble in groups. They quickly mobilized the Lithuanian youth in town. During the day on Friday a delegation consisting of Moyshe Lev the slaughterer, Elye Valotzky and the eyewitness Mikhoel Potashnik went to the Polish priest in town to ask him to find out what was going to happen to the Jews.

<sup>227</sup> Testimony of Manya Auster Feldman, August 11, 1988, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/feldman/>.

<sup>228</sup> Testimony of Mikhoel (Michael) Potashnik, in David Solly Sandler, comp., *The Lithuanian Slaughter of Its Jews: The Testimonies from 121 Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust in Lithuania, recorded by Leyb Koniuchowsky, in Displaced Persons’ Camps (1946–48)* (N.p.: n.p., 2020), 402.

The priest was a good man. He went to the offices of the police and partisans. When he returned he calmed the Jews, telling them that nothing was going to happen to them. The delegation told the Jews in the ghetto about this answer.<sup>229</sup>

That Saturday, September 27, 1941, at 10 a.m. all the Jews were driven out of the ghetto into the marketplace; they were allowed to bring along small packages. Those who didn't leave their houses quickly enough were brutally beaten by the murderers. Five families of 'useful Jews' were left behind. ...

At 11 a.m. that same Saturday, the Jews were lined up and taken away from the marketplace in the direction of Švenčionys [Święciany], herded along by police, partisans and civilian Lithuanians from the town and countryside. The sick, the elderly and the weak were taken on wagons ...

Five women were hidden in the barn of the Polish priest. On the Saturday morning before the Jews were taken away, they left the barn and tried to go to Postawy. The assistant mayor's son and commandant of the partisans in town, Pijus Rakovsky [Rakovskis], spotted them and shot them behind the barn. He buried them there ... That Saturday morning the Polish priest went to the Lithuanians to beg them to let him take care of 20 children. The murderers refused.

All the Jews from the towns of Old Švenčionys district were assembled in Poligon [i.e., former Polish army barracks] near Švenčionėliai [Švenčionėliai or Nowe Święciany] and were kept there for 12 days under terrible conditions. On Wednesday October 8, 1941, the shootings began. In the course of three days about 8,000 Jews were shot. Their corpses were thrown into a long mass grave in a sandy forest about three kilometers from Švenčionėliai.<sup>230</sup>

Another Jewish testimony bears witness to the kindness of Rev. Baniewicz of Hoduciszki.

We arrived at Itzhak Potashnik's home to a warm welcome. We stayed with him for 3 weeks. Everyday the men went to Yozek Kracovski's [Józef Grachowski] warehouse, a good Christian who gave them food and promised to help us in whatever manner he was able. If there wasn't any work to be done, he told the men to pretend they were working by bringing the same bundles of flax in and out the warehouse.

The priest Bunevitch [Kazimierz Baniewicz] also helped the Jewish folk. ...

We lived in this ghetto for several weeks, and on a Thursday before its liquidation, a Christian friend of ours came to us to let us in on a secret: all the Jews were going to be killed in a few days. He says: escape as soon as possible! That is how it happened! Friday in the morning we snuck out of the ghetto and ran with Grachovski [sic] to Svir [Świr]. During the day my husband Eliahu saw the roundup of the Jews from Stayatishok [Stojaciszki]. His heart told him that the ghetto would be the worst place to remain. He went to the priest to plead with him to help us.

<sup>229</sup> Testimony of Mikhoel (Michael) Potashnik, in Sandler, *The Lithuanian Slaughter of Its Jews*, 405.

<sup>230</sup> Testimony of Michael Potashnik, YVA, file O.71/27 (Item 3552432), cited in David Bankier, *Expulsion and Extermination: Holocaust Testimonials from Provincial Lithuania* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011), 100–1.

The priest, like I said, was friendly toward the Jews. He asked that my husband remain in his home, while he went to get news from the streets and about the activities in the ghetto. He came back quickly and confirmed: do not return to the ghetto. He brought him to Gravoski [sic] where we found the entire Smuckler family (that worked in the mill), where they were awaiting Gravoski's return from Svir. When he returned in the evening, Gravoski told us all was quiet in Svir. He asked that we leave immediately, not even to spend the night.<sup>231</sup>

An unidentified priest, probably Rev. Bolesław Łozowski, the local pastor, is credited with saving a Jewish family when the Germans were rounding up the Jews of Mołodeczno for execution in October 1941. Chana Szafran (née Pozner), her sister Luba and her father, Mordechai, who were outside the town at the time, were arrested by the local police on their return but released thanks to the intervention of a local priest who knew Mordechai Pozner. From there they reached the ghetto in Wilejka, where they remained until April 1943. Szafran describes the circumstances of her rescue:

On Saturday, the 25th of October 1941, very early in the morning, our Jewish neighbor came in panic to the house and said that, once again, the Germans had surrounded the town. She suggested to my mother that we should all flee together. My mother said that first my little sister Liuba, who was eleven years old and I, should run to our father and tell him to hide. She assumed that just as before, the Nazis were only looking for men. So both of us ran as fast as we could and told Father about what had occurred in town. I never saw my mother again. Later on, when I was in the police station, I found out from that neighbor that Mother was killed while she tried to escape from the house. The Germans had shot at her as she tried to flee. ...

All the Jews who were found that day were collected and put in the local police building. We met about fifty men, women, and children. Amongst them was also our neighbor—Paula Drutz. She was the one to tell me about the fate of my mother. While we waited in the police station, my father saw an army buddy of his who was now one of the policemen. He was sitting there nonchalantly playing his guitar. My father [Mordechai Pozner] begged him as a man who was to be shortly executed, to give [a] note to the local priest. At first, he ignored Father's request, but when my father pleaded, he agreed to bring the note to the priest. At midnight, the priest arrived with two policemen to the station. They took my father to one of the private rooms, and, after some time, he was returned. He explained to us the plan: one of the policemen would soon come, and take him to the bathroom. After some time, my sister Liuba and I should ask also to go to the bathroom. We would all then escape. While we were waiting for my father to go, they would call Jews one by one and then the Jews would return, beaten-up and confused. The girls were returned with torn clothes and looks of horror in their faces; it wasn't difficult to guess what had been done to them.

<sup>231</sup> Nekhe Volotzki, "Haydutzishok During These Terrible Days," in Kanc, *Svinzian Region*, cols. 1606–7. See also Sandler, *The Lithuanian Slaughter of Its Jews*, 406.

In Molodecno [Mołodeczno], there was at that time a large POW camp that contained Soviet prisoners. Because of this camp, the entire town was lit up by huge projectors to prevent the escape of POWs. When the policemen who escorted us took us outside of the police station, he yelled to us, “Run very quickly, kikes! If you don’t run, I’ll shoot you!” We ran as fast as we could and hid in the rubble of homes that stood on either side of the street. This was during a curfew hour when nobody was allowed to walk about in town, so we had to wait until morning in order to leave our hiding place. We then walked to the edge of the street—the place where we had originally decided to reunite with Father.

Like this, because of my father’s quick thinking, we were saved from the fate that the rest of the Jews in the police building encountered. The reason why this priest cared so much for my father was that my father, before the war, was a political representative of the community and knew the priest well. When the Soviets had invaded the area in September of 1939, they had arrested the old priest, saying that he was engaged in anti-Communist propaganda. Father had collected signatures from the local population and had collected testimony that this priest was only involved in religious matters, and, after a short time, the Soviets listened to the pleas of the town residents and released the priest. At the time when our life was in danger, he saved my father as well as the two of us.<sup>232</sup>

Jews fleeing from the Germans were known to turn to the Catholic clergy for succour. In the small town of Porozowo (Porozów), near Wołkowysk, more than a score were sheltered by a priest, probably Rev. Michał Twarowski, the parish vicar. The priest also managed to arrange travel permits for the refugees, who he claimed were Polish workers, thus enabling them to return to Białystok. The rescue would not have been without the permission and support of the local pastor, Rev. Mieczysław Małynicz-Malicki.

The Germans entered Parasowo [Porozowo] only in the evening [of June 24, 1941]. Immediately they ordered all the men from the town to assemble in the main square. There they separated the Jews from the Catholics. The Jews were lined up in rows and counted, and every tenth one was told to leave the ranks and line up on one side. About twenty men were assembled in this way. The Germans immediately put them against a wall and shot them. My friend and I were in the square standing among the Jews, we were counted but were fortunate not to have been among the ten and thanks to that we remained alive. Then all of the men, both Jews and non-Jews, were locked up in the church. It was very tight there, and there was simply no air to breathe. We were kept in the church the entire day, and then released. The inhabitants of the town returned to their homes. We and other Jews, refugees from Białystok and other localities, about 24 persons all together, went to search out local Jews, but they did not allow us into their homes for fear of the Germans. We therefore went to the priest of Parasowo—Grabowski [Michał Twarowski], who took us in and received us very cordially. There were already about 25 Poles, who worked in

<sup>232</sup> Moshe Kalchheim, *Be-komah zakufah, 1939–1945: Perakim be-toldot ha-lehimah ha-parizanit be-ya’arot Narots’* (Tel Aviv: Irgun ha-patizanim, lohame ha-mahtarot u-morder ha-geta’ot be-Yi’sra’el, 1991), translated as “At the Onset of the War in Molodecno,” Internet: [http://www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/maladzyechna/mal\\_pages/m\\_stories\\_onset.html](http://www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/maladzyechna/mal_pages/m_stories_onset.html).

the airfields, in his home. A group of Germans came to Grabowski and wanted to take us away, but the priest rescued us. He told them that we were workers who worked in the airfields and the Germans left us alone. Rev. Grabowski kept us at his house for all of seven days. He gave us food and drink free of charge. He constantly excused himself that he did not receive us the way he should ... He then obtained from the Wehrmacht [military authorities] a certificate allowing us to return to Białystok without obstacles. We returned to Białystok as a group of 24 persons on the first or second of July.<sup>233</sup>

In the interwar years, Alexander Bronowski, a lawyer, was engaged by Bishop Marian Leon Fulman to represent the diocese of Lublin in legal matters despite protests in the nationalist press. After the war broke out, Bronowski settled in Świsłocz, east of Białystok, in the Soviet occupation zone, where he continued to work as a lawyer. In his memoir, Bronowski describes his experiences there after the German entry in June 1941, and the assistance he received from several Poles, among them a priest, Rev. Albin Horba, the pastor of Świsłocz. Dr. Całko Majzel and his wife were also given shelter by Rev. Horba at the time. Bronowski wrote:

At court I appeared in show trials, political trials, criminal cases and the like. When the accused were Poles, the local priest and the pharmacist (a Pole) frequently turned to me to defend them. ...

My work at Swislocz [Świsłocz] was satisfying. I had social connections with both Jews and Poles. I lived comfortably. This situation prevailed until the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. It took everyone in Swislocz by surprise. The evacuation of the court and other Soviet offices to the east was hurriedly organized. The judge suggested that I leave Swislocz with the court. I declined, saying that my aim was to contact my family who were in the ghetto in Lublin; the judge understood.

On the fourth day of the war, June 26, 1941, Swislocz fell to the Germans, who began executing communists and rounding up Jews for heavy forced labor, looting their property. As I was known in the town not only as a Jewish lawyer but also as a lecturer who spoke out against the Nazi crimes, I realized that I had to find a hiding place. I left my apartment. First I went to my friend the pharmacist, and he, after hiding me for several days in his pharmacy, took me to the priest's apartment.

A week after the capture of Swislocz a new commander arrived and the persecution of the Jews intensified. I found out that I was being sought as an enemy of the Nazis and as a Jew. I therefore decided to escape to Białystok [Białystok], where some tens of thousands of Jews lived. Moreover, this move would bring me closer to Lublin. The pharmacist and the priest agreed with my decision.

To facilitate my flight from Swislocz, they contacted a certain Polish woman, the directress of an orphanage situated on the main road to Białystok, and asked her to allow me to stay there. She agreed without a moment's hesitation. It emerged that I had once

<sup>233</sup> Account of Kalman Barakin in Grynberg and Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945*, 386.

defended her against a groundless charge of maltreatment of Soviet orphans. After sleeping one night at the orphanage I departed unseen at dawn, supplied with bread, which was worth its weight in gold. The directress knew that I was a Jew and that I was escaping from Swislocz. I had gone no more than thirty meters when I heard her calling out to me to stop. She ran towards me, took the chain with the cross hanging on it from her neck, and fastened it on mine. I did not remove that cross throughout the journey to Bialystok. I was surprised and moved by her concern to protect me, and could find no words to thank her.

The distance to Bialystok was about eighty kilometers. ... Like me, there were other Jews from small towns walking to the large Jewish center at Bialystok.

When I left Grodek [Gródek] a Jewish lad of about fourteen fell into step with me. He too was making for Bialystok. A few dozen meters behind us were four Jews. Four kilometers outside Grodek I saw a German truck approaching, and when it reached us three German soldiers armed with rifles sprang out. They come up to me. "Jude?" they asked. I sensed danger and grew tense. Then one of them saw the cross around my neck. "Los," he muttered. They left. A few minutes later I heard firing. The Germans had shot the Jews walking behind us.

I was shocked. Despite my blistered feet I continued walking with the boy and even accelerated my pace. By evening we reached Bialystok. I parted company with the lad ...

I could not stop thinking about the Polish woman who had saved my life and the boy's. I do not recall her name, nor do I know her whereabouts. Swislocz is now part of the Soviet Union. I have searched for her address, but to no avail.

But I do know that when she ran towards me and placed the cross on my neck she did so for humanitarian reasons: to save a human life. In my heart I retain a deep sense of gratitude to her, and to the priest and the pharmacist. I learnt subsequently that the priest had died and the pharmacist had left Swislocz.<sup>234</sup>

Rev. Horba remained in Świsłocz until May 1942, when he was transferred to the nearby parish of Międzyrzec Podlaski. He continued to help Jews by providing them with false baptismal and birth certificates. After the war, Rev. Horba was arrested by the Soviet secret police and imprisoned until April 1948. He died in Poland in 1971.<sup>235</sup>

<sup>234</sup> Alexander Bronowski, *They Were Few* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 7–9. Rev. Albin Horba was on good terms with the local Jews. In his memoir, he does not confirm Bronowski's story about turning to Bronowski to defend Poles before Soviet courts. Rev. Horba states he did not know Bronowski personally when he came seeking shelter in the company of Dr. Całko Majzel, a local Jewish doctor, and his wife. They were hidden in a cellar near the rectory. See Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 209.

<sup>235</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 966; Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 45–46; Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 654, based on Nikolai Bykhovtsev, *Nemetskaia okkupatsiia Volkovyshchiny 1941–1944* (Minsk: Smeltak, 2015), 207; Tadeusz Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 2nd rev. ed. (Białystok: Buk, 2020), 185; Edmund S. Iarmusik, *Kato-licheskiei kostel v Belorussii v gody vtoroi mirovoi voiny (1939-1945): Monografiia* (Grodno:



**D**r. Kac (Edelist) of Łódź had taken refuge from the Germans in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland. Fleeing Lithuanian collaborators in the summer of 1941, he made his way back from a camp near Wilno to Warsaw. In January 1942, he recorded his testimony, which attests to extensive help received from Poles, among them a priest, along the way.

Indeed, [Polish] peasants very often helped us at no cost. We entered their cottages, where they frequently refused to take anything from us when they offered us milk, bread, etc. Apart from that, they showed us compassion and were indignant at everything that was happening to the Jews. ...

It is important to stress that I encountered exceptionally sincere warm-heartedness from Catholic peasants and Polish landlords. I was comforted and helped with money, food, and a place to sleep. My wound was dressed in manor houses. ...

The area I now entered had Polish police who tended to accommodate the Jews. In one of the Belorussian towns [i.e., in a Polish-speaking area incorporated into the so-called Ostland, and earlier Soviet Belorussia], not far from the Lithuanian border, through the efforts of the mayor, priest and head of the Jewish Council, I was placed in the hospital and provided with papers [i.e., an identity document] and money for my further journey.<sup>236</sup>

Endeavouring to flee the Germans, in June 1941, three Jewish girls who were making their way back to Białystok from Lida knocked on the door of a convent of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. They were given lodging for the night, as well as food for their journey. The location of the convent is not stated.<sup>237</sup>

**N**isia Gotthelf (later Janowski, b. 1922), a native of Łódź, fled to Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland after the Germans took over the western half of Poland in September 1939. She eventually took up residence in Nowogródek. When the Germans invaded this part of Poland in June 1941, Nisia left Nowogródek and made her way westward. She decided to pose as a Christian, adopting the name Stefania Wodzińska, after a tenant who had lived in the Gotthelf home in Łódź. However, she needed identity documents for the ruse to succeed. She approached an unidentified priest near Grodno, requesting identity documents with a story that the priest probably saw through. He could have easily tested the

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Grodnenskii Gosudarsvennyi Universitet imeni Ianki Kupaly, 2002), 106, translated as Edmund Jarmusik, *Kościół Katolicki na Białorusi 1939–1991: Od zniszczenia do odrodzenia* (Kraków: Avalon T. Jankowski, 2013).

<sup>236</sup> Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 3: *Relacje z Kresów* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2000), 471–74. See also Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto*, vol. 2: *Accounts from the Borderlands, 1939–1941* (Warsaw: The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, 2018), 361.

<sup>237</sup> Felicja Nowak, *My Star: Memoirs of a Holocaust Survivor* (Toronto: Polish Canadian Publishing Fund, 1996), 55, translated from the Polish *Moja gwiazda* (Białystok: Versus, 1991).

petitioner on Catholic beliefs and customs had he wanted to. Niusia appears to be unaware that the church she claimed to have been baptized in, named after St. Stanislaus Kostka, was actually the cathedral of Łódź.

We knocked at the door of a presbytery and an old priest asked us to enter. His housekeeper prepared lots of hot water for us to scrub our dirt off and lots of good food. The kind priest was moved by my experiences and bad luck stories and put a medallion of the Holy Virgin around my neck.

Timidly I asked him to issue me with a temporary birth certificate and a certificate of baptism. I told him I had been born in Lodz [Łódź] and baptized in the Church of St. Stanislaus Kostek [Kostka]. The real Stefa was very proud of this fact and talked about it a lot. The story I told the priest was quite plausible and sounded credible. With my mother we had come to visit my brother who was an officer in the Polish Army. War had caught us far away from our home. Mother was sent to Siberia and I had been left behind to attend school in Baranowicz [Baranowicze].

I had tried to make my way back home but the Russians had caught me and put me in prison and taken all of my papers. Without another word the kind priest issued me with a new certificate of baptism, a new name and family name, place and date of baptism, signed it and sealed it with the stamp of his church. The scrap of paper was my guarantee of safety and gave me my peace of mind.<sup>238</sup>

Niusia survived the war in the villages of Studzieniczna and Lipowiec, near Augustów, by posing as a Pole with the complicity of Poles who were aware or suspected that she was Jewish: Zofia Horbaczewska, Dr. Paweł and Helena Kunda, and Bolesław Dawidowicz, his wife and their daughter, Antonina. Niusia was betrayed by a Jewish woman arrested in Augustów on suspicion of theft, but she managed to extricate herself.

The Jews in Eastern Poland were enclosed in ghettos and living under constant terror. Enormous ransoms (called “contributions”) were extorted by the Germans. The testimony of Moshe Smolar attests to how a Catholic priest and his flock responded to that tragedy in the town of Brześć on the River Bug.

The community was pressured into making a “contribution” to the Germans of two million marks (or four million rubles), and the members of the Judenrat were arrested as hostages to ensure that the sum was paid. One of the Catholic priests organized help for the Jews and collected money for them to help pay the huge sum.<sup>239</sup>

<sup>238</sup> Niusia Janowski, *A Life Apart* (Elsternwick, Victoria, Australia: Jewish Holocaust Centre Melbourne, 1993), 11–12. See also the testimony of Nusia Janowski, SFV, Interview code 26675.

<sup>239</sup> Cited in Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 154.

In Braśław, the Germans demanded a contribution in gold from the ghetto. Unable to meet this demand, the Jews turned to Rev. Mieczysław Akrejć, the dean and local pastor. Rev. Akrejć generously contributed 4,000 gold rubles. Nonetheless, a few days later, the Germans liquidated the ghetto.<sup>240</sup> (Additional information about Rev. Akrejć's rescue efforts can be found later on.) Sources attesting to the assistance of the Catholic clergy in meeting contributions imposed on the Jews of Żółkiew and Słonim are referenced elsewhere.

In Włodzimierzec, Volhynia, "the priest Dominik Wawrzynowicz volunteered to sell church treasures to help the local Judenrat to pay a ransom imposed by the Germans. He also preached the duty to help the Jews."<sup>241</sup>

When Rabbi Isaac Yaakov Kalenkovich and other Jews were arrested in Drohiczyn Poleski, in Polesie (Polesia), for failing to provide the Germans with the contribution imposed on the Jewish community, Jews turned to the local priest for assistance.

The Germans imposed a second contribution on the town. However, since there was no more money or gold, the murderers took 35 Jews and the rabbi of the town as hostages. If we didn't give them the demanded sum of money, they would kill the rabbi and the 35 Jews. The mayor [a Pole by the name of Czapliński] of Drohitchin [Drohiczyn] interceded on behalf of the rabbi and the Jews, but it did no good. The wives of the arrested men and rabbi went to beg the priest Palevski [actually, Rev. Antoni Chmielewski, the local pastor] to save their husbands' lives. The priest Palevski quickly went to the SS commander and convinced him to release the rabbi and the 30 hostages. Five Jews were kept as hostages until the contribution was paid.<sup>242</sup>

Priests also came to the assistance of individuals who were required by the Germans to pay large ransoms for the safety of family members. A resident of Tomaszów Lubelski recalled how her mother turned to a Polish priest, who gave her a large sum of money in exchange for a gold chain, thereby allowing her grateful mother to pay the "indemnification" demanded by the Germans.

<sup>240</sup> Testimony of Mojżesz Bielak, JHI, record group 301, no. 3140, reproduced in Jerzy Diatłowski, ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2009), 290–93, at pp. 291–92.

<sup>241</sup> Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941–1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Federation of Volhynian Jews, 1990), 249.

<sup>242</sup> Testimony of Chaya Reider in Dov B. Warshawsky, *Drohiczyn: Five Hundred Years of Jewish Life*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Drohichyn/Drogichin.html>, translation of *Drohitchin: Finf hundert yor yidish lebn* (Chicago: Book Committee Drohichyn, 1958), 318–19.

I, and several other Tomaszow [Tomaszów] families set out to return to Tomaszow [from the Soviet occupation zone]. Arriving to my parents, they fell upon me, and wept sympathetically. ...

Immediately on the morrow, my parents receive a notice that because their daughter had returned from Russia, my parents are required to pay a large sum of money on my behalf as indemnification money. A keening went up in our house, regarding how it would be possible to get such a large sum of money, however there was no answer to this. In the morning, at eight o'clock, the sum must be presented. My mother took a gold chain that we still had in our possession, and went off to sell it to the Polish priest. She told the priest everything, and the priest took the chain, paid her, and told her, "Go save your child." My mother thanked him with a full heart, and went away. On the following morning, she paid the sum on my behalf. In this manner, all of the families that returned from Rawa [Rawa Ruska] were required to pay extraordinarily large sums as an indemnification.<sup>243</sup>

Jacob Gerstenfeld-Maltiel described conditions in Lwów, including displays of Polish solidarity with the Jews, in the early months of the German occupation.

The problem of telling Jews from Poles was solved by introducing the requirement for Jews and the people of Jewish descent down to the third generation to wear on the right arm a white armband with a Star of David. ... In the first days after the order was published [July 15, 1941] I saw a priest with a Star of David armband. But after some days, this sort of thing disappeared and only the accursed wore the armbands. The Polish population during the first period of this harassment displayed a certain measure of sympathy for the Jews ...

... the Germans demanded a "contribution" from the Jewish population totalling 20 million rubles to be paid in ten days. Of course the Germans threatened undefined consequences if the entire sum was not delivered in cash on time.

The Judenrat published an appeal to the Jewish population and asked for their cooperation. ...

... I knew personally some members of the Polish intelligentsia, who paid appreciable sums to help with the contribution. Although the sums made little difference, the gesture of good will showed a spirit that counted and had a strong moral meaning. ... These signs of sympathy from Polish society incited the Jews to even greater generosity than they had shown till then.<sup>244</sup>

A number of Jewish testimonies confirm that Poles contributed considerable sums to help pay the ransoms imposed by the Germans on the Jews of Lwów, Wilno, Chełm, Włocławek, Rzeszów, and other towns.<sup>245</sup>

<sup>243</sup> Rachel Schwartzbaum (Klarman), "During the Years of Horror," in Joseph M. Moskop, ed., *Tomaszow-Lubelski Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2008), 406.

<sup>244</sup> Jacob Gerstenfeld-Maltiel, *My Private War: One Man's Struggle to Survive the Soviets and the Nazis* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), 56–57, 62–63.

<sup>245</sup> Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 471, 492 (Wilno), 554, 724 (Lwów); Filip Friedman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich* (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce,

When the Germans created a ghetto in Lwów in November 1941, some Jews went into hiding to avoid being rounded up. A six-year-old Jewish girl recalled hiding temporarily in a church steeple with a group of Jews.<sup>246</sup>

Friends and family told us that we needed to go into hiding. My aunt and uncle heard about a church steeple where people were hiding during the roundups. We went there in the evening. Mom went up first and grabbed me because I couldn't climb up. Her nail scratched my cheek, and it started to bleed. The steeple was not large, but there were at least 20 or so people already hiding there, including my aunt and two cousins. It was very cold, but we were not allowed to speak or cry, and everyone was shushing one another as we fell asleep to the sound of church bells and gunshots outside.<sup>247</sup>

When the Germans occupied Słonim in June 1941, they took the highly unusual step of appointing Rev. Kazimierz Grochowski, the acting pastor of St. Andrew's church, the mayor of the city. Being a native of the Poznań region, he spoke flawless German. He remained in that position for only a few months. During that time, he intervened on behalf of the Jews. He also provided Jews with false identity documents. His benevolence was noted by a Jew who briefly stayed in Słonim.

From Jeziernica, I was off to Slonim [Słonim]. I found a half-demolished city. Half of it had been consumed in flames during the battles. When the Germans took over, they shot a small number of Jews. I came upon a long line of Jews, and was told that they were standing on [sic] line to receive work from the Germans at various labor sites. The Germans paid them with bread. The mood in the city was good. The local priest had been appointed as mayor, and he had prevailed upon the Germans not to treat the Jews as badly and as brutally as

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1945), 8 (Lwów); Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 275 (when the Germans imposed a heavy levy on the Jewish community in Chełm, in late 1939, the local Polish intelligentsia contributed food and money); Siek, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 9, 121 (Włocławek); Daniel Blatman, *En direct du ghetto: La presse clandestine juive dans le ghetto de Varsovie (1940–1943)* (Paris: Cerf; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 470 (Poles contributed 100,000 złoty in Rzeszów); Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 314 (Wilno); Maciej Siekierski and Feliks Tych, eds., *Widziałem anioła śmierci: Losy deportowanych Żydów polskich w ZSRR w latach II wojny światowej: Świadectwa zebrane przez Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji Rządu Polskiego na Uchodźstwie w latach 1942–1943* (Warsaw: Rosner i Wspólnicy and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny; Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 2006), 372 (Liski), translated as *I Saw the Angel of Death: Experiences of Polish Jews Deported to the USSR during World War II* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2022).

<sup>246</sup> Celia Rapp Kener and her mother, Sonia Rapp, were sheltered on the farm of Maria and Tadeusz Eckstein and survived the war. See the testimony of Celia Kener, SFV, Interview code 42433.

<sup>247</sup> Celia Kener, "I Survived the Holocaust. But I Have Nightmares About Cats," *The New York Times*, January 24, 2020 and September 6, 2020.

in other cities. On the day of my departure from Slonim, July 12, 1941, they instituted the yellow badge for Jews.<sup>248</sup>

Rev. Grochowski was arrested by the Germans in January 1942 and accused of hiding Jews. Since no Jews were found in the rectory at that time, he was released. He was arrested again in March 1942, or possibly later that year, at which time a baptized Jewish woman was found in the rectory. He was executed soon after.<sup>249</sup>

<sup>248</sup> Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem*, 373.

<sup>249</sup> On Rev. Kazimierz Grochowski see Tadeusz Krahel, "W Generalnym Okręgu Białoruś (c.d.)," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 12 (December 1998); Tadeusz Krahel, "Ksiądz Kazimierz Grochowski," *W Służbie Miłosierdzia* [Białystok], no. 2 (February 2009); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 195; Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941-1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643-61, at pp. 654-55; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939-1945*, 174-75. See also the testimony of Salomon Szlakman in Grynberg and Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939-1945*, 522-25; Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 356.





## The Holocaust Intensifies: 1942–1945

Priests and nuns throughout Poland responded to the increasingly harsh conditions faced by Jews by giving various forms of assistance to Jews who fled from the ghettos. The most widespread way of extending help was the issuance by priests of birth and baptismal (*metryka urodzenia i chrztu*). Genuine certificates were based on actual entries recorded in the parish register. (In the interwar period, parishes functioned as civil registry offices. A small fee was usually charged to issue the certificate.) These identity documents are variously referred to in rescue accounts and the literature simply as baptismal certificates.

The safest birth and baptismal certificates were those of a deceased person whose death entry was removed from the parish register. Another document considered to be safe was a birth and baptismal certificate from a parish whose records had been destroyed during the war. These certificates were presented to the local authorities in order to obtain an identity card, known as a *Kennkarte*, bearing the person's photograph. All persons 18 years of age and older were required to possess a *Kennkarte*. Forged identity documents were also produced by the Polish underground, usually *pro bono*, and by independent manufacturers (both Polish and Jewish), who charged a premium for work that was often of poor quality.<sup>250</sup>

Rescuers faced many practical obstacles. The German authorities often requisitioned portions of convents and rectories for their own use. Given their prominence, especially in rural communities and small towns, priests were highly visible. Any activities they engaged in might readily come to the notice of others, including the German authorities, who often visited parish rectories. Convents likewise came under surveillance, as nuns were suspected of harbouring Jews and other fugitives. Orphanages suffered from food scarcity and convents had few sources of income.

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<sup>250</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 254.

Jewish children were welcomed, above all, in orphanages and residential schools under the care of nuns. With the right preparation, it was easier for them to blend in there provided they could pass as Catholic children. A successful rescue for an extended period of time was almost never the work of just one nun or priest acting alone. As we shall see, it usually entailed a chain or a network of collaborators.

Convents played an important role in the rescue of Jewish children. Jan Dobraczyński, a prewar member of the nationalist National Party (“Endek”), used his offices in the Department of Social Welfare of the Warsaw municipal corporation to place some 500 Jewish children in Catholic convents. This was a daunting task. Many of the children had Semitic features, spoke Polish poorly or with a Yiddish accent, and most of them had little if any knowledge of Catholic prayers and rituals; it would not have been easy for them to blend in. (Even when the children had learned Catholic rituals, there was a tendency to overdo them, e.g., by making the sign of the cross multiple times rather than just once before a meal.)

Dobraczyński belonged to a large network of persons dedicated to the rescue operation which involved Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews attached to the Delegates Office of the Polish government in exile. Prominent participants included Zofia Kossak-Szczucka and two nuns—Mother Matylda Getter, the provincial superior of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, and Sister Wanda Garczyńska, the superior of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Dobraczyński recalled those times in an interview published shortly before his death.

I was afraid to place [Jewish] children in just any institution; I relied only on convents. I was well known to all of the Sisters and they trusted me. I gathered the Sisters and told them: “Dear Sisters, we will be hiding Jewish children. If a child is sent with my signature, that will be an indication that the child is Jewish, and you will have to know how to act on this.” I also told them that we would not be sending more children to any institution than we agreed to ...

... our social workers searched for [Jewish] children. Sometimes they were found on the street, or in some primitive hiding place. Once we were informed that two boys were hidden in a cubbyhole in [the suburb of] Praga. One of them was running a high fever and it was imperative to move them. A nun took the sick boy on a streetcar and he started to scream out something in Yiddish. The driver was astute enough to sense the danger and yelled out: “This streetcar is going to the depot. Everyone out.” At the same time he signalled to the nun that she and the boy should remain.

Each of the children was taken for a few days to the home of a social worker. There they were taught their new names and prayers, and how to make the sign of the cross. The children were after all being taken to Catholic institutions and couldn’t differ outwardly from the Polish orphans residing there.

All but one of the children survived the war. (The one boy who didn't survive was killed by Ukrainians in Turkowice, where he was sheltered in a convent.) ... a few of the children remained Christians, but the rest reverted to the faith of their forefathers.<sup>251</sup>

The rescue efforts of the Catholic Church were not always welcomed by the Jews themselves. Some Jews claimed that conversion was the primary, or at least a very important, factor in the decision of the Catholic clergy to extend assistance to Jews. In fact, this was one of the reasons given by Warsaw's Jewish leaders for turning down an offer to place several hundred Jewish children in convents and monasteries,<sup>252</sup> even though a register would be kept to ensure the children's return after the war.

Emanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, acknowledges this offer of assistance and records, in the most unflattering terms, the motivation—all of it nefarious—attributed to the Catholic clergy by Jewish community leaders at the time: proselytism (“soul-snatching”), financial greed, and looking out for their own prestige. After meeting with vehement opposition from Orthodox and other Jewish groups, the project was shelved. Jewish parents were, however, given a free hand in placing their children privately in Catholic institutions, though many rabbis remained adamantly opposed to that idea too.<sup>253</sup>

Some of the discussion recorded by Ringelblum merits repeating:

I was present at a discussion of this question by several Jewish intellectuals. One of them categorically opposed the operation [of sending Jewish children to convents]. He argued that though it was agreed that [only] children between ten and fourteen years of age were to be put in convents (as desired by the Jewish negotiators), the children—though supposedly old enough to resist indoctrination, would fall under the priests' influence and would be converted sooner or later. The priests' promise not to convert the children would be of no avail; time and education would take their toll. He maintained that we must follow the

<sup>251</sup> Jan Dobraczyński, interviewed by Małgorzata Rutkowska, “Traktowałem to jako obowiązek chrześcijański i polski,” *Słowo-Dziennik Katolicki* [Warsaw], no. 67 (1993).

<sup>252</sup> It is not clear when exactly this took place, but it was likely in the summer of 1942, or possibly later that year. (In his diary, Ringelblum wrote on this matter on December 14, 1942.) Since no known church source mentions the proposal of saving children from the Warsaw ghetto, Kurek suggests that it may have been actually put forward, as other sources indicate, by Irena Sendler of the Social Welfare Department of the Warsaw Municipal Council. That Council worked closely with the Central Relief Council (RGO) in placing hundreds of Jewish children in religious institutions, primarily convents. See Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 229–30.

<sup>253</sup> Kurek discusses this matter extensively, and provides fulsome quotations from Ringelblum's writings, in her book, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 34–38. Rabbi David Kahane describes similar discussions that took place among rabbis in Lwów. Ibid., 216–17. See also Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), 336–38; Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, 150–51.

example of our fathers and accept martyrdom in His name. We have no right to give our blessing to the conversion of our children. Jewish society has no right to engage in such an enterprise. Let it be left to every individual, to decide and act on an individual basis.<sup>254</sup>

The discussion on the matter among social workers reached no agreed conclusions, no resolutions were accepted, and Jewish parents were left to decide for themselves. The project was not carried out because of a variety of difficulties, but mainly because the Polish clergy was not very much interested in the question of saving Jewish children.<sup>255</sup>

Although Ringelblum is anxious to shift the blame for the failure of this project to the Catholic clergy, it is not reasonable to believe that the Church authorities would have initiated the undertaking only to welcome its demise. In fact, many convents were already active in sheltering Jewish children, and the clergy's rescue activities increased with the liquidation of the ghettos.

Moreover, there was considerable reluctance on the part of many Jews to give their children over to Poles, especially the Catholic clergy, for safekeeping. One survivor records the following conversation:

"I gave my little son to a Polish family and I hope to God he'll survive," a young father said with relief. "Oh no," I heard Mr. Blum exclaim. "I'd never give my children to a Christian family. Who knows if my wife and I will survive to claim them after the war? And if not," he continued in a voice charged with emotion, "they'll grow up to be good Christians, God forbid. Oh no!" he repeated passionately. "It's better that they should die as Jews. Let them go together with their people; let us perish together. I couldn't entrust my children to the gentiles," he concluded with determination.<sup>256</sup>

Żegota activist Irena Sendler (also known as Sendlerowa in Polish, née Krzyżanowska) recalled that sometimes Jews asked her for "guarantees" that their children would survive the war. Sendler explained to them that she could not even assure the children's safe passage out of the ghetto. This too discouraged Jews from seeking placements for their children with Christians.<sup>257</sup>

As noted by Jadwiga Piotrowska, a Warsaw social welfare worker active in rescuing scores of Jewish children, the nuns were not sheltering Jewish children in order to convert them. Rather, they were at pains to ensure the seamless integration of Jewish children into orphanages where the appearance

<sup>254</sup> Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 336–37.

<sup>255</sup> Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, 151.

<sup>256</sup> Pearl Benisch, *To Vanquish the Dragon* (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1991), 131.

<sup>257</sup> *Żegota: Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland (1942–1945)*, Documentaries International Film & Video Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1998.

of religious assimilation as Polish Catholics was crucial not only for the success of the rescue effort but for their own survival.

The children who were being rescued not only had to have documents made for them, and an “Aryan past” created, but they needed another place to survive. It was also necessary to instil in them an awareness that they were not worse in any way, that they did not differ from their native Polish brothers, that they were also Poles. The Germans frequently visited the orphanages run by religious orders, checked the children’s documents and also their religious knowledge, ordering them to pray or recite the catechism. Any inaccuracy on the children’s part could have led to the deaths of many people, including the children. What is more, it could have endangered the entire rescue operation. ... Therefore it was out of necessity that the Jewish children were baptized and taught religion. The nightmarish memories of their past were carefully erased, so that they would not differ in any way from the Polish children. In truth this was no conversion, no augmenting of adherents of Catholicism, but only a fight for life, in which no error could be made.<sup>258</sup>

Nonetheless, some Holocaust scholars have imputed a vile, underlying nature to the rescue efforts. Jean-Charles Szurek has argued that what the nuns were actually doing was subjecting the children to “deculturation,” a form of violence. Viewed from this distorted angle, rescuers metamorphose into victimizers.<sup>259</sup> Unfortunately, the desperation for novelty and “cutting edge” writing among Holocaust academics far too often results in such perverse “insights.”

The matter of baptizing Jewish children has also sparked considerable controversy. Baptism was not a prerequisite for finding refuge in a convent. As historian Ewa Kurek points out, “[s]ome nuns did baptize the children, while others did not, and a majority of them accepted without question the false baptismal certificates presented to them.”<sup>260</sup> Similarly, as we shall see, not all priests were in favour of baptizing Jewish children, especially if their parents might still be alive.

While keeping young Jewish children in convents without their undergoing baptism raised no theological concern, that was not the case with older children who had to receive Communion in order to pass as Catholics and thus blend in with the other children. The sacrament of Holy Communion (Eucharist) is

<sup>258</sup> Ewa Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach: Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Lublin: Clio, 2001; Lublin: Gaudium, 2004), 209. This is part of an extensive interview with Jadwiga Piotrowska, at pp. 205–10.

<sup>259</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018), 598.

<sup>260</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 91. This is part of an extensive interview with Jadwiga Piotrowska. See Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 205–10.

reserved only for baptized Catholics, and allowing non-Catholics to receive Communion is a sacrilege. What to do in this case posed a real challenge and dilemma, something that is not fully appreciated by commentators who are not believing and practicing Catholics.

Yitzhak Zuckerman, a Jewish underground leader in Warsaw, takes a balanced approach to this matter.

If I gauge the phenomenon by one of the finest figures I knew, Irena Adamowicz, who helped Jews deliberately and consciously, as a devout Christian, who assisted as much as she could, I nevertheless cannot ignore the fact that she also saw another mission for herself: to convert Jews, since there is no greater commandment than to convert Jews to Christianity, accompanied by the faith that will save the world. I'm not saying she would have abandoned someone even if she hadn't kept her sights fixed on the Christian purpose; but let's look at this from the other side: for example, if a rabbi chanced to save a gentile. He wouldn't see anything bad if, at this opportunity, he began telling him about the religion of Moses and the various practices of Judaism. Is there anything wrong in that? Irena also filled such "missions." I know of at least four or five such cases.<sup>261</sup>

American sociologist Jan Tomasz Gross has referred to the practice of baptizing Jewish children without the consent of their parents as "ritual murder." "I have in mind the 'ritual murder' of Jewish children by Catholic clergy," he writes, "which took place, in a manner of speaking, every time a Jewish child was baptized without a specific request or authorization by his or her parents."<sup>262</sup>

This charge is eerily reminiscent of the obscene accusations levelled at Jan Dobraczyński and Jadwiga Piotrowska after the war, when they presented lists of rescued Jewish children to the Jewish Committee. They were accused of having condemned the children to damnation. When asked what she thought she had gained from those years, Piotrowska answered:

The awareness that I behaved in a decent manner and with dignity. And also, a deep wound in my heart which is there even today. ... When Poland was liberated in 1945 a Jewish Committee was established, and Janek Dobraczynski [Jan Dobraczyński] and I went over to it to give them the lists of the saved children. They were not even full lists but the best we were able to reconstruct. We did not count on any gratitude, but we did not even think that someone would accuse us. ...

During the conversation we were told that we had committed a crime by stealing hundreds of children from the Jewish community, baptizing them, and tearing them away from Jewish culture. We were also told that we were worse than the Germans. The Germans only took the body; we took the soul, condemning the children to damnation. Our arguments

<sup>261</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman "Antek," *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 493.

<sup>262</sup> Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006), 162 (footnote).

that we were fighting for their lives were put off right away: “It would have been better if those children had died...”

We left completely broken. ... Over forty years have passed, and I am still grappling with this in my conscience. Would it really have been better if we had sent those children to their deaths?<sup>263</sup>

Known as Koordynacja (Coordination) in Polish, the Jewish Committee was an organization that located Jewish children, usually without parents, who had been hidden by Christians, had survived with the partisans, or had returned to Poland after the war from the Soviet Union. The children were placed in Jewish children’s homes. The goal was to eventually transfer these children to Palestine; however, some of the children were sent to England and France.<sup>264</sup>

When representatives of the Jewish Committee went looking for Jewish children who had survived in convents and with Polish farmers, their most valuable leads and information came from the local Polish residents. Jewish children hidden in the countryside were remarkably easy to track down because their presence in a village was often an open secret.<sup>265</sup> Izajasz Druker, who was charged with the task of finding Jewish child survivors, stated:

When I began my work in the [Polish] army rabbinate in 1945, Jews were returning from all points and reporting that while visiting their family villages and towns they had heard of Jewish children who had been saved by peasants. During the war one could not talk about this, but after the war people talked about this openly. I then began an operation to find these children, and this became my main work during the years 1945–49.<sup>266</sup>

One of the oft-heard canards associated with the black legend of Poles in the Holocaust is that Polish rescuers were invariably ostracized by their own communities. On the contrary, villagers would often rally to support rescuers who struggled against the Jewish organizations that came to take away their adopted children after the war.<sup>267</sup>

It is noteworthy that kidnapping of children who had Polish Catholic fathers and Jewish mothers was not viewed as repugnant by the Jewish Committee at the time, nor has it been condemned since. As Izajasz Druker candidly admits:

Another one of my post-war duties was taking back women who during the wartime were compelled [?] to marry the men who saved them and with whom they had children. There

<sup>263</sup> Cited in Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 87.

<sup>264</sup> On the postwar reclaiming of Jewish children, see Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 111–21.

<sup>265</sup> See, e.g., Gafny, *Dividing Hearts*, 82–83, 88 (Giełczew, and a village near Góra Kalwaria, and another unidentified locality).

<sup>266</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 205.

<sup>267</sup> See, e.g., Gafny, *Dividing Hearts*, 228, 251, 254.



were several incidents where, without the knowledge of their husbands, I took the women and their children. This involved the issue of abduction and tricking the husbands, who later went mad, running about and searching for their wives and children.<sup>268</sup>

Presumably, this highhanded intervention was justified by the belief, grounded in the Jewish religion, that someone born to a Jewish mother is automatically a Jew. Was any consideration given to the Polish Catholic heritage of these children?

The matter of compensation has also generated controversy. While some rescuers demanded compensation for sheltering and caring for their charges (as was their right, provided it was not an exorbitant amount), based on his extensive experience during the years 1945 to 1949, Druker has stated authoritatively that this was not the case with children hidden in Catholic institutions. According to Druker, “the nuns did not take money for the children. I myself, of my own initiative, gave endowments to the convents. To sum up, in the convents the issue of money did not play a role.”<sup>269</sup>

In a few cases, convents did request some reimbursement from individuals for the cost of sheltering the Jewish children they reclaimed. As Donald Niewyk points out, these requests for payment “must be viewed compassionately in light of the desperate poverty of these institutions.”<sup>270</sup> Indeed, orphanages had to absorb many Polish children who had been left without parental care as a consequence of the war.

While it is true that some Poles asked for payment for the upkeep of their Jewish charges, this was to be expected given the risks involved, the material hardships faced by everyone under the German occupation, and the dire poverty that was widespread after the war. Many Jews who reclaimed their children recognized their obligation to compensate their children’s guardians and saviours.

Contributing towards the cost of one’s shelter and upkeep is not at all unusual. Jews were expected to pay for their rescue, shelter and upkeep throughout Europe, even in affluent countries. The highly praised Danish rescue effort was funded primarily by the Jews themselves.<sup>271</sup> Rescue services in Belgium

<sup>268</sup> Cited in Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 210–11. The reclaiming of Jewish children after the war is a topic that has generated a considerable amount of controversy. In some cases, it involved resorting to ruses, threats, legal procedures, and even kidnapping.

<sup>269</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 208.

<sup>270</sup> Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 151.

<sup>271</sup> During the initial stages of the rescue operation, only well-to-do Danish Jews could afford the short passage to Sweden. Private boatmen set their own price and the costs were prohibitive, ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 kroner per person (\$160–\$1600 U.S. in the currency of that period). Afterwards, when organized Danish rescue groups stepped in to coordinate the flight and to collect funds, the average price per person fell to 2,000 and then 500 kroner.

were bought at a premium by Jews who could afford to pay and by Jewish organizations.<sup>272</sup> As a recent study shows, unlike many Western Europeans, the overwhelming majority of Poles were simply in no position to offer long-term material assistance to anyone.<sup>273</sup>

The total cost of the rescue operation was about 12 million kroner, of which the Jews paid about 7 million kroner, including a 750,000 kroner loan which they had to repay after the war. See Mordecai Paldiel, *The Righteous Among the Nations* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem; New York: Collins, 2007), 105–9; Leni Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of a Democracy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 261–65, 269. As described in Sofie Lene Bak, *Nothing to Speak of: Wartime Experiences of the Danish Jews, 1943–1945* (Copenhagen: Danish Jewish Museum, 2011), “it can no longer be ignored that money was the hinge on which the whole escape apparatus turned.” Money was needed to organize the fishermen and their boats and ensure there were enough of them. The price was based on supply and demand. Some fishermen earned a fortune at the Jews’ expense. The average price was 1,000 kroner per person. There were some payments of 50,000 kroner, but an average of 10,000 kroner for a family of four people. The monthly wage for a skilled worker in 1943 was 414 kroner. In the case of Denmark, charging these exorbitant amounts has been justified by historians. We are told that the demands for payment must be viewed in relation to the danger of the crossing the Sound, the risk of fishermen losing their boats, which would bring a loss of earnings and the ability to support their families, as well as the possibility of arrest. In fact, the risk to the fishermen was very remote, if any, since the entire operation was orchestrated by the German authorities. There were no Germans policing the strait between Denmark and Sweden during the exodus of Jews in October 1943, and not a single boat with Jewish refugees was captured at sea by the Germans.

- <sup>272</sup> The Belgian *Comité de Défense des Juifs*, a Jewish self-help organization which represented a broad cross-range of the Jewish community, engaged in propaganda, finance, false papers, and material aid. It is believed to have helped 12,000 adults and 3,000 children, of whom 2,443 were supported financially, and it was indirectly instrumental in assisting perhaps another 15,000 people. The *Comité* relied on at least 138 separate, secular or religious institutions and at least 700 individual families to hide the children. Individual rescuers were paid generous monthly stipends of 300–500 Belgian francs per charge. These operations required huge amounts of resources and money, especially for monthly subventions to families and institutions for feeding and clothing the children. The *Comité* raised huge sums of money, most of it from individual Jews and Jewish groups. It began fundraising by appealing to wealthy Jews and by making richer Jews pay double for services in order to subsidize the rescue of poorer Jews. The *Comité* was able to secure a loan for the sum of 3 million Belgian francs from the Banque de Bruxelles, and monthly subventions from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, initially for 20,000 Swiss francs but raised in increments to 100,000 Swiss francs. This money was smuggled from Switzerland into Belgium. Additional funding came from other individuals and organizations. The *Comité*’s total expenditure during the occupation was estimated to have reached 48 million Belgian francs. See Bob Moore, “Integrating Self-Help into the History of Jewish Survival in Western Europe,” in Norman J. W. Goda, ed., *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 193–208, at pp. 196–97.
- <sup>273</sup> Grzegorz Berendt, “The Price of Life: Economic Determinants of Jews’ Existence on the “Aryan” Side,” in Sebastian Rejak and Elżbieta Frister, eds., *Inferno of Choices: Poles and the Holocaust*, 2nd ed. (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2012), 115–65.

Honest survivors, such as Yitzhak Zuckerman, are appreciative of any aid to Jews, even if it was paid for.

Anyone who fosters hatred for the Polish people is committing a sin! We must do the opposite. Against the background of anti-Semitism and general apathy, these people are glorious. There was great danger in helping us, mortal danger, not only for them but also for their families, sometimes for the entire courtyard they lived in. ... I repeat it today: to cause the death of one hundred Jews, all you needed was one Polish denouncer; to save one Jew, it sometimes took the help of ten decent Poles, the help of an entire Polish family; even if they did it for money. Some gave their apartment, and others made identity cards. Even passive help deserves appreciation. The baker who didn't denounce, for instance. It was a problem for a Polish family of four who suddenly had to start buying double quantities of rolls or meat. And what a bother it was to go far away to buy in order to support the family hiding with them. ... And I argue that it doesn't matter if they took money; life wasn't easy for Poles either; and there wasn't any way to make a living. There were widows and officials who earned their few Złotys by helping. And there were all kinds of people who helped.<sup>274</sup>

The need for help increased dramatically with the liquidation of the ghettos in the Generalgouvernement in 1942 and 1943. Rescue activities took various forms. The priests and nuns involved are often not identified or improperly identified in Jewish accounts. The vast majority of rescuers among the clergy, as well as among the Polish population, have not received official recognition from Yad Vashem.

On September 29, 1942, the eve of the liquidation of the ghetto in Żelechów, near Garwolin, the Jewish leaders demonstrated their faith and trust in the local Catholic priest.

The night before the Germans came, with rumors of the deportations sweeping the terrified ghetto, several Jewish leaders hurried across the dark market square and knocked on the door of the rectory across the street from the church. When the priest answered, they asked him to hold the documents of their community—the birth and death records and the most important papers—in safekeeping. They would be back to retrieve them when they could. The priest agreed, and he hid them in the rafters of the rectory for safekeeping. The next day, the deportations to Treblinka began.<sup>275</sup>

<sup>274</sup> Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, 461. Yitzhak Zuckerman openly acknowledges that he was accosted by as many Jewish blackmailers as Polish ones, and that it was a Jewish blackmailer who almost cost him his life. "And if I consider the treason carried out against me by individuals, there were just as many Jews among them as Poles. For example, when I was condemned to be executed on April 18, 1942, it was because of a Jewish denunciation." *Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>275</sup> Jonathan Kaufman, *A Hole in the Heart of the World: Being Jewish in Eastern Europe* (New York: Viking/Penguin, 1997), 102.

An unidentified priest from Garwolin, as well as other Poles, were entrusted with the possessions of six Jews, among them Meir Herc, who were hidden by a farmer named Markiewicz in the village of Jagodne. They provided the Jewish fugitives with money and valuables, as needed, for their upkeep. The entire group of six Jews survived this way for 23 months. Herc writes: “I only survived thanks to more than a dozen Poles who sold our goods and would send the money to me. They even knew the village in which I was hiding but did not betray me.”<sup>276</sup>

Rev. Stanisław Szczepański of Wilga near Garwolin, together with his sister, Marianna Różańska, sheltered two Jewish sisters, Luba and Lea Berliner, in the parish rectory for several months, and provided them with false documents that enabled the sisters to survive the war by passing as Poles. Though the efforts of Różańska were recognized by Yad Vashem, those of Rev. Szczepański were not.

One day in September 1941, German policemen surrounded a labor camp for Jews in the forest near Wilga, Garwolin county, Warsaw district, and prepared to make a Selektion among the inmates. Several prisoners, fearing for their fate, fled from the camp. They included the sisters Luba and Lea Berliner, who knocked on the door of the village priest [Rev. Stanisław Szczepański<sup>277</sup>] and asked for assistance. Marianna Rozanska [Różańska], the priest’s sister, quickly placed the two fugitives in hiding and when the Germans came to search for them she carefully shielded them. The Berliners stayed in their hideout until Rozanska equipped them with forged papers, with which they survived by enlisting for forced labor in Germany. After the war, one of the Berliner sisters stayed in Germany, and the other resettled in Israel.<sup>278</sup>

About a score of Jews, both children and adults, were taken in by the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa), commonly known as the Resurrectionist Sisters (*zmartwychwstanki*), at their convent and boarding school in the Warsaw suburb of Żoliborz. During the Great Deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942, Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, a young lawyer, together with her three-year-old daughter, Eva, managed to jump from the train headed to the Treblinka death camp. Injured as a result of her fall, Ruth was helped by railway guards, villagers, passers-by, passengers, and even a gang of robbers.

After making her way back to Warsaw with her daughter (whom she placed with a Polish family in Zakopane), Ruth was assisted by numerous Poles while

<sup>276</sup> Meir Herc, “My Experience in September,” in Moshe Zaltsman and Baruch Shein, eds., *Garwolin yisker-bukh* (Tel Aviv, New York, and Paris: Garwolin Societies, 1972), 187–93; Testimony of Jankiel Grynblat, July 28, 1950, JHI, record group 301, no. 4801.

<sup>277</sup> Michał Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993), 459–60.

<sup>278</sup> Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, vol. 5: *Poland*, Part 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 679. (Hereinafter cited as *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5.)

passing as a Christian. She describes her stay with the Resurrectionist Sisters in Żoliborz in the early part of 1943 in her memoir, *A Jump For Life*.

At my friend's house, the advocate Mrs. L., I met her husband's sister, Sister Maria-Janina, a nun of the Sisters of Resurrection Order from the Convent in Żoliborz [Żoliborz] Street [district]. Apart from her duties in the convent she directed a small carpenter's workshop in a shed near the cloister. Sister Maria-Janina, upon learning of my troubles, offered me accommodation on the workshop premises, which I gladly accepted. The room was small but comfortable. Although it was very cold and lacked conveniences, I felt at home there at last. I could spend my whole time there doing whatever I liked except for a few hours during which the room served as an office. Slowly I grew acquainted with my new surroundings. Next to my room, in the kitchen, there lived a maidservant who ran the house and cooked for the boys in the shop. She had an illegitimate son ... On top of this she was very inquisitive and talkative. It was apparent that the shed was inhabited by other people as well: I heard voices through the partitions although I never saw anybody. In great secrecy Sister Maria-Janina confided in me that in the next room there lived two Jewesses. The older one, who had typically Semitic features, never went out, not having been registered anywhere. The younger one on the contrary was out all day, and was even employed somewhere.

Sister Maria-Janina advised me not to communicate with them. Actually I preferred sitting alone in my little room, during the long evening hours, not making any new friends. I noticed the same trait in the behaviour of Jews in hiding: a tendency to keep away from other Jews. One could only tell the other sad stories, terrible experiences, the loss of nearest and dearest ones—there would be no end of unhappy memories. In order to live on we had somehow to forget the past and strive to become accustomed to the present.

Sister Maria-Janina, who was sixty years old, had an exceptionally beautiful character. The widow of an advocate, for the past fifteen years she had been devoting her strength and energy to the convent and public welfare. The toy workshops were designated for the poorest boys, the street urchins. The Sister admitted anybody who applied. ...

As I had no job at the time I tried to help out as much as I could. Whenever there was anything to sort out in the city I went readily. Often I was sent to cash money in some welfare institution, or to collect provisions for the boys. ...

One day in our house in Żoliborz a skirmish broke out which could have had very serious repercussions for all of us. The boys were coached in grammar school subjects by a teacher popularly nicknamed "Student." This "Student," as it turned out, was a Jew—a fact of which Sister Maria-Janina was well aware. Quite by accident a young man came to the workshop and recognized the teacher as a fellow student from university, a communist, with whom he had constantly quarrelled. These two had a very sharp altercation after which the visitor reviled the Sister for sheltering a Jew. It was quite obvious that the unexpected visitor was bound to turn the teacher over to the Gestapo, and the trembling inhabitants of our slum implored the teacher to leave, for a short time at least. He was courageous, however, and insisted on staying; he admitted that in any event he had nowhere else to go. Sister Maria-Janina's behaviour was remarkable. She did not give him notice nor did she tell him to quit. "God will help us," she said, and nobody denounced us. Yet I considered it unsafe to stay in the small house in Żoliborz and as soon as I had received another offer

of a job I took the opportunity and left the hospitable shelter, but I stayed in touch with Sister Maria-Janina until the end of the war.<sup>279</sup>

Sister Maria Janina, actually Janina Teofila Łabęcka,<sup>280</sup> signed a deposition attesting that Ruth was her relative. As Ruth points out,

A genuine Aryan relative was priceless to a Jew at that time. The best documents could prove worthless if a crafty Gestapo man asked: “It’s all right with your papers; they are in order and I believe you to be an Aryan. But give me some names of your friends or relatives who have known you for a long time.” Such a Jewish Gentile, a human creature with no relatives and acquaintances would then be lost.<sup>281</sup>

Ruth describes a familiar scene she witnessed after the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto in May 1943. She personally observed Jewish Gestapo agents—“catchers”—in the streets of Warsaw shouting Jewish slogans or singing Jewish songs in order to provoke a telltale reaction by fugitive Jews among the pedestrians.

The Jewish Gestapo men who remained alive were very dangerous. Their eyes were penetrating and Jews pointed out by them were lost without hope. A little car often seen passing slowly along Marszałkowska [Marszałkowska] Street, always keeping close to the pavement, became notorious. Once I was walking along this street when suddenly I heard the shout “*Szma Israel*” [*Shema Yisrael* – Hear, O Israel, the words of a section of the Torah that is the centrepiece of morning and evening prayers], followed by the sight of a man dragged struggling into the car. It transpired that the cry had come from the slowly driven vehicle, causing an elderly gentleman passing by to stop and look back instinctively. It was final proof for the manhunters. They must have been observing their prey for some time and, having reckoned that only a Jew would react to these words, had successfully used their subterfuge. A friend told me that the most unexpected shouts could be heard from this car.

Another time, while walking in the street, I heard behind me a low humming of the *Hatykva* [*Hatikva* – “The Hope,” a Zionist anthem]. For a moment I wanted to look back but I overcame this desire. The singing individual overtook me. He was a young fellow in a little round hat with a feather. This hat meant the same as a Gestapo uniform as we learned at the end of the war. Unfortunately under this hat was the cheeky, carefree face of one of my university colleagues—a Jew. The degradation of some people had plumbed such depths.<sup>282</sup>

<sup>279</sup> Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life: A Survivor's Journal from Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 129–30. See also pp. 163, 221–22.

<sup>280</sup> Joanna Pyszna, “Żoliborskie zmartwychwstanki w czasie powstania warszawskiego,” in Jan Walkusz and Marcin Nabożny, eds., *Kościół na drogach przeszłości* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2020), 307–28, at p. 311.

<sup>281</sup> Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life*, 134.

<sup>282</sup> Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life*, 165–66. While staying in Zakopane, Ruth encountered an outspoken anti-Semite who was lodging Jews. This episode is significant in that it shows that a dislike of Jews did not necessarily lead to either denunciation or refusal to extend help. “In all respects I was well off in Zakopane. My employer was a really good,



After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Ruth was evacuated to the Kraków area. There she encountered Mrs. Maria, who had also been evacuated from Warsaw and worked closely with a Polish organization that rescued Jewish children. Mrs. Maria had sheltered Ruth's daughter, Eva (b. 1940), and several other Jewish children. During the evacuation, Mrs. Maria had become separated from two of her Jewish charges. But they were found living in a small town under the guardianship of a local vicar and soon they were reunited with Mrs. Maria. Although she attended mass regularly in many churches during the occupation, Ruth encountered no hostility toward Jews among the Catholic clergy.

After escaping the Warsaw ghetto, Joanna Ritt (b. 1932) was placed by friends of her mother in the convent school of the Resurrectionist Sisters in the Warsaw suburb of Żoliborz.<sup>283</sup> Janina Gertner (b. 1936) was also accepted at that boarding school,<sup>284</sup> as was Krystyna Maślankiewicz (later Heldwein, b. 1934), who had dark features. Krystyna had a Catholic father and Jewish mother, who were married in an Evangelical church before the war; she too had been baptized in that church.<sup>285</sup> Additional examples of rescue at that institution follow.

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obliging woman while my landlady, Mrs. Zosia, one of the kindest and most pleasant creatures I have known. I took to her very much indeed. Her one grave fault was that she hated Jews and would talk about them at every opportunity. She would constantly mock Jewish expressions, ridiculing Jewish customs and practices. In my opinion she had an unhealthy obsession with the subject. Since I was unable to have a heart-to-heart talk with her, I could never understand where this ill-will towards the Jews came from, and what its real cause was. Being a kind-hearted woman she would always speak with sympathy about the deaths of her Jewish acquaintances. She was of the opinion that killing people was too brutal and cruel a means of getting rid of them, yet she was glad that even by these inhuman methods, the Jewish question in Poland was settled once and for all. To this day I cannot understand how a person who in all other respects was so aware, kind and gentle could be so wrong. Notwithstanding this she would never actually harm Jews. Several people from Warsaw settled in our villa and among them was the widow of a doctor with her daughter. Mrs. Zosia suspected that they were Jewish, which I did too, though I did not admit it. Landlady and tenant often quarrelled about the use of kitchen and money and Mrs. Zosia bitterly complained about 'the Jewesses'. When somebody suggested giving them notice, however, Mrs. Zosia to my surprise replied, 'God be with them. Be it as it may, I would not wish to make their lives more difficult.' And as a matter of fact she tried hard to make their lives easier." *Ibid.*, 220–21.

<sup>283</sup> Testimony of Joanna Ritt, July 30, 1959, JHI, record group 301, no. 5658. Joanna Ritt stayed at the convent from 1943 until March 1944. Afterwards, she stayed at various places.

<sup>284</sup> Testimony of Janina Gertner, SFV, Interview code 16728. Janina's mother was asked to take her child because of frequent German inspections.

<sup>285</sup> Testimony of Krystyna Heldwein, SFV, Interview code 7795; Testimony of Gustawa Malankiewicz, SFV, Interview code 7794. Krystyna was reunited with her parents just before the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944.



Irena Bernstein (Biernacka) was assisted by the Resurrectionist Sisters, at their shelter on Szczekocińska Street in Warsaw's Mokotów district, as well as by nuns from two other orders.

Two persons played a considerable role in delivering me and my parents from death and suffering. The first—Bożena Stanisławska, a classical philologist, my school-mate: at present Sister M. Piotra, a Franciscan Servant of the Cross in Łaski. Bożena met me in 1940 on Nowogródzka [Nowogrodzka] St—I was then lugging home bedspreads to be sold [in the market] on Kazimierz Square. As she told me after the war, she was immediately aware that I was hungry. Then she began to earnestly persuade me [to] come to Szczekocińska St to a shelter for academic students, victims of the war, conducted by Sister Emanuela Roman, a Resurrectionist—that food could be had there cheaply and even a place to live. I lived at the Resurrectionist shelter home to the middle of 1942; when too much interest began to be shown in me. I was ordered to move to the country. From then on, I began to go ‘as a tutor’ to the mansions of the country gentry, directed there by the nuns of the Immaculate Conception and the Nazareth Order.

The shelter on Szczekocińska St was an asylum for several other Jewesses and persons of Jewish extraction besides me. When my parents were “stolen” out of the ghetto, the Resurrectionist nuns procured a room for them nearby, on Ursynowska St, and provided them with dinners.<sup>286</sup>

The Resurrectionist Sisters found lodging for Irena's parents, passing as Biernacki, and provided them with meals. The aforementioned Bożena Stanisławska also placed Ludwika Łaska and a girl named Tempelhoff with the Resurrectionist Sisters, at their shelter on Szczekocińska Street. She was also instrumental in rescuing Helena Posner together with her mother and brother, as well as Iza Biezuńska (later Małowist).<sup>287</sup>

Sometimes Jews underwent conversion simply to increase their chances of survival. Chaja Sara Wronberg, also known as Zofia, a widow, and her daughter Halina Wronberg (later Masri, b. 1934), were saved by their Polish friends, Renia Boćkowska (later Czaczkes) and her husband, Stefan, who arranged for them to leave the Warsaw ghetto through the courthouse, near the ghetto wall, that served the entire city including the ghetto. They obtained false papers for Zofia and Halina and arranged for them to receive religious instruction at the parish church of the Holy Saviour (Najświętszego Zbawiciela) in Warsaw, where they were later baptized. Halina became Jolanta Chmielewska, and her mother went by the name of Jadwiga Stanisława Chmielewska. Halina and her mother stayed in an apartment rented by Renia.

<sup>286</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 306–7.

<sup>287</sup> Testimony of Sister Joanna (Halina) Lossow in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 197–98.

In the fall of 1941, Halina was enrolled at a Catholic convent boarding school on Mokotowska Street run by the Resurrectionist Sisters. The director of the school, Sister Maria Teresa Czerwińska, was nominated by Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute for recognition by Yad Vashem, but for some reason she was not awarded. The school was later relocated to the summer palace of Prince Franciszek Radziwiłł in Starawieś, near Węgrów, some 30 miles east of Warsaw. At the time, Zofia was living with another prewar friend, Rita Bauman Hasslauer, and her husband. With Rita's help, Zofia visited Halina several times at the convent. Both mother and daughter survived the war, and soon after they abandoned their Catholic faith.<sup>288</sup>

Mother bought honey-cakes in a honey shop on the corner of Marszałkowska Street and the Square of the Redeemer [Saviour], and often talked with Pani Renia who worked there. Her husband, Pan Stefan, was an engineer with the gas-works. One day Mother said to her, "I have a problem. I have to move into the ghetto." "Why?" Pani Renia asked. "Because I am a Jew." "Ah, don't go there." "But I have to." "No, you can't go there." ...

Pani Renia also put us in touch with a priest and we went to him at the Church of the Redeemer through the sacristy. He was a prelate who demanded that we know the catechism very well. ...

Our baptism took place in the evening, by candlelight. Long shadows played on the walls, and the echo carried each word high. Pan Stanisław, Rita's first husband and Yola's father [Rita Bauman Hasslauer, a divorcée, was the lover of Halina's uncle, Hipolit—Ed.], was my godfather. We didn't go back to the Jewish side. Pan Stefan, Pani Renia's husband, went there in the gasworks' van and brought out suitcases with our things to an apartment which Pani Renia had found for us at 7 Miodowa Street. ...

Men in black leather coats stopped us on the street by our house and came with us into the apartment. I no longer know whether they ordered me to, or whether I knelt down myself and started to pray out loud. And I don't know which was more effective—my prayer, or the money which they got from Mother. Immediately after that, Pani Renia found me a place with the Sisters of the Resurrection, and Mother moved in with Rita who had married an Austrian and was living in a German quarter on Aleja Szucha. ...

The boarding school of the Sisters of Resurrection was at 15 Mokotowska Street. I always remembered the numbers and names, but nothing other than that interested me. A new name is a new name, I didn't ask about anything. I knew that despite my baptism I was still a Jew, which was very bad. That was enough, I didn't want to know any more. When it became too dangerous on Mokotowska Street, they moved us to Stara Wieś, to a white mansion with a turret and little towers belonging to a prince. ... the mansion which stands to this day in Stara Wieś, Węgrów district, belonged to Prince Radziwiłł. German officers occupied part of the mansion. They had a separate entrance on the other side, but they used to come to our chapel. Sister Alma once said to my mother, "Ah, Halusia is so smart, when she sees a German, she immediately runs away."

<sup>288</sup> Halina Masri Papers, USHMM, Accession no. 1999.262.1.

We carried water from the well and peeled potatoes—two buckets of water and forty potatoes a day. In the summer, we picked mushrooms, strawberries and blueberries in the woods. The nuns made tasty dishes out of them. We prayed in the morning, evening, before and after eating. We confessed every week, and for one day a month we spoke to no one except the cross on the wall. I prayed very sincerely. On these words, which I often did not understand, depended my life not only on heaven, but also here on earth. We went to church for Sunday Mass and Communion, but Confession, Novenas and Vespers were held in the chapel at the mansion. The priest who heard our confessions had escaped from Germany and hidden with the Sisters of the Resurrection because—which we didn't know—he had been born a Jew. Germans also confessed to him because he spoke good German and even had a German last name. How were they to know that a Jew was hearing their confessions? [This information is incorrect. The priest in question, Rev. Tadeusz Pecolt, was a Pole of German ancestry, who had to flee his native city of Łódź because of his underground activity. He served as chaplain and instructor at the boarding school in Stara Wieś under an assumed name, Tadeusz Perzyński.<sup>289</sup>—Ed.]

We went to the village school, but the nuns gave us extra lessons in Latin and German. They also taught us embroidery and to make play things out of paper and straw. They arranged games and theatricals for us. They darned our stockings and repaired our clogs. They cared for us and treated our flu, hepatitis, and scarlet fever. They went into the countryside to ask for milk and potatoes and flour for us. We didn't have enough to eat, but I never felt it. I only felt fear in my stomach. My face grew thin, my nose longer, and fear showed in my eyes, and I looked nothing like Shirley Temple any more.

I went to my mother to Warsaw for holidays. Yola [Jola was Rita's daughter] took me to the circus where the antics of the acrobats filled me with dread, and to the cinema where I sat even more anxiously because everything was in German and I only saw Germans around me. Once they sent me to fetch milk from Meinl's, a shop for Germans and Volks-deutsche. A moment later, the telephone: "Frau Haslauer, who is that Jewish child?" Walter immediately took me back to Stara Wieś and I never went there any more. My mother came to see me, but I was afraid of her visits. Krysia Janas's grandmother came once and took her back for Easter. They were discovered in the train. The Sisters tried to save Krysia, but one of the Germans told them to desist because it could end up badly for the whole boarding school. I don't remember her face. She was nine years old, the same as me.

We were not taught hatred—only love, above all for the Lord Jesus. But hatred was stronger. Especially when coupled with love. Because how could you love the tormented Jesus, and not hate those who betrayed Him? And how strong must the hatred have been if even little Krysia Janas was betrayed? That's why I made a pact with the Christian God that I would never be a Jew and that, in exchange, no one would hate me. That was Easter 1944.<sup>290</sup>

<sup>289</sup> Testimony of Tadeusz Pecold [sic] SFV, Interview code 45859; "Tadeusz Pecolt," Wikipedia, Internet: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tadeusz\\_Pecolt](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tadeusz_Pecolt). Rev. Tadeusz Pecolt identified two other Jewish girls (of nine) residing at the boarding school: Irka Bilska (possibly Irena Bialer) and Alina Danilewicz, as well as two nuns: Sister Alma and Sister Helena.

<sup>290</sup> Henryk Grynberg, *Drohobycz, Drohobycz and Other Stories: True Tales from the Holocaust and Life After* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 206–11.

Irena Bialer (b. 1928) was another Jewish girl who was accepted by the Resurrectionist Sisters in Warsaw and later taken to Starawieś near Węgrów. She survived the war and was reclaimed by her uncle. She too recalled her stay there favourably.<sup>291</sup> Izabella Łachowska, who had a Polish Catholic father and German-speaking Jewish mother, also resided at the boarding school on Mokotowska Street.<sup>292</sup> Other Jews that were taken in or assisted in other ways by the Resurrectionist Sisters included Elżbieta Sobelman, Ewa Grosfeld (later Krawczyk, b. 1929), Eva Schutz and her son Jan, and the sisters Hanka and Mirka Rosenblatt.<sup>293</sup>

The following additional examples of rescue by the Resurrectionist Sisters are mentioned in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*.

Elzbieta [Elżbieta] Sobelman was 11 years old when both her parents died in late 1942. Before his death, her father had asked Krystyna Klarzuk, a former acquaintance of his, to take care of his daughter. Klarzuk, a young married woman with a baby who lived in central Warsaw, welcomed the young orphan and looked after her devotedly without expecting anything in return. Although the neighbors soon became suspicious, Klarzuk refused to be intimidated by their threats and blackmail. After obtaining Aryan papers for Elzbieta, she enrolled her at an institution run by the Resurrectionist (Zmartwychwstanki) nuns, where she continued to look after her and watch out for her safety. Elzbieta was transferred to a transit camp for Poles who were evacuated from the Zamosc [Zamość] region and sent to the orphanage belonging to the RGO [Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, a social welfare agency]. Elzbieta remained in the orphanage until the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944, when she was deported to Pruszkow [Pruszków] with the rest of Warsaw's population. After wandering from one hiding place to another, she finally reached the village of Chorowice in the county of Skawina, Cracow [Kraków] district. Although Elzbieta lost contact with Klarzuk, the ties between them were renewed immediately after the liberation in January 1945 and continued for many more years.<sup>294</sup>

<sup>291</sup> Testimony of Irena Bialer, August 10, 1948, JHI, record group 301, no. 4109.

<sup>292</sup> Testimony of Izabella Łachowska, SFV, Interview code 23032.

<sup>293</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 175, based on the testimony of Chana Shachori (Hana Shchori, Ania Rosenblat or Hanka Rosenblatt), YVA, file O.3/4751 (Item 3558619). See also the testimony of Hanah Shchori, SFV, Interview code 47353. Hanka Rosenblatt (b. 1934) disclosed to a priest that she was Jewish. She was evacuated to a convent in Zakopane after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Janina Jankowska, a Catholic girl who attended the Resurrectionist Sisters' school in Żoliborz, recalls the protective attitude of the nuns towards their Jewish charges. The Jewish girls, most of whom resided in the dormitory, often had to be hidden in times of danger. When a German fingered a Jewish girl during an inspection, Sister Bogusława, who knew German, denied that there were any Jews at the school. See the testimony of Janina Jankowska, Archiwum Historii Mówionej, Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, Internet: <https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/janina-jankowska,1881.html>.

<sup>294</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 349.

Aldona Lipszyc, a widow who had been married to a Jew and lived with her seven children in Warsaw, owned a farm and house in Ostrowek [Ostrówek], in the county of Radzymin. Before the war, Lipszyc had been active in the PPS [Polish Socialist Party] and was known for her progressive views. During the war, Lipszyc, guided by humanitarian principles, which overrode considerations of personal safety or economic hardship, helped her Jewish friends by offering them shelter in her home. The first to stay in her apartment in Warsaw was Helena Fiszhaut, an old school friend who had escaped from the ghetto during the large-scale *Aktion* in August 1942. Thanks to her ties with the Polish underground, Lipszyc was able to provide Fiszhaut with Aryan papers and find her a job with a Polish family as a maid. In the fall of 1942, a woman introducing herself as Olga Grosfeld knocked on Lipszyc's door, telling her that she had come from Przemyśl [Przemyśl] with her 13-year-old daughter, Eva, following the advice of a mutual acquaintance. Lipszyc gave Grosfeld a warm welcome, and looked after her until she was driven out of the city with the rest of Warsaw's population following the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944. Lipszyc also arranged for little Eva to be admitted to an institution for war orphans [actually, a boarding school in Żoliborz] run by the Zmartwychwstanki [Resurrectionist] Sisters, where she stayed under an assumed identity [Józefa Chruszcz] until the liberation.<sup>295</sup>

During the war, Irena Stelmachowska lived in Warsaw with her two daughters, Wanda and Aleksandra. In winter 1942, Irena offered Eva Schutz and her 11-year-old son, Jan, shelter in her apartment. Eva and Jan, who had false papers in the names of Ewa and Jan Sarnecki, had escaped from the Lwow [Lwów] ghetto and reached the Nunnery of Resurrection in Żoliborz [Żoliborz] with the help of an acquaintance. At the nunnery, the mother and son were handed Irena's address [the contact was established by Sister Laurenta<sup>296</sup>]. Eva and Jan [Stelmachowski] stayed with the Stelmachowskas [sic] until the end of the Warsaw Uprising in October 1944, when they were deported to Pruszków [Pruszków] and separated. After the war, Eva and Jan left Poland.<sup>297</sup>

During the war, Dr. Kazimierz Weckowski [Węcowski], a widower, worked as a physician in Warsaw. As soon as the Nazis began persecuting the Jews he “actively entered the fight, rendering help, by advice and deed, to numerous sections of the Jewish population,” wrote Ela Rosenblatt in her testimony to Yad Vashem. In order to avoid their expropriation by the Germans, Weckowski took over the clinics of his friend Dr. Jan Rosenblatt. It was at these clinics that he was able to help and shelter his Jewish acquaintances. “Many a time, he used to put the patch on his arm and enter the ghetto to visit his acquaintances and friends.” There he got in touch with the young members of the Betar organization. The latter made use of his private apartment, staying there overnight. Others were able to earn money, since

<sup>295</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 459–60. According to Olga Grosfeld, her daughter, Ewa, was placed with the Resurrectionist Sisters in Żoliborz by Kazimierz Szelągowski, who headed the Main Welfare Council in Warsaw and has also been awarded by Yad Vashem. Ewa Grosfeld Krawczyk recalled her stay at the boarding school as a “good period” and praised the nuns for their fairness, openness, and tolerance. See the testimony of Olga Grosfeld, JHI, record group 301, no. 5940; Testimony of Ewa Krawczyk, SFV, Interview code 26060.

<sup>296</sup> The Stelmachowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-stelmachowski-family>. See also the testimony of Eva Schutz, SFV, Interview code 21731.

<sup>297</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 753.

Weckowski, as head physician of the social insurance service in the Praga neighbourhood in eastern Warsaw, could arrange jobs for them. Because of his position, Weckowski was able to hospitalize an incurable Jewish boy whose stay in a hideout was no longer possible since he might have exposed the people who were sheltering him. Ela Rosenblatt remained alone with two daughters, Hanka and Mirka, because her husband was drafted in 1939 into the Polish army. Weckowski helped them leave the ghetto just before it was sealed and settled them in the countryside near Warsaw. Some time afterwards, he escorted them to Grochow [Grochów], where they lived with Weckowski's brother's family. Later in the war, Weckowski put the girls in a convent in Żoliborz [Żoliborz] and rented a little room for their mother. Ela Rosenblatt moved to Israel, but died in 1951 at the age of 45. The sisters left for Israel, too, from where they maintained contact with Weckowski.<sup>298</sup>

Under the tutelage of their superior, Sister Anuncjata (Helena Rozwadowska), the Resurrectionist Sisters sheltered a number of Jewish children and a Jewish woman, as well as other endangered persons, at their convent in Lwów. Their charges included the brothers Stanisław and Bolesław Proszowski, Lermi Tischer, Krystyna Tymeczko, and Klara Podhorzer (later Christine Nash, b. 1939), passing as Krystyna Sanecka but known as Zosia in the convent. Zosia had been brought there from a small Benedictine nuns' cloister on the outskirts of Lwów.<sup>299</sup>

**H**ania Ajzner (later Strosberg, b. 1934), an only child, lived with her parents in the Warsaw ghetto. Jan Zakościelny, a former employee of her father's, obtained the birth and baptismal certificates of deceased family members for them, and then he arranged for Kennkarten. After escaping from the ghetto with her mother in late January 1943, they first stayed with Mrs. Maciejewska and then with the Jankowskis, prewar school teachers.

Afterwards, Hania was placed in a boarding school in the suburb of Żoliborz run by the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There she became Anna Zakościelna. Hania's true identity was known to the nuns and the chaplain, but she was never questioned as to whether she had been baptized. She recalls an episode that occurred when a revolt broke out in the Warsaw ghetto.

One night, Sister Wawrzyna [Motyczyńska] came into the dormitory after the girls had already settled down. "Get up, girls, come up to the windows," and she drew aside the black-out curtains. They could all see a red glow over the fields to the South. "That is the Ghetto, burning," she said. "There was an uprising in the Ghetto. You must all pray, girls, for there are heroes fighting and dying there." Ania stood there in silence. ... It was a long time before they went back to their beds. It was the 19th April, 1943.<sup>300</sup>

<sup>298</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 855–56.

<sup>299</sup> Mistecka, *Zmartwychwstanki w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1945*, 144–45, 147, 203. See also the testimony of Christine Nash, SFV, Interview code 17400. Nash was reunited with her mother after the city was liberated.

<sup>300</sup> Hania Ajzner, *Hania's War* (Caulfield South, Victoria, Australia: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2000), 143.



After hospitalization for an illness in December 1943, through the efforts of a Jesuit priest, Fr. Alojzy Chrobak (misidentified as Fr. Rodak), Hania was taken to a hostel for teenagers on Kiliński Street in the Old Town, run by the Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There she met another Jewish girl, seven-year-old Jona Schieber (later Yonah Alschuler or Altshuler, b. 1936), who was passing as Joanna (Joasia) Rawicz. Jona had come to Warsaw from Lwów with her mother. The girls' mothers, who were living in Warsaw openly but under false identities, would visit their daughters from time to time. The director of the hostel, Sister Eugenia (Krystyna) Marcinowska, and the other three nuns were aware that these girls were Jewish and treated them well. After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the residents of Warsaw were evacuated to a transit camp in Pruszków, from where the nuns and their charges were deported to Germany as slave labour. Hania and Jona accompanied Sister Jadwiga Wyszomirska, who pretended to be their aunt, to a labour camp located on an estate near Eberswalde.

In December 1944, they were allowed to return to the Generalgouvernement, and they made their way to Częstochowa. Sister Jadwiga took the girls to the Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra, where, with the permission of the prior, they were fed and lodged temporarily in a hospice for pilgrims. Afterwards, the prior of the monastery arranged for the girls to stay in a boarding school in Częstochowa, run by the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. There were many girls evacuated from Warsaw there at the time, about a dozen of whom were Jewish. The rescue was fraught with danger as part of the nuns' building was occupied by the German military. After the war, Hania and Jona were both reunited with their mothers, with whom they had lost contact since the uprising. Hania and her mother settled in Australia, while Jona and her mother went to Palestine.<sup>301</sup>

Jona's story has been summarized as follows:

Yonah Altshuler was hidden in a convent in Warsaw with another Jewish girl. After the Polish uprising was suppressed, the convent was closed down and the nuns were exiled to Germany as forced laborers. The girls' caregiver, a nun about forty years old, kept them with her and did not abandon them, despite the many hardships of the way. In her place of exile she continued to care for them as if she were their mother. She took them with her to the fields where she had to work at hard manual labor from sunrise to late evening, and shared with them the meagre rations she received from her German peasant overseer. After the liberation, they returned with her to Poland, and before she resumed her prewar life she placed them in a convent in Częstochowa. It is no wonder that Yonah, summarizing her experiences of convent life, said, "I have a sentiment for the Catholic faith and I have nothing but good things to say about the nuns."<sup>302</sup>

<sup>301</sup> Ajzner, *Hania's War*, especially pp. 138–204; Correspondence of Joanna Schieber, YVA, Item 11085537.

<sup>302</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, pp. 176–77, based on the testimony of Yona Altshuler, YVA, file O.3/5568 (Item 3555111).



As a sign of their gratitude, in 1963, Jona and her father, Mordechaj Altschuler, invited Sisters Jadwiga Wyszomirska and Kinga Zakrzewska to visit them in Israel.<sup>303</sup> The nuns Marcinowska (Sister Eugenia) and Wyszomirska were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2017.

According to the order's records, two other teenage Jewish girls were sheltered at the hostel on Kiliński Street. One of them was Jakoba (Kubusia) Blidsztejn (b. 1925), passing as Danuta Dąbrowska.<sup>304</sup> They too were deported to Germany as slave labour together with Sisters Katarzyna Jaźwicz and Kinga Zakrzewska, two other nuns who worked at this institution. Yad Vashem only acknowledges two of the four rescued Jewish girls and two of the four nuns who rescued them, yet another illustration that one cannot simply rely on the recollection of an individual survivor to reconstruct the rescue efforts of a religious institution.

Hania Ajzner's cousin, Halina Ajzner (b. 1938), who obtained a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Halina Węgiełek, also survived. Fr. Chrobak placed her in an orphanage in Chotomów, run by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś).<sup>305</sup> (More will be said about Fr. Chrobak's rescue activities later on.)

**T**he Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Zgromadzenie Córek Najczystsze Serca Najświętszej Maryi Panny) rescued Jews in various localities: at least twelve children in three institutions in Warsaw; sixteen children (girls and boys) in Otwock; four children in Świder near Warsaw; two children in Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą; two girls in Skórzec near Siedlce; several children in Sitnik near Biała Podlaska; as well as in Janów Podlaski, Kolno, Pińsk, and Wilno.<sup>306</sup>

<sup>303</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 111.

<sup>304</sup> Jakoba Blidsztejn (Danuta Dąbrowska), PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/jakoba-blidsztejn-danuta-dabrowska>; *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947*, vol. 6 (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1991), 226–27; Testimony of Danuta Dąbrowska (Jakoba Blidsztejn), JHI, record group 301, no. 5719.

<sup>305</sup> Ajzner, *Hania's War*, 37, 126, 151, 190–91, 198–99; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 806–7.

<sup>306</sup> *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947*, vol. 6, 226–27; Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at pp. 155–56; Ratowanie Żydów przez żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne, Internet: <https://zakony-zenskie.pl/ratowanie-zydow/> and <https://zakony-zenskie.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Ratowanie-%C5%BByd%C3%B3w.pdf> (Zgromadzenie Córek Najczystsze Serca Najświętszej Maryi Panny). Halina Rotensztein (b. 1933) and her sister Krystyna were sheltered at the convent in Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą under the assumed surname of Nowicka. See the testimony of Halina Rotensztein, Ghetto Fighters House archives (Israel), catalog no. 4802, registry no. 18845 collection.

Several Jewish children were sheltered at the children's home of the Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Warsaw's Nowe Miasto (New Town), under the direction of Sister Wiktoria Wrześniowska. The charges included Ewa Zaniecka, Maria Rydzewska, and Lucyna Rychlicka (assumed names), as well as three Jewish women, who occasionally stayed at a convent in suburban Świder. A 12-year-old Jewish girl named Jasia, who arrived in early 1944, was transferred to Konstancin. After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the children's home was evacuated to the monastery of the Franciscan Fathers in Niepokalanów. Five Jewish boys were sheltered at the children's institution on Czerniakowska Street in Warsaw, under the direction of Sister Kazimiera Kłodecka.<sup>307</sup>

Five Jewish boys, among them Włodzimierz Berg (later William Donat, b. 1937), whose rescue is described later on, were sheltered at an educational institution for boys in Otwock near Warsaw, run by the Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A Jewish survivor who expressed his thanks to the director "for her Christian and humanitarian care of the children" noted that the institution was "poverty stricken" and had to rely on outside donations to make ends meet. Additional Jewish children were brought to that home after the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943, making sixteen in total.<sup>308</sup> There is some uncertainty regarding the order that sheltered Celina Borensztajn (b. 1941), passing as Borniewicz. Her Catholic protector, Magdalena Walter, placed her either with the Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary or with the Sisters of St. Elizabeth. Celina was reclaimed by her father after the war.<sup>309</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, two young sisters—Batya Faktor (Barbara, known as Basia, later Piechotka, b. 1936) and Esther Faktor (known as Jadwiga or Jadzia, later Rosman, b. 1929)—wandered in the Siedlce area begging for food and shelter. Villagers cared for the girls but became frightened, as they were widely suspected of being Jewish. Sister Stanisława Józwickowska learned of Batya's plight and asked her superior, Sister Beata (Bronisława Hryniewicz),

<sup>307</sup> *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947*, vol. 6, 226–27.

<sup>308</sup> The children were not required to undergo baptism contrary to the claim levelled by Włodzimierz Berg (later William Donat), who declared his desire to be baptized only *after* the Germans had left the area. See *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947*, vol. 6, 226–27; Sylwia Szymańska, *Ludność żydowska w Otwocku podczas drugiej wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2002), 85; Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom: A Memoir* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1965), 341–54; Emily Taitz, ed., *Holocaust Survivors: A Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 1 (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 96–97.

<sup>309</sup> Testimony of Stanisław Borensztajn, JHI, record group 301, no. 5690; Testimony of Rachela Hönigman, JHI, record group 301, no. 4239.

for permission to admit her into the orphanage run by the Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the village of Skórzec. This was a risky proposition because the Gestapo had installed itself in the same building. Batya recalled, “The nuns welcomed me warmly, cleaned off the dirt which clung to me during the many months of wandering, tended my wounds, and fed me.”<sup>310</sup>

Batya fell ill for several months, during which time she was tenderly cared for. Batya’s sister, Esther, came to the orphanage later, at the behest of Sister Beata. Earlier she had stayed with the Świątek family, who treated her well. After the war, the two girls, who were living in the orphanage under the assumed surname of Górską, were reunited with their elder sister, Halina, who was employed on a local farm. Two nuns—Bronisława Hryniewicz and Stanisława Jóźwikowska—were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles. The children were also cared for by other nuns at the orphanage—such as Sister Benedykta (Apolonia Kret), who nursed Batya back to health after her arrival at the convent, covered with scabies, abscesses, and lice.<sup>311</sup>

In the village of Czerniejew, in the Siedlce district east of Warsaw, it was another poor peasant woman, Stanisława [Stanisława] Cabaj, a widow, who gave shelter to two Jewish girls, Batja and Ester, sisters who had escaped from the Warsaw ghetto and wandered for several months through the Polish countryside. ...

Fearing betrayals, Stanisława Cabaj took Ester, aged eleven, and Batja, a mere five-year-old, for sanctuary to Sister Stanisława Jozwikowska [Stanisława Jóźwikowska], in the Heart of Jesus convent near the village of Skórzec [Skórzec]. “I was dirty, ill, weak, full of lice,” Batja later recalled. “The nuns washed me thoroughly, put me into soft pyjamas, and put me in a clean bed.” The Mother Superior, Beata Bronisława [Bronisława] Hryniewicz, nursed her back to health. “She fed me, she strengthened me.” After she recovered, the young girl attended the local school, as did her sister. “Once the headmaster checked my file and did not find my baptism confirmation. He asked my sister about it. My sister claimed that the church we had been baptized in, Bielany, a northern suburb of Warsaw, had been bombed, and hoped her answer would be acceptable. But the headmaster was a Polish nationalist, he did not give up,” He informed the local Polish police chief, and also

<sup>310</sup> Testimony of Batia Basha (Faktor) Pikhotke, YVA, file O.3 (Item 12808142). See also the testimony of Esther (Faktor) Rosman, YVA, file O.3/14170 (Item 12799684).

<sup>311</sup> Sister Benedykta (Apolonia Kret) recalled, “When Basia was brought in, her appearance brought us to tears. She looked horrible. She had lice everywhere and her body was covered [with] scabies. She had sores on her back, chest and legs. The first thing to do with the poor nine-year-old child was to give her a bath and then cut her hair. I bathed her every day, applied ointment and changed her sheets. Yet there were still lice. It took three weeks for her to recover. ... During Basia’s long stay in Skórzec, she mentioned her older sister, Jadzia. Mother Superior ordered her to be brought to the convent, so that they would be together. We also knew about another sister, Regina, who probably was in Gołębek, but nobody saw her.” See “The Righteous from the Treblinka Area: Apolonia Kret,” May 2009, Internet: <https://muzeumtreblinka.eu/en/informacje/apolonia-kret/>.

the Mother Superior, “who summoned my sister to the monastery and questioned her. Finally my sister confessed that we are Jewish. Ester knew that Mother Superior Beata Bronislawa Hryniewicz loved me a lot and she also would do everything not to harm us.”

At the time, half the convent was occupied by German soldiers. The Mother Superior, determined to strengthen the young girl’s self-confidence, sent Ester on “various tasks in the afternoon—precisely when the Germans were active around—as to deliver something to other nuns, to feed chickens, to watch bees, etc.”

Nobody knew the two girls were Jewish except for the Mother Superior and Sister Stanisława Jozwikowska, who had brought them in. [This is inaccurate. Sister Benedykta was also aware of their circumstances, and afterwards a priest in the nearby village of Kotuń baptized the girls. Given the children’s state on arrival and their lack of familiarity with Christian prayers and rituals, their true origin would have been apparent to the other nuns as well.—Ed.] After the war, the Jewish organization which found the girls wanted to pay the convent for having looked after them, but Beata refused to take the money, saying: “I did my duty as a Christian, and not for money.” Sixty years after having been given shelter, Batja reflected: “Mother Superior Beata Bronislawa Hryniewicz healed me; she recovered my soul by great love; she pampered me as her own child; she dressed me nice and neat; she combed my hair and tied ribbons in my plaits; she taught me manners (she was from an aristocratic noble family). She was strict, but fair with my duties; to pray, to study, to work on my character, to obey, etc., but every step was with love, love!” On liberation, Batja refused to leave the Mother Superior Beata, “but I was forced to. In autumn when I was nine—in 1945—I left the monastery.” At that moment, separated from her rescuer, “I lost my childhood forever and pure human love.” From 1946 until the Mother Superior died in 1969, they were in correspondence. “I always longed for Mother Superior and even wanted to go back to her ... Years after her death I told my story, and she got the medal of Righteous Among the Nations, in Warsaw. Sister Stanisława Jozwikowska died on 7 December 1984, she also got the medal. Mother Superior Beata Bronislawa Hryniewicz is always in my heart, and I still miss her very much.”<sup>312</sup>

Another account, based on the Yad Vashem Archives, provides somewhat different circumstances surrounding the rescue of the Faktor sisters and an indication of the community’s awareness of the children’s Jewish origin.

In the summer of 1942, 11-year-old Eстера Faktor and her five-year-old sister, Batia, escaped from the Warsaw ghetto and wandered through fields and villages until they arrived at the Kaluszyn [Kałuszyn] ghetto, where they were reunited with their brother, Janek, and their sisters, Halina and Regina. A few days before the liquidation of the ghetto and the deportation of its inhabitants to Treblinka, all five Faktor children escaped from the ghetto. Two of them—Janek and Regina—never made it to the Aryan side of the city. Halina, who did not look Jewish, was employed on a local farm, while Eстера and little Batia reached the village of Skorzec [Skórzec]. After introducing themselves as Christian orphans, they were sent by the village mayor to the home of an elderly, childless couple who lived in

<sup>312</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2003), 107–8.

abject poverty. Despite their willingness to help, the elderly couple was unable to provide for the two girls. Ester and Batia, therefore, turned to the nun Stanisława Jozwikowska for help. Stanisława consulted with the Mother Superior, Beata-Bronisława Hryniewicz, who next day arranged for the sisters to be transferred to the Dom Serca Jezusowego (Sacred Heart) convent in Skorzec, without knowing they were Jewish. When the headmistress of their school asked them for their birth and baptism certificates, the girls had no choice but to inform the nuns of their true identity. The nuns, far from abandoning them, were more concerned than ever for their well-being, particularly Mother Beata-Bronisława and Sister Stanisława, who perceived helping Jews as a sacred duty. After the war, the convent transferred the Faktor sisters to the care of the Jewish community in the nearby city of Siedlce. When members of the Jewish Committee heard their story, they raised money to buy a present for the two nuns, but Mother Beata refused, saying: "I simply did my Christian duty, without any thought of reward."<sup>313</sup>

Gitta Rosenzweig (b. 1938 in Biała Podlaska) was entrusted by her father to a school teacher, Czekański, who lived in the countryside. He in turn placed the child, now known as Marysia Czekańska, in an orphanage run by the Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the village of Sitnik. Sister Agnieszka Szołdzińska was the superior. The nuns wore ordinary clothes rather than habits. There were several Jewish children among their approximately 40 charges, including Henryk Gołubiak and Andrzej Sitnicki (assumed names). Part of the convent building was occupied by the German gendarmerie, which made the rescue even more precarious, as the Germans began to inquire about some of the children. After the war, Gitta joined her uncle's family in the United States, as her immediate family had all perished.<sup>314</sup>

<sup>313</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 317–18.

<sup>314</sup> "Double Life of Gitta," Genealogy Research Stories, Polin Travel, Internet: <https://jewish-guide.pl/Double%20Life%20of%20Gitta-Article%20by%20Tomasz%20Cebulski.pdf>; Ratowanie Żydów przez żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne, Internet: <https://zakony-zenskie.pl/ratowanie-zydow/> and <https://zakony-zenskie.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Ratowanie-%C5%BByd%C3%B3w.pdf> (Zgromadzenie Córek Najczystszego Serca Najświętszej Maryi Panny, no. 10); Gitta Rosenzweig, *Gitta: Hidden Child of the Holocaust: A Memoir* (U.S.A.: n.p., 2015); Testimony of Gitta Rosenzweig, SFV, Interview code 1876. According to another source, the Jewish committee had to pay a "redemption fee" for Gitta Rosenzweig's release from the convent. See "Life in the Shadows: Hidden Children and the Holocaust," USHMM, Internet: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/life-in-shadows-hidden-children-and-the-holocaust-photographs>. This is an unwarranted smear on the nuns' rescue effort. Gitta was taken in without any expectation of payment, putting the nuns' lives at risk. She was cared for her in dire circumstances, when food was scarce, thus depriving Christian children of much needed nourishment. It is not surprising, therefore, that it may have been suggested that the Jewish organization that took her, which was well funded by American Jews, make a financial contribution to the orphanage for the benefit of the children who remained there in an impoverished state. What stands out in this and many other cases, however, is the apparent lack of any effort

Conditions in the orphanage, as described in the diary of Sister Jadwiga Gozdek, were extremely harsh. This account also underscores the fact that it was generally common knowledge among the nuns in a convent or institution that Jews were being sheltered there.

On the 25th of June, 1943 I took my first convent vows and I was immediately directed to [the] orphanage in Sitnik village near Biała Podlaska ... I finally reached Siedlce but on the way I lost my luggage. On the way to Biała Podlaska, every few kilometres there were derailed and burned trains and twisted railway lines. This was the result of the activity of the local partisans, who were exploding the German trains. We were all constantly unsure if we would get there as those were the last months of the occupation and the fighting was getting more and more severe. ....

In Sitnik the sisters welcomed me warmly, but they were also full of anxiety as the night before there had been a Ukrainian raid on the orphanage. They were looking for young nuns to have fun with. The head sister was threatened that she would be shot. She was saved by the children, who refused to leave her side and were begging for her life. ....

The orphanage was located in two old houses without electricity or hygiene facilities. The sisters and girls lived in the larger house with a veranda. The larger room was changed into canteen and day room for children. The place was very packed; several sisters had to share one room. ...

Our head sister was Sister Aniela [Agnieszka] Szołdzińska. There were seven sisters in total and around 40 children aged from 3 to 19, both boys and girls. ...

There were 15 hectares [37 acres] of land, with a garden, orchard and bee hives. We had a few cows, horses, pigs, sheep and chickens. The work was extremely hard, as there were no tools and we did all the work manually with the help of the older children. ...

The children were mostly orphans and half-orphans due to the war. They were coming to us terribly dirty and insect-ridden. Often we had to burn all of the child's belongings on arrival. They were often brought to us naked and barefoot. Thank God we had enough food. ... The worst situation we had was with clothing and shoes. We were stitching new patches onto the old ones. ... It was the worst with shoes. Father Edward Kowalik, an incredibly good man, devoted priest and a former teacher, a man with golden hands and heart, spent all of his spare time with the children. He was able to resolve any problem. He acquired some military tarpaulin, arranged for a shoemaker, and was personally producing wooden soles. ... In this way we made shoes for all the children. ....

The winters of 1944/45/46 were the hardest. Then we started to get some donations. Often we had to match two shoes which were different in order for every child to get a pair of shoes. Among our Polish children there were also Jewish children. Some of them had very characteristic Jewish features. We had a lot of anxiety and troubles related to that, especially since right after my arrival part of our house was occupied by the German police commando station. We had to constantly hide the children and do our best not to be betrayed, because we were all aware that in such a case we would all be killed on the spot. One girl in particular was very beautiful and she stood out from all the rest of our

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on the part of the rescued survivor to have Yad Vashem confer recognition on their selfless benefactors.



children. She had a very pale and delicate complexion, blond, curly hair, and blue eyes, and for a long time it was difficult for her to learn to speak Polish clearly. The Germans were constantly asking who this child was and why she was so different from the others. All the time we said that this is the child of Polish nobility and, for this reason, she is so different and delicate. After the war, a Jewish organization traced her and, in spite of her resistance and great despair, because she had gotten very attached to the sisters, she was taken away with force and taken abroad where she probably had some rich family. All of those children had Polish papers. That girl was named Marysia Czekańska. The boys were Henryk Gołubiak, Andrzej Sitnicki, who was deaf and dumb, and there were others whose names I don't remember.

In summer 1944, after the Germans retreated, we were located in the middle of the front line. We spent a few difficult days with the children in bomb shelters dug in the garden, as the Germans and the Soviets took turns starting their offensive. An incendiary bomb exploded next to our house, but the trees sheltered the house from fire and sparks. ... The nearby village was completely bombed and devastated. ... God saved us and our children, and after the war, as a thanksgiving, we placed a statue of Our Lady in front of the house.<sup>315</sup>

Michał Hefer, then Żurakowska, was born in Warsaw in 1933. Her grandfather was the president of the Rabbinical Court. After her mother and brother were seized by the Germans in the Warsaw ghetto, her father entrusted her to a Polish woman, a family friend, who kept her for about a year. When this woman sensed that it was becoming more dangerous, she placed the child with the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, who had a convent in the New Town Market Square. Michał remembers the nuns with great fondness, "For me they were saints. So much compassion."<sup>316</sup> During the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, the convent was bombed by the Germans on August 31 killing 36 nuns, four priests, and about one thousand civilians, among them Jews who had taken refuge there.

Aviva Unger was an 11-year-old Warsaw school girl when the war broke out. Growing up, she was exposed to Catholic practices by the family's Catholic servant, whom she would sometimes accompany to church services. Aviva states that "her knowledge of it [the Catholic faith] was to be very useful later." Aviva and her mother, a widow, moved to the ghetto in 1940. Shortly after, her mother had a stroke that left her partially paralyzed. Aviva had to steal food in order to survive. After her mother was shot by the Germans, Aviva, with the help of a family friend, obtained false papers and escaped from the ghetto in 1942 by crawling through the sewers.

<sup>315</sup> "Double Life of Gitta," Genealogy Research Stories, Polin Travel, Internet: <https://jewish-guide.pl/Double%20Life%20of%20Gitta-Article%20by%20Tomasz%20Cebulski.pdf>.

<sup>316</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 151–53.



She was taken to a Catholic convent, where she lived with nuns identified as the *Sacré Coeur Sisters* (*siostry Sacré Coeur*). The following year, Aviva was recognized by a Jewish police informer while riding in a streetcar and was turned over to the Gestapo. She was beaten to extract information, but she admitted to nothing. Risking his life, a priest from the convent saved Aviva by vouching for her Catholic background. After her release, it was no longer safe for her to remain at the convent. Arrangements were made for Aviva to be sent to Germany as a Polish farm worker. She returned to Poland after the war, and later she left for Israel.

When the war broke out I was an 11-year-old Warsaw schoolgirl. I was already an orphan, since my father died just before I was born. We were moved to the ghetto a year after Poland's defeat. My mother had given up spiritually: if this was the conclusion of all the culture and education that had made Germany such a country to admire, then what were her own life's beliefs worth? When we came to the ghetto, matters got worse for her, and she had a stroke which left her half-paralysed. She had lost the will to fight. As for me, I continued to go to school in the ghetto, and to the Gymnasium there.

Then one day they shot my mother.

In 1942 I was able to escape, through the kind action of a Gentile friend of my mother's who had heard what had happened. She smuggled in 100 *zlotys* [zlotys] with which I was able to pay a guide to take me out through the sewers. I was taken to a teaching order of nuns in Warsaw, at the *Sacré Coeur* convent. I became a pupil of the convent school, and stayed there until Easter 1943—about the time of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Then, coincidentally, I was recognized on a tram by a Jew who was a police spy, and betrayed to the Gestapo. I then spent four days in the Gestapo HQ where they hit and kicked me ceaselessly to get information out of me about the Jewish resistance. I wasn't yet quite 15. They weren't human, those Gestapo. And don't make the mistake of differentiating between the Germans and the Nazis: all Germans were Nazis.

I was saved by the Polish priest attached to the convent who came to the HQ and swore that he had personally baptized me as a baby, that he had known my parents, that I came from a long line of Catholics; that I was now an orphan in the convent's care. All this he swore on the Cross, and eventually the Gestapo let me go. But I knew it would be too hot for me to remain in Poland, so I arranged to have myself transported for war work to Germany. However, that was another problem, because a lot of Jews tried to save themselves in that way [i.e., posing as Polish Catholics and hoping not to be recognized by anyone]. On the way I was saved by a Polish prostitute who was on the same transport. We were travelling by ordinary passenger train, and two men—German sailors, I think—started looking at me. I knew they suspected I was a Jewess: two minutes earlier a couple of Jewish girls had been picked off the train and shot. This prostitute said to the sailors, "What are you gawping at my cousin like that for?" "She's your cousin?" "Sure, and she's a virgin. She's no good for you; but if it's a fuck you want,

I'm your girl." The sailors left it at that. The prostitute didn't say a word to me directly. Only I could tell by her eyes that she knew.<sup>317</sup>

Another Jewish girl sheltered by the Sacré Coeur Sisters in Warsaw was Celina Bernstein.<sup>318</sup>

Another notorious case of denunciation involved Stefania Brandstätter, a Gestapo informer who was very active in Kraków. She is believed to have turned in scores of fellow Jews who tried to pass as Christians. Erna Kluger's (later Hilfstein, b. 1924) chances of hiding among the Poles were higher than average: she had false documents, spoke flawless Polish, and because she happened to attend a Catholic school, she knew the religious rituals and prayers. Furthermore, the chaplain at the school she attended was the secretary of Adam Sapieha, the archbishop of Kraków. He was willing to hide Erna in a convent, and he had the necessary connections. The only thing that stood between Erna and successful evasion was Stefania, who combed the convents searching for hidden Jews. Eventually, Erna abandoned the idea after two children of her mother's cousin were fingered by Stefania and seized by the Germans from the convent where they resided. Luckily, their father, Kwiatkowski, a Polish Christian married to a Jewish woman, was able to rescue his children because he was a renowned surgeon who operated on German military personnel.<sup>319</sup>

<sup>317</sup> Anton Gill, *The Journey Back From Hell: Conversations with Concentration Camp Survivors* (London: Grafton Books, 1988), 277–78. See also the testimony of Aviva Unger, YVA, file O.3/4297 (Item 3558492); Aviva U. [Unger] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1077), FVA.

<sup>318</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 472.

<sup>319</sup> Erna H. [Hilfstein, née Kluger] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2914), FVA; Testimony of Erna Hilfstein, SFV, Interview code 9995. Jewish agents and informers for the Gestapo and Kripo were active both inside and outside the ghettos. Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer has acknowledged that they caused "tremendous damage." See Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 148. Zbigniew Ryszard Grabowski (then Ryszard Abrahamer), whose father was fingered in a streetcar by a Jewish Gestapo agent while passing as a Christian in Warsaw, states: "Jews in the service of the Gestapo were best at recognizing other Jews." See Zbigniew Ryszard Grabowski, "W skorodowanym zwierciadle pamięci: Szkic autobiograficzny," *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2005): 7–202; Katarzyna Meloch and Halina Szostkiewicz, eds., *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 4 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie "Dzieci Holocaustu" w Polsce, 2012), 195. (Zbigniew Ryszard Grabowski was the father of historian Jan Grabowski.) In some cases, Poles have been wrongly accused of denunciations actually made by Jews against fellow Jews. In his memoir, Alexander Bronowski recounts his arrest in Warsaw by the Sicherheitspolizei (security police) after one of their informers, a Jew from his native Lublin, recognized him. Ironically, the Polish "Blue" police, to whom Bronowski was handed over, proved to be his saviours. Staff sergeant Wacław Nowiński not only rescued Bronowski, but Nowiński and his family also selflessly assisted and sheltered other Jews. See Bronowski, *They Were Few*, 30–33; Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous*

The three Neimark (or Neumark) sisters—Wanda (later Lomazow, b. 1919), Helena (Hala, later Helen Fagin, b. 1922) and Teresa (Tobcia, later Terry Dolgov, b. 1930)—managed to hide during the raid on the ghetto in Radomsko in October 1942, in which their parents were taken away by the Germans. Henryk Wróblewski, a friend of their father's, sent a messenger from the underground to tell them that they would be taken out of the ghetto and brought to a safe house in Warsaw. A young man took Wanda first, by train. The remaining sisters were sheltered for several weeks by the Loszek family, who were friends of the Neimarks. Wróblewski came next for Helena and Teresa, taking them by truck to his apartment in Warsaw. The sisters were provided with false identity documents. Wanda, passing as Natalia Drozdowska, and Helena, passing as Zofia Wróblewska, found jobs and rented a room together.

Since Teresa had dark, Semitic features, she did not venture outside. Helena approached the superior of an unidentified convent and requested that she take Teresa in. She put forward a highly improbable account, namely, that her "niece" had suffered memory loss after contracting meningitis and could not remember her catechism and prayers. In all likelihood, the superior saw through this flimsy subterfuge, but she accepted Teresa anyway. Teresa remained in the convent until the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944. Helena then removed her from the convent, and the three sisters moved to Busko-Zdrój, where they worked in a German military field hospital. At the convent, Teresa became acquainted with another Jewish girl, Krysia Panczanka, who also survived the war.<sup>320</sup>

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*Among Nations*, 142–44. Yet Mordecai Paldiel, a historian at the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, manages consistently, on repeated occasions, to omit the fact that it was a Jew who betrayed Alexander Bronowski, even though Paldiel describes Bronowski's ordeal fastidiously in various publications. Paldiel is so preoccupied with railing against Christian Poles that, in connection with Bronowski's betrayal, he lays the blame on "local anti-Semites," and for good measure elaborates: "Spotting a Jew on the street had become a sort of sport in Warsaw." See Paldiel, *The Righteous Among the Nations*, 289–90; Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews*, 53, 153 (twice).

Christian Poles also fell victim to Jewish Gestapo agents. Józef Garliński, a prominent member of the underground (head of the security department of the Home Army headquarters in Warsaw), was arrested after being betrayed by one of his former schoolmates, a Jew in the service of the Gestapo. The abridged English version of this memoir conceals the nationality of the betrayer and the fact that there were many Jewish informers. See Józef Garliński, *Niezapomniane lata: Dzieje Wywiadu Więziennego i Wywiadu Bezpieczeństwa Komendy Głównej Armii Krajowej* (London: Odnova, 1987), 109; Józef Garliński, *The Survival of Love: Memoir of a Resistance Officer* (New York: Blackwell, 1991), 3, 93. On the activities of Jewish agents and informers, see Mark Paul, *Patterns of Cooperation, Collaboration and Betrayal: Jews, Germans and Poles in Occupied Poland during World War II*, Internet: <http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia>.

<sup>320</sup> Testimony of Helen Fagin, SFV, Interview code 11964; Testimony of Terry Dolgov, SFV, Interview code 12290. Henryk Wróblewski was recognized by Yad Vashem for his role in saving at least 18 Jews. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 902.

Sometimes parents were not informed of their children's whereabouts, in order to protect the security of everyone participating in these perilous undertakings. Bernard Goldstein, a Bundist leader from Warsaw, describes the following cases.

In the same tenement lived Comrade Chaimovitch, formerly an official of our cooperative movement. Now he was liaison man between the Judenrat and the Tranferstelle, which supplied the ghetto food allotment. He had the right to visit the Aryan side, wearing a uniform cap with a blue ribbon and a Star of David.

I went up to visit Chaimovitch and found him and his wife greatly agitated. He had just returned from smuggling their ten-year-old daughter out of the ghetto. A Christian friend had arranged for her admission to a children's home run by a convent somewhere in Poland—where, he was not permitted to know for fear that he might disclose the dangerous secret.

"The child did not want to go to the Christians," Chaimovitch told us, weeping. "She cried and pleaded to be allowed to stay with us. If our fate is to die, she wanted to die with us. It was only with great difficulty and against her will that we were able to get her across." He wrung his hands. "Where is my child? Will I ever see her again?" ...

My guide took me to a small three-room apartment on the first floor. Mr. and Mrs. Chumatovsky, with whom I was to stay, worked in the [armament] factory. ...

In a tiny room in the apartment I found Zille, [Zalman] Friedrych's wife, and their five-year-old daughter, Elsa. Friedrych himself lived elsewhere....

Five-year-old Elsa was a pretty, active blond child whose blue eyes radiated life and spirit. She could not understand why we had to remain constantly cooped up in our small room, not even going for a walk in the courtyard. In other ways, however, she was sometimes frightened by her awareness of the dangerous situation.

Sometimes I would forgetfully lapse into Yiddish. The child would become almost hysterical. "Stop speaking that language. Don't you realize it means our lives?" she would hiss sharply in Polish.

Elsa would sit at the window, watching other children at play in the yard. Often she would cry. Fearful of attracting attention, her mother would try to quiet the girl. Sometimes the only way was to stuff a handkerchief into the little mouth. The child's crying made our landlady very nervous. The neighbors knew that she had no children. She was afraid that we would be discovered. She had heard terrible tales of how the Germans stamped out the lives of little Jewish children with their boots, and then shot the mothers and their Gentile hosts as well. ...

The nervous anxiety soon began to tell on our hosts. Our landlady was often in tears. Her hysteria multiplied our own fears. Together with our hosts we began to cast about for a way in which little Elsa might be removed to safety. Our landlord had a sister who was Mother Superior in a convent near Cracow [Kraków]. We decided to send the child to her.

Mrs. Chumatovsky went there first to discuss the project and to make the necessary arrangements. When she returned with a favourable answer, we prepared the girl for the trip. She was told that she was going to an aunt's where there were other children with whom she could play outdoors and have lots of fun. For several days our landlady taught the child how to say prayers in preparation for her new life and new name under the

crucifix. The child slowly accustomed herself to the new role. Her intuitive understanding of the danger which hung over her and her mother drove her to do her best. She seemed to know instinctively that all this was necessary to avert a terrible catastrophe.

With a heavy heart, her lips pressed tightly together to restrain her sobs, Zille packed Elsa's things and sent her away.

Mrs. Chumatovsky stayed with the child at the convent for several days. Elsa would not let her leave. She wept and pleaded not to be left alone. When the child was somewhat calmer Mrs. Chumatovsky was able to return.

Exactly where the convent was, the Chumatovsky, of course, refused to say. In case of arrest the parents might not be able to endure the torture and might give the information to the Germans, bringing tragedy to the convent and all its inmates. Besides, the parents, in their anxiety, might attempt to communicate with the child and unwittingly betray the secret. The Chumatovskys obtained a Catholic birth certificate in the girl's new name and assumed legal guardianship over her.<sup>321</sup>

Just before the Warsaw Uprising began in August 1944:

We also managed to take little Elsa Friedrych out of the convent near Cracow [Kraków] where she had been hidden. The child of our heroic Zalman Friedrych was now completely alone; her father had perished in a gun fight with the Gestapo, her mother had been killed in Maidanek [Majdanek]. She was later brought to the United States and adopted by American comrades.<sup>322</sup>

In actual fact, Zygmunt Friedrych's daughter, who used the name Elżunia, was sheltered at the orphanage of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary in Zamość, whose activities are described later on. Marek Edelman himself, one of the leaders of the ghetto revolt, is said to have collected Elżunia after the liberation.<sup>323</sup>

Whether or not a Jewish child should be christened also proved to be a contentious matter, not always easily resolved. In order to blend in, at a certain age, a Jewish child in a Catholic institution or passing as a Christian in a Catholic milieu needed to receive the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation together with the other children. To do so without incurring sacrilege required that the child be baptized. This often posed a dilemma for nuns and priests as well as for the parents of the Jewish child. Bernard Goldstein recalled:

I am reminded of an incident—one of hundreds—which occurred in the family of Shierachek [Sieraczek?], the former Jewish policeman, my fellow tenant on Grzybowska [Grzybowska Street in Warsaw]. His sister was a servant in a Christian home in Waver [on the

<sup>321</sup> Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 157, 164–67.

<sup>322</sup> Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness*, 239

<sup>323</sup> Adam Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2005), 194.

outskirts of Warsaw]. Naturally she had to act the part of a Catholic. Regularly each Sunday she attended church and participated in the religious ceremonies with her neighbors. Her thirteen-year-old daughter lived with her, under the protection of her employers' daughter, a schoolteacher. Supposedly, the little girl's parents had been arrested by the Nazis, and she had been placed in the custody of the teacher. The girl was raised as a Christian.

The mother, although not at all religious, was deeply concerned about the child. She feared that in time the little girl would forget that she was a Jew and begin to feel truly like a Christian. She would thus be lost to the Jewish people.

Before her school examination, the little girl had to go to the priest for communion with all the other students. The teacher, a deeply religious woman, refused stubbornly to be a party to this deception. Her convictions would not permit her to send a Jewish child who had not been converted to such a holy ceremony. It would be a betrayal of her own religious faith.

The teacher consulted two other priests—the priest at the school was permitted to know nothing about it. One of them told her that his convictions would not permit him to baptize the girl under compulsion. The second, considering the desperate situation of the child, agreed to perform the ceremony.

Now the mother was assailed by doubts. She was afraid that the impressiveness of the ritual would give her child the final push toward Catholicism. In her anxiety she came to Grzibovska to consult with her brother, Marek Edelman, and myself. Hard and bitter, Marek was inclined to oppose the whole idea on the ground that it was tantamount to capitulation. Child or adult, he was damned if he would recommend knuckling under to those Nazi bastards. To hell with them! But the more conservative counsel of Shierachek and myself prevailed. To save her life, the child must be baptized.<sup>324</sup>

The accounts of Jews who survived as children are often problematic, and not entirely reliable, since they were generally not privy to the arrangements that were made for their rescue. These testimonies are often lacking in important information and are prone to speculation. A case in point is the testimony of Nancy Brenner, who was born in Lwów in 1931 as Emilia Zimmer. After escaping from the Janowska Street camp with her mother, something that was arranged by her father, Nancy and her mother were provided with false identity documents as Janina and Helena Kozakiewicz, respectively. These documents were also obtained by her father.

Nancy and her mother travelled to Warsaw, where her father had made arrangements with a woman named Jadwiga, said to be a journalist with the Polish underground, to receive them. Jadwiga was sheltering another Jewish couple at the time. Nancy's father also made arrangements with an unidentified priest, who contacted them at Jadwiga's apartment. The priest helped Jadwiga's mother secure employment with a German family as a housekeeper. He taught Nancy Catholic catechism and rituals, and baptized her so that she could be

<sup>324</sup> Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness*, 224–25.



placed in a convent as a Catholic child. The nuns, whose order is not identified, ran a boarding school for children from affluent families. Nancy's mother, who had been provided with ample funds by her husband, paid for her upkeep at the boarding school. Nancy suggests that the priest had tricked the head of the convent into believing she was Catholic, and that the nuns monitored her in order to expose her cover. Finally, they told her mother, who was posing as her aunt, to take her from the convent. Since there were other Jewish children at the boarding school, there must have been more to the story. Was Nancy's cover compromised?

In any event, her mother contacted the same priest as before, and he found another convent, in an unspecified locality outside of Warsaw, to take Nancy in. This convent housed a shelter for poor children. Again, the order of nuns is not mentioned. Nancy found the atmosphere there more congenial, even though conditions were harsh for all of the children. Just before the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, Nancy's mother decided to take her out of the convent. They spent two months in Warsaw and witnessed the bloody suppression of the revolt. Afterwards, Nancy and her mother were marched out of Warsaw with the Polish population and sent to Germany as labourers.<sup>325</sup>

Decisions to shelter Jews were usually made by the superior general or provincial of the order, or by the superior of a particular convent. In the latter case, the order's superiors were usually also informed. Sister Maria Zenona of the Redeemer (od Zbawiciela), or Ludwika Dobrowolska, the superior general of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny), commonly

<sup>325</sup> Testimony of Nancy Brenner, SFV, Interview code 324; Oral history interview with Nancy Brenner, USHMM, Accession no. 2019.253.173, RG-90.063.0173. Nancy Brenner's remarks about the Poles are even more problematic. She states that the Poles were worse than the Germans, and just as brutal. Allegedly, they had an inborn hatred for Jews as Christ killers, which was augmented by their own (justified?) inferiority complex. She also claims she was more afraid of Poles than Germans, although she provides no evidence of any Jew having sought out help from the Germans. "Why did the Germans build all these concentration camps in Poland?" she asks. Her answer: It was because the Poles would not bother to rise up to prevent the camps from being built. (In fact, Auschwitz was built initially for Polish political prisoners, not Jews; Jews arrived there in large numbers almost a year and a half after the camp opened.) Tellingly, Brenner expresses no appreciation for the help she received. Unfortunately, such opinions are not all that uncommon among Jews who survived with the help of Poles. Roma Buchman, who, together with her sister, was sheltered in a convent in Przemyśl, states: "80 percent of the Polish people were anti-Semites who collaborated with the Germans—they helped them a lot." See the testimony of Roma Buchman, Crestwood, Internet: <http://www.crestwood.on.ca/ohp/buchman-roma/>.



known as the Immaculate Sisters (*niepokalanki*), was well aware of her order's rescue activity and encouraged it wholeheartedly.

Jews were sheltered in all of the order's homes and, according to the order's incomplete records, at least 17 children and 20 adults who have been identified by name were rescued. The identity of many other Jewish charges has not been established. Some 25 Jewish girls found refuge at the boarding schools of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary located in Warsaw, and in nearby Szymanów, Pruszków-Żbików, and Wrzosów. A number of those girls had Semitic features and had to be hidden away when the Germans carried out their inspections.<sup>326</sup>

At the order's Warsaw convent, on Kazimierzowska Street, the decision to shelter Jews was made collegially. The superior, Sister Wanda Garczyńska, wanting a unanimous agreement, summoned all the nuns to a meeting which began with a reading of the Gospel of St. John, chapter 15, verses 13–17, which begins, “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for a friend ...” and ends “These things I command you, that you love one another.” Historian Ewa Kurek records the event, as movingly related to her by Sister Maria Ena Paciorek who was a participant.

It was 1942–43. The school on Kazimierzowska had been closed. The SS was based in a huge block opposite our house, where the RGO [Main Welfare Council] kitchen was open and functioning almost without a break. The people, too, came in a constant stream—children, young people, adults with canisters for soup. Only for soup? For everything. Kazimierzowska pulsed with life—from the nursery to the university. Amongst the hive of activity there were also Jewesses. Real ones. With red, curly hair, freckled, with prominent ears and unusual eyes. Thoroughbreds. There could be no mistake. It was well-known that concealing a Jew meant the death sentence.

The sister knew that other orders had already been warned and searched. So she hid nothing, withheld nothing. She called us together. She began the conference by reading a fragment of the Gospel of St John. ... She explained that she did not wish to jeopardise the house, the sisters, the community. She knew what could be awaiting us. There was no thought of self. She knew: you should love one another as I have loved you. How? So that He gave His Life.

I lowered my head. I did not dare look at the other sisters. We had to decide. If we said one word, openly, honestly admitted to fear for our own skins, our own lives, the lives of

<sup>326</sup> On the rescue activities of the order, see Wiesława Chwedoruk and Magdalena Filipek, “Działalność Zgromadzenia Sióstr Niepokalanego Poczęcia NMP w okresie konspiracji 1939–1945,” in Janusz Marszałec and Katarzyna Minczykowska, eds., *I Kongres Historyków Konspiracji Niepodległościowej: 25 lat niezależnych badań naukowych nad konspiracją niepodległościową 1939–1945: Ludzie, instytucje, wydarzenia (Materiały z XXV sesji naukowej w Toruniu w dniach 12–13 XI 2015 roku)* (Toruń: Fundacja Generał Elżbiety Zawackiej, 2018), 219–48, at pp. 235–41.

so many sisters, the community. ... Was it prudent to risk it for a few Jewesses? It was our decision whether or not they would have to leave.

Silence.

No one stirred. Not a single breath. We were ready. We would not give up the Jewish children. We would rather die, all of us. The silence was overwhelming—we did not look at each other. The sister was sitting with closed eyes, her hands folded over the Gospel. We were ready.

We got up. We did not even pray together as we normally do. We went to Chapel. We felt light and joyful, though very grave. We were ready.<sup>327</sup>

Sister Wanda Garczyńska was awarded by Yad Vashem.<sup>328</sup> The chaplain, Rev. Bronisław Ussas, was also aware of the Jewish charges, as were all the nuns.

Among the charges was Joanna Olczak (later Ronikier), born in 1934 to a Polish father and a Jewish mother, Hanna Olczak (née Mortkowicz, 1905–1968), who had converted to the Lutheranism (known in Poland as the Augsburg Evangelical faith). Like her mother, Joanna was considered to be a Jew under German racial laws. Initially, Joanna, her mother, and her grandmother, Janina Mortkowicz (1875–1960), were sheltered by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary at their convent in Pruszków-Żbików near Warsaw. When their safety became uncertain there, in March 1942, Joanna was transferred to the boarding school on Kazimierzowska Street in Warsaw, and her mother and grandmother moved elsewhere. Other students at the school became aware of

<sup>327</sup> Ewa Kurek-Lesik, "The Conditions of Admittance and the Social Background of Jewish Children Saved by Women's Religious Orders in Poland from 1939–1945," *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 3 (1988): 247.

<sup>328</sup> On Sister Wanda Garczyńska, see Maria Ena (Paciorek), comp. and ed., *Gdzie miłość dojrzewała do bohaterstwa: Wspomnienia o siostrze Wandzie Garczyńskiej, niepokalance* (Warsaw: Koleżeńskie Zjednoczenie Jazłowieckie, 1999); Benedykta Magdalena Filipek, "Wróbel w dłoni Ojca," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 113–30; Stories of Rescue: Wanda Garczyńska, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/she-took-my-hand-tightly-hers-and-thus-we-went-story-sister-wanda-garczynska>. According to the Yad Vashem Righteous Among the Nations database, Sister Wanda Garczyńska was instrumental in the rescue of at least 32 Jews: Lilian (Lili) Lampert (Baczewska), Halina Lampert (Baczewska), Józef Pytowski, Róża Pytowska, Hanna Dymecka, Miriam Fishman (Maria Felińska), Maryla Gajewska, Józefa Jabłońska, Teofila (Tosia) Jabłońska, Irenka Jamicka, Janina Kon Atkins (Jasia Kaniewska), Rachela Szyfka (Teresa Kurek, later Rochelle Dreeban), Maria Ogonowska, Joanna Olczak Ronikier, Aleksandra Olejniczak, Krystyna Siemińska, Ester Syrkis Blum, Ala (Malka) Syrkis Pylowsky, Ida (Yehudit) Syrkis Lewy, Maryla Solecka, Emil Kaliski (Józef Domagalski), Rachela (Anna) Kaliska, (first name unknown) Kaliska, Henryk Mioduszewski, Hanna Mortkowicz Olczak, Janina Mortkowicz (Żaneta Horwitz), Józefa Nowicka, Seva (Sheva) Lewy, Seva (Sheva) Blum, Chawa (Chana) Szydłowska (later Anna Clarke), Maria Trzcińska, and Seva (Sheva) Pylowsky.

Joanna's Jewish background. A photograph taken on her First Holy Communion showed seven girls, five of whom were Jewish.<sup>329</sup>

I remember Nena [i.e., Irena Grabowska, a member of the Home Army] well. It was she who took me, on the advice of the Sisters of the Order of the Immaculate Conception, from Piastów to the boarding school they ran on Kazimierzowska Street in Warsaw.

I can clearly see my first encounter with that place. I am standing on the threshold of a huge gymnasium, holding Irena's hand tightly. The shining floor smells of fresh polish. By the wall a large group of girls are sitting cross-legged, all staring curiously at the new girl. I am dying of embarrassment and fear. For the first time in my life I must remain alone in a new place, with strange people. I want to tear away from Irena and run home crying, but I know it is not possible. There is no home, and if I "make a scene" here—my grandmother's most abusive definition of hysterical behaviour—I shall compromise myself in the eyes of these girls for ever, and that will not help me at all. So I take the first conscious decision of my entire life: I let go of Irena's hand and, on that shining floor, in defiance of fate, I do a somersault, then a second, and a third, and keep on rolling until I end up at the other end of the room. The girls clap and the nuns laugh. I know I have won their hearts, I feel accepted, and thus safe.

That was when I found a way of coping with life by hiding my true emotions behind a jester's mask. I put a lot of effort into pretending to be a resourceful, cheerful child and into amusing everyone around me. It was the special skill of many occupation-era children. None of the dozen or so Jewish girls hidden at the convent, some of whom already had terrible experiences behind them, ever despaired or showed their sadness or fear about the fate of their loved ones. The crying was done at night. The day went by as normally as could be, like before the war, criss-crossed with all sorts of activities. The nuns were gentle and smiling. Nowadays I cannot understand how on earth such extraordinary calm and cheerfulness prevailed in that ark sailing on the oceans of the occupation nightmare, when absolutely everything going on inside the convent carried the risk of death. They were not just hiding Jewish children, but also teaching subjects banned by the Nazis. There were secret study groups for secondary-school pupils, secret university lectures, a priesthood [chaplaincy] for Home Army soldiers, contacts with the underground, help for prisoners and people deprived of a living, and food for malnourished Jews who had escaped from the Ghetto. Courageous and composed, the nuns were only people, after all, and must sometimes have been terrified at the thought of what would happen if the Germans discovered just one of those crimes. Everyone knows how easily adults' worries are passed on to children. How did they manage to protect us from fear? They did not hide the danger from us. Frequent alarm practices prepared the schoolchildren for surprise raids by the Germans. When an internal bell rang during lessons, we gathered the pre-war books for Polish and history from our desks double-quick and shoved them into a special storage space—a sort of cloakroom—among our shoe bags and gym kits, where we always put them away after school anyway. Sometimes the alarm was real—then the nuns hid the endangered children in the enclosure. I am told that I once sat inside the altar for a few hours during one such search, but I cannot remember. By then I was already thoroughly

<sup>329</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 210–2.

versed in conspiracy. I knew by heart all the new facts in each successive fake identity card. This time my mother was called Maria Olczak, née Maliszewska, and my grandmother had become her own daughter's mother-in-law, borrowing the name Julia Olczak, née Wagner, from my father's late mother. My grandmother's sister Flora, alias Emilia Babicka, née Płońska, daughter of a carpenter born in Łunińsk in Byelorussia, was no longer her sister, but just a chance acquaintance. Flora's husband Samuel was called Stanisław. Luckily he was still her husband, which made his life much easier, because his daughters, Karolina and Stefania, who had two different surnames and were not apparently related to each other or to their parents, were always making blunders and were incapable of hiding their family connections. It was all very complicated.

What did I tell my schoolmates at the boarding school about myself? I do not think anyone ever asked me any questions, which is amazing, because everyone knows how full of curiosity little girls can be. Evidently the nuns issued a strict ban on talking about personal matters. That must be why I had no idea about the situation and origin of the other pupils. How many secrets those little heads must have been hiding. How many lies they must have contained. How much information as seemingly basic as one's first name, surname and family address they had to bury as deep as possible in their memories to avoid revealing them accidentally and causing a disaster. The challenge to "be yourself!"—that basic condition for mental sanity—had been replaced with the categorical order: "Forget who you are and become someone else!"—which was a life-saver, but later on, after the war, made life immensely complicated, because it was hard to recover one's lost identity.

Once every two weeks I visited my family, who were still living in Piastów. Irene used to collect me from the convent and take me home. ...

The convent refectory smelled of ersatz coffee and slightly burned porridge, while little girls chased up and down the corridors laughing. The whole boarding school was absorbed in preparing a Nativity play for Shrovetide. The play was entirely written and composed by Miss Zosia Orłowska—nowadays Zofia Rostworowska, wife of Poland's first Minister of Culture after independence was regained in 1989—who rehearsed our roles with us. The show was to be performed before an audience from the city: relatives and friends of the pupils. The little girls of Jewish origin were also eager to take part, so the good Miss Zosia came up with the idea that they would appear as couriers of the exotic Three Kings. Coloured turbans and make-up would disguise their Semitic looks. I was a Negro page and, all backed-up, I could freely show off my gymnastic skills. Nowadays the first-hand accounts that Sister Ena has collected in her book [*Where Love Matured into Heroism*] remind me of other, less amusing adventures. Anna Kaliska writes: "One day three Volksdeutsch appeared in the parlour with a demand to hand over the little Olczak girl, whose mother was a Jew. They demanded an inspection of all the children, and had come with precise instructions. Sister Wanda [Garczyńska] locked the little girl and a few others whose origin can easily be guessed behind the enclosure on the second floor, and the rest had to file into the parlour. Then they began to inspect the house, first the ground floor, then the first floor. Sister Wanda showed them round. Her explanation that the enclosure was on the second floor and that access there was forbidden by the rules of the Order was passed over in silence, and the three Germans started to go up the stairs. We remained on the first floor. I can still hear their heavy footsteps today—I can

remember the appalling fear—we knew all too well what would happen to her and the children. Some sisters were praying in the chapel as the footsteps approached the door of the enclosure. Then there was a moment's silence, and we heard Sister Wanda calmly say: 'I shall once again remind you that this is the enclosure.' And again there was a silence, in which it was felt as if everything around us and inside us had died and gone still. And then footsteps coming down the stairs, as they were gone."

At that point, at the nuns' request Irena Grabowska took me away from the convent to live with Maria Jahns in Pruszków. ...

According to the list, my mother and grandmother spent that terrible Easter at Tworki, where they lived from March to June 1943. ... The nuns had taken me back again. The girls in my class were getting ready for their First Communion, including those of Jewish origin, with their parents' consent, if they were still alive, or that of their guardians if they had any. My secular family approved of the Catholic education that was instilled into me at the convent, besides which I had been christened before the war.

Yet the nuns did not force any of the girls in their charge to change their religion. Dr. Zofia Szymańska-Rosenblum, who in September 1942 saved her little niece from the Ghetto and brought her to Kazimierzowska Street, writes in her memoirs: "With the greatest subtlety Sister Wanda asked me if I would agree to Jasia being christened and taking Holy Communion, assuring me that it was the child's ardent wish and would be desirable in terms of safety. 'But if you have any objections, please rest assured that my attitude to Jasia will not be changed and that I shall save the person.'"

Jasia's mother had been deported from the Ghetto earlier, probably to Treblinka, her father fought in the Ghetto to the last moment and must have been killed there. I had no idea about my schoolfriend's experiences. She did not talk about them, and if she cried, it was only when no one could see. We were both very excited about our First Communion. We wrote down our sins on cards, so that, God forbid, we would not forget them during confession. We spent hours at our prayers in the chapel, and now and then we ran to one of the nuns with the happy news that we felt a 'vocation'. Two jolly, lively little girls, enjoying life, as if they hadn't a care.

On 3 June 1943, the day of our First Communion came. Some photographs of the ceremony have survived. In one of them seven little girls in white sacramental vestments are posing for the camera—it is the classic souvenir picture, taken by a professional photographer. Five of the girls in the photograph are Jewish. I am astounded by the courage, and at the same time the sensitivity, of the nuns. They heroically regarded hiding these children as their Christian duty. They treated the inevitable threat of death as a consequence of their decision. But where did they get the motherly sensibility that prompted them, amid the all-surrounding danger, to give us a little joy? Not just spiritual but also secular, the kind little girls should have—somehow they knew we had to look pretty in our white dresses, made to measure and decorated with embroidery, that we had to have little white garlands on our heads, our hair twisted into curls, and that we must have a souvenir of that memorable day. Those photographs, and I have several at home, always move me with their festivity and solemnity, absurd, it would seem, in those awful times. Or maybe the photos had some other, hidden aim? Perhaps they were supposed to save us in the event of danger, to convince the people who came for us that as ardent Catholics we did not

deserve to die? If that was what the provident nuns intended, I feel even greater emotion as I gaze at our earnest little faces. We all survived. Thank God.<sup>330</sup>

Two of the Jewish girls rescued at the Warsaw convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary were Felicja Riesel (later Irene Furness), passing as Irena Kosowska, and Nina Rotman, passing as Nowakowska.

In 1941, immediately after the German occupation of Lwow [Lwów], Maria and Bronisław [Bronisław] Bochenek decided to help their Jewish acquaintances who had studied at the university with Maria before the occupation. After the ghetto was sealed off, the Bocheneks took food to David Riesel, a Jewish doctor, and his family. Maria also gave her birth certificate to a Jewish woman named Susanna Glowiczower, which made it possible for her to move to Warsaw. Bronisław, who was forced to flee because of his left-wing views, settled in Cracow [Kraków], where he was later joined by Maria. The Bocheneks continued their good work in Cracow, offering shelter to Riesel, his wife, Lea, and their six-year-old daughter, Felicia, who had escaped from the Lwow ghetto. Since the Bocheneks were on the Gestapo's "Wanted" list, Felicia was transferred to a local convent [Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Kazimierzowska St. in Warsaw<sup>331</sup>], while her parents fled to Warsaw. The Bocheneks themselves also fled to Warsaw, after finding an apartment in Lwow for the three members of the Amscislawski family, who also sought refuge with them. The Bocheneks likewise sheltered Professor Jozef [Józef] Feldman, who was being hounded by the Gestapo, first in their Cracow home and later in their Warsaw home. In Warsaw, the Bocheneks helped Professor Henryk Glowiczower, Susanna's husband, who was already in Warsaw under an assumed identity. Throughout the occupation, the Bocheneks saw to all the needs of their Jewish acquaintances who sought refuge with them. They took special care of Lea Riesel, who was in the throes of a nervous breakdown, and her daughter, Felicia, who had taken ill at the convent and required hospitalization. In undertaking these selfless acts of courage, the Bocheneks were guided by an unwavering sense of loyalty to their friends.<sup>332</sup>

During the occupation, Zygmunt Rytel, a journalist by profession, was active in the Socialist Fighting Organization (*Socjalistyczna Organizacja Bojowa – SOB*) in Warsaw. Rytel produced forged papers, printed underground publications, and maintained indirect connections with the Jewish National Committee that operated on the Aryan side of the city. Rytel, as a courier for the Jewish National Committee, helped Jews who escaped from the ghetto and provided them with the financial support, and documents, housing and jobs. Rytel also helped move Jews from place to place—sometimes accommodating Jewish fugitives in his own apartment—and kept them in touch with each other. Three of the Jews whom Rytel assisted were Sonia Wisznia and her two daughters, Rina and Shulamit. After they fled from the ghetto, he concealed them in his home, provided them with money and Aryan

<sup>330</sup> Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, *In the Garden of Memory: A Family Memoir* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 253–63.

<sup>331</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 49; Testimony of Maria Bochenek, SFV, Interview code 35405. Although passed off as a Catholic child, the nuns surmised she was Jewish and hid her behind the chapel altar during inspections of the convent by the Gestapo.

<sup>332</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 99.



papers, and arranged housing for them. Rytel also helped his friend Bruno Rotman [passing as Nowakowski] and his two daughters, who had fled from Lwów [Lwów] to Warsaw. He arranged an apartment and a job for Bruno, placed the elder daughter [Marta] in the residence of a nursing school, and enrolled the younger daughter [Nina] in a convent [of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary<sup>333</sup>] Rytel also helped a number of Jews who contacted him for assistance in living on the Aryan side and served them as an address in case of trouble.<sup>334</sup>

Sister Wanda Garczyńska committed herself to rescuing Jews under the influence of a Dominican theologian, Fr. Bernard Przybylski, who was engaged in underground activities in Warsaw.

... starting in August 1942, Jews fled the ghetto en masse, hid where they could, begged for help. Private people hid them, religious congregations hid them, and we this did not pass us by. Directly and indirectly, through priests or former students, friends or other congregations, they begged us to take them in, to hide them. I hesitated, I made excuses, but gave in. Father Przybylski, also hiding under the pseudonym “Father Wacław,” told me at that time that it was a simple Christian duty and that dispelled my doubts.<sup>335</sup>

Zuzanna Sienkiewicz, a frequent visitor to the Kazimierzowska Street convent, cited the encouragement for rescue activities that was given by Rev. Stanisław Trzeciak.

In those horrible times Sister Wanda [Garczyńska] radiated love of her neighbours, be they who they may, and even the enemy was not forgotten in her ardent prayers, in her begging God for forgiveness for the crimes being committed incessantly in those times. One of those “operations” of which Sister Wanda was in charge at the time was that of hiding little Jewish girls. She took them into the boarding school with false documents. Some were easily passed off as “Aryans,” but others had very prominent Semitic features. These poor little ones would disappear into pre-arranged hiding places whenever there was a visit by the Germans. Some “Aryan” mothers reproached Sister Wanda, asking how, at a time when it was so difficult to get an education for children, a Catholic school could be filled with non-Catholic children to the detriment of Polish Catholics. Sister Wanda was convinced that she was behaving righteously but, like all people truly great in spirit, she was very humble and she decided to seek the advice of a wise priest on this matter. It was then that Father [Stanisław] Trzeciak came to Kazimierzowska St.; he had been known before the war for his stand, often very firm, against the influence of the Jewish faith on our Polish psyche. For many he was the standard-bearer whose public utterances they used to justify their anti-Semitic actions. Then, when Sister Wanda presented the entire argument and the reproaches which she had suffered for her actions, Father Trzeciak

<sup>333</sup> Testimony of Zygmunt Rytel, JHI, record group 301, no. 7213.

<sup>334</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 689.

<sup>335</sup> Wiesława Chwedoruk and Magdalena Filipek, “Działalność Zgromadzenia Sióstr Niepokalanego Poczęcia NMP w okresie konspiracji 1939–1945,” in Marszałec and Minczykowska, *I Kongres Historyków Konspiracji Niepodległościowej*, 219–48, at pp. 238–39.



remained silent for a moment and then asked: “What is the danger to these little Catholic girls if you do not have room for them?”

“They will study in worse conditions or they may even completely lose these years of school.”

“And what danger would there be to the others if you were to send them away?”

“You know, Father, inevitable death.”

“Therefore, Sister, you do not have the right to hesitate and consider. Priority goes to those little ones in danger—to the little Jewesses,” answered the priest.

These are facts which I know from Sister Wanda’s own account to me and, in addition, I know that in all the Homes of the Nuns of the Order of the Immaculate Conception, in Szymanów, in Nowy Sącz, in Jarosław and other places, smaller and older Jewish girls were hidden and sheltered and in urgent cases, so were their mothers.

In Kielce Voivodship I know of cases where an entire village knew that a Jew or Jewess were hiding out, disguised in peasant clothes, and no one betrayed them even though they were poor Jews who not only could not pay for their silence but had to be fed, clothed and housed.<sup>336</sup>

Rev. Stanisław Trzeciak, the pastor of St. Anthony’s Church in Warsaw, is a controversial figure. He gained the reputation of being the most outspoken anti-Semitic cleric in interwar Poland.<sup>337</sup> Yet during the occupation he demonstrated concern for the fate of endangered Jews, especially children.<sup>338</sup> He instructed the staff at the Caritas soup kitchen at his church on Senatorska Street to dispense food to Jews.<sup>339</sup> Henry Frankel reported that he encountered Rev. Trzeciak in the winter of 1941, when he went for food to St. Alexander’s Church on Three Crosses Square in Warsaw. Even though he recognized Frankel as a Jew, Rev. Trzeciak treated him respectfully and gave him bread.<sup>340</sup> In order to enhance the cover of Anna (Anita) Mączkowska, his Jewish fiancée, Jerzy Duracz, a Communist underground activist in Warsaw, decided to marry her in a public ceremony. He turned to a friend who implored a Jesuit priest to assist with the arrangements. The Jesuit secured a dispensation from the bishop of Warsaw from publishing banns and permission to hold the marriage ceremony at St. Anthony’s Church, officiated by Rev. Trzeciak.<sup>341</sup>

<sup>336</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 360–61.

<sup>337</sup> Rev. Trzeciak’s writings on the Talmud, condemned by some as calumnious, must be reassessed in the light of current, scholarly literature such as Peter Schäfer’s *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>338</sup> Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński, “Trzeciak Stanisław,” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”*, vol. 17 (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2006), 214; Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 389.

<sup>339</sup> Testimony of Leon Bukowiński, JHI, record group 301, no. 4424.

<sup>340</sup> Testimony of Henry Frankel, SFV, Interview code 20142.

<sup>341</sup> Testimony of Jerzy Duracz, SFV, Interview code 31207.

According to historian Szymon Datner, Rev. Trzeciak rescued at least one Jewish child.<sup>342</sup> According to a statement submitted to Yad Vashem by Stanisław (Stanley) Kornacki, formerly Tanchum Kupferblum of Sandomierz (later a resident of Montreal), Rev. Trzeciak sheltered two Jews from Kraków who survived the war.<sup>343</sup> An episode that has raised controversy is Rev. Trzeciak's wartime ties to a pro-German organization and his alleged role in the arrest of Rev. Tadeusz Puder, whose fate is described later.<sup>344</sup> Rev. Trzeciak was executed by the Germans on August 8, 1944, during the Warsaw Uprising, just outside his church.

Sister Wanda Garczyńska is also remembered fondly by other Jews whom she helped. In the summer of 1943, Anna Clarke, then Chana Szydłowska, found herself in Warsaw's Hotel Polski together with her parents. The Germans had concocted a scheme to lure Jews out of hiding by extending an offer of passage to safe countries. Around 2,500 Jews came out of their hiding places and moved to Hotel Polski. In July 1943, some 2,000 Jews were sent to the Vittel and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps, where almost all of them perished. On July 15, 1943, the 300 remaining Jews, the ones without foreign passports, were executed in Warsaw's Pawiak prison, inside the ghetto.

And in Hotel Polski I saw my cousin Esther Syrkis ... She was here with her sisters Idunia and Mala, Mala's husband, and the three little daughters of the three sisters. They had exchange papers to go to Germany, and were getting ready to leave the next morning. With a pile of children's clothing getting rapidly smaller on her ironing board, she was telling me of Sister Wanda.

Sister Wanda had hidden her, her sisters and a sister-in-law of one of them. Found a job for Mala's husband as a gardener in one of the monastery's gardens. Most important of all, hid the three little girls. When the mothers came to claim them before coming to the Hotel, the children were "full of lice," Esther took her eyes off the board to look at me—"but alive and in one piece." "Don't write anything down, but here is her address. Go to her when in need and she will help you, too," she was saying next morning, shortly before the whole group left in an orderly fashion. And to their death, as we now know. A few hours later the Gestapo Marias came and took away everyone still in the Hotel.

<sup>342</sup> Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 389, 418 ("w czasie okupacji przyczynił się do ratowania przynajmniej jednego dziecka żydowskiego").

<sup>343</sup> Anna Poray, comp. and ed., *Polish Righteous: Those Who Risked Their Lives*, Internet: <http://www.savingjews.org/> (Cieslakowski, Jan); published as Anna Poray, *Those Who Risked Their Lives* (n.p.: Anna Poray, 2007).

<sup>344</sup> On Rev. Stanisław Trzeciak's controversial dimension, see Tomasz Szarota, *U progu Zagłady: Zajścia antyżydowskie i pogromy w okupowanej Europie* (Warsaw: Sic!, 2000), 48–50; Jan Żaryn and Andrzej Żbikowski's commentary in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 389–90, 438–39; Dariusz Libionka and Jan Grabowski, "Anatomia donosu ks. Stanisława Trzeciaka na ks. Tadeusza Pudra," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 13 (2017): 641–76.

When the trucks came I was standing in the wide entrance gate of the Hotel. Two girls in a party of workers passing the gate on their way to register at a brick factory in the neighbourhood made room for me between them. ... Outside the Hotel they let me go free ...

My own meeting with Sister Wanda took place late in the fall of that same year when I needed a place to stay. From a dark street up a dark staircase and into a large dimly lit room where Sisters slept all across the floor. Soon I found a mattress, too. "Why are you risking the lives of so many people because of me?" I asked Sister Wanda. "For the love of the God we have in common," she answered.

Soon Sister Wanda had a job for me. A country estate had asked for a governess for a high-school boy. Sister Wanda had confidence in my ability to teach the required subjects except one. I was to teach the boy religion.

... Here now in 1943 was a nun in her cell patiently teaching me the arcane of her religion, the catechism, the prayers, the mass, to fool her parishioners. The miracle of the mass was the fact over which I stumbled over and over again, both the fact and the significance of the fact that the transformation of the bread and of the wine was happening in front of my eyes. ...

At the estate, my 14-year-old student showed little enthusiasm for study, secular or religious, thus leaving me plenty of time for the ponds, the woods and air of the countryside. Then on Sunday morning it was time for church.

Sister Wanda had warned me in Warsaw not to try to avoid going and I went. No one made any remarks about my behaviour either at church or later. But many eyebrows must have been raised. ... Never before except for a school excursion had I been inside a church, let alone during a service in a little country church. I couldn't have known where to stand, to sit, to get up, make the sign of the cross or to kneel.<sup>345</sup>

Other memoirs also attest to Jews leaving the safety of convents for the doomed Hotel Polski. David Götzl (Goetzl, later Gilbert) removed his young daughter, Miriam or Micki, passing as Maria Kurkowska, from a convent outside Warsaw, where she had been sheltered for about a year, when he and his wife left their separate hideouts and went to Hotel Polski in July 1943. Miraculously, all three of them survived after their deportation to Bergen-Belsen.<sup>346</sup> Three teenage girls from the Warsaw ghetto had been placed in a convent by Irena Adamowicz, a member of the Polish underground, in early 1943. Pnina, Dina and Ariela left the safety of that convent for Hotel Polski.<sup>347</sup>

<sup>345</sup> Anna Clarke, "Sister Wanda," *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 7 (2002).

<sup>346</sup> David Gilbert, as told to Tim Shortridge and Michael D. Frounfelter, *No Place To Run: A True Story* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002), 111, 113, 142, 159, 167.

<sup>347</sup> Hella Rufeisen-Schüpper, *Pożegnanie Miłej 18: Wspomnienia łączniczki Żydowskiej Organizacji Bojowej* (Kraków: Beseder, 1996), 126; Hella Rufeisen-Schüpper, *Abschied von Miła 18: Als Ghattokurierin zwischen Krakau und Warschau* (Köln: Scriba Verlag, 1998), 199.

After escaping from the ghetto in Lwów in September 1942, Schieli Frisch happened to encounter a sympathetic priest in Chlebowice Świrskie, not far from Lwów. The priest provided her with a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Michalina Kaczyńska. She then went to Warsaw, where she took up various jobs under her false identity. She secured a position as governess with the Juchniewicz family in Sękocin near Raszyn, with the assistance of the superior of the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Kazimierzowska Street. In 1957, she left Poland for Israel.<sup>348</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Otwock, Izia Jabłońska (later Judy Kolt, b. 1936 as Iska Jabłońska,) and her sister, Tosia (Tauba), who was three years older than Izia, survived the war by finding shelter in a series of places, including several convents. They first stayed with an elderly Polish couple in Warsaw, also named Jabłoński, where they acquired new, Christian identities. Izia became Józefa (or Józia) Jabłońska. They were taught Catholic prayers and how to behave in church. The two sisters then moved to Rabka, near Zakopane, where they stayed at a boarding school with another Jewish girl, Teresa (Rachel) Rogozińska. Afterwards, Izia separated from her sister and stayed with her mother, Fela (Felicja or Fajga) Jabłońska, who worked as a servant in Częstochowa.

The three girls—Izia, Tosia and Teresa—were then sheltered by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary at their convent on Hoża Street in Warsaw. Not long after, Stefan Jabłoński, their father, enrolled Izia and Tosia at the boarding school of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Kazimierzowska Street in Warsaw. It soon became apparent to the nuns, however, that the girls were Jewish, as their hair, which was dyed, started to grow back a darker colour. Nonetheless, the nuns allowed them to remain at the boarding school, which housed about a dozen Jewish girls. Izia writes, “I can also say that we were treated well—in fact, with affection.” The nuns took great precautions to ensure the safety of their charges. They had to be prepared for periodic raids by German soldiers looking for Jews.

When the alarm was real and not a practice run, the nuns would hide some of the children as well. The usual place was in the chapel behind the altar, or sometimes in the nuns’ enclosure itself. Sometimes one or more of the girls would be put in the infirmary and have their faces bandaged, and it was rumoured that there was a mumps epidemic. The German soldiers were not too eager to catch mumps or any other childhood disease, so they generally didn’t go near the infirmary. Bandaging the faces of children deemed to have Semitic features served to disguise them, and in one case, bandaging the head to hide the suspect red hair of Jasia Kaniewska (Janina Kon). When the nuns tried to dye

<sup>348</sup> Testimony of Michalina Lewkowicz-Kaczyńska, JHI, record group 301, no. 7113. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 271 (Nusia Heller).

her hair blonde, it had turned green. ... seven-year-old Jasia had turned up at the front door at the convent one day and said, "I am Jasia and I have nobody." They took her in.<sup>349</sup>

Even though their convent was located across the street from the SS headquarters, the nuns also fed Jewish children who ventured out of the ghetto in search of food. For a period of several weeks, Izia and Tosia stayed at the nuns' residence in Brwinów, outside Warsaw. With her father's consent, Tosia prepared to make her First Communion, thus allowing her to blend in with other girls her age. To celebrate this event, on June 3, 1943, their father took his daughters to a restaurant where tragedy struck. He was arrested by two men from the Gestapo. A waitress urged the girls to run away.

At the time, their mother was staying at the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary on Hoża Street, in Warsaw, and her daughters joined her there. Mother Matylda Getter, the provincial superior, sent Sister Stefania Miąskiewicz to Siedlce, where Stefan Jabłoński was imprisoned, to attempt to get him released by offering a bribe to German officials. But by the time she arrived, he had been executed. In the meantime, afraid that their father might divulge their whereabouts under torture, Sister Wanda Garczyńska, the superior of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, arranged for the girls to be given temporary shelter by the Resurrectionist Sisters at their boarding school in Warsaw's Żoliborz suburb.

Afterwards, they were whisked from place to place: the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szymanów; a convent in Warsaw that housed a boys' boarding school, run by another order; and an orphanage of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wrzosów, on the outskirts of Warsaw (mistakenly identified by Izia as the Grey Ursulines). Turmoil set in as the Soviet front advanced and the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, when the nuns and children left Wrzosów and took shelter at the Institute for the Blind in Laski, run by the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross. After a short stay at Laski, Izia and Tosia were subsequently hidden in an old folk's home, then on a farm, and next with their mother, whom farmers belonging to the underground had taken in. Their final lodging, in January 1945, was with Sister Stefania Miąskiewicz's mother, who sheltered a number of Jews on her farm in Piastów, near Warsaw. Their ordeal ended when the Soviet army arrived in Piastów.<sup>350</sup>

<sup>349</sup> Judy Kolt (Jablonska), *Tell It To the Squirrels* (Caulfield South, Victoria: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2009), 43.

<sup>350</sup> Kolt (Jablonska), *Tell It To the Squirrels*, 26–106. See also Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 181.

Lilian Lampert (b. 1931) was one of at least twenty girls sheltered by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her Polish friends, the Mikre family, who had contacts with the nuns, made the arrangements.<sup>351</sup> At first, Lilian stayed at the nuns' Warsaw convent on Kazimierzowska Street, under the name of Ludwika Baczewska, and then at their convent in Szymanów, outside Warsaw.

Sister Wanda Garczynska [Garczyńska] was the prioress of the Chaste Sisters [Niepokalanki—Sisters of the Immaculate Conception] Nunnery in Warsaw, which served as a shelter for many Jews, especially children, during the war. One of these children was Lilian Lampert, who was admitted into the nunnery's boarding school with the help of prewar acquaintances of her parents. "I was treated exactly like the rest of the children, which profoundly influenced the whole of my adolescence. I was still learning to play the piano," Lilian wrote in her testimony to Yad Vashem. Lilian spent vacations in Szymanów [Szymanów], where the sisters ran a boarding school for older girls. At a certain point, the sisters decided to move her there permanently, since Szymanów was a long way from Warsaw and therefore safer. She was then able to see her mother [Halina Lampert], who had managed to procure Aryan papers. Sister Wanda also helped Roza and Josef Pytowski, who turned up in Warsaw with nowhere to stay after escaping from the Piotrków [Piotrków] Trybunalski ghetto. Their daughter, Franciszka, asked Sister Wanda for help and she found them a place to stay with two elderly women who were in touch with the nunnery. The frightened women suspected that the Pytowskis were Jewish but Sister Wanda did her best to allay their suspicions. "She took care of my mother as if she was her own mother. She taught her how to behave naturally during services in the nunnery chapel as well as in the courtyard, where joint evening prayers were conducted every day," wrote Rosa [sic] and Josef's daughter Maria. "Sister Wanda never regretted having sheltered a Jewish girl and allowing her to join services."<sup>352</sup>

In her Yad Vashem testimony, Lilian wrote:

The nuns knew of my identity and I retained my real name. They showed great courage by providing refuge for a Jewish child with red hair and Semitic features. ... I was treated exactly the same way as any other child at school. ... I even continued my piano lessons. Only my outings outside the compounds were curtailed, understandably, for my own safety.<sup>353</sup>

Summers and holidays were spent at the order's affiliate in Szymanów, a village located west of Warsaw, where the nuns conducted a boarding school for high school girls. Since Szymanów was more isolated, and hence seemed more secure, it was decided to transfer Lilian there permanently. Lilian's mother, Halina

<sup>351</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 75. Liliana Lampert mentions Ryszard Mikre, his sister, Waca Hoszowska-Mikre, and their mother, Maria Mikre.

<sup>352</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 227–28.

<sup>353</sup> Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust*, 213, based on the testimony of Lilian Lampert, YVA, file 2396b.



Lampert, also stayed at the convent in Szymanów for a period of time.<sup>354</sup> Lilian recalled that she was not the only Jewish child at that institution: “I remember, sometime in 1943–44 the arrival of another red-haired girl, and the nuns’ efforts to bleach her hair, which attracted my curiosity. Her name was Jasia [Janina Kon]. That’s all I knew at that time. She too survived the war.”<sup>355</sup>

Later on, the convent in Szymanów was subjected to constant, random inspections by the Germans. Part of the convent’s building was requisitioned to billet German soldiers. In the fall of 1944, Lilian rejoined her mother, who was hiding in the village of Zaręby Kościelne, near Grójec. They remained there until the area was liberated in February 1945. Lilian recalled with affection some of the nuns she had contact with: Sisters Ireneia, Brigida, Wanda, Teresa, Deodata, Blanka, and Bernarda, as well as the chaplain, Rev. Franciszek Skalski. Until 1943, the superior of the convent in Szymanów was Sister Krystyna of the Cross (od Krzyża), actually Joanna Kossecka, and from 1943 to 1945 Sister Assumpta of Jesus (od Jezusa), actually Maria Sapięha. The congregation’s general house was also located in Szymanów, and the Superior General, Sister Zenona of the Redeemer (od Zbawiciela), actually Ludwika Dobrowolska, fully endorsed the rescue activities carried out by the order.

In her memoir, *Byłam tylko lekarzem...* [I Was Only a Doctor...],<sup>356</sup> Zofia Szymańska (née Roza Rozenblum, or Rosenblum), a renowned neurophysicist, describes how, after escaping from the Warsaw ghetto in August 1942 with her niece, Janina (Jasia) Kon (later Atkins), with the help of Maria Łeszeżanka (Leszega), a municipal employee, she found shelter with the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Kazimierzowska Street in Warsaw. She was placed there by her protector, Irena Solska, who had taken her in after she left the ghetto. Dr. Szymańska mentions in particular Sister Wanda Garczyńska. Within a few weeks, she was transferred to a small convent of the Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus (Grey Ursulines) in Ołtarzew (Ożarów), outside Warsaw, where she lived until April 1945, with the approval of that congregation’s Mother General, Pia (Helena) Leśniewska. Dr. Szymańska mentions in particular Sister Maria Ziemacka (Sister Magdalena of Divine Mercy).

In both convents, Dr. Szymańska received material care and an abundance of spiritual comfort from many nuns and priests, among them Rev. Józef Dąbrowski,

<sup>354</sup> Kazimierz Medyński, *Wojenne Łomianki: Wspomnienia mieszkańców z lat 1939–1945* (Łomianki: Pommard, 2008), 104–5; Wiesława Chwedoruk and Magdalena Filipek, “Działalność Zgromadzenia Sióstr Niepokalanego Poczęcia NMP w okresie konspiracji 1939–1945,” in Marszałec and Minczykowska, *I Kongres Historyków Konspiracji Niepodległościowej*, 219–48, at p. 236.

<sup>355</sup> Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust*, 213.

<sup>356</sup> Zofia Szymańska, *Byłam tylko lekarzem...* (Warsaw: Pax, 1979), 145–77.



a Pallottine, who comforted her in difficult moments. No one attempted to convert her. Dressed as a postulant, she would walk around the village. Concerned for her safety, a Blue policeman urged the nuns to keep her hidden away.<sup>357</sup> Although her presence in Ołtarzew was widely known, no one betrayed her. Dr. Szymańska's 10-year-old niece, Janina (Jasia) Kon (going by the name of Kaniewska), who had a very Semitic appearance, was also taken in by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Kazimierzowska Street in Warsaw. Afterwards, she stayed at the nuns' boarding schools in Wrzósów and Szymanów, outside of Warsaw.

All of the sisters at the boarding school in Szymanów were aware that many of their young charges were Jewish. So were the employees and lay staff, the parents of the other students, and many villagers. None of the Christian parents removed their children from the school, despite the dangerous situation there; at one point, a German military unit was quartered in the convent. In fact, many of the parents contributed to the upkeep of the Jewish children. Dr. Szymańska wrote: "The children were under the protection of the entire convent and village. Not one traitor was to be found among them." Throughout this time, Dr. Szymańska remained under the watchful eye of Sister Andrzeja, actually Maria Stefania Górka, about whom there will be more to say later. Sister Andrzeja kept in touch with Janina Kon's parents in the Warsaw ghetto until they were deported. Dr. Szymańska's story is also related by Margherita Marchione.

With the German occupation of Poland in 1939, the people of Warsaw faced a hopeless situation. Dr. Szymanska became involved in the work of helping thousands of Jewish children. While still working for Centos [the Union of Welfare Societies for Jewish Orphans] during the first winter of the war, she understood the future fate of Warsaw Jews and the lack of help from the Jewish organizations outside Poland, especially American Jews. She knew that this was the beginning of the end. With her two sisters, brother-in-law and nine-year-old niece, Jasia, she lived in the Warsaw Ghetto from October 1940. The Centos Building was bombed on the first day of the War. In 1942, the Germans closed the Centos and her permit was terminated. The program was liquidated. All two hundred residents were exterminated.

When the reality of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto became imminent, Sister Golembiowska [Gołębiowska], who was working with the Polish underground network, persuaded Dr. Szymanska to leave the ghetto with Jasia. They were moved by the network to the Institute for Boys at 97 Puławska [Puławska] Street. Another Catholic friend, Irene [Irena] Solska, took Dr. Szymanska to Sister Wanda Garczyńska [Garczyńska] of the Immaculate Conception Sisters on Kazimierzowska Street. This convent was a link in the underground network to "help those who were hiding and living in danger and misery." Within seventeen days she was relocated with the Ursuline Sisters. Jasia, entrusted to a family friend and colleague, spoke about the bombings of the Warsaw Ghetto, accidentally disclosed

<sup>357</sup> Andrzej W. Kaczorowski, "W szarym domu," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (November 2010): 57–64, at p. 61.

her Jewish background. Immediately she was transferred to Kazimierzowska Street and instructed to approach the gate alone. She knocked and said: “I’m Jasia and I don’t have anyone.” Sister Wanda responded, “No, my child, you are not alone, you have me.” During these years of hiding, Jasia was moved many times among the villages of Wrzosowo [Wrzosów] and Szymanowo [Szymanów] and Kazimierzowska Street. The Gestapo suspected that the nuns, under the pretext of foster care for Polish orphans, were saving the lives of many Jewish children. In spite of constant danger the girls attended classes regularly in a serene atmosphere. Indeed, the heroic role of the Immaculate Conception Sisters in saving Jewish lives needs to be told.

In her book, Dr. Szymanska writes: “The example of the Sisters allowed me and others not to lose faith in human beings during those years of atrocities and cruelty.” At the end of August 1942, with the approval of the Mother General Pia Lesniewska [Helena Leśniewska], she was moved to the Ursuline Gray Nuns’ convent in the village of Ozarow [Ożarów]. There she remained for two years and eight months in a small room and was visited by Sister Urszula Gorska [Maria Stefania Górka, Sister Andrzejka], a student of classical philology at Warsaw University [before it was closed by the Germans at the beginning of the war]. From her small convent cell, she looked closely at the lives of the nuns but could not understand their obedience to suspend their obvious enjoyable work routine and their readiness to pray and contemplate. Only later was she able to understand the power of contemplative devotion to God—the sole source of their strength—which gave a sense of meaning and purpose to their lives.

She frequently asked herself: Why did God allow this to happen? Why wasn’t Hitler excommunicated? [Hitler had severed his ties with the Catholic Church long before he came to power and considered the Church to be one of his chief enemies.—Ed.] Why didn’t the American Jews organize assistance and intervene with the American Government to help the European Jews perishing in the concentration camps? The Germans began the liquidation of the ghetto in 1942. They transported whole orphanages of children to the concentration camps. After the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, only her younger sister Eliza was still alive and trapped in the Ghetto. Stella and her brother-in-law had been transported to the concentration camp. When she learned the fate of her family, she shared her thoughts of depression and suicide with Sister Gorska. Responding to her needs, one of the sisters moved to her cell to help her. Many were the conversations they had about the need for people to assume responsibility and help save lives. In this crisis, the sisters were influential and encouraged her, but never did they try to persuade her to convert to the Catholic faith.

After the Russian offensive in the Spring of 1945, Dr. Szymanska spent the last Easter with the Ursuline Sisters. From documents and statements of eyewitnesses, she found out that the entire village of Ozarow knew that she and others were hiding in the convent. The sisters were aware of the consequences of hiding Jews; yet, without hesitation, they continued the dangerous task and saved many lives. She states: “No other country but Poland paid such a tremendous bloody tribute to the cause of saving Jewish lives. It is an undisputed fact that it is much easier to demonstrate and march for the cause of Jews, as happened in some Western countries, than to hide one of them for years during the German occupation of Poland.” After the war, she returned to completely devastated Warsaw and worked for the Ministry of Education, Department of Child Welfare. She inspected the care

given in orphanages. She learned that under the direction of Mother [Matylda] Getter, who saved the lives of several hundred Jewish Children, the Sisters of the Family of Mary was one of the most active congregations protecting Jews during and after the war.<sup>358</sup>

**E**lżbieta Szpilfogel (later Chruściak, b. 1938) was one of approximately twenty Jewish girls sheltered by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary at their convent and boarding school in Wrzosów.

During the German occupation of Poland, Julia Halina Dąbrowska and her mother, Gabriela Elżanowska, rescued Maria Szpilfogel (née Rozenowicz), her daughter Elżbieta, as well as her parents, Karolina (Kajla) and Elias Rozenowicz. Julia Dąbrowska had been friends with Maria Szpilfogel and her sisters Teodora Zysman and Felicja Głowińska at school. As a young girl she would spend time at the Rozenowicz house in Pruszków near Warsaw after school and play with their daughters. Elias Rozenowicz, who traded in wood, treated Julia as if she were their fourth daughter. Julia continued to visit them every Saturday after she had her own daughter, Danuta Maria, born in 1933. After the German invasion, the families stayed in touch until the Rozenowiczes were forced to move to the temporary ghetto in Pruszków. At the end of January 1941, when the Germans dismantled that ghetto, they were transferred to the Warsaw ghetto. In the fall of 1942, Maria Szpielfogel [sic], her daughter Elżbieta and cousin Piotr Zysman (later Świątkowski) escaped to the “Aryan” side and hid at Julia Dąbrowska’s apartment at 65 Al. Jerozolimskie, apt. 6. Julia helped the Rozenowicz parents to escape from the ghetto as well and took care of them when they were hiding, first in the village of Wólka Korabiéwička [sic, Korabiewicka] (between Żyrardów and Skierniewice, Warsaw District) and later on in Milanówek near Warsaw. She stayed in contact with them and visited them. When Elżbieta fell ill, Julia organized surgery for her in the Mikołaj Kopernik Hospital in Warsaw. When the stay of Maria, Elżbieta, and Piotr became too dangerous, she arranged another apartment for them. She also arranged for Elżbieta to stay in the convent in Wrzosów and helped to sell family jewels to support her wards. In order to save her friends, Julia and her mother, Elżanowska, hid them, provided them with food and false documents and even paid off blackmailers from the fall of 1942 until the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944. Julia’s husband, who belonged to the Polish underground Home Army (AK) died during the uprising. Occasionally, they also helped Teodora and Józef Zysman and Felicja and Henryk Głowiński, and their son Michał Głowiński.<sup>359</sup>

Another Jewish girl sheltered by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wrzosów was the daughter of Ignacy Wachnik. Wachnik and his wife, who had a Jewish appearance, survived the war in Warsaw and reclaimed their daughter. Ignacy Wachnik was an assumed named, having been

<sup>358</sup> Marchione, *Consensus and Controversy*, 101–4.

<sup>359</sup> Israel Gutman and Avraham Milgram, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010), 543. See also the testimony of Elżbieta Chruściak (née Szpilfogel), SFV, Interview code 32341. (Hereinafter cited as *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2.)

obtained through false identity documents supplied by the nuns.<sup>360</sup> The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary also sheltered adult Jews, sometimes hiding them in plain sight as staff employees. The couple Anna and Emil Kaliski-Domagalski, who had converted to Catholicism before the war, were engaged as an educator and gardener, respectively, at the Wrzosów convent, as was Henryk Mioduszewski.<sup>361</sup>

With the approval of the order's superior general, Mother Dominika (Maria) Szymczewska, the Benedictine Samaritan Sisters of the Cross of Christ (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Benedyktyniek Samarytanek Krzyża Chrystusowego), popularly known as the Samaritan Sisters (*samarytanki*), sheltered Jews at various convents and institutions: Niegów-Samaria (near Wyszaków), Henryków (near Warsaw), Pruszków, and Pruszków-Żbików. The siblings Stefania and Bolesław Landau were sheltered at the mother house in Niegów, known as Samaria, for some time despite the fact that a police station was installed on the premises. The nuns also provided food and clothing to Jews who were being sheltered by others in the area.

Fifteen young Jewish women from Warsaw were sheltered at the institution for troubled girls and single mothers located in Henryków, on the outskirts of the city, whose director was Sister Benigna (Stanisława) Umińska. Some of the Jewish charges were directed there by Magdalena Langer, a psychologist and educator with connections to the Father Baudouin Home and the Warsaw Social Welfare Department. Langer herself also stayed at the institution and assisted with the students' education. Sister Norberta (Władysława) Ziółkowska oversaw the illegal procurement of Kennkarten (official identity documents) for the young women, with the help of trusted local officials and based on birth and baptismal certificates provided by All Saints parish in Warsaw. Leon Schiller, a renowned theatre director of Jewish origin, was also sheltered at the convent in Henryków. He directed a conspiratorial theatre whose productions of religious plays attracted outside audiences, including such prominent literary figures as Czesław Miłosz.<sup>362</sup>

<sup>360</sup> Testimony of Ignacy Wachnik, JHI, record group 301, no. 5904.

<sup>361</sup> Medyński, *Wojenne Łomianki*, 104–5; Wiesława Chwedoruk and Magdalena Filipek, "Działalność Zgromadzenia Sióstr Niepokalanego Poczęcia NMP w okresie konspiracji 1939–1945," in Marszałec and Minczykowska, eds., *I Kongres Historyków Konspiracji Niepodległościowej*, 219–48, at p. 236.

<sup>362</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 334–37; Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 129–30, 164–66; Margarita Brzozowska, "Samarytanki nie pytały o narodowość," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 61–77.

Several Jewish girls were sheltered at the Samaritan Sisters' home for mentally impaired girls in Pruszków-Żbików. Among their charges were two sisters, whose father also stayed there for a short time and retrieved them after the war. Although the children took religious instruction from the chaplain so as to be able to pass as Catholics, they were not baptized. Eugenia Wawrzycka, a convert, resided there from 1944.

At least six Jewish boys and several Jewish girls and adults were sheltered in the home for mentally impaired boys on Szkolna Street in Pruszków, whose director was Sister Zofia (Lucyna) Szadkowska. The boys included Tadeusz Łapiński, who was adopted by a Polish family, Stanisław Wiśniewski, Marian Marzyński (Kusznier), Henryk Wirowski, and a boy named Jan. These were the boys' assumed names. After the war, the children were taken by family members or Jewish organizations.

Eugenia Szenwic was sheltered by the Samaritan Sisters in Pruszków from 1942 under the name of Sowińska, together with her daughter Iwona, who went by the name of Stenia (later Yvonne Grabowski, b. 1929). Iwona was transferred to other places, including an Ursuline boarding school and the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szymanów. Iwona was taken from the latter institution by her father, Dr. Wilhelm Szenwic (Sowiński), at the time of the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944. (Dr. Szenwic served in the Home Army during the uprising as a doctor.) Afterwards, Dr. Szenwic and his daughter returned to the convent in Pruszków and remained there until the Germans were driven out.

Another Jewish woman sheltered at the convent was Maria Brzeska, a school teacher. Sister Charitas (Eugenia) Soczek was particularly engaged in helping Jews. She also distributed money to Jews provided by Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews. One of the charges, Maria Fiszman, the daughter of a doctor from Łódź, was placed with a family and attended a school run by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She survived the war and moved to Israel, where she was known as Miriam Sawia.<sup>363</sup>

Thousands of Jews who had hidden or passed as Catholics in Warsaw were expelled by the Germans during and after the Uprising of 1944. They were held in the transit camp in Pruszków, outside Warsaw, pending deportation to concentration camps and as forced labourers. Some of the Jews, passing as Christians, were resettled among Poles in the Generalgouvernement. Lo-

<sup>363</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 167, 170; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 335–37; Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 129–30; Margarita Brzozowska, "Samarytanki nie pytały o narodowość," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 61–77, at pp. 62–67; Testimony of Stanisława Karsov-Szymaniewska, Archive of the Jewish Historical Museum (Warsaw), record group 301, no. 6365.

cal farmers and nearby convents took in many of these refugees, even though they recognized them as Jews. A number were brought to the convent of the Benedictine Samaritan Sisters of the Cross of Christ in Pruszków, ostensibly as family members of the nuns: Józef and Irena Woźnicki (a married couple), Józef Margules, Anna Rechnic (later Janina Baran), and another unidentified, five-member family.

According to historian Gunnar Paulsson, none of the Jews held in the Pruszków camp appear to have been betrayed by Poles.<sup>364</sup> Nonetheless, fearing denunciation, some Jews sought shelter with Poles in the area rather than going to the camp. Aleksander Weissberg, a member of the Polish underground, recalls:

Polish nuns hid me in the cellar of a convent. Then I made contact with some Austrian soldiers. They helped me and my family across the barbed-wire lines. We settled in a suburb of Warsaw. ... We were secluded and isolated, and we waited there for the German front to collapse. Then on January 17, 1945, the advancing troops of the Red Army liberated us.<sup>365</sup>

The Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Urszulanek Serca Jezusa Konającego), commonly known as the Grey Ursulines (*urszulanki szare*), sheltered more than thirty Jewish children and about a dozen adults in their convents and children's homes throughout Poland: Warsaw (three institutions), Brwinów near Warsaw, Czarna Duża near Wołomin, Czarny Bór near Wilno, Janów Poleski, Łódź, Milanówek near Warsaw, Ołtarzew (Ożarów) near Warsaw, Radość near Warsaw, Sieradz, Wilno, and Zakopane. The Jewish children usually had false identity documents and were brought by family members, non-Jewish family friends, and organizations active in the rescue of children. Mother Pia (Helena) Leśniewska, the order's Mother General, maintained close contact with such an organization. The nuns continued to shelter children even when their sponsors lapsed in paying for their upkeep. Fortunately, none of these Jewish children were discovered by the Germans.

Sister Andrzejka (Maria Stefania Górka), who was recognized as a Righteous Gentile, was particularly active in the rescue operation. In addition to her tasks within the institution, running the soup kitchen and teaching biology, she fetched children leaving the ghetto and placed them in orphanages run by the nuns. She obtained false identity documents for the nuns' charges with the help of Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews.

<sup>364</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 236.

<sup>365</sup> Misha Shifman, *Physics in a Mad World: Houtermans, Golfand* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2016), 376.



During the German occupation, Sister Maria Gorska [Andrzejka Górka], a member of the Ursuline Sisters convent [order], was an active participant in the convent's [order's] effort to save Jewish children. Officially, Gorska ran a soup kitchen for orphaned or abandoned children in central Warsaw. Unofficially, her job was to help Jewish children by arranging for them to be smuggled out of the ghetto and transferred to institutions belonging to the Ursuline Sisters, which had branches throughout occupied Poland. In performing these and other dangerous operations, Gorska was inspired by Christian love and a sense of obligation to save human life. Among Gorska's tasks were obtaining Aryan papers for the Jewish children, protecting those who looked Jewish, and hiding them during German raids. Gorska was in touch with *Zegota* [Żegota], which supplied her with documents as necessary. Gorska saved the lives of many Jewish children who left Poland after the war. Gorska's activities are the subject of Dr. [Zofia] Rozenblum-Szymanska's [Szymańska] book *Byłam tylko lekarzem* ("I Was Only a Doctor").<sup>366</sup>

When danger lurked, Sister Andrzejka organized the transfer of Jewish children from one location to another. She recalled how she took a girl—whose head had to be bandaged to disguise her marked Jewish features—from Warsaw to the order's children's home in Brwinów.

In most cases we knew very well that the children were Jewish. However, even in cases where we did not know for sure, and only suspected they were Jewish, it was never mentioned and never the subject of discussion, and we took the children as they were. ...

We usually baptized the Jewish children in those cases where we were told that this was crucial for their survival, especially so as not to arouse suspicion that they were Jews. We wanted all the children to be present every day for confession and prayers. Some of the Jewish children became very attached to the Christian religious rites, but we made them understand that they would not be required to be committed [to accept Christianity when they grew up]. From my contact with tens of Jewish children, I noticed that they needed much empathy and expressions of love, since in the beginning they kept to themselves, which could have aroused suspicion. I decided to break down the wall between them and us and gain their confidence. ... Today [1985] in our convent there are several nuns who have been with us after the Holocaust. No one ever came to ask for these Jewish girls, and when they grew up they asked to remain with us and be inseparable from us. ... Most of the surviving children we returned at the end of the war or several years afterwards to their families or to representatives of the Jewish community who were armed with appropriate documentation testifying a relationship to these children. ... Not one of the Jewish children who were sheltered by us, and especially in the Milanówek house, did not return to his family in a much better condition. ...

This human experience helped me to better understand the human soul and heart, and especially the soul of a child who suffers through an experience as terrible as the Holocaust.<sup>367</sup>

<sup>366</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 249–50.

<sup>367</sup> Testimony of Sister Andrzejka (Maria Stefania Górka), YVA, file M.31.2/7668.



At least ten Jewish children were sheltered by the Grey Ursulines in their orphanage in Milanówek, among them Stenia Jankowska, the daughter of a doctor from Łódź, and the Raniszewska sisters, who moved to France after the war. (This may refer to the twin daughters of Zygmunt Wojdyśławski and the daughters of Rywka Goldman, mentioned below.) Other charges were Janina Kon (later Atkins), the niece of Zofia Szymańska, Aleksandra (Ola) Mierzecka (later Garlicka, b. 1933), and Piotr Zelwerowicz.<sup>368</sup>

Emanuella (Illa) Kitz (later Sherman, b. 1936), was brought to the convent by her grandmother in 1942, ostensibly as a Polish orphan named Zofia Łopatto. Illa described the nuns as “quite wonderful”; they “did the best they could” to provide for their Jewish charges and to protect them during German inspections. She was reunited with her mother and grandmother after the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944.<sup>369</sup>

Irena Kajles (later Krzysztowska and Abramowicz, b. 1937) was brought to the convent by her mother after they left the Warsaw ghetto.<sup>370</sup> Piotr Ałapin, who was smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto with his parents, was baptized and assumed the name Pietraszkiewicz before he was brought to the convent. After the war, when her life was unsettled, his mother placed him temporarily in another convent outside Łódź.<sup>371</sup>

A number of Jewish girls were sheltered by the Grey Ursulines at their boarding school on Tamka Street in Warsaw. One was Hanah Mandelberger (later Avrutski or Avrutzky, b. 1932), who went by the name of Hanka Litwińska.<sup>372</sup>

<sup>368</sup> Testimony of Maria Górka, SFV, Interview code 43319.

<sup>369</sup> Testimony of Illa Sherman, SFV, Interview code 5399; “Identification Issued to Lucie Kritz in 1933 and Restamped by the Soviet Government in 1940,” USHMM, Photograph no. 21351, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1162036>. Illa Sherman’s grandmother contributed towards her upkeep at the convent. Illa is shown in a photograph from her First Holy Communion with Bishop Kazimierz Bukraba, who was exiled from his diocese in Pińsk and resided in Milanówek at the time.

<sup>370</sup> Helen Gougeon, “Lives Lived: Irena Krzysztowska Abramowicz,” *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], February 7, 2000.

<sup>371</sup> Heather Laskey, *Night Voices: Heard in the Shadow of Hitler and Stalin* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 66, 89–90, 95. Piotr Ałapin’s mother, Dr. Stanisława Rubiłowicz-Ałapin, and his grandmother, the actress Irena Grywińska-Adwentowicz, were sheltered by Jan Pikulski in Albinów near Opatów together with three other Jewish women. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 610.

<sup>372</sup> *Przywracanie pamięci: Polakom ratującym Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Recalling Forgotten Memory: Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (Warsaw: Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, The Teatr Wielki–Polish National Opera, and Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2007), 43; Andrzej W. Kaczorowski, “W szarym domu,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięi Narodowej*, no. 11 (November 2010): 57–64, at p. 64; Testimony of Hanah Avrutski, SFV, Interview code 5675; Testimony of Hana Avrutzky, YVA, file 0.3/5737 (Item

Two of the older girls were brought there by Rev. Alfons Męcikowski, a Pallottine priest, shortly before the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944.<sup>373</sup> After the uprising was crushed, the residents of the boarding school were relocated to a convent in Zakopane. Additional confirmation of the rescue activities of this order of nuns can be found in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*.

During the war, Mieczysław [Mieczysław] Wionczek lived with his family in Warsaw. He was a student at the underground Warsaw University. In 1941, he met a young Jewish woman who was known during the occupation as Teresa Czarkowska [actually, Idzikowska]. In 1942, Mieczysław and Teresa were married. In order to remove any suspicions regarding Teresa's origins, the wedding was held in the St. Jan [John] Cathedral. All of Mieczysław's family, as well as Teresa's family, who were then in hiding, attended the wedding. After the wedding, Mieczysław's mother held a wedding reception in her home, which removed any possible doubts that the German authorities might have had. One of the people that the newlyweds Mieczysław and Teresa helped during the war was Krystyna Prutkowska [née Flamenbaum], then 19 years old. They offered her work as a maid ... In 1943, when Teresa's niece Antonina Dworakowska [née Perec] fell ill with polio, Mieczysław helped her parents find a room for her in the Sisters of Urszula [Ursuline Sisters] convent in Zakopane, where the girl received the required aid. After the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, Mieczysław and the nuns in this convent also hid his wife, who was by then nine months pregnant, as well as Antonina's parents.<sup>374</sup>

Various components of this rescue account have been collapsed in the above entry. Six-year-old Antonina Perec (later Dworakowska, b. 1936) was first sheltered at the Ursuline Sisters' convent at 30 Tamka Street in Warsaw, together with some other Jewish children. Teresa Wionczek and Mieczysław's younger brother, Roman, began to help some of the Jewish children at that convent by providing them with packages of food and clothing. When the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, Teresa Wionczek, as well as her parents, Gustaw and Romualda Perec, found shelter in the Ursuline convent. After the uprising, the Jewish charges accompanied the nuns to Ołtarzew (Ożarów), and then to their convent in Zakopane.<sup>375</sup>

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3555297) and file O.3/13347 (Item 7988630). Hana Avrutsky published a diary in Hebrew in 1995 under the title *Kokhav ben tselavim* (*Star Between Crosses*), and was featured in a 2006 documentary film titled *Hanuszka*. Hana escaped from the Warsaw ghetto alone, leaving behind her family. After the war, she was reunited with her mother and younger sister (her father perished in Treblinka) and settled in Israel. Her claims that she met Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II, while at the convent in Warsaw, is doubtful.

<sup>373</sup> Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at pp. 139–40.

<sup>374</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 872.

<sup>375</sup> *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady: Przywracanie pamięci / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust: Recalling Forgotten History* (Warsaw: Chancellery of the Presi-

Kazimiera Sikora [Bąkowska] became acquainted with the Jewish Wojdysławski family from Łódź at the very start of the war, when they arrived as refugees in Warsaw and rented an apartment near her. From that time a friendship grew between them that continued even after the Wojdysławskis were moved to the ghetto and for a long time afterwards. In April 1943, when the ghetto was liquidated and the Jews were being sent to their deaths, Kazimiera came to the rescue of her friends. By this time, Zygmunt Wojdysławski was already on the “Aryan” side of the city, but the rest of his family—his wife [Maria], his 13-year-old twin daughters [Hanna or Franciszka (later Perrin), and Ludwika], and his sister-in-law [Rywka Goldman] with her two small girls, aged seven and four [Pauline (later Stanislas) and Larisa (later Meilen)]—were still in the ghetto. Kazimiera planned how to bring them out of the ghetto down to the smallest details. The first thing she did was to ready an apartment in which to hide them. She also took care of having forged “Aryan” documents waiting for them. Not only did she help to successfully take them out of the ghetto, but she continued to help them by instructing them on how to behave on the “Aryan” side: she taught the girls all the details of Christian customs, the prayers, conduct in church, confession before the priest, and so on. She was also their address for solving various problems that arose in living on the “Aryan” side. When the need arose to move to other apartments she would be there to help them. Kazimiera also arranged to transfer the girls, using assumed Christian identities, to a convent in Milanówek, where they remained until the end of the war. All the members of the Wojdysławski family, who were looked after by Kazimiera, survived the war, and to a great extent thanks to her resourcefulness and devotion; they remained grateful to her for all she had done for them. At the end of the war when they left Warsaw, which was in ruins, to return to their own Łódź, she joined them and went to live with them. They stayed in touch with her for years and even long after they had emigrated from Poland.<sup>376</sup>

A number of Jewish adults were also taken in by the Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus. None of them were denounced, nor did they pay for their upkeep. Professor Helena Radlińska (née Rajchman), professor of social pedagogy at Warsaw’s Free University (Wolna Wszechnica Oświatowa), and the elderly Kurtz sisters from Poznań were hidden in the order’s mother house on Gęsta Street (now Wiśłana Street) in Warsaw. Because of their marked Semitic features, they did not venture out of the convent. When the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, they were transferred to Milanówek.<sup>377</sup>

dent of the Republic of Poland and Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2013), 119; Mieczysław Wionczek, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-wionczek-mieczyslaw>; Testimony of Antonina Dworakowska, SFV, Interview code 15801.

<sup>376</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 614–15.

<sup>377</sup> Testimony of Maria Górka, SFV, Interview code 43319. Some of the nuns were former students of Professor Helena Radlińska. Although she herself was destitute and depended entirely on the goodwill of benefactors, Radlińska continued to teach in underground institutions and assisted other Jews in finding shelter with Poles. See Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 306; Irena Lepalczyk, *Helena Radlińska życie i twórczość* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2001), 122; Andrzej W. Kaczorowski, “W szarym domu,”

The Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Bazylika Najświętszego Serca Jezusowego), located on Kawęczyńska Street in the Warsaw suburb of Praga (on the right bank of the Vistula River), was under the care of an order of priests known as the Salesian Society. During the occupation, the basilica became a beacon of hope for endangered Jews. Rev. Michał Kubacki, the first vicar, was in charge of the parish while its pastor himself was in hiding. He was also the director of Caritas, a Catholic relief organization, a branch of which was established on the premises of the church to help the needy.

Rev. Kubacki gave shelter to Halina Engelhard (later Aszkenazy, b. 1925). Halina, then a teenager, had jumped out of a transport taking Jews from the Umschlagplatz to the Majdanek concentration camp in the summer of 1942 and made her way back to Warsaw.<sup>378</sup> Her mother, who was also on the train with her, told Halina to get in touch with Rev. Kubacki. Rev. Kubacki agreed to let her stay at the parish. She lived in the Caritas building, located directly behind the church, for several months. She helped prepare meals at the soup kitchen for the poor and for children who attended religion classes at the church. Rev. Kubacki taught Halina prayers and religious practices, which were essential for her to pass as a Catholic, and provided her with a birth and baptismal certificate in another name.

From that moment on, she became Halina Ogonowska, an orphan from Płock. Halina recalled, “Living in that community without getting to know the principles and practices of the religion would have been impossible. Every day I sat with the priest who taught me religion, the key principles of the faith, and prayers. He was a noble and honest man who respected my roots and didn’t force me to do anything.” Rev. Kubacki’s housekeeper also showed her hospitality. Rev. Jan Stanek, another priest attached to this church as well as another

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*Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (November 2010): 57–64, at pp. 60–61; Agata Mirek, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 139.

<sup>378</sup> One often hears stories of Poles gathering near trains carrying Jews to death camps in order to sell them water for jewellery or large sums of money. Such transactions were strictly prohibited, and the Germans and Ukrainians guarding the trains had orders to shoot any Pole who disobeyed. As Halina Aszkenazy-Engelhard explains, Jews had to entice people to approach the trains with extravagant rewards as, understandably, most Poles were afraid to take on that risk at any cost: “A man had a diamond ring and wanted to trade it with the Poles for a bottle of water. They were afraid, nobody wanted to take the ring. Eventually, one—apparently more courageous than the others—brought a big bottle and got the ring.” After jumping from the train, Halina met Celina and two other girls who had also jumped. Local people gave them money so they could get to Warsaw. On the way, Germans searched through the train and pulled out any Jewish girls they could identify. See Halina Aszkenazy-Engelhardt’s, “Death Cars,” PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/death-cars-halina-aszkenazy-engelhardts-account>.

parish in the city, cared for a Jewish girl named Zosia (Zofia), who was eight or nine years old and had a Semitic appearance. Her tasks included adorning the church altar with flowers and other light household chores.

Both Jewish girls were later transferred to other places, but they continued to receive material assistance from the priests. Zosia was placed in a private home, while Halina was taken in by the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, commonly known as the Magdalene Sisters, who ran a correctional shelter for young women on Żytunia Street in Warsaw. Sister Bernarda (Julia Wilczek) of the Magdalene Sisters told Halina, “Remember, my girl, that you are Jewish. Be proud of it.” Afterwards Halina was transferred to the convent of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul on Freta Street, also in Warsaw. Halina soon found out that there were other Jews hiding in both of these institutions, some of whom are mentioned later on.

The Salesians assisted other Jews during the occupation. Fajga Wajnstraub (later Janina Sobczak-Rustecka) was engaged in the soup kitchen by Rev. Kubacki, who provided her with additional food to take home.<sup>379</sup> The Salesians provided false identity documents to Rozalia Werdinger, among others. They issued ardent appeals at private religious gatherings regarding the need to help Jews. “These people are our brothers,” Rev. Kubacki would state.

They have a soul just like us. In the heavenly court, it is not they who will be condemned, but those who murder them today. In God’s eyes, it is man’s behaviour that counts, regardless of his religion. Be he a Buddhist, Jew or Muslim, if he believes in one God and keeps his commandments, God loves him. A good Catholic is not one who follows the religious rituals and regularly attends church to pray, but the one who obeys the commandment regarding fellow men and extends a helping hand to others in need.<sup>380</sup>

Rev. Kubacki was recognized by Yad Vashem.

In April 1943, during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Germans discovered where Halina Aszkenazy was hiding and dispatched her on a transport leaving the city. After jumping off the train, Aszkenazy made her way, with tremendous difficulty, back to Warsaw, where she knocked on the door of Michał [Michał] Kubacki, a director of the Christian charity “Charitas” [Caritas] and priest of the Bazylika Church in the Praga suburb of Warsaw. Kubacki, who knew Aszkenazy’s mother and had promised in the past to help her and her daughter, welcomed Halina and immediately provided her with false birth and baptism certificates. Aszkenazy hid in a room in the church for three months, during which time she became acquainted with Christian prayers and rituals. At one point, Aszkenazy was joined by an

<sup>379</sup> Testimony of Janina Sobczak-Rustecka, SFV, Interview code 7812.

<sup>380</sup> Halina Aszkenazy-Engelhard, *Pragnęłam żyć: Pamiętnik* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, 1991), 80–88. See also pp. 92–93, 107–8, 114. See also the expanded version of this memoir: Halina Aszkenazy-Engelhard, *Dzień, noc, dzień* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 2005), as well as her testimony, YVA, file O.3/442.

eight-year-old Jewish girl who was later adopted, on Kubacki's recommendation, by a Christian family. Kubacki, inspired by compassion and religious faith, also financed the upkeep of two young girls whose rescuers were unable to support them. After being provided by Kubacki with a German Kennkarte, Aszkenazy left her hiding place and after numerous ordeals was liberated. After the war, Aszkenazy immigrated to Israel, where she wrote her memoirs, including Kubacki's role in saving her life, in a book entitled *I Wanted to Live*.<sup>381</sup>

Additional information about the rescue of Jews at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus came to light in the year 2000, when Edmund Zabrzeźniak presented the church with a votive chalice in gratitude for his rescue. Together with several other Jews, Zabrzeźniak had been sheltered in a chamber underneath the sanctuary of the church. The Germans conducted a careful search of the church premises, even using dogs to sniff out hiding places. But fortunately, they did not discover these hidden Jews; the entire group survived. They left their hiding place in July 1944, when the Soviets arrived in the area.<sup>382</sup>

Jews found shelter in about a dozen convents and correctional homes (Domy Miłosierdzia) for young women run by the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia), commonly known as the Magdalene Sisters (*magdalenki*), with approval of the congregation's Superior General, Mother Michaela (Olga Moraczewska).<sup>383</sup> However, no records were kept for the safety of all concerned, so the events had to be reconstructed based on testimonies.

A number of Jews were accepted at the correctional home on Żytnia Street (at the corner of Wronia Street) in Warsaw, which was close to the ghetto.<sup>384</sup> The head of the institution was Sister Róża (Janina Kłobukowska). Sister Bernarda (Julia Wilczek) was responsible for overseeing help to Jews. Niusia Wolfowicz was employed as a cleaning lady, having been placed there by Zofia Wiewiórowska, the director of a Warsaw women's shelter.<sup>385</sup> Irka Przysuskiej from Częstochowa, who "looked Jewish," was taken in by Sister Bernarda. However, she was apprehended when she ventured out, probably to meet her Jewish boyfriend.<sup>386</sup> Inka Szapiro, then 8 or 9 years old, had previously stayed

<sup>381</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 412.

<sup>382</sup> Jan Pietrzykowski, *Towarzystwo Salezjańskie w Polsce w warunkach okupacji 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2015), 152.

<sup>383</sup> On the rescue activities of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy see Nulla Chmura, "Pomoc ludności żydowskiej w Zgromadzeniu Sióstr Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 193–99; Olga Abramczuk, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1981), 168–233.

<sup>384</sup> Aszkenazy-Engelhard, *Pragnęłam żyć*, 98–100.

<sup>385</sup> Goldenberg, *Before All Memory Is Lost*, 201.

<sup>386</sup> Goldenberg, *Before All Memory Is Lost*, 200–1.



with the Sisters of Charity on Tamka Street, also in Warsaw, before moving to the Żytnia Street hospice.

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, the younger children were transferred to the Magdalene Sisters' summer home in Szczęśniówka, near Wołomin. Inka's mother, Klara Szapiro, also left Warsaw at that time and was sheltered in a parish rectory on the outskirts of Warsaw.<sup>387</sup>

In the winter of 1942, Klara Szapiro fled from the Warsaw ghetto with her seven-year-old daughter, Nina. After being harassed by blackmailers, Szapiro was directed by an acquaintance to Adela Domanus, who obtained forged papers for her and her daughter and arranged for them to stay with one of her friends. When this hiding place proved unsafe, Domanus placed young Nina in a Christian orphanage [of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy on Żytnia Street, in Warsaw<sup>388</sup>] and found a job for Klara as a maid ... In risking her life for persecuted Jews, Domanus was guided by sincere humanitarian beliefs, which overrode considerations of personal safety.<sup>389</sup>

Eight-year-old Ewa M., who got separated from her parents, was brought to the Magdalene Sisters' correctional home on Hetmańska Street in Warsaw by a woman who found her in the street.<sup>390</sup> Sister Ksawera (Janina Olszanowska) was the head of that institution, located in the Grochów district of the city's Praga suburb. Some of the charges were placed with Polish benefactors. Halina Rajman (b. 1929) stayed at the home on Hetmańska Street for only a very brief period. Since she was emotionally unstable, the nuns feared she would give herself away. Halina was placed with a Polish woman.<sup>391</sup> At the behest of the nuns, Maria Goljan took in a Jewish woman with a daughter, both of whom had Semitic features, as well as another Jewish woman.<sup>392</sup>

Jews were often moved from one convent or institution to another—run by the same or a different religious order of women—to ensure their safety. The Magdalene Sisters transferred Jewish charges from their correctional home on Żytnia Street in Warsaw to their correctional homes in the Grochów district of Warsaw

<sup>387</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 115–16; Testimony of Adela Domanus, February 27, 1965, JHI, record group 301, no. 6102.

<sup>388</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 115–16.

<sup>389</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 184.

<sup>390</sup> Nulla Chmura, "Pomoc ludności żydowskiej w Zgromadzeniu Sióstr Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 193–99, at pp. 197–98.

<sup>391</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 334; Testimony of Halina Rajman, JHI, record group 301, no. 4495.

<sup>392</sup> Testimony of Zofia Poławska, JHI, record group 301, no. 5211. Zofia Poławska and her daughter were also sheltered by Maria Goljan, although they were not sent there by the Magdalene Sisters.



(44 Hetmańska Street), Częstochowa (9/11 św. Barbary Street), Kraków,<sup>393</sup> Kalisz, and Walendów and Derdy (associated homes) outside of Warsaw. The chaplains at those institutions also became involved in the rescue operation.

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto in October 1940,<sup>394</sup> Dora Borensztajn (or Tova Borenstein, b. 1926) stayed in three homes of the Magdalene Sisters, two in Warsaw and one in Częstochowa, under the assumed name of Maria Teresa Zielińska. She was directed first to the Żytnia Street shelter in Warsaw by the congregation's Superior General, Mother Michaela Moraczewska. She remained at that shelter from December 1940 until May 1941, under the tutelage of Sister Alojza Piotrowska. Subsequently, she was transferred to the order's correctional home on Hetmańska Street, in the Grochów district, where she remained for more than a year. In June 1943, Sister Alojza dispatched her to a residence on św. Barbary Street in Częstochowa, also run by the Magdalene Sisters. In one of her testimonies, Dora Borensztajn mentions the names of priests, among them Rev. Jan Tomaszewski of Częstochowa, who instructed her in religious matters. After the war, she became a Benedictine nun known as Sister Ancilla.

Death threatened not only me but all those who would accept me and all the tenants of their apartment building. Nonetheless, Janina Przybysz (Ninka) took me with her to 12? or 19? Zielna Street where she lived just with her mother, because her father had died recently ...

After a few days, I went to 43 Mokotowska Street to live with Aleksander and Maria Jaźwiński, who had no children. ... I was with them until Christmas.

I returned to Zielna Street. From there, on December 27, 1940, I was taken in by Mother Michaela Moraczewska, Mother General of the Sisters of the Holy Mother of Mercy [Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy]. The Sisters had a correctional residence for girls in Warsaw at 3/9 Żytnia Street. Mother Alojza was the educator of the particular class in which I was placed, and I was now called Genia, but before that, they called me Elżbieta. There, I learned colorful embroidery.

<sup>393</sup> One of the charges, Sujka Erlichman, was a courier from Warsaw for the Jewish underground. Posing as a Pole, she was captured by the Germans illegally trying to cross over to the Reich from the *Generalgouvernement*. After serving a three-month prison sentence in Kraków, she was transferred to a labour camp in Łagiewniki for women convicted of crimes. Before the war, this was a correctional home for girls run by the Magdalene Sisters. Since she was to remain there indefinitely and conditions were harsh, Sujka decided to volunteer for labour in Germany. Her true identity was, supposedly, not known to the nuns. When she attended mass on Sundays, she was moved by the sermons of an elderly priest who preached love towards all people. See the memoir of Sujka Erlichman, JHI, record group 302, no. 314; Sujka Erlichman-Bank, *Listy z piekła* (Białystok: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1992).

<sup>394</sup> Dora Borensztajn decided to return to the Warsaw ghetto for a visit at some point and had to be smuggled out by Sister Joanna (Halina) Lossow, a Franciscan Servant of the Cross. See Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 187–88.

In May 1941, while seeing a doctor in the health center on Okopowa Street, I was recognized by the nurse, Helena Wiśniewska. Therefore, [out of caution] I had to immediately change my place of residence. I went to the Grochów district to 44 Hetmańska Street, where the same order of Sisters had another correctional residence. I was given the name Urszula. It affected me greatly, knowing of the danger to me and to them. ... I learned to work in the garden and in the hothouse. I was there more than a year, and then I went again to Ninka on Zielna Street, where I stayed until June 1943. ... [After being recognized on the street] I returned to Zielna Street, and together with Ninka went to Żytnia Street to Mother Alojza to ask her for help. She wrote a letter to the Sisters in Częstochowa, who lived at 3/9 Saint Barbara Street, and she asked a lady she knew to take me there.

From the thirteenth of June, 1943, onward, I stayed there and was given the name Mirka. This was also a correctional residence. I went there with a Kennkarte [German identity document] issued at 3/9 Żytnia Street. In Częstochowa, I also changed my place of residence several times.<sup>395</sup>

Another Jewish charge from Warsaw at the Magdalene Sisters' convent in Częstochowa was Stella Obremska (later Kolin, b. 1926). After escaping from the labour camp in Skarżysko-Kamienna in August 1944, she made her way to Częstochowa and found shelter with the nuns.<sup>396</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Anna Sokol-Sokołowska (later Brożek, b. 1933) was cared for by her Polish nanny and several families. After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, she was expelled from the city together with her elderly caregiver, who died in the transit camp in Pruszków. Alone, Anna was put on a train that stopped in Bliżyn, near Skarżysko-Kamienna. Local residents took in the refugees. Anna found shelter in the rectory of Rev. Czesław Kucharczyk, the local pastor, and was cared for by the priest's mother and his housekeeper. She remained there after the war, was baptized in November 1945 and placed in a children's home.<sup>397</sup>

According to a Jewish account, Rev. Tadeusz Kamiński, the pastor of Czerńce Borowe, near Przasnysz, sheltered two Jews in the parish rectory, but the particulars are unknown. Fearful of being arrested again by the Germans, Rev. Kamiński had to go into hiding.<sup>398</sup> These may have been the two Jewish

<sup>395</sup> Wiktoria Śliwowska, ed., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, vol. 1 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 148–50.

<sup>396</sup> Testimony of Stella Kolin, SFV, Interview code 5415. Her testimony is found in Jakub Gutenbaum and Agnieszka Latała, eds., *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, vol. 2 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 114–16.

<sup>397</sup> Testimony of Anna Brożek, SFV, Interview code 28418.

<sup>398</sup> Janusz Szczepański, *Spółeczność żydowska Mazowsza w XIX–XX wieku* (Pułtusk: Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna imienia Aleksandra Gieysztora w Pułtusku, 2005), 491, based on

sisters from Czernice Borowe who were later sheltered by Rev. Józef Piekut, the pastor of Przasnysz, in the parish rectory.

Rev. Piekut placed the girls in the monastery of the Capuchin Poor Clares (Klaryski Kapucynki) in Przasnysz. In April 1941, the Germans arrested all of the nuns and sent them to the Soldau concentration camp in Działdowo. Once the monastery was closed, the girls returned to the parish rectory in Przasnysz. Afterwards, they were placed with the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, also in Przasnysz. The ultimate fate of these two girls is not known. According to one account, they were eventually caught by the Germans and did not survive.<sup>399</sup>

**B**ronisław Krzyżanowski, a Home Army commander from Wilno, and his wife, Helena, were decorated by Yad Vashem for rescuing several members of the Baran family. According to the entry in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among Nations*,

In July 1941, immediately after the Jews of Vilna [Wilno] were interned in the ghetto, five-year-old Zeev Baran was smuggled over to the Aryan side of the city, where he was taken in by Bronisław [Bronisław] and Helena Krzyżanowski [Krzyżanowski], friends of his family. The Krzyżanowskis passed Zeev off as a relative whose parents had been exiled to Siberia by the Soviets. In time, Guta Baran, Zeev's mother, also escaped from the ghetto, after her husband [Eliasz Baran], who was a leading AK [i.e., Home Army] activist, fell in action against the Germans. The Krzyżanowskis hid Guta, who was in the last months of pregnancy, in their apartment, where she gave birth to her second son, Eliahu. The Krzyżanowskis also hid Sophie Rachel and Gregory Baran, relatives of Guta's, in their summer house [in Ponaryszki]. Throughout the occupation, there were many near escapes, when the refugees were almost discovered. Despite the danger, the Krzyżanowskis, prompted by humanitarian considerations, were determined to help their friends, and never expected anything in return. All the refugees were liberated in July 1944 and after the war immigrated to Israel, while the Krzyżanowskis moved to an area within Poland's new borders.<sup>400</sup>

As is all too often the case, the above entry gives no indication of the large number of persons who played a necessary role in the rescue of that handful

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the account of Seweryn Ruda of Tel Aviv; "Tadeusz Kamiński," Wikipedia, Internet: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tadeusz\\_Kami%C5%84ski\\_\(ksi%C4%85dz\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tadeusz_Kami%C5%84ski_(ksi%C4%85dz)).

<sup>399</sup> Shlomo Bachrach, ed., *Sefer zikaron kehilat Proshnits* (Tel Aviv: Proshnitz Landsmanshaft in Israel, 1974), translated as *Memorial Book to the Community of Przasnysz*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/przasnysz/przasnysz.html>; Józef Piekut, Wikipedia, Internet: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B3zef\\_Piekut](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B3zef_Piekut); Oral history interview with Aleksander Drwęcki, August 30, 2009, USHMM, Accession no. 1998.A.0300.296, RG-50.488.0296. Rev. Józef Piekut was a good friend of Yitzhak Perzhentsavsky, the last rabbi of Przasnysz, and they were known to take long walks together. Rev. Piekut died in 1946 and was buried in Przasnysz. Reportedly, years later, the two girls' brother returned to Przasnysz and cried over the priest's grave.

<sup>400</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 411–12.

of Jews. We know from Krzyżanowski's personal account that Elias Baran, his wife Guta and their son Zeev were also sheltered for periods of time by the Magdalene Sisters, on a farm known as Tartak-Saraj on the outskirts of Wilno, near Werki. Krzyżanowski mentions by name Sister Petronela (Zofia Basiura), Sister Innocenta (Zofia Jakubowska), and Sister Fabiana, as well as several other Poles by name who came to the assistance of the Baran family.<sup>401</sup>

After escaping from the Wilno ghetto, Esther Zabłocka Taylon (b. 1912), a graduate of the University of Warsaw, moved from place to place with the assistance of a network of helpers that included two unidentified priests and several members of the Polish underground. Befriended by a Polish nun named Lodzia, who did not wear a habit, she was taken to the belfry of a church before being placed on a farm in Jerozolimka, on the outskirts of Wilno. The farm belonged to a priest from St. John's Church. Esther remained there, performing various chores, under the supervision of a nun named Urszula, until the arrival of the Soviet army.<sup>402</sup> The order of nuns is not clear.

Nuns were part of a network that worked closely with welfare institutions in sheltering Jews. The overnight hospice (*dom noclegowy*) for women from the lowest strata of society, located on Leszno Street near the main gate of the Warsaw ghetto, was run by the Municipal Women's House; both these institutions were operated and financed by Department of Social Welfare. The aforementioned Sister Bernarda (Julia Wilczek) of the Magdalene Sisters and the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul are mentioned in accounts describing the activities of two valiant women, Kazimiera (Halina) Szarowaro, the manager of the hospice on Leszno Street, and Zofia Wróblewska-Wiewiórowska, an employee of the hospice, both of whom were recognized by Yad Vashem.

Kazimiera Szarowaro and her daughter, Zofia Kwiatkowska, lived in Warsaw during the war. Kazimiera managed an overnight guesthouse next to the Municipal Women's House. The guesthouse (as well as the Women's House) stood near the ghetto on Leszno Street. During the German occupation, Szarowaro as well as her daughter lent considerable help to people who were hiding because of persecution. Since the Municipal Women's House and the overnight guesthouse were near the ghetto Kwiatkowska and her mother often helped people who were escaping from the ghetto and gave them illegal shelter in their apartment. Many times these people stayed for a long time under their complete care.<sup>403</sup>

<sup>401</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 228–32. See also Bronisław Krzyżanowski, *Wileński matecznik 1939–1944* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1979), 94–96.

<sup>402</sup> Testimony of Esther Taylon, SFV, Interview code 16889.

<sup>403</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 777–78.

In February of 1942, I [Zofia Wiewiórowska] got employment as a clerk in the Common Lodging House on Leszno St., in Warsaw. At this time the Lodging House was run by the Municipal Women's House, at 96, Leszno St., and both these institutions were managed and financed by the Department of Social Welfare at 74, Złota St.

In the summer of 1942, when the Germans started to liquidate the "small ghetto" ... Women of Semitic type with insanity and fear of death in their eyes began to reach the porter's lodge of our House more and more frequently, asking for a place to sleep and for asylum. They had false papers, *Kennkarten* (identity cards) issued by the City of Warsaw authorities. We placed the women in the common ward, but usually they left this asylum. After seeing the horrible conditions among the crowd of drunkards, beggars and insane women, they went to seek refuge somewhere else. ...

The Jewish escapees were passed on to us by a nun, Bernarda, with whom we kept in touch until the end. It was she who placed the younger ones in various boarding houses, private homes or institutions. The Municipal Women's House [was] also crowded with Jewesses—girls in the boarding house and dormitories, governesses, guardians of the girls found refuge and occupation there. We never spoke, of course, about their origin, accepted their false papers in good faith ...

We arranged for the hidden women to get in touch with their families; the underground organization supplied them with medicine, food and clothing. Halina Szarowaro and I lived as on a volcano.<sup>404</sup>

Zofia Wiewiórowska [Wiewiórowska], together with Halina Szarowaro, managed a night hospice ("Dom Noclegowy") for women from the lowest strata of society, which was located near the main gate of the Warsaw ghetto. Two rooms in the hospice served as a small hotel, and another as a small infirmary. There, Zofia hid a number of Jewish women throughout the war. In addition, she served as a liaison and courier for Jews hiding in nearby Radosc [Radość], delivering money for their upkeep. Zofia placed Anna [Wolfowicz, Irena Cygler's mother] in one of the rooms in her hotel. Although Anna had false papers under the name of Anna Sierczyńska [Sierczyńska], she had Semitic looks, and was unable to safely leave her hiding place. She remained in the hotel until the Warsaw ghetto [sic] uprising, in August 1944. After the fall of the Wola district, where the hospital was located, she managed to blend in with the crowds of Poles expelled from Warsaw. She was sent to forced labor in Germany, where she survived until the end of the war.

Zofia also arranged for false Catholic birth certificates for Hendel and Irena [Cygler]. With these, they applied for *Kennkarten* (official identification cards) under the names of Kazimierz Laski [Łaski] and Teodozja Lewandowska. With the help of a Catholic nun, Sister Bernarda, Zofia then arranged a job for Hendel, working in a vegetable garden in the suburbs of Warsaw. This job, his false papers, his appearance, and his command of the Polish language enabled him to survive there until August 1944. He fought in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, as a member of the AL (People's Army) in the Old City district. He was wounded and hospitalized at Plocka [Płocka] Street, and later evacuated to the field hospital in Ursus, in the vicinity of Warsaw. He was liberated there in January 1945 by the Red Army.

Like Hendel, Irena spoke Polish perfectly, but her looks betrayed her Jewish origins and she was forced to change her place of employment frequently. Zofia always assisted

<sup>404</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 131–33.

in finding a new job for her. Finally, Sister Bernarda found a job for Irena in the Szarytki [Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul] convent orphanage at ul. Ordynacka,<sup>405</sup> where she worked first in the kitchen, and later as a children's caretaker in the orphanage. Irena stayed there until the Warsaw ghetto uprising. She also was able to leave with the Polish population expelled by the Germans. She found Hendel in Ursus shortly before liberation.<sup>406</sup>

In February 1942, Zofia [Wiewiórowska] began working as a manager in the hospice and shelter for women at 93 Leszno Street, which was part of the Municipal Women's Home under the auspices of the Division of Social Services. The hospice was located close to one of the entrances to the Warsaw ghetto at Żelazna Street. Together with her immediate superior, Kazimiera Szarowaro, Zofia Wiewiórowska helped to arrange short- and long-term stays at the shelter for women who had escaped from the Warsaw ghetto, especially in the summer of 1942, during the deportation of Warsaw ghetto Jews to Treblinka. While some were placed with trusted families and institutions, others continued to stay at the shelter. Though some of them had false identity papers, Zofia was well aware that they were Jewish. Among those who turned to Zofia for help in the fall of 1942 was a pianist, Niusia (Anna) Wolfowicz. Niusia and her daughter Irena had survived the liquidation of the ghetto in Żelechów (Garwolin County, Lublin District), and had moved to Warsaw. When Irena went to Częstochowa to look for her boyfriend, Hendel Cygler (later, Kazimierz Łaski), she visited Alina Sybyłówna [Sebyła], a friend from school and Zofia Wiewiórowska's niece who gave her Zofia's Warsaw address. Zofia placed Niusia Wolfowicz in one of the rooms of the small hotel that was part of the hospice. She had false identity papers in the name of Anna Sierczyńska, but due to her looks, she stayed inside until August 1944, when the Warsaw Uprising broke out. Hendel Cygler escaped from the ghetto in Częstochowa in April 1943, and Zofia arranged an original birth certificate for him under the name of Kazimierz Łaski and a birth certificate for Irena under the name of Teodozja Lewandowska. These documents allowed them to apply for official identity cards. Zofia organized a place to stay for Hendel Cygler in the basement at 62 Chłodna Street and put him in touch with Sister Bernarda, who found him work in a vegetable garden. Zofia also arranged work for Irena Wolfowicz and eventually likewise put her in touch with Sister Bernarda, who found Irena a place in the orphanage run by the Szarytki Convent. Irena stayed at the orphanage during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and found her fiancé shortly after the liberation. ... Among other Jews who were hidden at the shelter was Zofia Władimirowa Łukaszewicz, who presented herself as a White Russian émigré [sic]. Zofia Wiewiórowska and her colleague, Kazimiera Szarawaro [Szarowaro], organized private tutorials for her so that she could make a living teaching French and German. Other Jews who were hidden in the hospice were Irena Drweska-Ruszczówna [Ruszczyc Drwńska], Miss Szapiro, and Maria Fisher, who worked as a nurse in the hospice infirmary.<sup>407</sup>

<sup>405</sup> This was the House of Mercy (Dom Miłosierdzia), which sheltered a number of Jewish girls. See Jadwiga Kisielewska, "Heroiczne zaangażowanie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego a Paulo prowincji warszawskiej w dzieło ratowania ludności żydowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 78–85, at p. 83.

<sup>406</sup> "Portrait of Zofia Wiewiorowska," USHMM, Photograph no. 65387, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1177149>.

<sup>407</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 635.



The Magdalene Sisters sheltered some twenty Jewish girls at their correctional home for young women on Zadwórzeńska Street in Lwów. After their mother was seized from their home and taken to the ghetto in August 1942, Danuta Macharowska (b. 1928) and her brother, Ryszard Macharowski (b. 1930), roamed the streets of Lwów, begging for food. In February 1943, someone brought them to the attention of the Polish Welfare Committee, and they were placed with nuns. Danuta stayed at the shelter run by the Magdalene Sisters, where she remained until after the war. Danuta posed as a Catholic and bonded with Sister Maria Kazimiera (Irena Twarowska), with whom she remained a life-long friend.

Her brother, Ryszard, was placed in a shelter for boys in the Zamarstynów district run by the Albertine Sisters. Because he was circumcised and it was feared that his cover as a Catholic would be discovered by the other charges, in June 1943, Ryszard was sent to live with Polish families, first with a doctor in Lwów, and then on a farm in the nearby Polish village of Zimna Woda.

Danuta and Ryszard were baptized by Rev. Tadeusz Załuczkowski, the pastor of St. Elizabeth Church, in April 1944, and took their First Holy Communion. In 1946, the children were reunited with their father, Ignacy Macharowski, who had been interned in Hungary as a Polish soldier and returned to Łódź after the war. Unfortunately, he died of cancer very soon after their reunion.<sup>408</sup>

While staying at the Magdalene Sisters' home in Lwów, Danuta Macharowska met another Jewish girl, Fela Meisel (later Felicja Mikołajczyk, b. 1927), who had stayed earlier with the Felician Sisters and whose story appears later on. The Jewish girls were given false names. Fela, who was known as Renia, recalled the names of several other Jewish girls: Maryla, Lutka, and Halinka. No one talked about their past and all of the charges were treated the same. Fela had nothing but praise for the nuns, especially Sister Maria Pelagia (Natalia Chabowska), the superior, and Sister Maria Kazimiera. She maintained an enduring friendship with both of these selfless nuns.<sup>409</sup>

Another Jewish child placed in the Magdalene Sisters' shelter in Lwów was Marlina Wolisch (b. 1936). After her parents and brother were seized by the Germans, Marlina's older sister, Irka (then 15 years old), turned to a Catholic priest who was an acquaintance of their mother and obtained false identity documents for herself and Marlina. The priest was willing to hire Irka as a housekeeper, but she was not interested. Instead, Irka registered for labour in Germany as a Pole. Marlina went to live with her Ukrainian aunt, Marysia, who was married to Marlina's Jewish paternal uncle. After Ukrainian police arrested her aunt

<sup>408</sup> Magdalena Marczyńska, *Uśmiecham się, jak chciałaś* (Warsaw: Baobab, 2008), 22, 28–34, 62, 70, 194–95.

<sup>409</sup> Testimony of Felicja Mikołajczyk, SFV, Interview code 45624.



and uncle, a neighbour of Marysia's took Marlina in but was afraid to keep her because of continued police raids on that same building. That woman took Marlina to the Polish Welfare Committee, who entrusted her to the Magdalene Sisters. She remained there until the entry of the Soviet army. The head sister and another nun surmised that Marlina was Jewish.<sup>410</sup>

A number of Jewish children were brought to the Magdalene Sisters' convent in Rabka,<sup>411</sup> near Zakopane. Sister Maria Irena (Maria Krzyżanowska) was the superior of the convent. Their charges included Beata Lew and Halina Lamet.

In 1942, Krystyna Lew escaped from the Warsaw ghetto together with her eight-year-old daughter, Beata; her son, Marek; and her sister, Helena Pocimak. Armed with Aryan papers, which they had obtained from a Polish acquaintance, the fugitives appealed for help to Helena Byszewska, her sisters Jadwiga Gostkiewicz and Maria Szulinska [Szulińska], and Wiktoria Kolbinska [Kolbińska]. Before the war, these four women had maintained a business relationship with the Lew family, which in the course of time had evolved into genuine friendship. When they learned of the distress of their Jewish friends, the women immediately undertook to help them. Helena took Marek into her apartment, and subsequently found refuge for Krystyna and her daughter as well as a hideout elsewhere for Helena Pocimak. The women set up a joint fund, from which 150 zlotys [złotys] were allocated monthly to Krystyna and Helena Byszewska. In due course, the janitor's daughter began to suspect that Beata was Jewish, and fearing denunciation Helena Byszewska decided to transfer her to a convent. Helena's daughter, Anna, taught Beata the rudiments of the Catholic faith, and the child was sent to a convent [of the Magdalene Sisters in Rabka, near Nowy Targ], where she remained until the end of the war. ... Jadwiga, Maria, and Wiktoria were of constant assistance to Helena and Anna, and in times of danger hid the fugitives in their homes.<sup>412</sup>

From 1942, Adela Nowosielska sheltered two Jewish children in her home in Rabka: Boruch Szafir, four years old, and Ewa Seifmann, one and a half years old. When Boruch fell ill, he was taken to the hospital in nearby Nowy Targ, where the Seraphic Sisters (*serafitki*), formally the Daughters of Our Lady of Sorrows, were employed as administrators and nurses. Sister Roberta Dudek, the superior of the local convent, made every effort to conceal the fact that Boruch, who was circumcised, was Jewish. Nonetheless, at least some of the lay staff at the hospital must have been aware of that fact, yet no one betrayed him. Nowosielska recounted the story as follows:

<sup>410</sup> Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss, eds., *The Children Accuse* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), 95–97; Testimony of Marlina Wolisch, October 26, 1945, JHI, record group 301, no. 1128.

<sup>411</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 560; Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 197–204.

<sup>412</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 127.

I kept the boy Boruch Szafir, son of Chana Łaja, née Korn, and Froim Szafir, the father, who lived before the war in Ostrów Kielecki. At the time the boy of four was given to me, he was called Boluś in order to avoid dangerous suspicion. Boluś became very sick of appendicitis in the autumn of 1943. During the night, I took him to the hospital in Nowy Targ where it was found during the preliminary examination that he was circumcised and so they were afraid to take him in. A nun (Sister Roberta of the Seraphic order) transferred me with Boluś to the German ward for women and children and put me in a private room for prisoners where I remained with the child for four months. I went home to Rabka only once a week in order to leave my dispositions and food for my children and then my 14-years-old daughter replaced me with Boluś. In consequence, she acquired a serious case of neuritis and I had to stay constantly, day and night, with the sick Boluś. Obviously, I spent much money for the hospital, doctors and services at the hospital; I did everything to keep the child alive. There is no need to add that in concealing Boluś I exposed my children and myself to a death sentence at the hands of the Nazi Gestapo.<sup>413</sup>

At least six Jewish children were left as foundlings at the Seraphic Sisters' children's shelter in Drohobycz. For everyone's safety, the children's Jewish names were not made known at the time. After the arrival of the Soviet army, the children were reclaimed by their relatives. The nuns refused to accept any payment for sheltering the Jewish children. Sister Janina Watychowicz recalled:

During the war, I worked at St. Jadwiga's shelter on Polna Street in Drohobycz. Jewish children weren't accepted officially; they were dropped off or brought anonymously by someone from social services. At times, there were three of them, at other times five or six; things changed because people we knew took them. Once, someone just left two newborn twins wrapped in a small pillow. We were never given the names of the children, because they stayed in our home as allegedly lost or war children. There was no question of payment; social services provided for them. ...

Long before our departure from Drohobycz, people would come to take them, thanking us. Through their channels, Jews sent us small gifts (stockings), sometimes money, since we did not want to accept anything for saving [the children]. The Jews thanked us for our prayers and requested more. In turn, we provided them with medications and dressings.<sup>414</sup>

None of the charges or their parents has requested Yad Vashem to recognize the nuns' rescue efforts.

The Seraphic Sisters accepted at least one Jewish child at their children's shelter in Stryj. Pola (Tamara) Richter, who went by the name of Michasia, survived the war and left Stryj with the Sisters when they relocated to Gliwice, in Upper Silesia. The child had been left near the gate of the nuns' convent by an unknown woman, and was taken in as a foundling. A Jewish woman who was brought into the Sisters' confidence praised the kindness and compassion of the

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<sup>413</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 404–5.

<sup>414</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 240.

Mother Michalina, the superior, who turned away no child in need of help. Pola was a member of the Fischbein family, who were sheltered in Stryj by a Polish couple, Bronisław and Maria Jarosiński. The Polish benefactors were arrested and executed, together with their Jewish charges, by the Gestapo in November 1943.

According to the Jarosińskis' son, Leszek, who was also arrested at the same time but later released, they had been betrayed by a Jew who was not accepted into the shelter because of a lack of room. (The Jarosińskis were already sheltering a Jewish family consisting of five people.) The Jarosińskis' two young daughters, who were not home at the time of the arrest, were also spared. Pola managed to escape detection during the raid on the home. The three Jarosiński children were placed in the same children's shelter as Pola, which was later transferred to Gliwice. Upon arriving in Gliwice, the Jarosiński children were taken in by their aunt. Pola was removed from the convent in Gliwice by subterfuge. The Jewish committee sent someone there posing as the girl's uncle, and the child was handed over to him.<sup>415</sup>

Rev. Kazimierz Wasiak, who served in the church of Our Lady of Victory (Corpus Christi parish), on Grochowska Street, in the Warsaw suburb of Praga (Kamionek district), was instrumental in the rescue of a number of Jews. He connected Irena Śmietanowska (née Waksenbaum), who had converted when she married Józef Śmietanowski, and their children Stefan (b. 1930) and Aleksandra (later Leliwa-Kopystyńska, b. 1937), with his sister, Maria Pac (Józef Śmietanowski's distant cousin) and her husband, Stanisław Pac. Rev. Wasiak also provided Irena with a false birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Bednarska to conceal her Jewish origin. From the summer of 1940, the Śmietanowski family took up residence in Życzyn, near Dęblin, under the protection of the Pac family, who owned a mill. Józef Śmietanowski was killed in a brawl with a mill worker, who had tried to blackmail him, in February 1942. (The mill worker's denunciation of the Śmietanowskis was, fortunately, intercepted by the Polish underground.)

Aleksandra Śmietanowska stayed with the Albertine Sisters in Życzyn for several weeks. Afterwards, she and her mother returned to Warsaw, where they took shelter in the rectory of Our Lady of Victory Church. In addition to Rev. Wasiak,

<sup>415</sup> Testimony of Pola Richter, October 22, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 5399; Rysia Sobol-Masłowska, *Fakty i wspomnienia*, 2nd ed. (Haifa: Ayalon, 1973), Part 1, 117–18, 204–7; Diane Armstrong, *Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations* (Milsons Point, N.S.W.: Random House, 1998), 392–94; Jolanta Chodorska, ed., *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny: Świadectwa nadesłane na apel Radia Maryja*, Part 2 (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 2002), 164–65. An official German announcement of January 28, 1944, concerning the death sentence imposed on 84 people, five of them specifically for sheltering or otherwise helping Jews, including Bronisław Jarosziński [sic] of Stryj, appears in Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 442.

the rectory housed the parish pastor, Rev. Feliks De Ville, and another priest. Irena and Aleksandra lived at the rectory from the summer of 1942 until their return to Życzyn a year later. They were reunited with Stefan and together survived the war in Życzyn. Rev. Waław Lechowicz, a local priest, provided Aleksandra with a false birth and baptismal certificate under the assumed name of Bednarska. Rev. Wasiak also brought a Jewish woman named Maria Rybakowska (actually Wieniewicz) and her daughter, Katarzyna, to Życzyn from Warsaw. Under the protection of the Pac family, they too survived the war in Życzyn.<sup>416</sup>

Alfred Zajdorf (b. 1928) was brought from his native city of Łódź to Warsaw in February 1940 by his father. Upon arriving at the train station in Warsaw, his father was shot dead by the Germans. A man by the name of Bernard, an underworld type, noticed Alfred looking lost and invited him to his apartment in the Grochów district of the Praga suburb. Bernard lived there with his sister, Weronika. They had already taken in a Polish boy named Jasio (Jan) and three homeless Jewish boys, one of whom spoke Polish poorly. Alfred, who became Feliks Kucharczyk, was the youngest. Weronika taught the Jewish boys the Polish language and Catholic religion so that they could pass more easily as Poles. Jasio worked as a pickpocket, and Alfred soon learned this trade. When conditions became perilous for the hosts, Weronika approached two local priests, Fr. Stefan and Fr. Stanisław, to find a place for Alfred. (Two other Jewish boys had been transferred to the countryside earlier.) In September 1942, Fr. Stanisław escorted Alfred to the Lublin district, where he was sheltered successively by several Poles.<sup>417</sup>

Another survivor describes the fate of her aunt, Frania Fink, a native of Zamość who survived in Warsaw. Living as a vagrant, she frequented Catholic churches where she begged, received assistance, and sometimes shelter. Her identity as a Jew was known or suspected by many. Although occasionally taunted by some young ruffians, she was not betrayed during the two years that she lived on the streets of Warsaw.

Francia [Fink] had lived in Zamosc [Zamość], along with her husband and three daughters, when the war broke out in 1939. They managed to endure ghetto conditions with the help

<sup>416</sup> Ola (urodzona w 1937) [Aleksandra Leliwa-Kopystyńska], "Nie mów nikomu!" *Midrasz*, no. 1 (2008): 42–49; "The Righteous from the Treblinka Area: Stanisław and Maria Pac and Fr. Kazimierz Wasiak," Internet: <https://muzeumtreblinka.eu/en/informacje/stanislaw-and-maria-pac-and-fr-kazimierz-wasiak/>; The Pac Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-pac-family>.

<sup>417</sup> Testimony of Alfred Zajdorf, SFV, Interview code 28878. See also Alfred Zajdorf, *Nie święci ...* (Poznań: Zysk, 2011). Zajdorf's first host was the Kuba family in Przytoczno; his last abode was with the Osiński family, near Sobieszyn, where he was known as Feliks Janicki. These two rescuers were recognized by Yad Vashem.

of Polish friends who provided food and money. They also gave Frania a false ID, which she could use in case of an emergency.

In October 1942, the Zamosc ghetto was brutally liquidated by the German forces. By then, one daughter had escaped to Russia and another had left the ghetto and was working in a factory on the Aryan side. During the liquidation, my aunt removed her armband with the Star of David and sneaked out of the ghetto to get some food for her daughter and husband. Upon her return she witnessed the liquidation of the Jews of Zamosc. From afar she saw the town's Jewish inhabitants shot by the SS and Ukrainian Auxiliary Police. Horrified, she ran back to her Polish friends crying: "It is time for me to get out of this place. I'm alone. My husband and little girl have been sent away by the Germans with our people. I have nowhere to go. I cannot stay here, endangering the life of your family. May the Lord take care of you. Thank you for helping me. Some day I will return and pay you back for the things which you did for me and my family."

To get out of the city she took care to pass as a gentile. Fortunately, she had blond hair and blue eyes and spoke fluent Polish without any accent. Leaving nothing to chance, she boarded a train wearing a big cross on her chest and under her arm was a Christian prayer book. Reasoning that it was easier to get lost in a big city, she left Zamosc, for the Polish capital of Warsaw, where she assumed the appearance of a beggar. Warsaw was a crowded metropolis, full of people trying to do their best to persevere. But survival was not easy, even for Poles, as the Germans planned to transform the entire population into slaves working for the Fatherland. As a result, the streets of Warsaw were teeming with paupers just looking for handouts. Many stationed themselves at the entrances of churches, so they could plead with worshipers for food and money.

My aunt was a lost soul in Warsaw, without funds and without shelter. She slept where she could—sometimes invited into homes by strangers, sometimes on the street. It was a very hard and dangerous life, but she had no choice. Ironically, it was the Catholic churches that provided the greatest refuge for my Jewish aunt. She found a priest who gave her permission to solicit on the steps of the sanctuary. He also allowed her to wash her clothes and take care of herself in the rear of the church, but only during the warmer months. In the winter she had to clean her face and hands with snow and frequently went weeks without washing herself. The harsh cold and rains of winter left her sick, and she often had to find refuge by sleeping on the hard wooden benches inside the church. Already familiar with Catholic liturgy, she prayed and sang along with other worshipers, with a prayer book in one hand and a cross in the other. But this, too, was not easy. At times, Polish youths taunted her by calling "to stoy Zydowka" [tu stój Żydówko] ("[Stand] You Jew!"), forcing her to flee to another part of the town and finding another church for safe harbor. ...

For two years my aunt had to endure the shame of posing as a beggar woman, living off the magnanimity of church officials and the generosity of strangers. She also lived through the Warsaw uprising in August 1944, when the Germans destroyed the city, killing hundreds of thousands of Poles. She saw how the Nazis eradicated Polish patriots who dreamed of a democratic Poland, while the Red army cynically watched from the other side of the Vistula. The Germans left Warsaw in ruins, liquidating almost all the inhabitants of the city. Those who did not perish were sent either to labor camps in Nazi Germany or to transit camps in Poland. My aunt was arrested and spent the remainder of the war in

one such camp in eastern Poland, from where she was liberated by Russian and Polish forces in January 1945.

It was only with great difficulty that she returned to Zamosc after the war in Europe came to an end. Immediately she reconnected with her Polish friend who, true to his word, returned the hardware store that Frania had left with him years earlier. She got back her home, too, but she was alone. It was very difficult for her to go on living, so it was that our finding each other came as a blessing.<sup>418</sup>

Zofia Bartel, a Jewish woman, converted to the Augsburg Evangelical (Lutheran) faith when she married Oskar Bartel, a Protestant high school teacher in Warsaw. The couple frequented Polish society before the war. Zofia's husband supplied her the documents of a certain Jadwiga Idzikowska, deceased, with the help of a Catholic priest from St. James's parish in Warsaw. Zofia even took shelter at the rectory for a time. Afterwards, she was sheltered by Polish friends who gave her refuge, among them the Usarek family of Warsaw and the Kuszell family of Przytoczno, near Kock. Zofia looked unmistakably Jewish, and her husband's decision to move her from Warsaw to Przytoczno was fraught with peril, as recalled by Krystyna Usarek, but it ended up being fortuitous.<sup>419</sup>

So it was that Mrs. Bartel, alias Jadwiga Idzikowska, became our 'second Jew'. She lived with us for six months. She could not, of course, ever set foot outside the flat or even show herself at the window. ...

At the beginning of April [1944] she announced that she was leaving. Mr. Oskar Bartel had found a hiding place for her at a manor house near Dęblin. We spent a long time urging her to reconsider her decision. There was a curfew from eight in the evening until six in the morning, and it was forbidden to be on the streets during this time without a pass. She would have to walk in front of the sentry while it was still light, make her way to the tram terminus near the Basilica [of the Sacred Heart] (often used by German soldiers going on leave), walk from the tram stop at ulica Targowa to the Eastern Station, and finally ride a hundred kilometres in a crowded train. I was brutal. I handed her a mirror and told her to look at her profile. "Yes, I know what sort of nose I've got," she said. "I'll have plastic surgery as soon as the war is over. But for now, I'm leaving!"

She left on Holy Thursday and arrived safely. She encountered no evil people, no stupid people, and no Germans along the way. ... She must, on the other hand, have met at least two or three hundred people who knew what she was as soon as they looked at her, but pretended to see nothing. Just four months later, she was free. She survived.

But the Gestapo came for us at night, the following Thursday, exactly a week after her departure. Our arrest had nothing to do with Mrs. Zofia Bartel. The Gestapo officer

<sup>418</sup> Joseph Freeman, *Kingdom of Night: The Saga of a Woman's Struggle for Survival* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2006), 113–15.

<sup>419</sup> Marian Turski, ed., *Polish Witnesses to the Shoah* (London and Portland, Oregon, 2010), 163–66; The Kuszell Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-kuszell-family>.



at their headquarters on aleja Szucha [in Warsaw] screamed “You should all be shot and hanged! You are ALL in the Resistance!” (There were a hundred of us, and I supposed that he must have been right.)

Forty of the hundred were shot forthwith, and the other sixty sent to concentration camps. It was pure chance that we were among the sixty, and not the forty.<sup>420</sup>

Moshe and Eva Weinman (Wajnman) befriended Rev. Józef Garbala, the pastor of a Polish National Catholic (Kościół Polskokatolicki) parish in Skarżysko-Kamienna. Rev. Garbala taught them prayers so they could pass as Christians. After their conversion in 1940, the family lived for a time as Christians. Their oldest daughter, Ruth, obtained false documents in the name of Krystyna Kowalska and went to stay with the pastor of the Polish National Catholic parish in the village of Hucisko, near Końskie. The priest was also sheltering a Jewish couple going by the name of Majewski, who may have played a role in Ruth’s disappearance. (After the war, Majewski worked for the State Security Office in Katowice.)

After the loss of their parents, the oldest son, 16-year-old Witold took his youngest sibling, Henryk (b. 1941), who was not circumcised, to Kraków in December 1943. He left him in the entrance to the building at 45 Krakowska Street, near the Albertine Sisters’ orphanage, wrapped in a blanket. As Witold watched from a distance, the caretaker, Józef Wadek, took Henryk away. Henryk was placed in the Albertine Sisters’ orphanage on Koletek Street, where he became known as Stanisław. After the war, Henryk was adopted by Stanisław Jankowski and his wife, who were reluctant to return the child when his brother, Witold, found him.

Witold also took his seven-year-old sister Danuta (b. 1936), known as Dana or Danusia, to Warsaw and left her at St. James Church (actually the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary of St. James parish) on Grójecka Street, near Narutowicz Square. Her brother instructed her to turn to a priest for help, pretending to be a lost child named Barbara Ślęzak. She remained at the church rectory for about a month, cared for by the sister of a priest. A parishioner then agreed to take the child. When Mrs. Przybysz took her to the police station to register her, as required, a policeman suspected the child was Jewish. Another policeman took her to the office of the Polish social welfare agency where lost Polish children were brought, in order to ensure the child’s safety.

Danuta was introduced to an official at the agency, Stanisław Kornacki, who became her guardian. Kornacki cared and provided for Danuta throughout the remainder of the war. Initially, she stayed at a children’s institution on Czernia-

<sup>420</sup> Turski, *Polish Witnesses to the Shoah*, 165.



kowska Street, where she suspected that a number of the other children were Jewish. She would often visit Kornacki at the one-room apartment he shared with his family. In July 1944, just before the Warsaw Uprising broke out, Kornacki placed Danuta in a boarding school on Marysińska Street, in the outskirts of Warsaw. After the Germans crushed the Uprising and evacuated what was left of the city, the boarding school was relocated to Poronin, near Zakopane. Danuta returned to Kornacki's home in May 1945 and remained with him until November 1947.

Henryk and Danuta were eventually reunited with their brother Witold. A Polish friend, Jan Szalla, found Witold a job as a farm hand on an estate in Głusków, near Warsaw, where he was known as Witold Winiarski (Winarski). Count Jan Skarbek-Tłuchowski, the estate manager, provided food to Jews that were hiding in the forests. He had been expelled by the Germans from his own estate in Kije, near Pińczów. They were later evicted to a small farm in the nearby village of Częstoniew. When Witold returned to Skarżysko after the Germans were driven out, Rev. Garbala took him in and cared for him. Witold followed Rev. Garbala when he was transferred to another parish, in Grudziądz. Witold attended high school there and served as an altar boy. In the summer of 1946, he decided to return to the Jewish community.<sup>421</sup>

Dana Wajnman's Hebrew name was Rachel. She later became known as Dena Axelrod. Her story is found in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*.

In January 1943, six-year-old Dana Wajnman's elder brother [Witold] smuggled her out of the Przeborz [Przedbórz] ghetto, in the Kielce district, and took her with him to Warsaw. Upon their arrival, Dana's brother told her to enter a church [St. James] and tell the priest that her parents had died in the war and that she had nowhere to go. The priest accompanied little Dana to the offices of the RGO [Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, a social welfare agency] where an RGO official, Stanisław [Stanisław] Kornacki, questioned her. After she fearfully admitted that she was Jewish and told him her story, Kornacki, stirred to compassion, arranged for Dana to stay in an orphanage near Warsaw under an assumed identity, where he used to visit her and bring her candy and clothing. Dana also used to stay with Kornacki on occasion. Dana remained in the orphanage until January 1945, when the area was liberated. After the war, when he discovered that Dana's parents had perished,

<sup>421</sup> Diana Binder, "Abandoned," in Arnold Geier, *Heroes of the Holocaust* (New York: Berkley Books, 1998), 211–25; Dena Axelrod, "My Name is Barbara," in Peter Tarjan, ed., *Children Who Survived the Final Solution* (New York: iUniverse, 2004), 192–204; Taitz, *Holocaust Survivors*, 15–17; Testimony of Witold Weinman, September 13, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 1945; Testimony of Henryk Weinman, February 1948, JHI, record group 301, no. 3362; Testimony of Danuta (Basia) Wajnman, August 8, 1948, JHI, record group 301, no. 4110; Testimony of Stanisław Kornacki, September 20, 1958, JHI, record group 301, no. 5635; Testimony of Dena Axelrod, YVA, file 0.3/7786; Testimony of Bill Wyman, SFV, Interview code 16232.

Kornacki adopted her and gave her his name. After his death in 1963, Dana Wajnman emigrated to the United States.<sup>422</sup>

Fr. Józef Kamiński found shelter for Marian Kuszner (later Marzynski, b. 1937), who had been smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto and left with the Catholic Aid Centre. The boy was baptized under the name of Marzyński. He was placed in the Orionine Fathers' orphanage for boys in Łaźniew, outside of Warsaw, which was staffed by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś). Marian, who became an altar boy, recalled the precautions that had to be taken when the Germans came to search the orphanage: "And the chapel was used whenever Germans were around ... I was always taken by one of the brothers to the chapel, and I was hiding, either by serving [at] the mass or sometimes behind the altar."<sup>423</sup> In another account, Marian recalled the motherly care extended to him by Sister Witolda Wielgus.<sup>424</sup> According to *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*,

In the summer of 1942, Jozef Kaminski [Józef Kamiński], a priest, turned to Antonina Kaczorowska, and asked her to look after Marian Marzynski [Marzyński], a five-year-old orphan. After Kaczorowska, a matron at Warsaw's Saint Roch hospital who lived on the hospital premises, agreed[,] the orphan was brought to her apartment. Although she soon discovered that Marian was a Jew who had been smuggled out of the local ghetto, Kaczorowska decided to look after him. Kaczorowska obtained Aryan papers for Marian, whom she passed off as a relative. Inspired by her religious faith to look after the persecuted, Kaczorowska took good care of Marian without expecting anything in return. Marian stayed with Kaczorowska for eight months, after which a place was found for him in an orphanage run by a convent in the village of Lazniew [Łaźniew], near Warsaw, where he stayed under an assumed identity until April 1945. Throughout his stay at the orphanage,

<sup>422</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 375.

<sup>423</sup> Testimony of Marian Marzynski, SFV, Interview code 34729, Internet: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/germans/marian/>. There is some confusion as to the institution that sheltered Marian Marzyński. According to the Samaritan Sisters of the Cross of Christ, he stayed at their home for boys in Pruszków, near Warsaw, for at least some time. See Margarita Brzozowska, "Samarytanki nie pytały o narodowość," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 61–77, at p. 65. Marzyński made the following bizarre claim about the alleged carefree lives of Catholic Poles during the war: "See, during the war, when people were dying, the Catholic Church functioned like there was no war [sic]. People were dressing up. They were going to church, they were singing the songs. They were connected to their God. So I played this game. It was oppressive, of course, but at the same time it made me busy." See Azmat Khan's interview with Marian Marzynski, "Before I Was Anybody, I Was a Child survivor of the Holocaust," February 4, 2013, Internet: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/biographies/never-forget-to-lie/before-i-was-anybody-i-was-a-child-survivor-of-the-holocaust/>.

<sup>424</sup> Jolanta Kołata and Maria Lewicka, "Pomoc udzielana Żydom w latach 1939–1945 przez Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek NMP (Starowiejskie)," Łódź, 1983, in YVA, file 0.6/1674 (Item 3695938).

Kaczorowska came to visit him and brought him clothes and candy. After the war, his mother traced him and reclaimed him.<sup>425</sup>

Fr. Józef Kamiński also sheltered a family of converts, Mrs. Draber and her five daughters. After the war, one of her daughters, Irena (b. 1925), became a Carmelite nun known as Sister Teresa of Jesus.<sup>426</sup>

The Salesians (Society of St. Francis de Sales, now known as the Salesians of Don Bosco) sheltered Jews—primarily boys—at various institutions for boys in several localities: the Ks. Siemca Institute on Lipowa Street in Warsaw; an orphanage on Litewska Street in Warsaw; a boarding school in Głusków, near Warsaw; a boarding school in Częstochowa; an orphanage in Przemyśl; and an orphanage in Supraśl.<sup>427</sup> Among the priests directly involved in the rescue of Jews were Rev. Jan Mazerski, the director of the Ks. Siemca Institute; Rev. Stanisław Janik, who procured false documents for Jews and whose involvement with a social welfare agency enabled him to place some Jewish boys at the Ks. Siemca Institute<sup>428</sup>; and Rev. Adam Skałbana, the director of the school for boys in Głusków.

Artur Ney, born in Warsaw in 1930, lived in the Warsaw ghetto together with his parents. He ventured out of the ghetto frequently, buying goods and then smuggling them into the ghetto for re-sale. When the ghetto uprising

<sup>425</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 324.

<sup>426</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 692.

<sup>427</sup> Pietrzykowski, *Towarzystwo Salezjańskie w Polsce w warunkach okupacji 1939–1945*, 149–50, 155; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 745–46. A. Filipowski was sheltered at the boarding school in Częstochowa. Several Jewish boys, among them Julian Ostrowski, were sheltered by the Salesians in Przemyśl. (The latter account is given later.) See Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 204. Accounts regarding the Salesian parishes in Lwów (Our Lady of Ostra Brama) and Warsaw (Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) can be found elsewhere in the text. Rev. Wawrzyniec Kapczuk, a Salesian, is believed to have assisted Jews in Kraków. See Pietrzykowski, *Towarzystwo Salezjańskie w Polsce w warunkach okupacji 1939–1945*, 155.

<sup>428</sup> On the activities of Rev. Stanisław Janik, see Jarosław Wąsowicz, “Cierpiący świadek Chrystusa: Ks. Stanisław Janik (1909–2006), więzień obozów hitlerowskich i komunistycznych,” *Nasz Dziennik*, July 7–8, 2007; Jarosław Wąsowicz, “Wychowawca, nauczyciel, więzień PRL—ks. Stanisław Janik SDB (1909–2006),” in Gustaw Romanowski, ed., *Bohaterowie trudnych czasów*, vol. 2 (Łódź: Biblioteka Urząd Miasta Łodzi, 2006), 30–45. The Gestapo arrested Rev. Janik in February 1944, during a raid on the Ks. Siemca Institute. They took him to the Pawiak prison with several other priests, including Rev. Jan Cybulski. He was subsequently imprisoned in several concentration camps, mostly in Gross-Rosen. On his return to Poland, he was persecuted by the Communist authorities and, in January 1962, was sentenced to a three-year prison term for alleged subversive activities.

broke out in April 1943, Artur happened to be on the Aryan side, at the home of the Serafinowicz family, who offered him a base outside the ghetto. They made arrangements for Artur to stay with their relatives in a Warsaw suburb where he remained for a brief period. Artur then found employment as a farm hand in the village of Runów near Grójec, where he worked for the Puchała family. The family learned that he was Jewish, but Artur felt safe among them. At one point, Artur was injured on the farm. A nun, who was a nurse, came to see him twice to dress his wound. She, too, knew that he was Jewish.

Artur returned to Warsaw in December 1943, when the Germans carried out a round-up in the village, seizing Poles for labour in Germany. He turned to the Polish civilian welfare authorities for assistance. Realizing he was Jewish, they sent him to the Ks. Siemca Institute, a boarding school for boys on Lipowa Street, run by the Salesians. Artur was known there as Piotr Grodzieński, using identity documents his father had obtained for him. The director, Rev. Jan Mazerski, who had assumed a false identity because he was wanted by the Gestapo,<sup>429</sup> was aware of Artur's Jewish origin. Eventually, of his own accord, Artur asked Rev. Stefanowski (likely an alias), his religion teacher, to christen him. Artur learned that there was another Jewish boy, a prefect at the institution. Artur remembered that he was a mean boy and took advantage of the younger boys. Artur relates his story in the following account.

I went to the emergency welfare department. In the ghetto I had purchased an "Aryan" birth certificate from a boy who was a convert who was later deported from the ghetto. They checked the document in the social welfare office and discovered that it belonged to a convert. So I was sent to an institute which was run by Rev. Jan Kapusta as a convert. He was there as a civilian, hiding from the Germans. His real name was Jan Marzerski [Mazerski]. He was a good person. Rev. Stefanowski also knew about me, and he was good to me too. The children who resided there knew nothing about me. While there I completed my sixth grade of public school. There were about 100 people there in total. The institution was located at 59 Sienna Street. [Actually, it was located on Lipowa Street.—Ed.] I stayed there until the Uprising [in August 1944].

<sup>429</sup> Wanted by the Gestapo in Kraków, Rev. Jan Mazerski escaped to Warsaw. Artur Ney, who found shelter at Ks. Siemca Institute, knew Fr. Mazerski under his assumed identity of Jan Kapusta. (The real Rev. Kapusta had been arrested by the Soviets in Eastern Poland in November 1939 and was deported to the Gulag. He wasn't released until December 1955.) During the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Rev. Mazerski took refuge in the convent of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in Warsaw's New Town Market Square. The convent was bombed by the Germans on August 31, 1944, killing 36 nuns, 4 priests (Rev. Jan Mazerski, Rev. Józef Archutowski, Rev. Michał Rozwadowski, and Fr. Leonard Hrynaszkiewicz), and about one thousand civilians, among them Jews who had taken refuge there. See Sylwester Jędrzejewski, "Jan Mazerski SDB (1901–1944), biblista i orientalista," *Seminare*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2014): 11–19.

During the Uprising I joined the Home Army. They knew I was Jewish. The whole time I was in the first frontline in horrible conditions. I went there of my own free will, because they did not want to let me out of the institute. ... On October 7 we all left Warsaw as the last patrols. We were taken to Pruszków. I ran away from the transport and made it to Łowicz. ... I stayed there until the Soviet Army arrived.<sup>430</sup>

During the Warsaw Uprising, Artur was protected by the commander of his unit, Captain “Orzech,” and by an unidentified chaplain, both of whom knew that he was Jewish. After the uprising, Captain “Orzech” and a driver by the name of Kazmierczak helped Artur to escape from the transit camp in Pruszków. Since he had no surviving family, Artur decided to return to the Salesians after the war. He stayed at their orphanage in Głusków-Zielone, outside Warsaw, for more than a year, while attending high school there. He recalled, “The priests knew that I was Jewish but they didn’t treat me any differently.” In particular, he had fond memories of Rev. Henryk Ignaczewski, the director of the orphanage. A former employee of his deceased father was surprised to run into Artur. He put him in contact with an aunt and uncle who had also survived. They made arrangements for Artur to leave Poland with them, and Artur eventually settled in Canada.<sup>431</sup>

In fact, there were several other Jewish boys residing at the Ks. Siemca Institute. The Goldstein brothers, who had Semitic appearances, were also referred there by the Warsaw Social Welfare Department. They went by the name of Cesarski.<sup>432</sup> Another charge at the institution was Edgar Talmus (b. 1930), who went by the name of Włodzimierz Zieliński. The Talmus family escaped from the Warsaw ghetto by bribing the leader of a Jewish work crew, blending in with the workers until they were safely outside the ghetto. A Polish friend took them into his apartment. They obtained identity documents under different names from a Catholic parish. Edgar was placed in the Salesian Society’s boarding school by the family’s former Polish maid. Although from an assimilated family who spoke Polish, Edgar had a Jewish appearance and was not well versed in Catholic rituals when he arrived at the institution. He learned his catechism quickly, and even became an altar boy. He recalled that he was treated very well by the priests and was not questioned about his background. He does not

<sup>430</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 331–32.

<sup>431</sup> Artur Ney describes his stay with the Salesians at length in his autobiography, published under the name of Arthur Ney, *W Hour* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2014), 98–109. The references to the nun who cared for him when he was a farmhand and the chaplain who protected him when he joined the underground are found, respectively, at pp. 82–83 and 119. His stay with the Salesians in Głusków after the war is described at pp. 145–57. See also the testimony of Artur Ney, dated January 15, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 2227, which is reproduced in part in Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 331–32.

<sup>432</sup> Pietrzykowski, *Towarzystwo Salezjańskie w Polsce w warunkach okupacji 1939–1945*, 150.

know if they were aware he was Jewish, but believes they probably suspected it. He met another Jewish boy there, the son of his mother's friend, whom he described as "obnoxious." Edgar left the institution when it was raided by the Germans, and several priests were arrested. This was probably the raid in February 1944. He joined his parents, who were passing as Poles in Złoczów, a town located east of Lwów.<sup>433</sup>

Two Jewish women were also employed at the Ks. Siemca Institute: Adina Blady Szwajger was a child-care worker for the Central Relief Council;<sup>434</sup> and Zofia Kubar was an accounting teacher.<sup>435</sup> It is not clear whether their true identity was known to the priests.

Rev. Adam Skałbania, the director of the Salesian Society's school for boys in Głusków (Głusków-Zielone), near Warsaw, was awarded posthumously by Yad Vashem for his rescue efforts. Among the Jewish boys he accepted at this institution were Piotr Krasucki and the cousins Jan (later Jan Philipp) and Karol Majzel.<sup>436</sup>

During the war, Adam Skałbania, a Catholic priest and member of the Silesian [sic] Order, worked as headmaster of a boys' school run by the Order in Głusków, a small village some 18 km south of Warsaw. In the fall of 1942, Jan Majzel (b. 1928, later Jan Mostowski, later Jan Philipp) arrived at the school, having previously hidden in Warsaw with his father. After placing his son in Skałbania's care, Majzel's father was captured and killed in Warsaw. Meanwhile, Majzel's cousin Karol (b. 1932, later Łaskowski [Laskowski]) was hiding on the Aryan side with his mother. By the end of 1942 the threat of being discovered and arrested grew dangerously high. When she learned that Jan was already safely at the school, Karol's mother went to beg Skałbania to accept Karol as a student too. Karol was taken in immediately, posing as a "charity case"—a poor orphan sent from another Salesian school. Karol's mother also stayed at the school, passing as her son's aunt. Altogether, over 30

<sup>433</sup> Testimony of Edgar Talmus, SFV, Interview code 57127.

<sup>434</sup> Adina Blady Szwajger, *I Remember Nothing More: The Warsaw Children's Hospital and the Jewish Resistance* (London: Collins Havrill, 1990), 122–24.

<sup>435</sup> Zofia S. Kubar, *Double Identity: A Memoir* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 147–49.

<sup>436</sup> See also the testimony of Jan Philipp, SFV, Interview code 52705. Jan states that his father, Edmund Majzel, approached an Ursuline nun who had taught religion at the school he (Jan) had attended before the war in Łódź, and it was this nun who arranged for Jan's stay with the Salesian Fathers, ostensibly as a Catholic boy. Initially, Jan's father paid for his upkeep (as was the case for the other students, except those from impoverished families); after his father disappeared, the fees were dispensed with. The Jewish boys did not experience any adverse incidents at the school. Jan even served as an altar boy. Officially, only the director of the institution was aware they were Jewish; the other priests may have been aware of or suspected it. Jan stayed at the institution for about a month after the arrival of the Soviet army. Rev. Adam Skałbania allowed Jan's father to stay in a small house on the institution's premises for several weeks when he was having difficulty finding accommodations in Warsaw.



other students were at the school, including Piotr Krasucki, who was also in hiding, along with several university professors whose life [sic] were in peril as “intellectuals”—all of whom needed to be fed and cared for. Few of them could pay any tuition, and the school was aided by some of the neighboring farmers. Skalbania, however, was the only person aware of the Jewish identities of some of his wards. ... On Sundays, mass was held for all the villagers in the small schoolhouse, and there was always a risk that their true identities would be revealed. Despite the enormous peril to himself and others, Adam Skalbania felt that saving the persecuted was his moral obligation, and he willingly sheltered them for no reward. As Father Skalbania told Piotr Krasucki when they met in Łódź after the war, “The danger of death for us was possible, but for our charges it was imminent.”<sup>437</sup>

According to a brochure published for the award ceremony held in Warsaw on June 14, 2010:

The boys had to keep their Jewish origin in secret. However, other boys from the school were easily guessing at it. One pupil even threatened Jan to inform on him to the Germans. The risk of disclosure was higher because the school was often inspected by the German soldiers. Another danger would arise on Sundays when the school attended Mass. People in church could pay attention to two little boys with dark looks. Fortunately, all of them survived the war. Later on they moved to Lodz [Łódź]. Rev. Skalbania [Skałbania] offered to orphaned Jan (his father was killed during the occupation) to live with him. Rev. Skalbania, a man of great heart and bravery, died in 1986 in Warsaw. Today Karol Laskowski lives in Brazil, his cousin Jan Philipp—in the United States. Up to this day, both of them remember their rescuer and guardian who lent them a helping h and although he risked his life.<sup>438</sup>

Several Jewish boys were sheltered at the Salesian orphanage in Supraśl. Dioniza Lewin (Lewińska) from Warsaw worked there as a laundry woman under an assumed identity. Her seven-year-old son, Jan, found housing in the orphanage. Both survived the occupation. Dr. Brenmuller, a local doctor, and his wife stayed in a rectory in nearby Czarna Wieś for several weeks. The following priests were involved in the rescue effort: Rev. Władysław Dorobiałą (Dorabiałą), the director of the institution; Rev. Julian Zawadzki, the administrator; Rev. Stanisław Piotrowski; Rev. Leon Kunat; and the seminarian Mikołaj Płoski. The institution's staff included several lay members.<sup>439</sup>

<sup>437</sup> Adam Skałbania, RD.

<sup>438</sup> See Adam Skałbania, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-adam-skałbania>.

<sup>439</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 745–46; Ewa Rogalewska, “Siostry szarytki i księża salezjanie: Zapomniana karta ratowania Żydów w Białymstoku i Supraślu,” in Aleksandra Namysł, ed., *“Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?...”: Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2009), 56–73; Ewa Rogalewska, “Zagłada, opór, pomoc: Miasteczko Supraśl na skraju Puszczy Knyszyńskiej,” in Adam Sitarek, Michał Trębacz, and Ewa Wiatr, eds., *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego; Instytut



The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul had to relocate their orphanage from Białystok to Supraśl in 1942, when the Germans took over their premises. They sheltered a number of Jewish children and a nun of Jewish origin. Three Jewish girls—Maria Syrota, Józefina Kloze, and Henryka Phifer—and a Jewish boy sheltered by the nuns were transferred to the Jewish community after the war. In addition to the nuns, among them Sister Natalia Hadryszewska, the superior, and Sister Genowefa Łaguń, lay staff members of the orphanage participated in the rescue.<sup>440</sup> Some of the Jewish charges had been brought to the orphanage by Marcin Czyżykowski, a Home Army liaison with the Białystok ghetto who was honoured by Yad Vashem for rescuing several Jews.<sup>441</sup>

During the war, Marcin Czyżykowski lived in Białystok, together with his wife Maria and two two-year-old daughters. From the moment that a ghetto was established in the city, the Czyżykowski couple openly engaged in helping its inhabitants. The Białystok ghetto held over 40,000 Jews from the city and the surrounding area. Pre-war friends of the family had also ended up there.

Marcin Czyżykowski provided the ghetto with food and medicines. He also helped the neediest of members of Jewish organisations who were active outside the ghetto walls. In 1941, he joined the Home Army (AK) within which, as Bartek, he was assigned the duty of maintaining contact with the ghetto. As part of his activities, he supplied the ghetto with false documents which gave Jews the chance to escape and live on the Aryan side. He organised the transport of weapons to Jewish partisans and the escape of people into the forest.

He also saved Jewish children, leading them into the Aryan side and placing them into crèches, orphanages and kindergartens run by the Sisters of Charity. His actions required great courage and were enormously risky.

Czyżykowski wrote, “My assignment was to be the contact with the ghetto. I saved children through my contacts with the clergy. I once transferred twelve infants, some of whom were still in cradles. I was scared that their crying would attract attention to me. The Sisters of Charity accepted the children into their crèche, the older ones entering their kindergarten.”

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Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Łodzi, 2012), 216–17; Ewa Rogalewska, *Getto białostockie: Doświadczenie Zagłady–świadcstwa literatury i życia* (Białystok: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej Oddział w Białymstoku, 2013), 200–10; Pietrzykowski, *Towarzystwo Salezjańskie w Polsce w warunkach okupacji 1939–1945*, 150–51.

<sup>440</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 745–46; Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 956; Ewa Rogalewska, “Siostry szarytki i księża salezjanie: Zapomniana karta ratowania Żydów w Białymstoku i Supraślu,” in Namysło, “Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?..,” 56–73; Ewa Rogalewska, “Zagłada, opór, pomoc: Miasteczko Supraśl na skraju Puszczy Knyszyńskiej,” in Sitarek, Trębacz, and Wiatr, *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, 216–17; Rogalewska, *Getto białostockie*, 200–10.

<sup>441</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 163.

The Czyżykowski home served as a hiding-place for ghetto escapees. Among those hidden there were the Kaczmarczyk and Neumark families. Maria and Marcin saw their providing help to needy Jews as their obligation, regardless of the problems that this would entail.

In April 1944, Marcin Czyżykowski was arrested by the Gestapo for his activity in the underground and put into prison. He was then moved to the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp. Upon his release, he returned to Białystok.<sup>442</sup>

The Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek Najświętszej Maryi Panny Niepokalanie Poczętej ze Starej Wsi), whose mother house was located in Stara Wieś, near Brzozów, ran a large number of institutions where Jews were sheltered throughout occupied Poland:<sup>443</sup> Będzin, Brzeżany, Chotomów (near Warsaw), Chorostków (near Kopyczyńce), Częstochowa, Gorlice, Grodzisko Dolne (near Przeworsk),<sup>444</sup> Kraków-Prądnik Czerwony, Łańciew (near Warsaw), Lesko, Lisków (near Kalisz), Łódź, Lublin,<sup>445</sup> Miechów, Nienadówka (near Rzeszów), Piotrków Trybunalski,<sup>446</sup> Róża (near Mielec), Rzepińce (near Buczacz), Skała Podolska,

<sup>442</sup> The Czyżykowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-czyzykowski-family>.

<sup>443</sup> See Jolanta Kołata and Maria Lewicka, "Pomoc udzielana Żydom w latach 1939–1945 przez Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek NMP (Starowiejskie)," Łódź, 1983, in YVA, file O.6/1674 (Item 3695938).

<sup>444</sup> According to a Jewish account, the young daughter of Reb Moshe of Grodzisko was sheltered in an orphanage run by nuns. No one betrayed her, even though her presence there was widely known. See Bertha Ferderber-Salz, *And the Sun Kept Shining...* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 199. According to Frieda Stieglitz (Fryda Einsiedler), who hails from Grodzisko Dolne, the child in question was Anna (Hana, Hanale) Kestenbaum, also from Grodzisko Dolne. The child appeared openly with the nuns and was reclaimed by her mother after the war. See the testimony of Frieda Stieglitz, SFV, Interview code 23942 (segment 270). In a Polish account, this child is referred to as Hania, the daughter of a couple known as Jackow. Stanisław Dec, the head of the family who sheltered the Jackows and two other Jews in Grodzisko Dolne, was shot by the Germans during a raid on his home, together with one of the Jewish men he protected. See Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 196. See also Jolanta Kołata and Maria Lewicka, "Pomoc udzielana Żydom w latach 1939–1945 przez Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek NMP (Starowiejskie)," Łódź, 1983, in YVA, file O.6/1674 (Item 3695938), where it is said that the child was left by a Gestapo man.

<sup>445</sup> Ruta Helman was one of several Jewish children sheltered at the orphanage on Dominikańska Street, under the direction of Sister Florentyna Podolak. See the testimony of Ruta Helman, JHI, record group 301, no. 997. See also the story of Sabina Irena Czerkies, later in the text.

<sup>446</sup> An infant, several months old, was left at the orphanage along with a note saying her name was Helenka. The nuns suspected she was Jewish. The child fell ill, had to be hospitalized, and recovered. After the war, she was taken by her parents. Another Jewish infant left at the convent was fostered by a Polish woman. See Jolanta Kołata and Maria

Stara Wieś (near Brzozów), Staromieście (near Rzeszów), Szywnaś, Tapin (near Przemyśl), Tarnopol, Tarnów,<sup>447</sup> Turkowice (near Hrubieszów), Wirów (near Drohiczyn), and Wola Rzędzińska (near Tarnów).

At the orphanage in the village of Turkowice, near Hrubieszów, thirty-three Jewish children were saved by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś). All of the convent's twenty-two nuns were actively engaged in the rescue. Although the Jewish children were not baptized, they all had false baptismal certificates and were permitted to receive the sacraments. The nuns were assisted by their chaplain, Fr. Stanisław Bajko, a Jesuit, and by a network of people outside the convent, including the district social services inspector, Saturnin Jarmulski. No one betrayed them. The superior of the convent, Aniela Polechajło (Sister Stanisława), and three other sisters—Antonina Manaszczuk (Sister Irena), Józefa Romansewicz (Sister Hermana), and Bronisława Galus (Sister Róża)—have been recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles. Other nuns who cared for the children include Konstancja Szczepiek and Władysława Posłuszna.

The Turkowice convent in Hrubieszów [Hrubieszów] county, Lublin district, was one of the largest children's convents in Poland, known for having provided asylum for Jewish children during the occupation. Some arrived in the convent from the immediate surroundings, but most were sent there from distant Warsaw by *Zegota* [Żegota]. The efforts to save children were spearheaded by the mother superior of the convent, Aniela Polechajło [Polechajło], known as Sister Stanisława. She collaborated with Jan Dobraczynski [Dobraczyński], the head of the department for abandoned children in Warsaw's City Hall and an active *Zegota* [Żegota] member. Polechajło was an educational role model and inspired her students with her own spirit of tolerance. Helped by the nuns Antonina Manaszczuk (Sister Irena) and Józefa [Józefa] Romansewicz (Sister Hermana), she received the Jewish children warmly and never forced any to accept the Catholic religion. The three nuns worked to save Jewish children in full cognizance of the danger they had taken upon themselves. A number of German soldiers were always stationed in the convent, some of whom knew that Jewish children were hiding there but were willing to turn a blind eye because of their sympathy for the nuns. The *Zegota* chose to send children of particularly Jewish appearance there because of the convent's remote location in a forest far from any main roads. Whenever *Zegota* activists came across children difficult to hide because of their appearance, they would inform the Turkowice convent and the nuns Romansewicz and Manaszczuk would set out on the long journey to Warsaw to rescue them. All the boys and girls brought to the

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Lewicka, "Pomoc udzielana Żydom w latach 1939–1945 przez Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek NMP (Starowiejskie)," Łódź, 1983, in YVA, file O.6/1674 (Item 3695938).

<sup>447</sup> Two sisters, Zofia and Czesława Hubel, who were baptized, were sheltered in an institution for girls Tarnów. They resisted being taken by the Jewish Committee and remained in Poland. See Jolanta Kołata and Maria Lewicka, "Pomoc udzielana Żydom w latach 1939–1945 przez Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek NMP (Starowiejskie)," Łódź, 1983, in YVA, file O.6/1674 (Item 3695938).

Turkowice convent were saved and not a single case of a Jewish child being denounced or handed over to the German authorities is known. Those saved by the three nuns have very fond memories of them and the convent—of how they cared for them with kind devotion and without discrimination, motivated only by their conscious and religious faith.<sup>448</sup>

Sister Bronisława Róża Galus was one of the nuns teaching in the orphanage in the convent of Turkowice (Hrubieszów County, Lublin District) where 30 Jewish children were kept in hiding. Sister Róża taught a group of boys, including several Jewish boys who had taken refuge there under false Christian identities, with Michał Głowiński and Ludwik Brylant among them. She knew that they were Jewish and was aware of their fears that their Christian friends might inform on them and cause their death. Sister Róża displayed warmth towards her Jewish pupils, surrounded them with love, and protected them. ... In his biography, Michał Głowiński indicates that of all the nuns who looked after the Jewish children in the Turkowice convent, three of whom have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations, Sister Róża exceeded them all in her devotion and sensitivity, because she knew that the Jewish children felt threatened even there and she took them under her personal protection.<sup>449</sup>

Katarzyna Meloch (b. 1932), passing as Irena Dąbrowska, was one of many Jewish children sheltered at the orphanage in Turkowice. In one of her accounts, she wrote:

I was a Jewish child, saved in an institution for children operated by nuns, Servant Sisters of the Most Holy Virgin Mary (headquartered in Stara Wieś). I am one of a large group of Jewish children saved in Turkowice in the Zamość area. “Jolanta” (Irena Sendler, the head of Żegota’s department for the care of children) reports that thirty-two Jewish children found shelter in Turkowice. One of the nuns, decorated posthumously, Sister Hermana (secular name Józefa Romansewicz), writes in her yet-unpublished memoirs about nineteen children who were hidden in the institution.

Three nuns from Turkowice (from a religious staff of approximately twenty-two persons) have already been awarded Yad Vashem medals, but rescuing us Jewish children was the joint effort of the entire religious staff. When I write and speak of the collective rescue deeds, I have in mind not just “our” nuns. In the Social Service Department of the municipal administration of Warsaw, operations were conducted, clandestinely, to place Jewish children in homes operated by religious orders. The writer Jan Dobraczyński was the initiator of this activity. He was assisted by coworkers Irena Sendler, Jadwiga Piotrowska and also by my wartime Aryan guardian, Jadwiga Deneka [Deneko]. The “collective enterprise” would have been impossible without the consent of Inspector Saturnin Jarmulski. He knew (Sister Superior had no secrets from him) that Jewish children were located in

<sup>448</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 629. According to the Yad Vashem Righteous Among the Nations database, the following children were sheltered in Turkowice: Ludwik Zdzisław Brylant, Michał Głowiński, Katarzyna Irena Jacki Dąbrowska Meloch, Stanisława Jankowska, a boy named Nowicki, Fredzia Rothbard Kowalska, Stefania Rybczyńska, Chaim Blaiberg Sternbach (Stefan Bożeński or Bużyński), and Joanna Szeptycka.

<sup>449</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 552.

the Turkowice institution. He demanded just one thing, that we all have our Aryan documents in good order.

I cannot fail to mention Father Stanisław Bajko. He saw to it that our identity was corroborated by church practices. ...

For me, the most important of these persons was and is Sister Irena (Antonina Manaszczuk). Two years ago, she received, in person, a medal at Yad Vashem. ... Sister Irena took us, girls and boys, by a dangerous route from Warsaw to our place of destination. On a daily basis, she looked after several Jewish girls. In the task of rescuing us, she was the right hand of Mother Superior.<sup>450</sup>

Janusz Sadowski, a Jewish boy from Lwów—with flaming red hair—had been wandering around in small villages before he presented himself at the convent in Turkowice and declared that he was Jewish. The nuns accepted him without hesitation. He was well liked by the other boys, even though everyone knew about his Jewish origin. He was one of several teenage boys killed by Ukrainian nationalists on May 16, 1944, when they accompanied Sister Longina (Wanda Janina Trudzińska) to get food for the orphanage in nearby Werbkowice.<sup>451</sup>

The rescue of Renata Margulies (later Johanna Pick Margulies, b. 1920), the daughter of a lawyer, was a complicated one. Since Renata was recognizable in her hometown of Stryj, she had to be moved elsewhere. Her former teacher, Maria Wasserman-Waniewska, provided Renata with the birth and baptismal certificate of her own daughter, Janina Wasserman, as well as other documents fabricated pro bono by the artist Edward Grabowski. Although Renata was stopped by a train policeman (Bahnschutz) in Stryj, another policeman vouched for her and she was released. After arriving in Czortków, Renata was sheltered by Bronisława Rybak and by Mieczysław Mossoczy and his wife. Renata then relocated to Tarnopol, where she lived with a friend of Mrs. Rybak. Fr. Józef Obacz, a Jesuit priest from Tarnopol, placed Renata for a period of time with Agata Gomułkiewicz.

Afterwards, Fr. Obacz took Renata to Stara Wieś, near Brzozów, where she was put in the care of Fr. Bogusław Waczyński, the rector of the Jesuit college (seminary). For a short time, Renata (then passing as Joanna Kluzowicz, which was Maria Wasserman-Waniewska's maiden name) was sheltered by the Wałęcki family. Afterwards, in February 1943, with the permission of Mother General Eleonora Jankiewicz, Fr. Waczyński placed Renata in the convent (mother house)

<sup>450</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 114–15. See also Satrunin Jarmulski, “Ze wspomnień inspektora,” *Więź*, no. 4 (1988): 82–90; Cezary Gawryś, “Turkowice—śmierć i ocalenie,” *Więź*, no. 4 (1987): 4–42.

<sup>451</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 65–66. Sister Longina was also murdered with the boys, all but one of whom were Catholic.

of the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Immaculately Conceived in Stara Wieś, ostensibly as his cousin. Renata remained there until March 1945, under the care of Sister Maria Walentyna Krzywonos. While at the convent, Renata shared a dwelling with Maria Ujejska, a benefactor of the nuns. After the war, she was reunited with her mother and settled in Italy. Fr. Waczyński also sheltered another Jewish girl, who went by the name of Maria (Marysia), in the Jesuit residence in Stara Wieś.<sup>452</sup>

As an eight-year-old boy from a family of converts, Ludwik Brylant attempted to escape from the Warsaw ghetto on three occasions. The first two times, he was apprehended by the same Polish policeman just outside the ghetto wall when he jumped off a streetcar he had mounted as it passed through the ghetto. He was handed over to the Jewish ghetto police, who beat him mercilessly. Ludwik's second beating was so ferocious that he suffered permanent brain damage and permanent scarring on his head. On the third occasion, towards the end of 1941, an unknown Pole concealed the young boy from the German guard on the streetcar. Ludwik then made his way to Mr. Dąbrowski, a family friend, whom Ludwik's father had recommended. Mr. Dąbrowski, who lived in the Old Town, welcomed Ludwik, and the Dąbrowskis kept him for a short period of time.

Subsequently, Ludwik was transferred to Rev. Tadeusz Zimiński, who lived in suburban Anopol. Rev. Zimiński cared for Ludwik for several weeks before placing him in an emergency shelter in Warsaw. Ludwik was then transferred to the Father Baudouin Home. He was one of several Jewish children taken from that institution, just before Christmas 1941, to the orphanage of the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś) in Turkowice, where he survived the war as Zdzisław Mroczek. He was joined by his older sister, Feliksa, whose escape from the Warsaw ghetto was arranged by Rev. Zimiński. After her tuberculosis was treated at the orphanage in Chotomów, outside Warsaw, also run by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin

<sup>452</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 593–94; Jolanta Kołata and Maria Lewicka, "Pomoc udzielana Żydom w latach 1939–1945 przez Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek NMP (Starowiejskie)," Łódź, 1983, in YVA, file 0.6/1674 (Item 3695938); Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 74; Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 193–94; Mossiczy [sic], RD. Renata Margulies states she converted during the war and reverted to Judaism after the war. According to another source, she was also assisted by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Stryj. See Kamil Barański, *Przeminęli zagończycy, chłiborobi, chasydzi...: Rzecz o ziemi stanisławowsko-kołomyjsko-stryjskiej* (London: Panda Press, 1988), 261–62. Her mother survived in Stryj, sheltered for a time by Adolf Trunkwalter.



Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś), Feliksa was transferred to the orphanage in Turkowice.<sup>453</sup>

Michał Głowiński (b. 1934 as Adam Pruszkowski) arrived at the orphanage in Turkowice in February 1944, as part of a group of some fifteen Jewish children who were brought there by Sister Hermana from the Father Baudouin Home in Warsaw. He recalled their journey in the harsh winter conditions: “We travelled a long time. We sat on wooden benches, crowded, frozen, huddled closely together.”

He also described the dilemma faced by the Catholic clergy regarding the religious practices of children, like himself, who had not been baptized: “The Sisters knew about it as well. Still, they allowed something that they may have regarded as a sacrilege—my full participation in religious life. I was entitled not only to pray. I participated actively in everything. I went to confession, and I took communion.” Participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion by non-Catholics would have been universally regarded as a sacrilege. Understandably, as other accounts demonstrate, some priests were deeply concerned.

Previously, Głowiński had stayed briefly with the Felician Sisters in Otwock and later, for even a shorter time, with the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (of Pleszew) in Czersk.<sup>454</sup>

Maria Feldhorn (later Krawczyk, b. 1934) was sheltered at the orphanage of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (of Pleszew) in Czersk, near Góra Kalwaria, not far from Warsaw. She arrived there in the fall of 1943, after her “bad looks” attracted attention and conditions deteriorated at her hiding place in Łagiewniki, a suburb of Kraków. Maria recalled two other Jewish children she met at the orphanage: the son of a doctor from Kraków, and a girl called Stefa.<sup>455</sup>

She also recalled the perilous times experienced by the nuns and charges when the Soviet front approached.

<sup>453</sup> Testimony of Ludwik Brylant in Katarzyna Meloch and Halina Szostkiewicz, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 3 (Warsaw: Midrasz and Stowarzyszenie “Dzieci Holocaustu” w Polsce, 2008), 174–78; Interview with Ludwik Brylant, “Z getta uciekałem trzy razy,” February 14, 2010, Polska Agencja Prasowa (PAP), Internet: <http://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/198835,Z-getta-uciekalem-trzy-razy>.

<sup>454</sup> Michał Głowiński’s account is recorded in Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 56–70, where the quotations can be found; his autobiography *Czarne sezony* (Warsaw: Open, 1998), 97–134, translated as *The Black Seasons* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005); Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 191–96; Testimony of Michał Głowiński, SFV, Interview code 19205.

<sup>455</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 822; Testimony of Maria Krawczyk, SFV, Interview code 14119.



I was then nine years old, and I was one of the oldest children in the orphanage where the majority were little ones. The nuns, forced to leave their place because of the approaching front line, in a heroic manner and at great personal sacrifice, tried to provide the assembled group of children with a roof over their heads and something to eat. There were bombardments and continuous flight, fear, hunger, lice, shortages of clothing and shoes. We lasted like this until the end of the war. At the beginning of 1945, the nuns, together with the children, returned to their ruined quarters in Czersk.<sup>456</sup>

After the war, Maria was reclaimed by her guardians, the Trammers, who had arranged for her stay at the orphanage.

Sabina Futersak (Sheindel Futersack) placed her two infant daughters, Sonia (b. 1941) and the infant Dina, with two Polish families in Nienadówka, near Rzeszów, before joining her husband, who was hiding in the forests nearby. Fearing for the safety of their charge, the Benedyk family entrusted seven-week-old Dina to the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś), who had a small convent in the village.

Dina was given the name of Maria and survived the war, as did her sister, Sonia. Sabina located Sonia after the war but did not manage to find Dina when she left Poland in 1946. Dina was adopted by the Benedyks. In 1963, Dina was reunited with her mother and sister, who had settled in the United States. Her story was reported at the time as follows.

A Jewish mother has been reunited with the daughter whom she left in the care of a Catholic woman in their small Polish town when their family was threatened by the Nazis. Mrs. Sabina Futersak, who now lives on New York's Lower East Side, last saw her daughter when she was seven weeks old. The next time they met was at New York's Idlewild Airport when they were brought together by the efforts of a small voluntary agency which tries to reunite families who were separated during World War II.

In 1942, the Futersaks were in fear of their lives in their small village of Sokoloff [Sokołów], Poland. The father finally decided to go into the woods to join a group of partisan fighters. The mother, believing her place was at her husband's side, joined him; but first she left her two small daughters, Sonia, 1, and Dina, seven weeks, with two families in the town whom they knew well. Dina was left with a Catholic couple, the Benedyks.

The Benedyks, fearing for the safety of their charge, gave her over to a group of nuns. Meanwhile, Futersak was shot by the Germans, and he died in the woods in 1945. His wife managed to escape to Austria where she gave birth to a son, Samuel.

After the war, Mrs. Futersak tried to find her two daughters. She managed to locate Sonia, but Dina could not be traced. Mrs. Futersak's mother and brothers had come to the United States, and she and her two children joined them in 1949.

<sup>456</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 43.

This did not mean that she had given up looking for her other daughter. However, for 10 years, all inquiries proved fruitless. Finally, in 1959, she learned of Children's Salvation, Inc., and turned to it for aid in locating the long-missing Dina.

The agency conducted its investigation in secret for four years and finally located Dina. Only now Dina was Maria Benedyk; she had been reclaimed and adopted by Mrs. Wladisainy [Władysława] Benedyk, now a widow, in 1950.

Finding her was one thing; arranging for her to be brought to the United States was quite another story. Children's Salvation ultimately worked out an agreement with Polish authorities, and Maria, now 21, and her foster mother both were flown to the United States.

Mrs. Benedyk had been frightened when she learned that Mrs. Futersak was still alive and wished to see her daughter, and she was at first reluctant to bring them together. Finally, however, she wrote Mrs. Futersak: "I've given her an education. I've cared for her. Someday I will present you with your little princess."

Someday came sooner than she thought. Maria and her foster mother were flown to New York where they were met by her sister and brother. They then took her and Mrs. Benedyk to the Futersak's apartment where all will stay for the time being. Maria, although she speaks no English, wishes to stay in the United States; plans for Mrs. Benedyk are not yet certain.<sup>457</sup>

After Jews emerged from hiding when the Red Army entered the area near Czortków around March 1944, they had to go into hiding again when, shortly thereafter, the Germans returned. Cyla Sznajder (née Huss) and several other Jewish girls took shelter with the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś) in Jagielnica. They were hidden in the attic of their convent and survived a German search for Jews. "The nuns comforted us that things would not last long, and brought us food," Cyla recalled.<sup>458</sup>

The Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek Rodziny Maryi), one of the largest orders of Polish nuns, rescued more than 500 Jewish children and some 250 Jewish adults, and provided temporary assistance to many other Jews in their convents and all 40 of their orphanages throughout Poland:

Anin, near Warsaw—two orphanages (one located in the home of Rev. Marceli Godlewski, the other in the Loth home) housed 40 children each, half of whom were Jewish; Białoleka

<sup>457</sup> "Mother and Daughter, Separated by the Nazis, Reunited Here," *Jewish Post*, December 20, 1963.

<sup>458</sup> Testimony of Cyla Sznajder (Huss), January 25, 1960, JHI, record group 301, no. 5699. See also Omer Bartov, "Communal Genocide: Personal Accounts of the Destruction of Buczacz, Eastern Galicia, 1941–1944," in Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, eds., *Shatter-zone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 399–420, at p. 411.

Dworska, near Warsaw—20 Jewish boys were among the 120 boys there; Brwinów, near Warsaw; Brzezinki, near Warsaw; Grodzisk Mazowiecki, near Warsaw; Izabelin, near Warsaw—15 Jews, mostly adults, were sheltered there; Kołomyja; Kostowiec, near Warsaw; Krasnystaw; Łomna, near Turka—26 Jewish girls were among the 120 children there; Lwów—an orphanage on Kurkowa Street with 12 Jewish children, another on Słodowa Street with several Jewish children and some adults; Międzyzylesie, near Warsaw—an orphanage (Zosinek) with 17 Jewish children, and a sanatorium (Ulanówek) with a dozen Jewish girls and four Jewish adults; Mirzec; Mszana Dolna; Nieborów; Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski; Ostrowek; Płudy, near Warsaw—40 Jewish girls were among the 180 children, and at least ten adult Jews were employed there; Podhajce, near Brzeżany; Pustelnik, near Warsaw—several adult Jews worked there; Sambor; Soplicowo, near Warsaw; Tłuste, near Zaleszczyki; Turka; Warsaw: 19 Chełmska Street—about a dozen Jewish children were sheltered there, as well as some adult Jews; 53 Hoża Street; 7 Targowa Street, 15 Targowa Street; Skaryszewska Street; 12 Wolność Street; 97 Żelazna Street—15 Jewish girls were sheltered at this home; and Wola Gołkowska, near Warsaw.<sup>459</sup>

None of the Jewish children placed in the care of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary perished during the war. Among the 120 sisters who stand out for their role in this vast rescue mission and conspiracy are: Mother Matylda Getter, the order's provincial superior in Warsaw, who oversaw the reception and transfer to other institutions of several hundred Jews through the order's convent on Hoża Street in Warsaw; Mother Ludwika Lis (Lisówna), the superior general of the order, and Mother Janina Wirball, the vicar general, both in Lwów; Sister Anzelma Wojdyła, the director of children's home in Lwów; Sister Apolonia Sawicka and Sister Anna Skotnicka, superiors of two orphanages in Anin; Sister Bernarda Lemańska, the superior in Izabelin; Sister Tekla (Anna) Budnowska, the superior in Łomna; Sister Aniela Stawowiak and Sister Gabriela Strak, superiors of two institutions in Międzyzylesie; Sister Romualda Stępak, the superior in Płudy (in 1943, Sisters Romualda Stępak and Aniela Stawowiak exchanged their posts); Sister Franciszka Liebthal, the superior in Białoleka Dworska; Sister Helena Dobiecka, the superior in Pustelnik; Sister Celina Kędzierska, the superior in Sambor; Sister Olga Schwarz (Szwarc), the superior of the Divine Mercy

<sup>459</sup> On the rescue activities of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary see the following: Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 842–43; Teresa Frącek, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek Rodziny Maryi w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1981); Teresa Antonietta Frącek, *Siostry Rodziny Maryi z pomocą dzieciom polskim i żydowskim w Międzyzlesiu i Aninie* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Publiczna w dzielnicy Wawer m. St. Warszawy, 2006); Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Parts 1–6, *Nasz Dziennik*, March 10, March 12, March 16, March 19, March 26, April 4, 2008; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanek Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92; Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz, *Uratować tysiąc światów: Matylda Getter–Matusia* (Kraków: Esprit, 2021), especially pp. 209–342.

home on Chełmska Street in Warsaw; and Sister Teresa Stępa (Stępówna), the superior of the home on Żelazna Street in Warsaw.<sup>460</sup>

Various nuns such as Sisters Janina Kruszevska, Apolonia Lorenc, and Stefania Miałkiewicz were charged with transporting Jewish children from one institution to another. Jewish children and adult charges were also placed in the homes of lay persons.<sup>461</sup> Rescue at the institutions in Lwów, Sambor, Kostowiec and Warsaw (Chełmska St.) was particularly precarious because part of the premises was occupied by German soldiers. Birth and baptismal certificates for the Jewish charges were obtained from various Warsaw parishes: St. Barbara, St. Florian, Holy Cross, St. Adalbert, St. Alexander, St. James, All Saints, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as well as from parishes outside Warsaw, such as St. Anthony and St. Mary Magdalene in Lwów and parishes in Grodno, Wadowice, Wilno and Wołkowysk.<sup>462</sup> Rev. Stanisław Piotrowski, the pastor of Dobrzejowice, who was hiding in Warsaw, also fur-

<sup>460</sup> The fate of the nuns from the convent on Żelazna Street was particularly tragic. During the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, their convent was bombed and burned to the ground. On August 9, 44 nuns and 30 children were seized and taken to the transit camp in Pruszków. From there, the nuns were then sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and then to Ravensbrück. Nuns from Brwinów and Kostowiec were able to salvage the children, among them many Jewish ones.

<sup>461</sup> For example, Antoni Chaciński, a Christian Democratic political activist, and his wife, Irena, accepted 13 Jewish women and girls into their Warsaw apartment at the behest of Mother Matylda Getter, despite the proximity of German Kripo and Gestapo premises to their home. Antoni Chaciński was part of Irena Sendler's network. See Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 73; "Irena Sendler's network of colleagues," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/o-sprawiedliwych/irena-sendlerowa/siec-wspolpracownikow-ireny-sendlerowej>.

<sup>462</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanek Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 183. Regarding the retrieval of baptismal certificates from the records of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish in Warsaw's New Town, see the testimony of Feliksa Piotrowska, the parish secretary and wife of the parish organist, JHI, record group 301, no. 4154, and the testimony of Stanisław Stefański, a Home Army member overseeing this complex operation, JHI, record group 301, no. 2975. For confirmation of the provision of documents by priests from the Warsaw parishes of the Holy Cross and Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary parishes, see the testimony of Roman Jabrzemski in Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 601–2. On the provision of birth certificates by the Warsaw parishes of St. James and St. Alexander, see Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 334. Roman and Józefa Osiejewski obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for a young Jewish girl left in the nuns' care by her father. See Marian Turski, ed., *Losy żydowskie: Świadcstwo żywych*, vol. 3 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2006), 320–23.

nished baptismal certificates for Mother Matylda Getter, with the assistance of Rev. Józef Rosiński.<sup>463</sup>

Although several hundred Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary risked their lives to rescue Jews, only seventeen members of that order—Matylda Getter, Ludwika Lis, Tekla Budnowska, Helena Chmielewska, Helena Dobiecka, Celina Kędzierska, Bernarda Lemańska, Zofia Olszewska, Ludwika Peńsko, Zofia Pigłowska, Teresa Reformat, Olga Schwarz (Szwarc), Aniela Stawowiak, Teresa Stępa, Romualda Stępak, Aniela Wesołowska, and Anzelma Wojdyła—have been decorated by Yad Vashem. This is, unfortunately, all too characteristic. Yad Vashem acknowledges that 32 Jews were rescued in just two institutions, the ones in Międzyzlesie and Płudy headed by Sisters Aniela Stawowiak and Romualda Stępak,<sup>464</sup> yet only one other nun assisting in this rescue was recognized. The following accounts referring to the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary are found in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*.

Matylda Getter (Mother Matylda) was head of the Franciscan order “Mary’s Family” ... in the Warsaw district. In her capacity as Mother Superior, Matylda ran a number of children’s homes and orphanages in the locality, where she hid many Jewish children during the occupation. In 1942–1943, Mother Matylda contacted the workers of Centos, an organization which arranged care for orphans and abandoned Jewish children in the Warsaw ghetto. Many of these children, after being smuggled out of the ghetto, were sent directly to Matylda’s institutions. Although we do not know exactly how many Jewish children were saved by the institutions of “Mary’s Family,” we do know that about 40 Jewish girls—including Wanda Rozenbaum [later Shamir], Margareta Frydman [later Marguerite Acher], and Chana Zajtman [Hanna Zajdman, later Fajgenbaum]—found refuge in the Pludy [Płudy] branch alone. All 40 survived. [Chana Zajtman first stayed for a few months in the nuns’ small rest home in Izabelin before being moved to Pludy—see below.] Mother Matylda was fond of saying that it was her duty to save those in trouble. Spurred by her religious faith, she never demanded payment for her services, although some parents, and a few

<sup>463</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Siostry Franciszkańki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem,” *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 183; Teresa Anotnietta Frącek, *Matka Matylda Getter* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2019), 56.

<sup>464</sup> Yad Vashem lists the following rescued persons: Krystyna Frydman Mirska Mausner, Janina Dawidowicz (David), Hanna Zajtman Fajgenbaum, Daniela Shtaimetz Reiss (Danuta Rajska), Małgorzata Marguerite Frydman Mirska Acher, Teresa Mirska Lasota, Varda (Wanda) Rozenbaum Shamir, Krystyna Grodzieńska Żurowska, Nora (Eleonora) Rozenberg Baranowicz Hilkowicz Stern, Maria Juszcak, Stanisława Rakower Juszcak, Jolanta Zabarnik Nowakowska, Mira Wrocławska, Maria Barga, Barbara Barga, Felicja Górską, Ryszarda Górską, Teresa Kass, Maria Miniewicz, Bronisława Kowalska, Barbara Matusik, Zofia Oprzała, Irena Styś, Krystyna Styś, Halina Święcicka, Zofia Młocińska, Teresa Wlekińska, Rev. Marian Tadeusz Puder, Krystyna Parysek, Eleonora Senkowska, Dąbrowska, and Stefania Dąbrowska.

relatives, paid for their children's upkeep. Despite the fact that most of the Jewish children were baptized while in the institutions, they all returned to Judaism after the liberation.<sup>465</sup>

Professor Stanisław [Stanisław] Popowski, a physician, was a well-known expert in children's diseases. During the occupation, he was the head of the children's municipal hospital in Warsaw and active in an underground organization of democratic and socialist doctors who helped save Jews who fled from the ghetto to the Aryan side of the city. In saving Jewish children, Popowski collaborated with Matylda Getter, the mother superior of a Franciscan convent in the area. ... Bianka Perlmutter, the daughter of a family of physicians [Arnold and Stefania Perlmutter] who had been friendly with the Popowski family, ... was smuggled out of the ghetto during the large-scale deportation in the summer of 1942 and the Popowskis hid her in their home, where she was treated with warm devotion as if she were a member of the family. After a few months, Aryan papers were arranged for her and she was taken to the orphanage [on Hoża Street] run by the Franciscan sisters, where she remained until the liberation.<sup>466</sup>

After the establishment of *Zegota* [Żegota], Irena Sendler, who lived in Warsaw, became one of its main activists. Her job in the Warsaw Municipality's social affairs department made it easier for her to carry out her clandestine assignments. In September 1943, Sendler was appointed director of *Zegota*'s Department for the Care of Jewish Children. Sendler, whose underground name was Jolanta, exploited her contacts with orphanages and institutes for abandoned children, to send Jewish children there. Many of the children were sent to the Rodzina Marii [Rodzina Maryi] (Family of Mary) Orphanage [on Hoża Street] in Warsaw and to religious institutions run by nuns [Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś)] in nearby Chotomów [Chotomów outside Warsaw] and in Turkowice near Lublin. In late 1943, Sendler was arrested and sentenced to death, but underground activists managed to bribe officials to release her. After her release, even though she knew that the authorities were keeping an eye on her, Sendler continued her underground activities. The exact number of children saved by Sendler is unknown.<sup>467</sup>

The occupation did not curtail the friendship between Władysław Smolski [Władysław Smółski], a Polish author and playwright, and his many Jewish writer friends. On the contrary, he maintained contact with them and tried to help them to the best of his ability. As a member of *Zegota* [Żegota] in Warsaw, he provided a number of Jews with forged documents, found them hiding places on the Aryan side of the city, and offered them financial assistance. Among the Jews he helped were Bronisław [Bronisław] Elkana Anlen, Tadeusz Reinberg, Wanda Hac, Janina Reicher, Janina Wierzbicka, and Natalia Zwierzowa. Smolski's youngest charge was Jolanta Zabarnik (later Nowakowska), the daughter of friends of his, who was five when she first arrived. At first, Smolski hid her in his home and with relatives, until he found her a safer place in a convent in Chotomów [Chotomów—it was, in fact, with the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Płudy<sup>468</sup>], near Warsaw. ... Smolski documented the saga of Zabarnik's rescue in his book *A Child's Date* (*Losy dziecka*), which was published in 1964.<sup>469</sup>

<sup>465</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 234.

<sup>466</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 633–34.

<sup>467</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 702.

<sup>468</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 496.

<sup>469</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 728.



When the war broke out, Aleksander Zelwerowicz, a well-known Polish actor, was living in Warsaw with his daughter, Helena (later Orchon [Orchoń]). At the end of August 1942, one of Helena's prewar friends, Helena Caspari, came to her with her 11-year-old daughter, Hania. They had managed to flee the ghetto and were looking for shelter. The Zelwerowicz's apartment was already serving as a hiding place for Miriam Nudel (later Caspari). Nevertheless, Helena and her daughter were invited to stay with them for a few weeks and then after that with some friends of the Zelwerowicz's. All the while, Helena was looking for a permanent hiding place for the Jews. In the end, it was possible to hide them in a convent located in Izabelin, near Warsaw, where they were able to wait out the rest of the war. Miriam stayed with Helena—who provided for all her needs—until Warsaw was evacuated after the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising in October 1944. She moved in with Helena's father, Aleksander, who was a delegate of the Central Relief Council [RGO] in Sochaczew at that time. ... After the war, Helena and Hania Caspari, as well as Miriam Nudel, left for Israel.<sup>470</sup>

Helena Zelwerowicz contacted her priest and confessor with the aim of finding a permanent refuge for Helena Caspari (then Helena Zajdman) and her daughter Hanna. The two were directed to the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary on Hoża Street in Warsaw, and then to a convent in Izabelin, where Helena remained dressed as a nun until the end of the war. After several months, Hanna was transferred to the institution for girls in Płudy.<sup>471</sup>

After leaving the Warsaw ghetto, Krystyna Żurowska went to stay with Polish friends of her parents who provided her with a birth and baptismal certificate in the name of Krystyna Grodzicka and taught her Catholic prayers. Several months later, they placed her in an orphanage in Płudy, which Krystyna misidentifies as run by the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth.<sup>472</sup>

**P**ola Hajt (later Wall) and her daughter, Lusja-Halinka (later Zipi or Zipora Kamon), found shelter at the Divine Mercy institution (Zakład Opatrzności Bożej) on Chełmska Street in Warsaw, which was run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. They passed as Catholic Poles, under the surname of Zajączkowska. In 1978, after the death of Sister Olga Schwarz (Szwarc), who was the superior of this home during the war, these two Jewish survivors wrote

<sup>470</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 935–36.

<sup>471</sup> The Zelwerowicz Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-zelwerowicz-family>; "Hanne Feigenbaum (née Zaitman, born on 14.5.1931.) about Her Parents and Their Families, Live in Warsaw ghetto, Escape from It and Hiding, Live in Łódź after the War and Way to Israel," Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/pl/article/warszawa/16,relacje-wspomnienia/19022,hanne-feigenbaum-nee-zaitman-born-on-14-5-1931-about-her-parents-and-their-families-live-in-warsaw-ghetto-escape-from-it-and-hiding-live-in-lodz-after-war-and-way-to-israel/>. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 234.

<sup>472</sup> Testimony of Krystyna Żurowska, SFV, Interview code 25745.



a letter to the nuns expressing their gratitude to Sister Olga. A photograph of some of the children who resided at this institution, showing Lusja-Halinka Hajt standing next to the chaplain, Rev. Zygmunt Strzałkowski, has been preserved.

At least a dozen Jewish children were sheltered at this home, among them Maria Malinowska (later Widera). Despite the fact that it housed a hospital and flew a Red Cross flag, the building was bombarded five times by the Germans during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, killing seven nuns and several hundred wounded patients. Fortunately, all of the 180 children survived. Sister Olga evacuated them promptly after the first bombardment, taking refuge in Skrzyszew, near Gostynin. Sister Olga was officially recognized by Yad Vashem in 2018.<sup>473</sup>

Early in 1942, the parents of Ruth (Róża) Knyszyńska (later Flakowicz, b. 1923) and her younger sister, Lilka, turned to a priest in Warsaw identified as Rev. Biernacki, a prewar acquaintance. This was probably Rev. Aleksander Biernacki. Rev. Biernacki sheltered the girls for a period of time. Their parents were seized during a deportation from the Warsaw ghetto. Rev. Biernacki provided Ruth with identity documents of the deceased Krystyna Kośna (Kosina) and taught them Catholic prayers. He then arranged for the girls to be placed in a residence, Ognisko Rodziny Maryi, at 15 Targowa Street, in the Praga district, run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. Ruth claims the nuns were unaware of their Jewish origin, but this is unlikely.

Ruth remained at the residence for about a year and a half, moving out on her own when she obtained employment as a nurse trainee at the Transfiguration of Our Lord Hospital (Szpital Przemienienia Pańskiego), run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. In her testimony, Ruth states that, during an anti-resistance reprisal, the Gestapo raided Ognisko Rodziny Maryi and other nearby premises, randomly selected 50 civilians, including Lilka (Ruth's sister) and two nuns, and shot them. According to the order's records, the nuns seized during the raid were later released unharmed; the fate of the other persons, including Lilka, is unclear. In her testimony, Ruth states that Rev. Biernacki helped many Jews.<sup>474</sup>

Among the many Jewish children sheltered at the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary on Hoża Street in Warsaw were the afore-

<sup>473</sup> "Żadne dziecko nie zginęło," *Nasz Dziennik*, March 14–15, 2014; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Part 2, *Nasz Dziennik*, March 12, 2008; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 179; Olga Schwartz [sic], RD.

<sup>474</sup> Testimony of Ruth Flakowicz, SFV, Interview code 4565: Testimony of Ruth Flakowicz-Knishinski, YVA, file O.33/1551.

mentioned Bianka Perlmutter (known as Marzec, later Bianca Lerner), who spent a year and a half there, and the daughter of a lawyer from Poznań by the name Hofnung, who was brought there by the son of Hofnung's friend Pesakh Bergman, with whom Hofnung had left his child in Warsaw.<sup>475</sup>

The sisters Lila Goldschmidt (later Engel, b. 1922), known as Danuta Sawicka, and Mary Goldschmidt (later Eckerling, b. 1924), known as Maria Krawczyk, fugitives from Lwów, also turned to Mother Getter for help. Lila had been urged to seek out Fr. Alojzy Chrobak, a Jesuit who had a reputation for helping Jews. Fr. Chrobak, from the Jesuit Church of Our Lady of Grace located next to St. John's Cathedral in Warsaw's Old Town, directed Lila to Mother Matylda Getter. Lila recalled her first meeting with Mother Matylda as follows:

I will not forget that moment as long as I live. Mother Getter was in the small garden on Hoża Street. I approached her and told her that I had nowhere to go, that I am a Jew, and therefore outlawed. Mother Getter replied with these words: "My child, whoever enters our courtyard and asks for help, in the name of Christ, cannot be turned away."<sup>476</sup>

Mother Matylda found placements for Lila and her sister, Mary. The sisters survived the war with the nuns' guidance, assistance, and protection. At one point, Mary resided in the nuns' convent in Brwinów, outside of Warsaw. Mary recalled the helpfulness of Sister Janina, in particular, and stated that the nuns did not attempt to convert her, but rather respected her religious beliefs.<sup>477</sup>

Whenever a Gestapo raid on one of the orphanages was believed imminent, Mother Matylda arranged to have children who looked too obviously Jewish taken to temporary shelter elsewhere. When there was not enough time to do this, those particularly Jewish-looking children would have their heads or faces bandaged as if they had been injured. The author Władysław Smólski, who took part in the rescue activities, described the Sisters' zeal and dedication.

It was only after the Germans had left that I learned the real number of Jewish children concealed in the orphanage at Pludy. It was revealed that of the 160 girls, about 40 were Jewish. The same Franciscan Sisters also maintained another home at Pludy, with 120 boys. The percentage of Jewish children harboured there was somewhat lower but this was more than offset by the incomparably greater risk involved in hiding boys. [Jewish boys were circumcised, Christian boys were not.]...

<sup>475</sup> Bianca Lerner, "Humanity in the Midst of Death," in Tarjan, *Children Who Survived the Final Solution*, 212–18; Eugene Bergman, *Survival Artist: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2009), 107.

<sup>476</sup> Frącek, *Matka Matylda Getter*, 51.

<sup>477</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at pp. 189–90; Testimony of Lila Engel, SFV, Interview code 40006; Testimony of Mary Eckerling, SFV, Interview code 3345.

The Congregation of Sisters of the Family of Mary in Poland was divided administratively into three provinces. Since Warsaw province was running more than 20 orphanages, and an identical attitude towards Jews prevailed in all of them due to the influence of Matylda Getter, active in the provincial authorities, it may be safely stated that this province alone kept several hundred Jewish children through the war.

The moral attitude of the nuns was all the more admirable as their aim was not to win new converts but to save human lives. Baptism was seldom administered and then solely at the request of a few of the older children, after long catechetical preparation. I remember Sister Stefania's attitude towards these matters: how avid she was in rescue work, how eagerly she accepted every little Jew into the institution.

Some of the children had a very markedly Jewish appearance; those were not taken out for walks and, in case of an inspection by German authorities—of which the head of the village warned the sisters—those children were put in some hiding places or hidden in private homes, or else taken to the nearby home [in Anin] of Father [Marceli] Godlewski, former rector of the Roman Catholic parish in the ghetto who displayed truly incredible energy in aiding the Jews. The transport of children from one place to another was the worst problem—and such situations also occurred. In such cases, the sisters would bandage their heads to conceal a part of the face and make Semitic features less conspicuous. To protect their wards, the brave sisters resorted to all kinds of ruses and most hazardous undertakings!<sup>478</sup>

Mother Matylda was instrumental in finding safe hiding places for Jews outside the convent, as illustrated by the following documented cases.

In early 1943, the commandant of the forced labor camp near Lwow [Lwów] informed the Jewish prisoners that they would soon be liquidated. Irena and Lazar Engelberg, prisoners in the camp, managed to escape, going to Warsaw in the hope of finding refuge there. Matylda Getter, a nun, found them a place to hide on the Szeligi estate, located near Warsaw. Ignoring the Engelbergs' obvious Jewish appearance and the danger to his life, the manager of the estate, Count Wladyslaw [Władysław] Olizar, and his wife, Jadwiga, and Stanislaw [Stanisław] and Aleksandra Zaryn [Żaryn] agreed to give Irena a job working on the farm and to find shelter for her husband, Lazar, on one of the neighboring farms. The Olizars and Zaryns soon realized that the work in the fields was too difficult for Irena and they hired her to care for Zaryns' children instead. ... Throughout the entire time that Irena remained under the care of the Olizars and Zaryns, they treated her warmly, guarding her personal safety and caring for her every need. ... The Engelbergs remained in hiding until the liberation of the area in January 1945 ...<sup>479</sup>

The Radziwills [Radziwiłł], scions of an aristocratic family in Poland, had Jewish friends, grew up in an atmosphere of tolerance toward Jews. During the occupation, their daughter, Izabella, was active in the RGO [Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, a social welfare agency], and in the Red Cross and helped the poor and Polish prisoners of war who had been wounded in battle. One day in 1942, Matylda Getter, head of the Franciscan order in the

<sup>478</sup> Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 190–91.

<sup>479</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 562.

Warsaw area, approached her with a request to look after 12 girls, including three Jews. Radziwill agreed and accommodated the girls, together with the nuns who looked after them, in a community center on a family estate in Nieborow [Nieborów] in the county of Lowicz [Łowicz], Lodz [Łódź] district, where she kept them at her own expense. One day, when Radziwill was warned that the identity of one of the girls had been discovered, she herself accompanied the girl to Getter in Warsaw, who hid her from her pursuers. After the Warsaw Uprising, Radziwill also hid Jerzy Einhorn and Nusbaum-Hilarowicz and his wife and daughter in her mansion. Even when German soldiers were billeted in Radziwill's mansion in Nieborow, Radziwill did all she could to help those who reached it, including Jewish refugees.<sup>480</sup>

The Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary had a small farm (Robercin) outside of Warsaw, where the Warsaw Social Welfare Department would send Jewish children. Adult Jews also took refuge there. After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto in September 1942, Jadwiga Skrzydłowska stayed with Sabina Czesława and Jan Ordynowski, an elderly couple who were sheltering several Jews in Brwinów. Mrs. Ordynowska approached Mother Matylda Getter, who agreed to help Jadwiga, sending her first to stay with the Sisters at their convent in Brwinów. In the spring of 1943, Jadwiga moved to the Sisters' farm (Robercin) in Wola Gołkowska, where she remained until the Germans withdrew. She worked on the farm with the nuns, who treated her kindly. Jadwiga Skrzydłowska's daughter, Alina, was sheltered by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Warsaw and Międzylesie.<sup>481</sup>

Two of the many Jewish children sheltered by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Płudy, outside Warsaw, were Małgorzata Frydman (later Marguerite Acher) and her sister, Irena (later Mausner). On September 9, 1942, the two young girls were taken from the Warsaw ghetto by a friend of their mother's. They stayed in succession with various persons.

Małgorzata obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from the pastor of the parish of St. Therese of the Child Jesus on Tamka Street.<sup>482</sup> Mother Matylda Getter, at the Hoża Street convent, accepted them despite their pronounced Semitic features. On the following day, Sister Aniela Stawowiak took the girls to

<sup>480</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 660.

<sup>481</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 310–11; Sebastian Piątkowski, ed., *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 1: *Dystrykt warszawski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Lublin and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2018), 35–36, 411–12.

<sup>482</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkańki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 182. Marguerite Acher's expressions of gratitude appear on page 186.

Pludy, a boarding school outside Warsaw that housed some 40 Jewish children and at least 10 adult Jews.

A small stipend for the girls' upkeep was paid first by friends and then by their mother, who fled from the ghetto in February 1943. The payments stopped when their mother was sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp in August 1944. The two girls remained in the convent until May 1945, when their father returned to Poland from Hungary and their mother from Germany. Marguerite Acher published a memoir in Polish.<sup>483</sup>

But little Margaret, only ten years old, posed a problem: it is difficult for a Polish family to shelter her temporarily, let alone hide her permanently. It is that she has, to use the correct words, a bad face. ... a Semitic face, immediately recognizable. ...

"To go out of the ghetto without risk of immediately being identified as a Jew, I would have to cover up with a hat along with a huge fur collar to disguise my hair and my nose. I could hide for a time at the house of the niece of the attorney general [Wacław Szyszkowski], my parents' friend. ... I stayed there two or three weeks. ... Then my sister and I were taken into a convent near Warsaw, at Plody [Pludy]: the Convent of the Sisters of the Family of The Virgin Mary. ... At Plody, about forty Jewish children were already hidden. They were brought by different channels, through Irena Sendler's network. But certain families came with their children. Sister Ludovica [Ludwika Peńsko] told you: parents never showed themselves as such; they preferred to say they were the child's aunt or uncle, and that they were here to give them to the convent. They gave the name of the child, then left quickly, taking cover along the way. The Sisters had to change the names and keep absolute secrecy. Every Jewish child knew that they were Jewish but did not know which others were Jews, in the community of several hundred 'orphans,' Jews and non-Jews." ...

"One day, a blue [i.e., a Polish policeman] came to the convent. He spoke to the Mother Superior and said to her: 'I know you are hiding Jewish children and demand that you denounce them.' The Mother Superior answered him: 'Why don't you do it yourself?' Replied the blue: 'No, I can't. I am a Catholic, I was baptized here. I don't want to go to Hell...' And the Mother Superior retorted: 'Why would you want me to go to Hell in your place?' Ah well, that policeman never dared to denounce the convent to the Germans!" ...

For sister Ludovica, who speaks with simplicity, everything came, she said, from the interior:

"I was very happy that these children were able to survive, that they were able to get away. It gives me great satisfaction, yes ... But, what I did was from the heart. The adults, in principle, could shift for themselves—children, no. So, all the children who came here were accepted. We never knew how it would all finish. We did all we could so that they could survive, everything it was possible to do ... It was a heart's demand, a cry from inside."

She explained how these things had been handled in the convent during the war: each Sister was responsible for a small group of children; she herself was in charge of thirty-five little Jewish girls. She told me: "today, some of them are in America, others in Israel, and

<sup>483</sup> Małgorzata-Maria Acher, *Niewłaściwa twarz: Wspomnienia ocalałej z warszawskiego getta* (Częstochowa: Święty Paweł, 2001).

others still in France. Regularly, one or another comes to see me. Besides that, I have many of their visiting cards. ... they were saved from death, and now they have children, and some of them are grandmothers!" ...

"All of them were collected [after the war] by their relatives, or friends, who knew they were here, hidden in the convent. Only one, whom nobody reclaimed, remained. Then someone came to take her to Palestine. ...

I ask Sister Ludovica: "I have been told that the Nazis came three times to inspect the convent?"

"They only saw Christian children," she chuckled. "You see the little chapel in the grounds? We took the children there to pray. We put the little Jewish girls furthest from the door, right up by the crucifix, close to Jesus: like that when the Germans came, they could only see blond heads."<sup>484</sup>

Sister Ludwika Peńsko, an instructor who had 23 Jewish children in the group under her care at Płudy, described in more detail how menacing were the visits that the Germans made to the orphanage and how local Poles protected the nuns and their charges. There some 140 Polish children at the institution, as well as lay staff and visitors from outside, yet no one betrayed the Jewish charges.

"And the Germans also came?"

"Oh, lots of times! It was simply a divine miracle that they did not find anything. People of good will helped a lot, of course. The head of the village always warned us. We then placed the children with a more telling appearance at private homes or with Father [Marceli] Godlewski [of All Saints parish in Warsaw], who lived nearby [in the suburb of Anin]. As we were taking them along, we would bandage the heads or faces of some to cover up their Semitic features."

"So in that way had you to conceal their suspicious appearances?"

"Of course. Those above all sought refuge in the convent. And surely, we could not drive them away, could we? In my group of twenty girls at least one in two attracted attention by her appearance. ...

When the front drew nearer in the concluding months, already after the [Warsaw] uprising, Germans began bursting into the orphanage. One Gestapo officer was an especially frequent visitor. He roared like mad, stamped his boots and threatened us with death if he ever found a Jew in the institution. My Lord, if he only knew the actual facts, he would have to have us shot fifty times."

"But he did not find any one?"

"Somehow the Lord had mercy upon us. But were those days terrible! Artillery shells kept exploding around the orphanage."

"I do not fear bombs myself too much. And since there was indescribable filth and odour in the cellar where many people from Płudy took shelter with us, I kept my group of girls, about twenty Jews and a few Christians among them, in the corridor next to our

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<sup>484</sup> Marek Halter, *Stories of Deliverance: Speaking with Men and Women Who Rescued Jews from the Holocaust* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1997), 16–17, 25–27.



dormitory. That was on the ground floor. The rabid Gestapo man burst in there many a time. Luckily enough, the Germans could never tell Semitic features from others. And then, too, the corridor was in semi-darkness.”

“But still, ... how often did he come?”

“In the concluding weeks he came nearly every day. Only he seemed to be in constant hurry then. One Sister, who had been resettled from the Poznań province and had a perfect command of German, always tried to outtalk him while we were hurriedly hiding those children whose appearance seemed most telling away. We were frightened. Our Mother Superior was most frightened of all because she was responsible above all others. Being an elderly person, critically ill with cancer, she seemed nearing a collapse. With adults we had even more trouble than with the children. During searches we hid one Jewish family inside an old dry well which stood in our garden. They descended a ladder and we put a heavy lid on the top. Somehow or other, it all went on without a single bad break. But no, there was one, caused by nervousness. But let me relate that story from the beginning.”

“Even at the beginning of 1943 Mother Getter brought a young woman with a ten-year-old daughter to Pludy. She gave them to me for safekeeping. Both looked all right and when the mother peroxidized her hair you could not tell she was Jewish. But she had one weakness: she took fright easily. And small wonder it was, after all—just try to live so many years in constant danger! She was good-looking and bright, and knew a few languages. She taught English to our girls. She spent nights in the pavilion set aside for teachers but in daytime she came to me, to my group. She would say she felt safest with us. Well, we had a very narrow escape with Rena (that was her first name) in the last month of the occupation when once that rabid Gestapoman burst into the orphanage. He came just as we were sitting with the girls in the corridor. In all likelihood, he would not have done her any harm as a teacher. But her nerves let her down. She fled to the girls’ dormitory where my bed stood behind a screen. All of a sudden I heard the officer roar. I jumped into the dorm and what did I see? The Gestapoman had glanced behind the screen and saw Rena there. She was there all right, covered with my quilt, a bonnet on her head. He turned to me and asked—I know some German—if she was a nun. Naturally I answered yes. Then he pulled the quilt and saw Rena’s lay dress.”

“That was a moment in my life! I thought both of us were already done for. He called me a liar, pulled poor Rena by the hair and out into the yard where he had already rounded up several persons caught in Pludy and environs. When I ceased trembling I felt enormous pity for Rena even though she had let us down in such a foolish manner. I did not know one thing, though: did he take her on the assumption that she was Jewish or because she seemed to him politically suspected? But anyway, what could I do? I only prayed. ... A few minutes went by and ... I could not believe my eyes. Rena, safe and sound, reappeared in the corridor. Just imagine, there was such chaos that she actually slipped off and came back into the building. I do not now realize how it could all come off: it seemed part of a nightmare. And then, artillery shells started coming down again, too. It was a miracle that she escaped death. Forthwith I gave her a frock which, from that moment on, she never failed to put on whenever the rabid Gestapo man put his foot in the orphanage.”<sup>485</sup>

<sup>485</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 349–51.



Henryk Ryszard Gantz was born into a family of professionals in Warsaw in 1932. He left the Warsaw ghetto with his parents, Stanisław and Halina (née Hertz) Gantz, in June 1942 and was hidden in religious institutions near the city. First, he stayed with the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Białoleka Dworska. Then he was transferred to a school for boys run by the Michaelite Fathers in Marki-Struga. Henryk was reunited with his parents in September 1944, during the Warsaw Uprising. Afterwards, the family passed as Poles with his father working for a German construction company.

In June 1942, I went, together with them [i.e., his parents], in a column of workers (in the middle of the column) past the guard post to work. When we got to the place, I was told to hide somewhere. I was picked up from there by Mrs. Stefania Wortman, and she took me to my mother's cousin, Zofia Hertz, at Plac Inwalidów in the Żoliborz district, where I spent about a month.

Then, under the name of Ryszard Klemens Szymański, I was taken to the orphanage of the Sisters of the Family of Mary in Białoleka Dworska in the district of Pludy. I was there several months, after which my mother (posing as my aunt) picked me up from there because of the excessive care the sisters were giving me (attracting attention). She placed me in the institution of the Michaelite Fathers in Struga near Warsaw, where I stayed until the summer of 1944. There, I finished the fifth and sixth grades of elementary school.

All of July through September of 1944 I spent in Milanówek with Mr. and Mrs. Dobrzański, where my parents also wound up after leaving Warsaw and escaping from Pruszków (Mother as Ewa Ziemska, my aunt, Father as Władysław Jan Matusiak, her fiancé).<sup>486</sup>

Hadassah (Halinka), the daughter of Dov Berish First, was spirited out of the Warsaw ghetto into the welcoming hands of Zygmunt and Maria Rumiński, who sheltered her for several months. She then stayed with members of the Rumiński family before being placed with the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Brwinów, where she went by the name of Janina Sztejmer. Hadassah survived the war and was reunited with her father.

They were a wonderful couple: Zigmund Ruminski [Zygmunt Rumiński] and his wife "Pani [a respectful form of address] Maria," both ardent Catholics. They had no children. He was an exceptionally handsome man, a lawyer by profession. For many years he was a devoted admirer of Jozef Pisulski [Piłsudski]. In the army he held the high rank of colonel and for some time he was the deputy-prosecutor of the highest military court. ...

He then opened a law office in his lovely five-room residence in Warsaw, at #17 on quiet, aristocratic Poznanska [Poznańska] Street. The building belonged to the well-known, wealthy Samuel Habergrits, who was a partner in the Jewish-owned chocolate factory "Pluto's." I was the building manager and for many years was very friendly with the quiet, small Ruminski family. These two later demonstrated their noble character by rescuing a Jewish

<sup>486</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 54.

child from the clutches of the horrendous Nazis. This actually involved my only child, my daughter Halinka-Hadassah, and here is the story of how it happened.

On August 22, 1939, a week before Hitler attacked Poland, I, a military reservist, was called up into the Polish Army and assigned to the Warsaw *intendatur* [military administrative offices], which was located in Praga [district of Warsaw]. After the war broke out three days later I didn't see my family anymore.

On Saturday, September 9, 1939, I left Warsaw with my military division under heavy bombardment, leaving behind my wife Brokhe-Bronia, the daughter of the well-known and prosperous Reb [a respectful form of address] Shimen Orzhef, and my only child Halinka.

My division "fought" until September 21 when we reached the Hungarian border, where we were disarmed and interned in camps. We remained interned for five years, but not as prisoners of war, because Hungary and Poland were not on opposing sides in the war. For that reason, we were treated much more leniently and could correspond freely with our families in Poland.

In 1941, when I began to receive the terrible letters about suffering from my wife and began to ponder how to help, I delved into my memory to remember all my Christian friends from the past and hit upon the Ruminskis, certain that they would help if it was at all possible. I was sure about the Ruminskis because I had continued to maintain contact with them after they fled from burning Warsaw to Rumania in 1939. I continued to exchange letters with them especially with "Good Maria" until they wrote me that I shouldn't write anymore, because they were returning to Warsaw. Our correspondence broke off. When I began to send them my alarming letters, I did not receive an answer.

I found a way to the Ruminskis through the only son of my brother, Rabbi Avraham Simkhe First. His son, Marek (Meyer Noekh), was very active, energetic man with many connections with the non-Jewish side [of the ghetto]. I wrote to him to get in touch with the Ruminskis. He located them and set a time when he would take my daughter out of the ghetto. (My wife had already been sent to Treblinka, where she died.) A pure Aryan was waiting outside the ghetto and brought my daughter to the Ruminskis at 17 Poznanska Street.

My daughter stayed with the Ruminskis for several months, and when the pressure grew for Aryans hiding Jewish children, the Ruminskis took her to a safer place with their family. But there, too, things became uncomfortable, and Pani Maria, who was a well-known social activist in Catholic circles, with great care and devotion found a place for her in a Catholic convent outside Warsaw, the institution "Sisters of Mary" in Brwinow [Brwinów]. There they converted the little Jewish girl with her Jewish ways and she was given her new, although not terribly Aryan-sounding name, Janina Shteymer.

After the liberation, I retrieved my daughter from the convent with the help of Pani Maria and installed her in the children's home in Otvotsk [Otwock] run by the extraordinary pedagogue Frau Bielitski-Blum. There my daughter was soon cured of the Catholic nonsense that had been drilled into her young head.

We didn't stay long in Poland. The brother of my dead wife, Mordkhe Orzhef, was then in the Jewish Brigade, which was headquartered in Holland. When he learned that we had survived, he came in a jeep to see us, provided us with well-prepared papers, and took us to Germany. I sent my daughter to Israel with the first children's Aliyah, Passover time 1946. There she forgot her former names Halina and Janina, and remained Hadassah, a name given her in honor of her noble, pious maternal grandmother. ...

And what happened to the Ruminskis, my child's saviors? The Germans tracked them down. He managed to hide, but Pani Maria was taken to Ravensbruck [Ravensbrück] Concentration Camp and wasn't reunited with her husband until after liberation.

Their home at 17 Poznańska Street no longer existed. When I went to Warsaw after the war, I found them in a very modest apartment in one of the houses that chanced to survive on Yerozalimsker Boulevard [Aleje Jerozolimskie], across from the railroad station. They were aged and enfeebled. All that remained of their old selves was the fine kindly look in their dimmed eyes. He died a few years after the war, and she a little later.<sup>487</sup>

**A**nother Jewish child who was spirited out of the Warsaw ghetto and sheltered by nuns in Brwinów was Lea Balint (b. 1938), then Halinka Herla.<sup>488</sup>

Before the war my parents lived in Ostrow Swietokrzyski [Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski] and owned a furniture factory. We had an accountant named Gluchowski [Głuchowski], and my father, when the Germans were taking him to Oswiecim [Oświęcim or Auschwitz], gave him the key to the factory and asked him to hide me. He sent my mother to Russia. I'm sure it was this Gluchowski who took me to the convent in Brwinow [Brwinów], but I really don't remember much from that time. ... My mother died in Warsaw in 1944; I think she used to come to the convent on occasion, and once she brought me some white bread. I was at the convent until 1945.

I remember that I was very sick. I had some type of growth and an infection. There was heavy bombing going on, and a nun took me by the hand and ran with me one night to the hospital, in which there were [German] soldiers. The nun sat with me and told me through the entire time that if I behaved she would buy me a doll larger than the one in the convent. They operated on me, and I returned to the convent.

I also remember that during the bombing we would go to the cellar, whose ceiling was made not of concrete but of earth. We laid there with the nuns; I remember the smell of potatoes. I remember the type of life we led, and Christmas, and a Christmas tree in some room to the left, with candles on the tree. Candies during wartime! St. Nicholas would come on Christmas [December 6th]; he would come through that big gate and go up the steps. This was during the war! We did not have potatoes to eat; we ate offals—and the nuns ate offals! Just like the children. And yet we would get candies at Christmas. The Christmas tree was enormous, and covered with balls and candles. There was much joy at the time. Now I have come back to my childhood, and it was not a bad one at that!

<sup>487</sup> Dov Berish First, "The Righteous Gentiles," in Arie Shamri and Dov Berish First, eds., *Memorial Book of Nowy-Dwor*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Nowy\\_Dwor/Nowy\\_dwor.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Nowy_Dwor/Nowy_dwor.html), translation of *Pinkas Nowy Dwor* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Nowy-Dwor in Israel, USA, Argentina, Uruguay, and France, 1965), 417–18.

<sup>488</sup> Lea Balint expressed her gratitude for the nuns' help on several occasions. See Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at pp. 185–86.

All in all, my war experiences were not that tragic. I think that if during the war it was possible for me to be on a bed of roses, then the bed was prepared for me here. And that is why the war is not so terrible for me.

But I never really understood why they were hiding me. They did not explain it to me; they only said that there was danger. I remember one more thing. The Germans used to come to the convent and take eggs, or sometimes pigs. There was a garden there, fruit and vegetables were growing—and the Germans came and took them. One day, there was a large basket full of eggs and straw. Perhaps there were hens in the convent? I do not remember.

The Germans came in so suddenly that I was left inside the room and could not be taken out through any door. Sister Helena—she was tall and slim, her face was like that of the Madonna; she was beautiful—took those eggs out so quickly! She put me inside the basket and covered me with the eggs and straw.

A German came in, kicked the basket and asked what was in it. She calmly answered that there were eggs in the basket. The German said he was taking the eggs. The sister started begging him, saying there was a seriously ill nun in the convent who had to have those eggs. The German persisted, but then started paying her compliments, for she was very beautiful. Finally he left the basket where it was and went away.

There was a lot of straw lying on the floor. I could not stay in that basket, for the straw prevented me from breathing properly. I had to hold my nose shut the entire time. Nowadays I think I must have been co-operating with the nun. A five-year-old girl, that's all I could have been at the time. Not more than five. To be aware of the terrible danger we were in! Both she and I, and the entire convent!

When the Germans left, the sister took me out of the basket and began to clean my nose. She kissed and hugged me. I was well-liked in the convent; I always felt that somebody loved me, and this was very important.

I remember one more thing. When we went to church, I always went with a blanket over my shoulder. A nun had explained to me that if a German came up from one side, I was to place the blanket on that side so that it would hide my face. I always listened to what she said, for I was a good, obedient child. If there had not been this attention to every detail, I don't know if I could have survived the war.<sup>489</sup>

It is not clear which nuns sheltered Aliza Penski-Chayut in Brwinów, as the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary maintained two children's shelters there, and the Grey Ursulines had one. Aliza described her first day in the convent thus:

I was placed with a group of children who were playing in a circle. Quickly I became re-accustomed to playing children's games. I was like a regular resident there. In the evening, after vespers, we went to bed. The room was very large and had rows of little white beds. I was given a bed near a little blonde girl who became my best friend. ... The supervisor of the room was a young, pretty nun named Barbara, whose bed was behind a curtain in the corner. Before I went to sleep, I was told that we all had to sleep on our backs, our arms folded over our hearts. ... That's how I fell asleep. The next morning, I woke up before all the children. I looked around ... and saw that everyone was sleeping quietly and calmly,

<sup>489</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 177–79.

meaning there was no longer anything to fear. Very slowly many heads began to rise. ... Sister Barbara stepped out from behind the curtain, fully dressed, and with a cheerful “Good morning” ordered us all to get up and wash up. I took my place in the long line to wash my face and teeth. We got dressed and went to a small chapel on the top floor, where I prayed fervently to Him Who sits on high, asking Him quickly to take me back to my parents and my home.<sup>490</sup>

There was a custom at the convent for the outstanding pupil in religious studies to wear a long white dress to her First Communion, whereas the other girls wore short dresses. Aliza, going by the name of Kryisia (Krystyna), decided to compete for the long dress and pored over her catechism. Her hard work paid off for, in the test administered by the priest to the whole class, Aliza excelled and was chosen to wear the prize dress. “It had been a long time since I had been so happy,” she recalled. “I ran straight to the chapel and thanked God for His kindness.”<sup>491</sup>

The Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary also sheltered and helped adult Jews. As mentioned, adult Jews were also sheltered in Płudy. Stanisława Rakower Juszcak, e.g., would dress as a nun when the Germans conducted searches for Jews.<sup>492</sup>

Michael Zylberberg’s wife, Henrietta, was sheltered at the convent on Hoża Street in Warsaw. When the Germans became aware that Jewish children were hidden there, one of the nuns by the name of Stefania (Krzosek) transferred Mrs. Zylberberg to her mother’s home in the town of Piastów, near Warsaw.<sup>493</sup>

Zuzanna Rabska, a convert to Catholicism, was sheltered for a year and a half in the institution for the elderly and handicapped on Belwederska Street in Warsaw, under the care of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. She wrote: “For the first time since I went into hiding, I had an awareness of complete safety. Above all, I was treated like a human being. The mother superior gave me the keys to the library collection, which was full of good books, and tasked me with the duty of distributing them among the sick.”<sup>494</sup>

<sup>490</sup> Nahum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 159–60.

<sup>491</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 168, based on the testimony of Aliza Penski-Chayut, YVA, file 0.3/3410.

<sup>492</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem,” *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 184.

<sup>493</sup> Michael Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary, 1939–1945* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1969), 133, 141.

<sup>494</sup> See Zuzanna Rabska’s testimony in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 627–28, and Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 61 n.125. Zuzanna Rabska, the daughter of Aleksander Kraushar, a renowned Jewish convert, was married to Władysław

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Romana Koplewicz (née Margitte), born in Warsaw in 1919, held various jobs. When her position as a chambermaid in a hospital in Otwock became endangered in the summer of 1944, a nun there gave her the name of the Mother Superior of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Warsaw. She, in turn, directed Romana to a convent in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, where she worked in the garden. After some three months, the priest there asked Romana to leave, apologetically, because her presence was arousing suspicion and endangered the lives of the Jewish children sheltered in that convent. He provided her with a reference, which was vital for future employment.<sup>495</sup>

Deborah (Adela) Knie from Nagoszyn, near Dębica, moved to Lwów with her young daughter, Irka. When she encountered a street round-up, she quickly pushed her daughter into the doorway of a Franciscan monastery to save her. The monks took the young girl to a nearby convent. She was adopted by a for-ester, who gave her over to another family after his wife died. Deborah managed to find her daughter after the war, and the family eventually settled in the United States.<sup>496</sup> According to Polish sources, Brother Norbert Wojciechowicz, the Franciscan who received the six-year-old child, brought her to the orphanage of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary on Kurkowa Street.<sup>497</sup>

About a dozen Jewish girls were sheltered at that orphanage for girls, under the care of its director, Sister Anzelma Wojdyła, who was awarded by Yad Vashem in 2020. Rev. Jan Nowicki, the chaplain, also helped with the rescue effort. Shoshana Lehrer (later Ronis, b. 1940), who went by the name of Janina (Janka) Ryszarda Glińska, was placed there by her mother. After the war, she was reunited with her mother, who had obtained a false birth and baptismal

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Rabski, an author and parliamentarian of the National Democracy (Narodowa Demokracja), known as Endeks, later the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe). Her son-in-law, Zbigniew Stypułowski, was the political leader of the far-right National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne).

<sup>495</sup> Oral history interview with Romana Koplewicz, October 8, 1993, USHMM, Accession no. 1995.A.1274, RG-50.106.0120.

<sup>496</sup> Grzegorz Król, "Sharon spotkała wybawców matki," December 10, 2011, Internet: <http://debica24.eu>.

<sup>497</sup> Teresa Frącek, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek Rodziny Marii w latach 1939–1945*, in the series *Kościół katolicki na ziemiach Polski w czasie II wojny światowej: Materiały i studia*, Franciszek Stopniak, ed. (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1973), book 1, 109–31; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 158; Ryszard Szkopwiec, "Działalność franciszkanów na rzecz Żydów," in Stanisław C. Napiórkowski, ed., *A bliźniego swego...: Materiały z sympozjum "Św. Maksymilian Maria Kolbe—Żydzi—masoni"* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski. Wydział Teologii, 1997), 128.



certificate for herself from the Catholic parish in Zimna Woda with the help of Rev. Nowicki, as well as assistance in finding a residence and employment.

Leah Lorenz (later Mary Sawa, b. 1935) escaped from the Lwów ghetto by way of an opening under a fence that she used when she went begging for food in the streets with other children from the ghetto. Her last exit was particularly harrowing because her two male companions were shot and killed by the Germans as they were sneaking out of the ghetto with her. An orphan by that time, Leah decided she would run away. She made her way to her former home and was taken in by a neighbour. This woman contacted a brother from a monastery. He told Leah not to return to the ghetto, and that he would take care of her. He took Leah to a shelter run by the Albertine Brothers in the Kaiserwald area. This appears to be the shelter on Helanka Street, mentioned in another account. Leah remained there for several months. She was one of eleven Jewish children—six boys and five girls—who resided at the shelter.

When the Germans came to inspect the premises, the Jewish children had to be hidden. One of the brothers, whom Leah refers to as her guardian but does not identify by name, arranged for the Jewish boys to be taken to Romania. The girls were taught the Polish language and Catholic prayers in preparation for their transfer to orphanages, since the shelter was not a suitable place for them. Leah was placed in the orphanage of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary on Kurkowa Street. Life was more settled there, despite periodic German inspections. Towards the end of her stay, Leah was baptized and given a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Maria Krzeczowska. With the arrival of the Red Army, the nuns had to protect their female charges from drunken, marauding soldiers. Since Lwów was incorporated into the Soviet Union, the nuns and children were evacuated. By then, some of the Jewish children had been reclaimed by their relatives. Leah recalled a Jewish girl named Irena, who was taken by her mother. As an orphan with no known relatives, Leah was transferred to a convent in Przemyśl. She was encouraged to pursue her studies. Leah recalls both her guardian and the nuns who cared for her fondly. She never experienced any animosity from them.<sup>498</sup>

Emilia Schauder, wife of the renowned mathematician Juliusz Schauder, placed her daughter, Ewa (b. 1938), at the convent on Kurkowa Street. Ewa was provided with a birth and baptismal certificate in the name of Szałdrowska. She was not baptized. The nuns moved the child to Warsaw, where she first stayed on Hoża Street with Mother Matylda Getter. After receiving hospital care, she was transferred to the Loth home, one of the two orphanages run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in suburban Anin. When the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, the children were evacuated to Białoleka. Afterwards, they

<sup>498</sup> Testimony of Mary Sawa, SFV, Interview code 15589.



were transferred to the nuns' institutions in Płudy and Międzyzlesie. Since her mother had perished, Ewa was placed in the Jewish orphanage in Otwock after the war. She left Poland for France with the Jewish children gathered by Lena Küchler. Eventually, she settled with her uncle in Italy.<sup>499</sup>

After leaving the Lwów ghetto with her mother, Sarah Wien (later Sylvia Richman, b. 1938) was placed at the orphanage on Kurkowa Street by a Polish social worker. She remained there for several months, under the assumed name of Irena Hulecka. There was another Jewish girl at this orphanage, known as Ewa (probably Schauder), who was said to be two years younger than Sarah. Ewa spoke openly about being Jewish, and thus gave her identity away. Anticipating a German inspection of the orphanage, the nuns transferred these two Jewish girls to a Franciscan monastery in Lwów, where they remained for about two weeks. Afterwards, they were separated and sent to different convents. Sarah lived in an orphanage outside of Warsaw, under the care of nuns, for about two years.

Meanwhile, Sarah's mother had gone to Germany posing as a Polish labourer, as did her mother's sister. This aunt returned to Poland after the war and located Sarah at the orphanage outside of Warsaw. According to the nuns' records, this was an institution for girls known as "Jutrzenka," located in Pustelnik (now Marki), where Sarah was known as Irena Hulicka. Sarah stayed with her aunt until her father returned to Poland to take her. Eventually, Sarah and her father reunited with Sarah's mother, who was in a displaced persons camp in Austria.<sup>500</sup>

Other Jewish charges at the home in Pustelnik included Jadwiga Lak (later Holas, b. 1939) and Janina Chaykin (later Jasia Reichardt, b. 1933).<sup>501</sup> The superior of this home, Sister Helena Dobiecka, was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2020, as was Sister Teresa Reformat. Another charge mentioned in connection with the latter nun's recognition is Nina Szapiro (later Shekht, b. 1936).

Other charges at the Kurkowa Street orphanage included Pola (Pesia) April, Regina Kartyganer (later Maria Damaszek), who had stayed earlier with the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Podhajce, and Łucja Schargel (later Borodziej/Keller), who remained in Poland after the war.<sup>502</sup>

<sup>499</sup> Julius Schauder, Fundacja Panteon Narodowy, Internet: <https://www.panteonnarodowy.org/wielcy-polacy/39-juliusz-schauder>; Information from Sister Teresa Antonietta Frącek.

<sup>500</sup> Testimony of Sylvia Richman, SFV, Interview code 53990.

<sup>501</sup> Jasia Reichardt, *15 Journeys: Warsaw to London* (Champaign, Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2012).

<sup>502</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Part 6, *Nasz Dziennik*, April 4, 2008; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzielili się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at pp. 180, 187–88.

The Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary ran a second orphanage in Lwów on Słodowa Street, where Sister Janina Wirball was the superior. The Jewish charges included both children—among them Maria Kuśnirska, Bronisława Malinowicz, Ewa Szlam, and Antonina Słonina—as well as some adults. The nuns employed Dr. Mieczysław Gelbstein at the convent, and arranged false identity documents for him.

Unfortunately, Dr. Gelbstein was caught in a round-up of civilians while out on the street and taken to Majdanek. He managed to escape after being transferred to a work camp and survived with the help of Poles, notably Stanisław Krzysztoporski in Biała Podlaska, whose identity Dr. Gelbstein later assumed, and Mieczysław and Mirosława Czajkowski in Warsaw.<sup>503</sup> According to one of the nuns, the Albertine brothers would bring children from their shelter on Helanka Street to the orphanage for hygiene care.<sup>504</sup>

After being apprehended in a suburb of Warsaw, Esther Bas-Melcer was interrogated by the Germans. A priest whom she did not know was summoned to the station. He vouched for her and brought her to a convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Izabelin. Fifteen Jewish women and children were sheltered there by three nuns.

The superior of this small home was Sister Bernarda Lemańska. The chaplain was Fr. Oskar Wiśniewski, a Conventual Franciscan. Both Sister Bernarda and Fr. Oskar were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2018 for rescuing a number of Jews: Esther (Estera) Bas-Melcer (Waiss), Helena Zajtman Hisenholz Caspari, Hanna Zajtman Fajgenbaum (b. 1931, passing as Anna Zabielska), and Marian Nudel (passing as Niedźwiedzki). The congregation's records also mention Anna Zabielska's mother, Aleksandra, and Guranowski's mother.<sup>505</sup>

As this story shows, Germans forced Catholic priests to question persons suspected of being Jewish about their knowledge of the Catholic faith. However, priests were rarely conscripted for this task, as they were neither reliable nor necessary. German officials who knew Polish or used interpreters usually questioned suspects on their basic knowledge of Catholic prayers and rituals.

<sup>503</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 180; Testimony of Stanisław Krzysztoporski in Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 544.

<sup>504</sup> Correspondence of Sister Józefa Wasilewska (1983), Archives of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, Warsaw.

<sup>505</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 175. See also the testimony of Hanna Faygenbaum, SFV, Interview code 2051, where Hanna mentions a stay at the convent in Płudy as well.

They were far more effective interrogators than priests, who were not known to cooperate in exposing Jews.<sup>506</sup>

<sup>506</sup> There are numerous recorded cases of German officials interrogating Jews who were attempting to pass as Catholics. Rarely do they mention the participation of priests. According to Elzbieta [Elżbieta] Szandorowska of Warsaw: "In May 1943, the Germans arrested seventeen people in our boarding house, including my mother and the rest of our family. They took us to the Gestapo headquarters on Szucha Avenue. Throughout the entire night, I taught Christian prayers to one of the Jewish girls who [had] been arrested. The next day the Germans were in a very good mood because they had found diamonds sewn into the trousers of one of the Jewish men. So they allowed my family to go free the next day. They freed a couple of Jewish people, too, because they had extremely convincing documents and they had passed the so-called religion examination, which consisted of reciting Catholic prayers." See Richard C. Lukas, ed., *Out of the Inferno: Poles Remember the Holocaust* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 161. Lidia Kott was also interrogated by two Gestapo officers on Szucha Street: "They told her to say her prayers, asked her to tell them the shape of the host, and tried to get her to say that it was square. ... The investigations began all over again, now with the assistance of three experts: a Jew, a Ukrainian, and a Pole." See Kott, *Still Alive*, 77. Braunia Szul, then a 14-year-old girl, and her mother were also brought to the Gestapo headquarters on Szucha Street and interrogated by Germans: "When we arrived there, they started to ask us about religion, if I know the religion prayers, so I knew the [Catholic] prayers by heart. We were prepared for that, you know." See the Oral history interview with Braunia Bella Sztul, USHMM, RG-50.030.0329. Wanda Ziemska was interrogated by the Gestapo in Warsaw and made to recite prayers, but released after a Polish policeman vouched for her. See Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 348. For another account from Warsaw mentioning interrogation by the German authorities about Christian prayers and customs (and release after a Pole vouched for the two Jewish women), see Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 192–93. Lala Fishman (née Klara Weintraub) was one of a number of women arrested in street sweeps in Kraków. The Germans required them to recite Catholic prayers during their interrogation. See Lala Fishman and Steven Weingartner, *Lala's Story: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 188. For additional examples of interrogations conducted by Germans, sometimes using Polish interpreters, see Yehuda Nir, *The Lost Childhood: A Memoir* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989), 67; Halina Zylberman, *Swimming Under Water* (Caulfield South, Victoria: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2001), 56; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 276; Theresa Cahn-Tober, *Hide and Seek: A Wartime Childhood* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 68–69; Małgorzata Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość: Polscy Żydzi ocaleni na "aryjskich papierach": Analiza doświadczeń biograficznego* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2004), 236; Halina Grubowska, *Haneczko, musisz przeżyć* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2007), 45; Testimony of an unidentified Jewish woman, JHI, record group 301, no. 164 (interrogation by the Gestapo in Warsaw, who also contacted the parish that issued the woman's baptismal certificate to verify its authenticity); Testimony of Marcelli Lubasz, JHI, record group 301, no. 418 (interrogation in the Łącki Street prison in Lwów); Testimony of Helena Kenig-Bruder, JHI, record group 301, no. 2832 (interrogation by the Gestapo in Warsaw); Testimony of Ewa Lewi, JHI, record group 301, no. 3868 (Montelupich prison

in Kraków). The next series of accounts pertains to questioning by Polish policemen of suspected Jews on religious knowledge. Such examinations tended to be perfunctory. Jadwiga Krall and her six-year-old daughter, Hanna, were accosted in the spring of 1943 by a blackmailer in the Aryan part of Warsaw. Because they had no money to pay him, he turned them in to the police, who tested their claim that they were Catholics by asking questions about Catholic prayers. "Suddenly the voice of a woman could be heard in the police station demanding to know why the police were accusing her sister of being Jewish. The woman, who eventually succeeded in getting Krall and her daughter out of the police's hands, was Maria Ostrowska, who had previously provided Krall with the birth certificate of her sister, who lived outside Warsaw." See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 569–70. Alina Margolis describes her interrogation by the police after being apprehended with her friend Zosia, who was recognized as a Jew. While Margolis was able to recite the prayers asked of her, thanks to having observed her Polish childhood nanny, her friend Zosia could not correctly describe the size of a Communion host. However, both were eventually released through a bribe arranged by a Polish acquaintance. See Alina Margolis-Edelman, *Ala z elementarza* (London: Aneks, 1994), 109–11; Alina Margolis-Edelman, *Tego, co mówili, nie powtórzę...* (Wrocław: Siedmioróg, 1999), 112–13; also available in French translation as *Je ne répéterai pas, je ne veux pas le répéter* (Paris: Autrement Littératures, 1997). During a Gestapo raid on a house in Warsaw, an 11-year-old Jewish girl was ordered to pray in order to ascertain whether she was Jewish. Fortunately, she had been taught to pray in Polish. See Elżbieta Isakiewicz, *Harmonica: Jews Relate How Poles Saved Them from the Holocaust* (Warsaw: Polska Agencja Informacyjna, 2001), 173, translated from the Polish *Ustna harmonijka: Relacje Żydów, których uratowali od zagłady Polacy* (Warsaw: Niezależne Wydawnictwo Polskie, 2000). After being fingered by a Ukrainian woman informer in Drohobycz, Erna Kamerman, then a child, and her mother were seized by German officials, who ordered a Polish policeman to listen to the child recite prayers in Polish. See Erna Kamerman Perry, *Christian by Disguise: A Story of Survival* (Margate, New Jersey: ComteQ Publishing, 2014). For additional examples of testing Jews' religious knowledge without the participation of priests, see Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, 152 (Kraków); Elsa Thon, *I Wish It Were Fiction: Memories, 1939–1945* (Hamilton, Ontario: Mekler & Deahl, 1997), 63; Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość*, 170, 236; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 569–70; Christine Winecki, *The Girl in the Check Coat: Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland and a New Life in Australia* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 70–71; Janusz Roszkowski, ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 4 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2015), 125 (Warsaw), 354–55 (Częstochowa); Testimony of Janina Kroch, JHI, record group 301, no. 362 (by Kripo policemen in Lwów). Only a few testimonies mention the involvement of Polish priests in interrogations of suspected Jews. We have not found one credible case of a priest participating voluntarily in such an interrogation, or to the detriment of a Jew. When a local police commander brought a suspected Jewish teenager who was passing as Christian to the pastor of Krzesk, near Łosice, the priest did not betray her despite the fact that she was unable to answer basic questions about the Catholic faith. See Stella Zylbersztajn, *A gdyby to było Wasze dziecko? Wspomnienia antysemity w getcie, komunistki w klasztorze i uniwersalistki wśród Ludu Wybranego, Umiłowanego* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1994; Łosice: Łosickie Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Equus, 2005), 52. When Blanca Rosenberg and her friend, who

were passing as Christians, were taken to a police station upon their arrival in Warsaw, a priest was summoned to test their knowledge of Catholic prayers and rituals. There is no indication that the priest did so voluntarily, nor did he expose them despite his misgivings. See Blanca Rosenberg, *To Tell at Last: Survival under False Identity, 1941–45* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 117. When Gila (Gizela) Shmulowitz and her father were caught in a round-up of Poles for forced labour in Germany, in Kraków in early 1944, her father was taken for questioning as a suspected Jew. Fearing he would betray himself, Gila whispered to him to pretend he was mute. Gila recalled, “They took him to the Orthodox [probably Uniate] priest and to a Polish priest. I was called, too. And that Polish priest said, ‘She’s a pure Pole, she can pray. If she’s all right, then her mute father must be as well.’” See Isakiewicz, *Harmonica*, 107–8. Historian Gunnar Paulsson states that “some [Catholic priests] could be found who were prepared to rule on a suspect’s Aryanness, knowing the consequences of a negative ruling.” However, he cites no evidence to support that claim. See Paulsson, *Secret City*, 106. In fact, the one memoir that refers to a priest who allegedly “trapped” his Jewish victims (Alina Margolis and her friend Zosia) is based on a hearsay account that is contradicted by one of the victims. Jacob Celemski spins a rather elaborate tale of two Jewish girls who were caught by a secret agent and taken to a police station where the commandant “called a priest, who trapped them with his first question.” See Jacob Celemski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland, 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemski Memorial Trust, 2000), 180–81. As stated earlier, Alina Margolis-Edelman’s memoir says—clearly and plainly—that the interrogation was conducted by a policeman; it does not mention the involvement of any priest. Ruth Flakowicz (then Knyszyńska, b. 1923) described how, after her arrest by agents as she was walking on a street in Warsaw, she was taken to the Gestapo premises and brutally interrogated. She maintained her false Christian identity and did not admit to being Jewish. At one point, someone dressed as a priest urged her to tell the truth, and she would be released. She rebuked this person for working for the Gestapo. Was this a genuine priest? After all, he did not even question her on her religious knowledge. According to a much earlier written testimony submitted to Yad Vashem, which does not mention any priest, she was released after her Polish landlady vouched for her. See the testimony of Ruth Flakowicz, SFV, Interview code 4565; Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 205–6. Jews were also known to act as interrogators of Jews. Two Jewish women from Stanisławów and Lwów, posing as Poles, were detained as they left the train station in Warsaw and were taken to a police station where they were questioned by two police officers: “They examined each of us in minute religious matters, and went over all our documents. They spoke only Yiddish during all of this, and even sang some Yiddish songs. Then they started arguing: the first one wanted to let us go and the other to turn us over to the Germans. We were finally freed after two hours of interrogation...” See the account of F.I. in Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, 305. In another case, a Jewish boy who was sheltered by the Salesian Fathers in Przemyśl recalled the arrival of Germans who came looking for Jewish boys, accompanied by a Jew dressed as a priest. Fortunately, the Jewish boys passed the religion test they were administered. See Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 204. Generally, Jews who passed as Poles, even Jews from an assimilated milieu, mastered only a few basic prayers, while their knowledge of Catholic rituals was often spotty and superficial. For example, Jewish survivors admit to not knowing that priests sprinkle ashes

Esther Bas-Melcer assumed the identity of Barbara Małeczka at the convent. Here is a passage from her memoir.

I was summoned to the chancellery [in Izabelin]. ... Afterwards, [the German officer] read the letters. I adhered to my original lies. He asked me to wait while he went outside.

A short time passed by. A priest and two nuns then entered. I was certain at that point that I was to be questioned. The priest, who was about thirty-five years of age, of medium height and who had mild, kind eyes, took my hand and asked me whether I was a Roman Catholic, while winking to me that I should say yes. I answered calmly, "Yes."

"In that case, come with us," he told me. "You will rest and recover at our place."

Could it be true? Was it possible? I thought to myself. A wagon could not be found, so two Poles were called. They crossed their hands and I was seated on them. This way, there [sic] were able to carry me. The priest, both nuns and children walked behind me. And so, in this way, I was led into the church in the procession.

They had prepared a sofa for me in the older nun's room. My eyes were transfixed by the ideal cleanliness and warmth of the room.

I would write much more about these people, but I did not know whether I would succeed. One thing, however, that I can say is that I never saw anywhere such extraordinary genuine, good and friendly people.

I shall refer to it as paradise, because I really thought that I was truly in paradise. Although a complete stranger, I felt good and free amongst them. I knew that these people would not disappoint me. Every one of them looked to me like an angel. ...

The oldest nun, who was about sixty-eight years old, was a true embodiment of righteousness and goodness. She immediately gave me a bowl of cream of wheat soup. When I ate, she prepared for me a clean bed, her own clean and fresh underwear, a pan with warm water and a towel.

"Do not cry, my child," she said to me. "You will wash up, have a good sleep in a clean bed and you will surely recover in a short time."

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on heads on Ash Wednesday; that unlike Easter, Christmas falls on a fixed date (December 25th); and that on Good Friday, Polish Catholics visit specially erected symbolic tombs of Jesus in churches—not in cemeteries. Nor did they know how to conduct themselves at mass, e.g., when to kneel or stand, and whether the communion host is taken with one's hand or in the mouth. See Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość*, 147; Nir, *The Lost Childhood*, 217; Janina Brandwajn-Ziemian, *Młodość w cieniu śmierci* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1995), 87–88; Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, 172; Taitz, *Holocaust Survivors*, vol. 2, 396. Some Jews came to realize that their guise as Christian Poles was not as foolproof as they had believed. But their inevitable, revealing lapses did not trigger a denunciation. A Jew who called on farmhouses in the Urzędów area, pretending to be a Christian, recalled, "I would cross myself, bless Jesus Christ, and ask for something to eat. I had made up a story in case questions were asked. Most farmers were not talkative. Viewed suspiciously, sometimes I would be given soup or bread and asked to leave quickly: sometimes I was just told to go. Later it dawned on me that I was crossing myself incorrectly, touching my chin rather than the chest." See David Makow, *Dangerous Luck: Memories of a Hunted Life* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 2000), 28.



My gratitude was boundless. I immediately took out my last fifty dollars and wanted to give it to the nun for the church or for another cause that she would find necessary.

“No, my child,” she said. “You are young and sick. This money will surely come in handy for you at some time in the future.”

Her kindness moved me to tears. I kissed her hand tenderly. She wanted to help me wash myself, but I declined. I was ashamed to show her my extremely lean body. ... I had no strength to wash my head. The nun did this the next morning. ...

There I lay, washed and clean in a spotless bed. I thought about all that had happened to me and what was now taking place. Every few minutes, another nun would come in to ask whether I was all right and whether I needed anything. ...

At seven o'clock the next morning, the priest came in and asked me my name.

“I have to inform the Polish Philanthropic Association about you in order to obtain medicine and better nutrition for you, because we, unfortunately lack it here,” he explained. I naturally gave him my Aryan name.

He walked over eleven kilometers to obtain the necessary items for me. The directress of the institution came with him and brought along injections, milk and other products.

As I have already described, this priest embodied a type of complete gentleness and goodness. His mild look, warm and hearty words affected me like warm sunshine.

Several times a day, he would come into the room, move over a chair to my bed, sit down and make an effort to engage me into conversation on various abstract themes, in order that I should forget my sorrows. Under the influence of these saintly people, the beastly faces of the brutal Germans began to fade slowly from before my eyes. It seemed to me that I was being re-born.

... [After the entry of the Russian troops in mid-January 1945], [a]n old woman from a nearby room came in, fell toward me in tears, and revealed that she was Jewish believing that I, too, was Jewish. Before that time, she would also often come in to where I was, conduct long conversations and inquire about the Jews of Warsaw. I therefore had a basis to believe that she was Jewish, but because I was not completely certain, I used to respond evasively.

Some time later, I learned that almost all of the women who were there were Jewish. The only one from among these who often came in to console me was the above-mentioned woman, who was named Wanda Rogatska [Rogacka] from Warsaw. All of the others kept away from my bed, in order not to become suspect. ...

Now we had to leave this place [i.e., after the liberation], first because we could not be a burden on these good people and second because we had to regain our identity. ...

Regrettably, I had to remain there another six whole weeks. I simply could not walk around. My sister finally located a room in Otwozk [Otwock].

The kindhearted priest rented a carriage for us. The nun wrapped me in a blanket with true motherly concern and seated me in the carriage. With tears of gratitude and heartfelt blessings from the priest and the nun, we left that blessed house and all of its wonderful inhabitants.<sup>507</sup>

<sup>507</sup> Esther Bas-Melcer, *In the Claws of Destruction* (Montreal: Aron Horowitz, 1986), 40–46.



Pesa Achtman Cimerman's sister, who was hidden together with her and eleven other Jews by the Koper family in the Warsaw suburb of Praga, "had once been rescued by a priest, Oskar Wiśniewski, when she was discovered in a hiding place, dirty and ragged. It was obvious she was Jewish, but Wiśniewski was called upon to identify her. He insisted she was a parishioner and took her home until another place could be found."<sup>508</sup>

Felicja Seifert (later Ela Manor) was smuggled out of the ghetto in Kraków and was sent to a farm in the village of Wawrzeńczyce, in the county of Miechów. She stayed there for about a year, together with a Jewish couple, the Rozmaryns, in the home of Zygmunt and Elżbieta Wojnarowicz. One day, the Germans raided the farm and arrested the farm owners. (Zygmunt Wojnarowicz perished in the Dora concentration camp.) They executed the Jewish couple, but Felicja managed to escape. She ran to the private tutor the Wojnarowiczes had hired for her. The tutor sent her to Dr. Aleksandra Mianowska in Kraków, a Żegota activist. Dr. Mianowska turned to Rev. Ferdynand Machay, who provided Felicja with a birth and baptismal certificate in the name of Elżbieta Smoleń. Dr. Mianowska arranged for Stefan Kamiński, an underground activist and member of Żegota, to take Felicja to a children's home in Kostowiec, near Warsaw. The Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary gave her refuge there until sometime after the area was liberated.<sup>509</sup>

The Zosinek orphanage in Międzyzlesie, near Warsaw, was also operated by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. From 1942 until 1945, it was under the direction of Sister Gabriela Strak, staffed by 10 nuns, a chaplain, and another resident priest. The orphanage housed around 75 children from ages 8 to 11, of whom some 17 were Jewish. Among the Jewish charges was Maria Kruszevska (b. 1934), the daughter of a medical doctor.

The residents of the orphanage were expelled by the Germans without warning on August 1, 1944, when the Warsaw Uprising broke out, and relocated to the order's already overcrowded educational institution in Płudy.<sup>510</sup>

<sup>508</sup> Irene Tomaszewski and Tacia Werbowska, *Zegota: The Rescue of Jews in Wartime Poland*, 1st ed. (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1994), 125; Irene Tomaszewski and Tacia Werbowska, *Zegota: The Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1999), 116; Irene Tomaszewski and Tacia Werbowska, *Code Name: Żegota: Rescuing Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945: The Most Dangerous Conspiracy in Wartime Europe*, 3rd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger/ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010), 125.

<sup>509</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 332, 507, and vol. 5: *Poland*, Part 2, 886; Aleksandra Mianowska, RD, Internet: <https://righteous.yadvashem.org>.

<sup>510</sup> Frącek, *Siostry Rodziny Maryi z pomocą dzieciom polskim i żydowskim w Międzyzlesiu i Aninie*, 9–42.

The Germans likewise expelled the residents of a sanatorium (Ulanówek), in Międzyzlesie, under the direction of Sister Aniela Stawowiak. Some dozen Jewish girls and four Jewish adults were among the expellees.<sup>511</sup>

The orphanage counted ca. 70 children, of which 10 were Jewish. One of them was a nine-year-old girl who was so terrified. One of them was a nine-year-old girl who was so terrified by the sight of Germans that her fright immediately attracted their attention when some of them appeared at the orphanage and caused them to ask if the Sisters do not keep Jewish children. Stanisława Kaniewska, fluent in German, assured them that only Polish Catholic children are in the orphanage and another Sister, Maria Czechowicz, distracted them from that dangerous questioning by talking to them in French, which one of them knew. In the last days of July 1944, when Russians reached the River Vistula, they bombarded the city by artillery and from the air. Several people were killed, the chapel was destroyed, but nobody from the orphanage was harmed. On August 1st, 1944 (first day of the Warsaw Uprising), during lunch, for which there were only broad beans, the Germans suddenly stormed into the orphanage and ordered everybody to leave and to march toward Warsaw. Soon the other orphanage from Międzyzlesie, "Ulanówek," with the youngest children, joined them. Those children remained at Grochów, while "Zosinek" went on to Saska Kępa, both in Warsaw. As the children had nothing to eat, Sister Stanisława asked the parish priest to announce their predicament in church and parishioners flocked with food. Sister Stanisława, realizing that this was not sufficient, returned with the older girls to Międzyzlesie for food. The Germans forbade them to go there but allowed them to go to Anin, where the Sisters had another orphanage. There they were bombarded again by artillery fire by both the Germans and Russians at the same time. On August 13, the Germans ordered the evacuation also of this second orphanage. Sister Stanisława explained the situation to the German command. At the beginning, the commanding officer refused any help, but finally agreed to give them horse carts for the children and food. After another bombing from the air by the Soviets, Sister Stanisława ordered the drivers to go not to Modlin, as indicated the Germans, but to Płudy, another of their orphanages, this time with 80 children and with the food. Having arrived there, she got some food for the children left at Saska Kępa. When she returned there, the children received her with tears. She fed them and they all went to Płudy. The conditions there were very difficult, as several orphanages were reunited there: altogether 500 children, of which a hundred (100) were Jewish. The Germans came continuously to search the house, especially one, particularly obnoxious fellow, returned every day for three weeks looking for Jewish children and for a Jewish priest, Father [Tadeusz] Puder, but as much as he searched he could not find them. He announced that if he discovers even one Jew, all would be shot. Despite continuous threats Sister Stanisława refused three times to leave the orphanage. The soldiers put her against the wall and under guard when they were expelling again all the children to Modlin. The superior, Sister Romualda [Stępak], entreated the Germans to leave the two and three year olds as too young to walk so far, famished as they were. They acquiesced and allowed seven Sisters, among them Stanisława, to stay with them. On the third night there arrived a German doctor who was furious that not all the children had

<sup>511</sup> Frącek, *Siostry Rodziny Maryi z pomocą dzieciom polskim i żydowskim w Międzyzlesiu i Aninie*, 43–63. Among those sheltered at Ulanówek was 10-year-old Alina Koenigstein, whose mother, a lawyer, was sheltered in another convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary.

left; he demanded to see the German-speaking Sister. But when he saw the miserable state of children in the cellars, he was appalled. He promised her to reward her after the war for her heroism. She thanked him but told him that she does it not for German rewards but to save the Polish children and that they need food, as they have only rye grain to eat. He promised to send them all kinds of food and delicacies. At that moment a shell fell in the place where both of them were standing and killed some people. The German doctor and the Polish Sister were both knocked out. But the food never arrived: the Germans fled. The next day Polish soldiers from the Kościuszko Division (formed in Soviet Russia out of Poles deported to Siberia at the beginning of the war who did not manage to join the 2nd Polish Corps of General Anders) liberated them. One of the priests celebrated Mass in the cellar; everybody wept.<sup>512</sup>

The aforementioned Rev. Tadeusz Puder was a Jew by birth who had converted to Catholicism as a teenager, together with his widowed mother, Jadwiga, and his two brothers. In order to protect Rev. Puder, a well-known convert with a distinctive Semitic appearance, Archbishop Stanisław Gall removed him from his parish church of St. Hyacinth (św. Jacka) in Warsaw. In November 1939, he was appointed chaplain at a children's home in Białółka Dworska, near Warsaw, run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. A number of Jewish children were being sheltered there. Rev. Puder lived there openly and his presence was widely known. He was denounced to the Gestapo and arrested in April 1941. He was sentenced to 20 months' imprisonment for residing outside the Warsaw ghetto and not wearing an armband with a Star of David.

By way of a ruse involving nuns and others, Rev. Puder was transferred to St. Sophia's hospital in Warsaw, near the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. Though carefully watched, he made a daring escape in November 1942. Rev. Puder was taken away in a horse-drawn wagon awaiting him and was hidden under some coal. Dressed as a nun and with his head heavily bandaged, he was taken to stay with his mother in Grodzisk Mazowiecki. Soon after, Sister Janina Kruszewska brought Rev. Puder, again dressed as a nun, to the children's home in Białółka Dworska, where he lived in seclusion.

In September 1944, the residents of that institution were expelled by the Germans and made their way to Płudy, where the nuns maintained another institution for girls. Rev. Puder arrived at Płudy dressed as a nun in the company of Sister Domicela Golik, Sister Janina Kruszewska, and Sister Romualda Stępak, the director of the institution. Rev. Puder remained in hiding there until the liberation of Płudy on October 24, 1944. After the left-bank Warsaw was freed of Germans on January 17, 1945, Rev. Puder was able to visit his mother, who survived in hiding with the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Brwinów.

<sup>512</sup> "Getter, Matylda, Mother," Internet: <http://www.savingjews.org/righteous/gv.htm>, based on Władysław Smólski, ed. *Za to groziła śmierć: Polacy z pomocą w czasie okupacji* (Warsaw: Pax, 1981), 300–8.

Less than a week later, on January 23, while walking on a street in the ruins of Warsaw with Sister Irena Waśniewska, Rev. Puder was hit by a truck driven by a Red Army soldier and struck unconscious. He died from head injuries four days later.<sup>513</sup>

Priests were often instrumental in placing Jews in convents and worked hand in glove with nuns to rescue Jews. According to historian Ewa Kurek,

Priests also fulfilled the role of intermediaries between Jews and convents, and they ex-  
tricated children from the ghettos. Children were led out of the Warsaw ghetto by, among  
others, Rev. Prelate Marcei Godlewski, the pastor of the Church of All Saints, and by  
Rev. Piotr Tomaszewski, the chaplain of the Father Boduen [Baudouin] Home, who, for  
example, brought three-year-old Monika to the Sisters of Charity [of St. Vincent de Paul]  
during playtime. Monsignor Antoni Godziszewski had contacts with the Czeŝtuchowa  
[Czeŝtuchowa] ghetto, from which he smuggled children to suitable institutions in that  
town. A similar role was played in Kielce by Rev. Jan Jaroszewicz, the future bishop of  
the Kielce diocese.<sup>514</sup>

Rev. Jan Jaroszewicz of Kielce relied on a network of clerical rescuers to place Jewish children in institutions run by religious orders there and in safe houses outside the city. There is more about Rev. Piotr Tomaszewski later.

The aforementioned Rev. Antoni Godziszewski, the provost (*prepozyt*) of the cathedral parish of the Holy Family in Czeŝtuchowa, turns up in the accounts of several Jewish survivors. After her father bribed a Ukrainian guard, 20-year-old Janina Rozenblat (Rosenblatt, later Jane Laufer) managed to leave the Czeŝtuchowa ghetto in September 1942, shortly before its liquidation. She made her way to a convent where her father was acquainted with a nun, Mother Klara. The nun took her to the Jasna Góra monastery, where Janina shared a room with other nuns. Mother Klara then contacted Rev. Godziszewski, who supplied Janina with false identity documents in the name of a deceased person, Eugenia Otremba.

With the help of Antonina Stalska, Janina's former nanny, she found work at a restaurant in Gross Strehlitz, near Oppeln (Opole). The nuns gave her clothes

<sup>513</sup> Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 653; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie: Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2013), 674–75; Peter F. Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto: An Epitaph for the Unremembered* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 61–62; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 852; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Ratowała, choć za to groziła śmierć,” Parts 3–4, *Nasz Dziennik*, March 16 and March 19, 2008.

<sup>514</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 52.

and the priest gave her a crucifix to wear. Rev. Godziszewski corresponded with Janina to assist with her cover. Janina described Rev. Godziszewski as a “very noble person” who saved many lives, mentioning in particular two engineers who took refuge in Warsaw.<sup>515</sup>

At the request of Rev. Godziszewski, Natalia Jaroszyńska took the brothers Teodor and Leopold Szajn into her home in the Warsaw suburb of Wesoła. The brothers had moved to Warsaw from Częstochowa, where Rev. Godziszewski concealed them briefly after their escape from the ghetto. They were also sheltered by Jan Czerwiakowski, Dr. Janina Krasowska, and Zofia Kanczewska. Leopold Szajn’s daughter was placed in a convent in Bielany.<sup>516</sup> Rev. Godziszewski was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2020, as was Antonina Stalska.

Rescue often entailed moving charges across the country to convents, homes and institutions ready to receive them. Often, this was done by train. Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc, a native of Warsaw, noted in her wartime diary how, in the autumn of 1942, when she was leaving Warsaw by train from Dworzec Wschodni (Eastern Terminal), a nun entered the wagon with a two-year-old girl. The child looked sad and started to cry. The passengers, who immediately realized that the child was Jewish, tried to comfort her.<sup>517</sup>

Moving children from one convent or institution to another was a fairly frequent occurrence. Danuta Rajska (Daniela Reiss) was transferred from Płudy to Anin, and then to Międzyzlesie, all in the vicinity of Warsaw and under the care of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary.<sup>518</sup> Maria Baczowska, the daughter of Dr. Feliks Blayn, was brought from Lwów to Warsaw, as was Ewa Szlam, who was eventually sheltered in Anin.<sup>519</sup> Sixteen-year-old Janina Sosnowska, who had previously resided in Anin, was transferred to Płudy, dressed as a nun, during the evacuation from Białoleka.<sup>520</sup>

<sup>515</sup> Oral history interview with Jane Laufer, USHMM, Accession no. 1984.1.1.13, RG-50.157.0013; Testimony of Janina Laufer, SFV, Interview code 45744.

<sup>516</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1026–27; Edmund Mazur, “Po prostu człowiek: Materiały dotyczące pomocy niesionej Żydom w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej w Warszawie,” *Palestra*, no. 11 (1968): 65–104, at p. 84.

<sup>517</sup> Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc, *Przeminęło z ogniem* (Warsaw: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, 1947).

<sup>518</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Siostry Franciszkańki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem,” *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 177.

<sup>519</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Siostry Franciszkańki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem,” *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 181.

<sup>520</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Dzieci żydowskie uratowane przez Siostry Franciszkańki Rodziny Maryi: Za to groziła śmierć,” April 11, 2016, Internet: <https://zakony-zenskie>.

After leaving the Warsaw ghetto in the early part of 1943, Janina Dawidowicz (later David), then 13 years old, assumed the identity of Danuta Teresa Markowska. The Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary cared for her in Płudy, outside of Warsaw, from July 1943 to January 1944. She then stayed for a brief period at their orphanage in Łomna, near Turka, and afterwards at an orphanage on Wolność Street, near the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto. After the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, the children were evacuated to Kostowiec, outside Warsaw, where the sisters had another convent.

Janina describes her experiences in those convents in her memoirs, *A Touch of Earth* and *A Square of Sky: Memoirs of Wartime Childhood*. She was treated lovingly by the nuns, among them Sister Zofia Olszewska, with whom Janina corresponded until the nun's death. Sister Zofia Olszewska was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2016. Janina also remembered fondly the priests who came to the convents, among them a Franciscan she identified as Fr. Cezary. This was in fact Czesław Baran, a Conventual Franciscan, known as Fr. Cezar, confessor to the nuns and teacher of clandestine high school classes in Kostowiec.<sup>521</sup>

Other Jewish children at this institution, identified by Yad Vashem, include Halina Żłotnicka (Chana Żłotnik), Teresa Brama, Teresa Kowalska, a boy named Kowalski, Teresa Rogozińska, and Felicja (Sara) Rafalska.<sup>522</sup>

Twenty-six Jewish children were sheltered among the 120 housed at the orphanage and school run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Łomna, near Turka, southwest of Łwów. A number of the Jewish children, among them Janina Dawidowicz (later David), had been brought there from Warsaw by Sister Blanka (Zofia) Pięłowska, who maintained contact with trusted persons in Warsaw's Social Welfare Department. The superior of the Łomna convent, Sister Tekla (Anna) Budnowska, stated that all of the nuns were aware of their charges' Jewish identity. Sister Tekla Budnowska and Sister Blanka Pięłowska were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2016.

One of the Jewish children was Chana Żłotnik, known as Halina Żłotnicka, a native of Głowno, whose family had been deported to the Warsaw ghetto. While working at a warehouse outside the ghetto sorting old clothes, her mother

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pl/dzieci-zydowskie-uratowane-przez-siostry-franciszkanek-rodziny-maryi-za-to-grozila-smierc/.

<sup>521</sup> Janina David, *A Touch of Earth: A Wartime Childhood* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1966; New York: Orion Press, 1966), passim, especially at pp. 25, 27, 75–78, 94–95, 97, 99, 123, 161, 162, 185. See also Janina David, *A Square of Sky: Memoirs of Wartime Childhood* (London: Eland, 1992), passim. On Fr. Czesław Cezar Baran see Ryszard Żmuda, "O. Czesław Cezar Baran (1915–1997) OFM Conv.," *Saeculum Christianum: Pismo historyczno-społeczne*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1998): 85–91.

<sup>522</sup> Zofia Olszewska, RD.



learned that its Polish director, identified as Władysław, was active in finding shelter for Jewish children through the Warsaw Social Welfare Department's network. Before a nun took her to the convent in Łomna by train, Halina, already a teenager, was assisted and sheltered by several Polish women who belonged to this network—a woman known as Wanda (likely Wanda Drozdowska-Rogowicz), Zofia Papuzińska (whose home served as a drop-off point for many Jewish children), Izabella Kuczkowska, Jadwiga Piotrowska and her daughter, Hanka, and another relative of hers. Although everyone experienced hunger, the food was shared equally among the children and staff, and the nuns devoted themselves compassionately to all of their charges, without regard to their ethnic or religious origin. In her testimony, Halina expressed “boundless respect and admiration” for the nuns who cared for her during the occupation.

When the convent in Łomna came under attack from Ukrainian nationalist partisans in the fall of 1943, the children were transferred to Warsaw. During the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the children were evacuated to the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Kostowiec, outside the city. One of the instructors there was the aforementioned Franciscan Fr. Cezar, who is warmly remembered by the children.<sup>523</sup>

The rescue efforts of the Papuziński family, who assisted Halina (Chana) Złotnik and a number of other Jews, is so remarkable that it merits elaboration.

The modest apartment of Zofia and Stanisław Papuzinski [Stanisław Papuziński], who lived in the Ochota neighborhood of Warsaw, served as an “address” and temporary hiding place for Jewish children hiding on the Aryan side of the city. From December 1942, after the establishment of *Zegota* [Żegota], Zofia and Stanisław Papuzinski worked untiringly, risking their own lives to save Jewish children. Motivated by national duty, and although they themselves were the parents of two young children, they placed themselves at the disposal of *Zegota*, disregarding the very real danger to their lives. Dozens of Jewish children brought to their apartment were treated with warm devotion until they were taken to other places to hide. In her book about *Zegota*, Teresa Prekerowa writes that the Papuzinskis were among the most active members of the organization. Among the children helped by the Papuzinskis were Ester Sztajn, Stefania Wortman, Krzysztof Groslik, Halina Złotnik [Złotnik], and Basia Markow, who was the eight-year-old daughter of a stage actor. Following information provided by informers, the Gestapo raided the Papuzinski apartment in February 1944. Those hiding in the apartment at the time were shot and Zofia was incarcerated in the Pawiak prison, where she was executed. Her husband Stanisław survived and passed away after the war.<sup>524</sup>

<sup>523</sup> Testimony of Halina Złotnik, JHI, record group 302, no. 93; Testimony of Izabella Kuczkowska-Trzaskalska, JHI, record group 301, no. 6340.

<sup>524</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 580.

Lidia Kleinman (later Siciarz), who was born in Kraków in 1930, was brought to the hospital in Turka, where her father worked as a physician, by her mother on the eve of the deportation of the Jews of Turka. Lidia's father, Dr. Mendel Kleinman, entrusted her to Sister Jadwiga, the head nurse, who hid Lidia in the hospital for several weeks until she was able to smuggle her out to her home. Sister Jadwiga then arranged for Lidia to be hidden in an orphanage run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary on Kurkowa Street in Lwów. Lidia remained there under the care of Sister Blanka (Zofia) Pigłowska, using the assumed name of Maria Borowska.

When suspicions about her identity arose, Lidia was transferred to the Franciscan Sisters' orphanage in Łomna, headed by Sister Tekla (Anna) Budnowska, where a number of other Jewish children were hidden. Lidia obtained a new set of false papers, under the name of Maria Wołoszyńska. She became particularly attached to Sister Zofia Olszewska, who was in charge of the school. Lidia describes her as a "wonderful person." Lidia met a Jewish girl named Urszula Peiper, whom she describes as "very, very Semitic" looking, with "very dark, olive skin and very, very dark hair." (Urszula Peiper's story follows.)

Towards the end of 1943, the nuns and children were transferred to Warsaw because of attacks on the convent by Ukrainian nationalists. Afterwards, when the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, the orphanage had to be evacuated to Kostowiec near Warsaw. In May 1945, Lidia was reunited with her father. Lidia's mother did not survive, but several other family members did.<sup>525</sup>

In Turka, on the eve of the deportation of the Jews in August 1942, Sister Jadwiga, a nun who was also the head nurse at the local hospital, hid twelve-year-old Lidia Kleiman [sic] in one of the cubicles of the men's washroom, which was used as a broom closet. Lidia stayed hidden in the hospital for several weeks. Sister Jadwiga then took her to her own home and taught her Christian prayers in preparation for placing her in a Catholic orphanage in Lvov [Lwów] under the assumed name of Marysia Borowska. There she was put in the care of Sister Blanka Pigłowska [Pigłowska], who knew that she was Jewish. When a suspicion arose in the orphanage that Lidia might be Jewish, it was Sister Blanka who obtained new false papers for her, with a new name, Maria Wołoszynska [Wołoszyńska]. She then transferred the girl to another orphanage, at the convent in the village of Lomna [Łomna], where the Mother Superior, Sister Tekla Budnowska, was hiding many Jewish girls.

In the early autumn of 1943, after an attack by Ukrainian nationalists, Sister Budnowska received permission to transfer her girls to Warsaw, and to establish an orphanage in an abandoned building in the former ghetto. In Warsaw, she accepted yet more Jewish children. After the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 [which in fact lasted over two months, until early October], the orphanage relocated to Kostowiec, fifteen miles south-west of Warsaw.

<sup>525</sup> Oral history interview with Lidia Siciarz, USHMM, Accession no. 2000.9, RG-50.030.0405; Oral history interview with Lidia K. Siciarz, USHMM, RG-50.999.0117.

Lidia's mother had been denounced to the Gestapo while travelling on false papers, arrested and killed; but her father had been hidden by a Russian [Eastern] Orthodox priest, and survived. Father and daughter were reunited after liberation.<sup>526</sup>

Lidia Kleinman wrote the following testimonial about her stay in Łomna.

When Sister Blanka [Pigłowska] brought me to Łomna in 1942 I was 10 years old and had a package of experiences that I cannot recollect calmly even to this day. For me Łomna was a safe island in a deep sea of misfortune. Thanks to a group of generous persons who extended a helping hand to me and many others, I survived the war. I feel a deep love and gratefulness for Mother Tekla [Budnowska], Sister Zofia [Olszewska] and Sister Blanka [Pigłowska] for their care, goodness and understanding, and for my companions from Łomna, since they were then my family.<sup>527</sup>

Sister Tekla Budnowska recalled those times in an interview conducted in June 1984:

During the war I was mother superior of a home in Łomna [Łomna]. I had 115 children in the orphanage, of which twenty-three were Jewish—one boy, the rest girls, for the orphanage was for girls. Only later did I get [more] boys.

Sometimes there was a note with the child saying that it was Jewish, but most of the time the children came to us with birth certificates. Some of the girls said openly: I am a Jew. Others did not admit to their Jewish background, and that's the way it stayed. For instance, Teresa B [Brama]. She did not look Jewish; nothing betrayed her. One day an older [Jewish] girl came to me, her name was Glancman, and she said:

"Mother Superior, Teresa B. is a Jew."

"She is no Jew," I replied. "Blue eyes, the nose and everything; she does not look like a Jew."

"I tell you, Mother Superior, she is! I can feel it!" Literally: I can feel it.

The fact is these children could somehow tell. For example, if some older Jewish girl was cleaning up, then the younger Jewish girls were immediately drawn to her. They didn't help anyone but the Jewish girl.

Returning to Teresa B.: Teresa came to us when she was eleven. Certainly, she had a [baptismal] certificate. As it turned out later, she had not been baptized. However, she was receiving the sacraments all the time. She was a rather pious, practicing Catholic. Only after the Warsaw Uprising in 1944—she had probably taken some oath—did she turn to an old nun and ask to be baptized. We baptized her in secret, so that nobody knew.

When the Germans would come, the Jewish children would be the first to go to the chapel, for they were afraid of them. They had a certain feeling, an instinct of self-preservation. They did not exhibit exceptional piety. They probably just felt safe, and that

<sup>526</sup> Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 56–57.

<sup>527</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 185.

was the reason for their normality, as far as matters of faith were concerned. We took great pains so that the children would not lack for anything. When the children in Lomna went out, I always reminded the sisters to make sure that no Germans or strangers were standing by the chapel.

Once the following thing happened: The children were going out, everyone was looking at them, including a German officer, who finally said to me:

“There are a lot of different faces in your group, sister!”

“What else do you expect,” I answered him in German. “Do you want them all to look like you? Everyone has a different mother and father.”

I gave him a look, and that was the end of that. The officer did not think any more of the matter.

I also remember the daughter of a doctor from Turka. He was needed by the Germans for something, so he was kept alive and walked around with the Star of David. His daughter [Lidia Kleinman] was being hidden by our sisters in Lwow [Lwów], but they feared keeping her, for she was too well known. So I told them: “Give her to us; we already have many, so one more won’t make a difference.”

The little girl had very long tresses, so I said to her: “You have to make a sacrifice, my child.”

I cut off her tresses [so that she would not be recognized en route], and we found a birth certificate for her. A sister went to St. Antoni’s [Anthony’s] Church in Lwow; the priest gave her a baptismal book [register], and after a two-day search she finally found a girl whose age coincided with the age of the doctor’s daughter. The priest wrote out a certificate in the name of O. [Maria Wołoszyńska], a name which was used after the war by the father of the child also.

Not one of the Jewish children we had was killed. The majority of our children are grateful, and maintain contact with us.

We received children mostly from Warsaw. All the sisters at Lomna knew about the Jewish children, but no one was allowed to differentiate between the children, and no one did. At most, the children did so among themselves.

One day Sister Paulina arrived with some children, and a boy came over to me, and said:

“I beg your pardon, Mother Superior, Sister Paulina has brought some children from Warsaw, all of them Jews!”

“They are not Jews, but all are baptized children, so there are no Jews here!” I replied.

We tried to create an atmosphere where the children would feel safe and secure. After the Ukrainian attacks [on the convent] in 1943, we left Lomna, and together with the children moved to Warsaw. In Warsaw we lived in a small place on Wolna [Wolność] St., until the uprising. All of us left Warsaw in August of 1944.

The children came from Warsaw in groups. There were situations where the [train] conductor, seeing our nuns with a group of children, among which he could see Jewish children, closed the compartment and drew the curtains to assure the safety of the sisters and children. These conductors were Polish, but one time a German conductor did this also.

After the uprising, we stayed for some time in Kostowiec, then in Wegrocia [?]; finally we found ourselves in Lublin [Lubień] Kujawski.

Reclaiming Jewish children started as early as 1945. When someone called at the convent, they gave a name and collected a child. But sometimes it was different. ...<sup>528</sup>

Róża Peiper was the wife of a judge from Sambor who had been deported to the Gulag during the Soviet occupation. After the Germans entered the area in 1941, she turned to Rev. Michał Ziajka, the pastor of the Catholic parish in Sambor, who promised that he would care for her daughter, Urszula (later Shulamit Kaner, b. 1934). He placed Urszula in the orphanage of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Łomna, where she remained until the nuns and children were forced to leave in the fall of 1943 because of attacks by Ukrainian nationalist partisans.

Urszula Peiper expressed nothing but praise for the nuns who protected her, and she had excellent relations with the children, even though they suspected that she was Jewish. Urszula stated, "It was splendid for me there. The sisters adored me. Whenever there was a game, I was part of it. The sisters knew that I was Jewish, and the children guessed, but no one confronted me or said anything bad to me." During her stay there, Rev. Ziajka provided Urszula with additional food and clothing.

When the orphanage was evacuated, Urszula returned to the parish rectory. She did not want to remain there, however, because her presence was well known. Rev. Ziajka arranged for Urszula to stay at a children's shelter in Sambor, also run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. She remained there until the arrival of the Soviet army. Rev. Ziajka sheltered Róża Peiper, Urszula's mother, at his rectory for several weeks. When her cover became risky, Róża found other hideouts, the last one in the home of a Ukrainian woman who denounced her. She did not survive the war.<sup>529</sup>

Anna Kretz (later Henriette Daniszewski, b. 1934) was one of a dozen Jewish and three Gypsy children sheltered by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in their orphanage in Sambor, under the care of the superior, Sister Celina (Aniela) Kędzierska. After the family's hideout with a Polish-Ukrainian family was betrayed by a fellow Jew (who had also stayed there for a short time), miraculously, Anna managed to run away from the German executioners who killed her parents and their benefactors. She approached the convent with caution because part of the building was occupied by German soldiers, who used the courtyard as their field kitchen.

<sup>528</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 139–41.

<sup>529</sup> Testimony of Urszula Peiper, February 15, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 4721; Testimony of Shulamit Kaner, SFV, Interview code 45348.

When she arrived at the orphanage, Anna turned to Sister Celina with these words: “Sister, be my mother; I don’t have parents anymore.” When Anna’s uncle came to claim her after the war, Anna (then going by the name of Kopłowicz) was reluctant to go with him. Sister Celina told her, “Child, you belong with your family. You must go to them.” Seriously ill with cancer at the time (she died soon after), Sister Celina’s parting words to Anna were: “Remember, be a good person.” Those words forever left an impression in Anna’s heart. In October 1993, Anna penned the following testimonial:

In memory of the Sister Superior and other Sisters who, risking their own lives and in those terrible conditions, cared for me and other Jewish children and helped to instil in us faith in people, which we could have lost forever together with our lives. May the memory of their deed never fade, because by their actions they showed that love of one’s neighbour could lead to the highest form of generosity and heroism. I will never forget that. May I be worthy of it.<sup>530</sup>

Sister Celina (Aniela) Kędzierska was recognized as a Righteous Among Nations by Yad Vashem in 2015.

Sister Maria Sawicka, who worked at the orphanage in Sambor, remembered Anna and a number of other Jewish children sheltered there, including Rysiek and Urszula Peiper, who had distinctly Jewish appearances, and a girl named Marysia.<sup>531</sup> Jerzy Bander (b. 1942), who was smuggled out of the Sambor ghetto in June 1943, was one of several Jewish infants brought to the orphanage by Maria Wachułka, a secretary at a local high school, who was a family friend.

<sup>530</sup> Henriette Kretz, “A Child of the Holocaust,” *The Ivansk Project e-Newsletter*, Issue no. 31 (July–August 2008): 3–21, at 17–18; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem,” *Życie Konsekwane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 187. See also the testimony of Henriette Daniszewski, SFV, Interview code 20785.

<sup>531</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 227–29. Marysia may have been Bina Neger (later Einav, b. 1939), who was placed in a convent in Sambor by her Ukrainian nanny, Fesia (Teodoziia), ostensibly as her illegitimate daughter fathered by a Jew. Bina recalled the convent and the nuns fondly. After some time, Fesia was asked to take the child back. According to Bina’s older sister, Esther, this was because a woman recognized Bina on the street and threatened to denounce her and the nuns to the Gestapo, thereby endangering all of the charges and nuns. According to Bina, it was because she had told other children at the convent that her father wore an armband with a Star of David, thereby exposing her own Jewish identity. In any event, Bina was sheltered by Fesia for the remainder of the occupation and was reunited with her mother, Helena Neger, and sister, Esther (Elżbieta). The latter two were sheltered on a farm with another Jewish family. See the testimonies of Bina Einav and Esther Leiner, SFV, Interview codes 25995 and 41617.



Jerzy's father was rescued by the Wachułka family, and they were reunited after the war.<sup>532</sup>

Mina Deutsch (née Kimmel) recalled the assistance she, her husband, Leon, and their young daughter, Eva, received from many persons, including the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Dźwiniaczka, a village near Borszczów, where she and her husband had worked for the Germans as doctors before going into hiding. The nuns even agreed to take in Eva (b. 1939), but Mina did not want to part from her. While hiding with Ukrainian farmers in the village of Babińce, the family was helped by an unidentified Ukrainian priest.<sup>533</sup> Mina recalled, "We used to hide from time to time in a nearby convent where the nuns were quite nice to us and asked us to come to them when there was an urgent need. After being there for a day or two a few times, the Sister Superior suggested that we leave our daughter with them ..."<sup>534</sup>

Regina Kartyganer (later Maria Damaszek, b. 1935) was seven years old when her father entrusted her to Czesława Kisielewicz (later Strąg), who lived in Brzeżany with her mother, Rozalia Kisielewicz. With her father's consent, Regina was baptized by a priest who joined the conspiracy, providing Regina with a false baptismal and birth certificate under the name of Maria Szkolnicka. Czesława took the child with her when she moved to Sambor, and then to Lwów.

Afterwards, the Polish Welfare Committee arranged for Regina to be placed with the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Podhajce, near Brzeżany, where she lived in an orphanage under the care of Sister Helena (Stanisława) Chmielewska, the superior of the convent. In the spring of 1944, fearing attacks by Ukrainian nationalist partisans, the nuns and their charges left Podhajce and moved to Lwów, where they stayed in the order's mother house on Kurkowa Street. Subsequently, they evacuated to Staniątki, near Kraków, and later to Nysa, before settling in Koperniki, Silesia. After the war, Regina immigrated

<sup>532</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Part 6, *Nasz Dziennik*, April 4, 2008; "Wspomnienia Jerzego Bandera," Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/sambor-1365/16,accounts-memories/42179,wspomnienia-jerzego-bandera/>; Jerzy Bander, *My ocaleni i inne opowiadania* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Książkowe IBIŚ, 2011); Anna Kołacińska-Gałązka, ed., *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie "Dzieci Holocaustu" w Polsce, 2013), 287.

<sup>533</sup> Mina Deutsch, *Mina's Story: A Doctor's Memoir of the Holocaust* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1994), 49–50, 77–79. Although Mina Deutsch implies that the nuns' help was motivated by a desire to convert her daughter, there is no evidence to suggest that anyone's conversion was ever a condition for receiving help.

<sup>534</sup> Deutsch, *Mina's Story*, 48.

to the United States. Three of her rescuers, apart from the priest, were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2014.<sup>535</sup>

Rozalia Kartyganer was born in Kańczuga, Poland, in 1935. Her parents escaped Kańczuga at the beginning of the war and arrived in Brzezany [Brzeżany]. Persecution of the Jews began there in 1942. Rozalia's mother was soon captured by the Germans and never seen again. Her father remained with 7-year-old Rozalia and began looking for solutions. Primarily, he wanted to find someone to hide his little girl. Czesława Kisielewicz (married name, Strąg), a 19-year-old Polish girl who happened to live and work with a family next door, was able to help. She had witnessed the capture of Rozalia's mother and observed the frightened and reserved girl from then on. Gradually, an emotional connection was forged between the two girls, and Rozalia's father felt able to approach Czesława to see if she would take it upon herself to protect his daughter. After presenting the child to her mother, Rozalia Kisielewicz, and consulting with her, Czesława agreed.

The Kisielewicz family consisted of six people, two parents and four adult children living out of town. Czesława was the second oldest. She begged her father, who was initially reluctant, to agree to shelter the little Jewish girl. He eventually gave in but did not contribute, whereas Czesława's mother, Rozalia, helped her daughter throughout the process.

The first order of business was making little Rozalia convincingly Polish. Czesława had her priest baptize the child and issue a birth certificate under the name of a girl she knew of the same age who had been sent to Siberia with her family by the Soviets. Rozalia's father knew and agreed to all this, knowing that it was done for his daughter's safety. He was kept aware of her progress, and along with his approval he sent contact information for relatives in the United States, in case he should not survive the war. Indeed, in 1944 he was captured by the Germans and, like his wife, murdered.

Czesława tried to move out of her parents' house and find work to support herself and the child but was unable to do so. She was desperate for a solution and sought the advice of her family doctor, whom she knew and trusted. His suggestion was that Rozalia be sent to the Franciscan orphanage opening at that time in nearby Podhajce. The orphanage was led by Mother Superior Helena Chmielewska. She was made aware of the little girl's real origins and did not hesitate to receive her. Rozalia was not the only Jewish girl in the establishment: an infant with distinctly Semitic features had been given up for adoption not long before, and Chmielewska was happy to raise her as well.

Both Jewish children survived the war at the monastery orphanage. Chmielewska cared for them with love and dedication. Czesława continued to visit her ward and receive updates on her situation. After the war, when the area was liberated and fate took everyone involved in very different directions, the connection remained. Rozalia Kartyganer eventually joined her relatives in the United States, where she grew up and became a pediatrician, living by the name of Maria Damaszek. Czesława visited her several times, and Rozalia/Maria corresponded with Helena Chmielewska for the many years that she lived.<sup>536</sup>

<sup>535</sup> Polska Agencja Prasowa (PAP), "Nowi Sprawiedliwi wśród Narodów," *Nasz Dziennik*, November 9, 2014; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Part 4, *Nasz Dziennik*, March 19, 2008.

<sup>536</sup> Helena Chmielewska, RD.

The Sisters Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (Zgromadzenie Służebnic Najświętszego Serca Jezusowego, commonly known as *sercanki*) opened their orphanage in Przemyśl to children of all faiths. Sister Emilia (Józefa Małkowska), the convent's superior, initiated and oversaw the rescue mission. Among the nuns involved in the rescue were Sister Longina (Leokadia Juśkiewicz), Sister Ligoria (Anna Grenda), Sister Bernarda (Rozalia Domicella Sidełko), and Sister Alfonsa (Eugenia Wąsowska), who was responsible for the Jewish children. The latter four nuns were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles.

According to Yad Vashem, 13 Jewish children found shelter there—ten girls: Anna (Hanka) Rubin, Maria Reinharz (later Miriam Klein), Barbara (Zofia) Friedman, Hedy (Jadwiga) Rosen (née Tugendhaft), Zofia Horn, Beti Milczyn, Ahuva Liss, Aviva Fogelman (b. 1931 as Czoban),<sup>537</sup> and Batia Fridman or Friedman (later Gortler, b. 1934);<sup>538</sup> and three boys: Joel (Julian) Ostrowski, Edward (Edek) Goldberg, and Gabriel Koren. Another child who arrived at the orphanage four months before the city's liberation was Fryda Einsiedler (later Frieda Stieglitz).<sup>539</sup>

Children were often received under dramatic circumstances, or on occasion simply left at the gate of the orphanage. Sister Alfonsa saw to it that the children did not lack food or clothing, and she often ventured out to collect alms for the children's support. When the German army was retreating in the summer of 1944, German soldiers occupied part of the convent. After the city was liberated in July 1944, the children that were not claimed by relatives were turned over to the Jewish committee. The following account was recorded by Mordechai Paldiel:

<sup>537</sup> Testimony of Avivah Fogelman, SFV, Interview code 40574. She was known as Irena Lipińska at the convent.

<sup>538</sup> Batia Gortler, passing as Basia Barańska, recalled that one of the Jewish charges, a blond girl, was quite nasty to the other children. After the war, some of the children remained at the convent until they were claimed; Batia was reunited with her parents. Her father was tolerant of her continued Catholic religious practices, which she eventually abandoned. See the testimony of Batia Gortler, SFV, Interview code 9142.

<sup>539</sup> Fryda Einsiedler (later Frieda Stieglitz, b. 1933) received a great deal of assistance from Polish farmers in the vicinity of her native village, Grodzisko Dolne. She arrived at the convent of the Sisters Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Przemyśl about four months before the entry of the Soviet army. She described the nuns as being "very kind" and stated that, although all the children were taught religion, the nuns did not press the Jewish children to become Catholics. See Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 73–74, 80–81; Testimony of Fryda Einsiedler, February 15, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 1348; Testimony of Frieda Stieglitz, SFV, Interview code 23942. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 576 (this entry states, mistakenly, that Fryda Einsiedler remained at the home of Maria Korzytko until liberation).

Hedy Rosen (a four-year-old child in the summer of 1942) and her mother had wandered through the woods for two years, seeking shelter from the fury of the Nazi Final Solution. One day they arrived outside the walls of a convent in Przemyśl in southern Poland. Panting for breath and on the verge of collapse, Hedy's mother looked into her daughter's eyes and told her quietly: "You have no choice. From now on your name is Jadwiga Kozowska and you are a Christian Pole." After repeating with her several verses of a Catholic prayer, she placed Hedy near the convent's entrance and disappeared behind a tree. Hedy stood there alone and wept. Her cries alerted the nuns, who opened the gates and fetched the child inside. There she stayed for two full years. She was the first Jewish child to be admitted. Twelve others followed in her wake.

St. Joseph's Heart was a children's orphanage with main offices in Cracow [Kraków]. In 1942, Sister Alfonsa (Eugenia Wąsowska) was sent from Cracow to the Przemyśl convent to help the other five nuns and one priest to care for the forty-seven orphaned Catholic children. With the approval of her Cracow superiors, the Przemyśl mother superior decided to give shelter to Jewish children; she then suddenly took ill and expired. When her successor in turn fell ill, Sister Alfonsa was made responsible for the "Jewish Section" of the Catholic orphanage. Under her stewardship, a total of thirteen Jewish children (ten girls and three boys) were sheltered in the orphanage until the city's liberation in July 1944.

Przemyśl had a Jewish population of 20,000 at the start of the war. When the city was liberated in 1944, only some 250 Jews had survived the Nazi terror.

Hedy's mother had in the meantime found work in a nearby village, under a new identity, and on occasion brought food to the orphanage for her daughter's sake. "I was forbidden to show the slightest sign that I knew her," relates Hedy, "for fear of the other children. I had to disregard her completely." The fear of detection was a constant threat to the children and the orphanage as well. Various tactics were used. One was to tell the Jewish boys "that if a stranger comes to the convent and asks a boy what he wants to be when he grows up, he should say a priest," Sister Alfonsa relates, adding, "We took the children to church along with Polish children, not because we were trying to make them Catholics but just so nobody would suspect they were Jews."

Sister Alfonsa was committed, soul and heart, to her charges. She saw to it that the children did not lack food or clothing during those years of dearth and want for the local population. Not able to repress the severe traumatic experience which had preceded their placement in the orphanage, the Jewish children were prone to sudden bursts of hysterical weeping. "Sometimes at mealtime a child would cry and throw his food on the floor," Sister Alfonsa recalls. Miriam Klein remembers some of the children screaming at night and wetting their beds. "Sister Alfonsa always knew how to calm us. Sleeping with us in the small room she was alert to every noise and often got up at night to place an additional blanket on the frightened children."

Immediately upon the city's liberation, Sister Alfonsa took the thirteen Jewish children to the newly constituted Jewish Committee in Przemyśl and promptly turned them over. "They were Jewish children and belonged with Jews," Sister Alfonsa emphasized. In one case, a father who was a shoemaker, made a pair of new shoes for Sister Alfonsa as a sign of his appreciation.

... Recalling her stay at the orphanage, Miriam Klein remarks, “I was privileged to experience calm and mental relaxation, and there I discovered the best and most beautiful of women.”<sup>540</sup>

Although Miriam wanted to convert and become a Catholic, she was dissuaded by the nuns and a priest at the convent.<sup>541</sup> Elżbieta Isakiewicz relates the account of Miriam Klein, born as Maria Reinharz in 1933.

My father was very well liked among the Polish population, he belonged to the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which was valued in the Polish intellectual community, and he also was on good terms with Kedyw [the diversionary command of the Polish Home Army] ...

... he tried to find another place of shelter [for me]. It was a convent of the order of the Sacred Heart in Przemyśl, in Mickiewicza Street, where they also ran an orphanage. One of my father's acquaintances dealt in cattle and knew the Mother Superior of the convent, who was a descendant of the Czartoryskis—Sister Emilia Małkowska. She herself had brought up the subject in a conversation and stated that she was going to rescue Jewish children. There were already Jewish children at the convent, but not from Przemyśl, only from Wołyń [Volhynia]. I said that I wasn't going to any convent. Then my father took me up to the attic where there was a small window—there was an operation taking place right then. They [the Germans] were catching children and killing them. I saw how, on Mikołaja Street, they were taking these children by the legs and smashing their heads against the walls. I saw how they were burning dead bodies mixed up with living ones and layers of wood. They set fire to these heaps with petrol or something of the kind, I don't know what, but the whole town was saturated with the smell afterwards and the wind made the ashes fly in the air. What else did I see? People hanged with dogs. ... So my father said, “You're thinking about death? Look, that's what it looks like. If you don't go to the convent, the same will happen to you.”

So I went, thank God I went. It was a bandage for my soul. A soothing compress. Something wonderful.

The nuns occupied a two-storey building. There were six of them, the best nuns in the world. Conditions were the pits, but the nuns were the best in the world. One of them [Sister Alfonsa] begged for food for us, going from house to house. The Polish woman who took me out of the ghetto brought milk. She was called Kazimiera Romankiewicz. ...

There were fourteen Jewish children in the nuns' orphanage and the rest were Polish orphans, dirty, pitiful, flea-ridden, sickly, whose parents had been killed, among others, by members of Bandera's [nationalist] Ukrainian groups. There were, for example, girls there who had had their stomachs cut open. They were no different to us, the Jewish girls. They had the same scared-looking eyes. We all looked the same. When I arrived with Mrs. Kazia, I was introduced to the Mother Superior. Later Sister Małkowska's heart could no longer bear the life of continual tension and fear—she died. But that was later. Then the

<sup>540</sup> Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House; New York: The Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers, 1993), 219–22.

<sup>541</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 80–81.

nuns introduced me to Hania, a Jewish girl who had been there for some time. I knew who she was because she was the daughter of a friend of my father's, but I didn't let on, as though I had never seen her before in my life. "Show Marysia where the toilet is," she said, "and where her bed is, introduce her to the life of the day-nursery."

When we got down to the toilet, we hugged, kissed each other and burst into tears. Then other girls joined in too: Zosia, Basia, and others. In this secret way, a get-together took place, so that nobody would suspect that we knew each other. ...

There were three circumcised boys among us. One of them was a toddler. We took great care that nobody saw us changing his nappies, that was why either the nuns or the older Jewish girls did it. ...

Once the Ukrainian police, who were co-operating with the Germans, occupied the first floor of our house—we were terrified. ...

I had never had anything to do with Christianity. My father was a member of the PPS [Polish Socialist Party], my uncle was a traditional Jew ...

When I came to the convent, I didn't know how to pray or make the sign of the cross, I knew nothing. Sister Jakuba told me to kneel down. I objected. "I'm Jewish," I said, "I don't know whether life is worth changing your personality for." Then Sister Jakuba suggested that I kneel at the end of the chapel and just make miming movements with my mouth so that it would just seem like I was praying. I pretended like that for a month or more. But I was never punished; I never heard a bad word, or any anti-Semitic allusions.<sup>542</sup> On the contrary, it was I who asked questions; I was too clever by half. I wanted to know what God was like, why he treated us in this way.

They were patient. They were good. Whenever they had a crumb of extra food—sometimes the priest brought a piece of cake—they gave it to us. I kept hearing, "Marysia, open wide, I have something for you."

The nuns took us under their protection and clasped us to their breasts. I remember them all: Sister Ligoria Grenda, Sister Bernarda, Sister Longina, Sister Jakuba and Sister Leokadia—a probationer nun who only took her vows after the war, because it was not possible during the war. And also Sister Alfonsa ...

So, it is hard to say when the process of conversion began, under the influence of their personal example, their love. After a certain time, I decided that I wanted to be christened. But the nuns said, "No, you have parents and you'll go back to them; faith is not some sort of pendulum."

<sup>542</sup> Some accounts go out of their way to claim that priests and nuns in German-occupied Poland instilled anti-Semitism or anti-Jewish teachings in their Jewish charges. Accounts from other countries contain similar charges. For example, Adele Lazanowski Zaveduk, whose mother arranged through an underground agency to place her and her sister with a widow in the small French village of Brou near Chartres, recalled visiting the Catholic church daily and attending mass every Sunday and holidays. "In church we learned that the Jews killed Jesus, and they were bad people." She states, in the context of her reunion with her mother after the war: "because we were raised as Catholics, we had been taught that Jews killed Jesus Christ. ... It was some time before I could think about what my parents' reaction to our Catholic training must have been, especially after the price they had paid for being Jews." See Elaine Saphier Fox, ed., *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 102–3.



Then Przemyśl was bombed. I knelt before the priest and kissed his hands, I begged him to christen me. The priest said, "If a bomb lands here, you'll be christened."

No bomb fell.

When the liberation came in 1944, I did not want to return to my parents. The nuns reminded me that amongst the Ten Commandments there was also this one: Honour thy father and thy mother. "You are sinning by not returning to your parents," they repeated. And of course I did not want to sin. I went back. But when I went to church for mass, my father would beat me. I went about with a swollen face. It was hell within hell, the two together. ...

I was very happy in Poland, I studied, I played the piano. I was the only Jew in the class, everything was working out wonderfully, except that when there was a retreat, my parents would take me away and I couldn't receive any of the holy sacraments. I waged war with my father for four years about the Church. But I never gave up hope.

Then in 1948 we moved to Sweden ...<sup>543</sup>

This is the account of Hedy (Jadwiga) Rosen (née Tugendhaft), another of the children.

I was born in Cracow [Kraków] in 1936. When the war broke out in 1939 and the Germans captured Cracow my father was immediately taken away ... No one knows where he was taken, but he was never seen again.

My mother and I fled and went to Katowice and then to various towns. We lived for almost two years in the countryside—in dog kennels and horse stables with barely enough to eat. By this time my mother managed to get "Aryan" papers, as she did not look Jewish. I did look Jewish and so she had trouble getting papers for me. We went from town to town until we came to Przemyśl.

My mother heard about a convent there that was taking Jewish children to save them from the Germans. My mother was dressed in peasant clothes and left me at the St. Joseph orphanage run by nuns from the order of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. My mother instructed me to say that my aunt from another city could not take care of me and that my parents were lost. The Mother Superior accepted this story and for a long time the nuns did not know that I was Jewish. I was the first Jewish child they took and after me they took more until there were about thirteen Jewish children

The Mother Superior was Sister Amelia [Emilia] Małkowska and the orphanage was at 80 Mickiewicza Street. There was Sister Ligoria, and Sister Bernarda. Sister Alfonsa was a third nun who left the order [after the war] and moved to Australia and married a Jewish man.

The nuns did not try to convert us. There was one girl, Hania, who refused to go with her uncle from the United States after the war. She remained with the nuns and was eventually baptized, married a Polish man, and lives in Przemyśl. Many of the children like myself went to Israel and have lived there. Miriam, my friend in the orphanage, is a neighbour in Israel to this day.

<sup>543</sup> Isakiewicz, *Harmonica*, 191–98. When Maria Klein wanted to continue to attend Catholic services after the war, her father would beat her. See also the testimony of Miriam Klein, SFV, Interview code 22575.

I remember a time when German soldiers came to stay in the orphanage and they played with the little boy, Staś. One day a woman wanted to take him with her when she left with the German soldiers. One of the nuns rescued him. He was circumcised and would have been discovered. Interestingly, he could only ask two of the older Jewish girls to change his diaper so that no one would discover that he was circumcised. Somehow he knew this even though he was only two or three years old. ...

During this time my mother remained in the area as a Polish peasant woman. She brought food to the orphanage for the nuns and for the children. I was in the orphanage in 1943 and 1944 until the Russians liberated Przemyśl. My mother left for Budapest, Hungary. I was very sick. I had pneumonia and rickets. I was in a hospital for about six months but survived these illnesses.

We made our way to Australia and then to Israel. ...

The little boy Staś whose last name was Korn lives now in Israel. His father was a lawyer and a prominent man in Przemyśl.<sup>544</sup>

The accounts of the nuns themselves—Sister Bernarda, Sister Ligoria and Sister Alfonsa—have been preserved.<sup>545</sup> Here is the testimony of Sister Bernarda:

I was in Przemyśl three or four years, 1942 to 1945. I was in the order of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. We had in our orphanage thirteen Jewish children and about forty Polish children. It was located at 80 Mickiewicza Street. It was across the street from a church and we could see the altar from our windows. Before this we had an orphanage that was destroyed by a bomb. The City gave us this building which had been previously owned by Jews who had been forced into the Ghetto. This was a two-storey home in disrepair. We conducted also a preschool and there were rooms for games and play.

Sister Emilia-Józefa Małkowska was the Mother Superior of our order. I worked with Sister Ligoria Grenda. Some women delivered some of the Jewish children. I did not know her. Sister Superior did not tell us any particulars in order not to endanger us with this knowledge. The less we knew the better. But I knew that some of the boys were circumcised and from the shooting in town I knew we had Jewish children.

Conditions were very hard at this time. We had little food and there was terrible hunger. We scraped the bottom of the barrel for any remnants of marmalade for the children. The Germans were right next door, behind the wall, and we all lived in fear that they would discover the Jewish children. These children were very afraid of the Germans. One little boy, Edek, slept with me in my bed and in the middle of the night would cry out, "Auntie, Auntie, save me! They will shoot me!"

One child was named Hania and she was twelve. Before she came to us she was hiding in a chimney. She was terribly malnourished. Her parents who lived in Zasanie had been shot by the Germans.

<sup>544</sup> John J. Hartman and Jacek Krochmal, eds., *I Remember Every Day...: The Fates of the Jews of Przemyśl during World War II* (Przemyśl: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Przemyślu; Ann Arbor, Michigan: Remembrance & Reconciliation Inc., 2002), 163–64.

<sup>545</sup> Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day...*, 211–18.

My job in the orphanage was to wash laundry and scrub floors. I would dress the children in clean underwear and they would get it dirty very quickly. I was sixteen years old and so the children did not confide in me too much. There was a lot of work just to keep the children clothed. I patched and sewed and picked lice off the children. My own clothing I made into clothing for the children. There was little food. We made sugar from red beets. Bread was made with sawdust. We had no coal to heat the house. We bathed four or five children in the same water. We did not know any last names. There was Bronek, Julek, etc. Maybe Sister Superior knew the last names. We knitted sweaters and sold them for food. We knitted until two o'clock in the morning. Five children slept under one cover. We made our own soap. We had no vitamins. The children were hungry and we filled them with potatoes.

There was a Mr. Walczak who would buy wounded horses and give us meat and fat. The children ate soup made from beets and horse fat. We would go on quests for food. I was not used to this from my upbringing but we would go out to collect money for the children. The children did not starve and no one died of hunger. They did catch colds due to lack of vitamins and sufficient clothing. You could not keep them on a leash. They would run around in the garden and play.

The children were dirty and brought lice with them in their clothing. Most had scabies. The wounds were very deep in their skin and the wounds festered and as they hardened they would scratch because it itched them a lot. Eventually I got a recipe for a salve. I had to get some grey stone crystals, grind them up and I mixed it with horse fat and sulphur which became a salve. I applied it twice and the itching went away. If someone knew what I had done I would have gone to jail. Their skin was so delicate. It all ended well. One had to stand on her head to do what one could for these children. None of the children died and no one was discovered by the Germans.

There was a Polish organization, RGO [Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, a social welfare agency] it was called, that helped us quite a bit especially near the end of the war. There was also a man who would bring us money, medicine, and clothing. I did not know who he was. We grew some vegetables and fruit in our garden but conditions were very tough.

We did not christen the children. Because we had some Ukrainian and Polish children, the Jewish children went to church. I gave Maria the key to the church across the street and showed her the place she and the other Jewish children should hide if the Germans came to the orphanage in search of Jewish children. It was in a secret place in the altar where the holy relics were kept. The children were well-trained and would not say anything unnecessary, and if they were awakened in the night by the Germans they would still do very well. How much terror these children experienced! Fear, hard work, this was our reward. We had no employment possibilities. Our work was for the Lord and we made sacrifices for the sake of the children. Our aim was to save human beings. We did not do it for compensation. After all the Jews had nothing. They were begging for food, begging to live.

After the war, the children went in different directions. Some were picked up by relatives and friends. Most went to Israel. Hania did not want to go with relatives. She wanted to convert to Catholicism. She eventually did, married, and lives in Przemyśl. I correspond with many of the "children." We reminisce about the war very seldom. The stresses are gone and it is very hard to return to them. For them these years were hell, they suffered

very much. Maria was constantly praying, “Please, God, let my parents return and not be shot.” She wanted to convert but the priest would not agree as she was only 14 years old. Eventually she did convert after the war.

The youngest child was Stasiu and he was only two and a half. His name now is Gabriel Koren and he lives in Israel. Whenever I would wash him he would move his bowels on the floor. The memories of this time have been paid for in nervousness, bad health, and bombings. The children were very aware of what was happening. Stasiu had a game in which he would throw his hat in the air and when it came down he would yell, “Bomb!”

We did our best not to scare the children. They were scared enough and so were we.

Here is the testimony of Sister Ligoria:

I stayed in Przemyśl from the winter of 1943 till 1956. The orphanage was established when transports of refugees from Volhynia [fleeing massacres by Ukrainian nationalists] started coming. The Germans would bring adults and very many children. All of them were put in the camp at Bakończyce in Przemyśl. Rada Główna Opiekuńcza (RGO) turned to Mother Superior Emilia Małkowska, a great child lover and orphan protector about organizing an orphanage. The RGO arranged a house in Mickiewicza Street, opposite the church at Błonie. It was a very primitive building in bad condition. The RGO would take children out of the camp and put them in our shelter. At first, no one had even considered admitting Jewish children. The kids were mostly Polish. A lot of them did not know their own names. They were sad and apathetic. No wonder, some had witnessed the death of their parents.

We were terribly poor, even though the RGO did their best to help. At least the children did not cry of hunger. After some time also Jewish children started appearing. Those cases were handled by Mother Superior only. She did not let us in on the secret for safety reasons. There was always somebody involved in the “deliveries.” I particularly remember one name. It was Mrs [Kazimiera] Romankiewicz, who lived near the Ghetto. Some children came to us by themselves. Among them was a small, eighteen-month-old boy. The children’s surnames were changed. Usually they had no documents. If anybody knew anything about their background, it was Mother Superior. She tried to get rid of any similarities. We only knew about some of those Jewish children, not all of them. It was Providence that saved them, not us. It was so very dangerous. The house, the backyard, the garden could be seen easily—we never locked the children up.

We kept about thirteen Jewish kids, boys and girls. I was the go-between for the RGO and the orphanage. My job was catering. I used to go to the Town Council where one could always get something by begging.

The one who took more care of the children was sister Bernarda. She did what she could: she would sew and change the clothes from her own outfit. The children from the camp were in a terrible hygienic condition, some of them were injured. We had to help one another as there were only a few of us: five sisters and thirty children. Of course, I also looked after the kids. I remember very well carrying little Staś in my arms. He was a pretty boy. Everybody loved him! He was the youngest one. I couldn’t recognize him when I saw him fifty years later. I have the closest contact with Marynia, Maria Klein (Miriam). She writes to me in Polish. After the war I used to receive many letters, some “children” visited me in Cracow with their parents. I am not in touch with them any more. [This

account is from October 1998.] Only with Marysia, always twice a year. And with Staś. All of them survived. I always say that it was nothing but the great Divine Providence over those children and us all. I tell them: "You should thank God, not us, we didn't save you."

One day, a car full of men stopped opposite our house. They got out and looked at the building. I was afraid that they had discovered somebody and were going to enter the orphanage any minute. I was scared! Sister Superior was already very ill at that time (she died on 12. 04. 1944). I couldn't even pray. Suddenly they got back into the car and drove away. I don't really know what they were after, but it was a frightening moment for all of us.

Our house was never searched by the Gestapo. There was one more orphanage in Przemyśl, run by the Sisters of the Order of Providence [in Zasanie]. We learned that somebody had given them away. The Germans went there and decided that the nuns had not known one of the kids was Jewish. They took the child away and that was it.

In our house a group of military officers occupied one or two apartments. They were not German, they were soldiers of some other nationality. Somebody told me that our children would visit their place sometimes, including Staś. They took to him very much. Staś was circumcised and he would often pee in his pants. But he never did it while at their place. A miracle? Just think if they had started changing his clothes!

Those medals, awards, they shouldn't be for us. It was God who chose to save those children. It was His great protection, Divine Providence. I am positive about it.

Our children were, among others, Marysia, two Jazias, Irenka, Stasiu, Edziu ... I can't remember many names. [The account is from October 1998—Ed.] Ah, yes, there was also Zosia. I remember, when I went to the RGO one day, there came a thirteen-year-old girl and asked to be taken under protection. The president of the RGO asked me:

"Will you take her, sister?"

"Well, yes, I will."

And Zosia, the Jewish girl, came with me.

We tried to organize their time. There were different age groups. The eldest child was fourteen. They were all very apathetic. Well, they had been through terrible things. We couldn't make them smile. They just sat there and stared ahead. We tried to keep them busy, to prevent them from thinking. We organized physical exercise for them. They would go to church with us and learn to pray. Sister Bernarda used to make them stand at the back of the church for other children not to see that they didn't know how to pray. They learned with time. They were very worried when the front was approaching. The older girls asked to be baptized, but we didn't do it. Later they recalled it like this: "For me the church was heaven and rescue, while being Jewish meant the Germans and death." Such were their associations.

At the end, when parents and families started collecting their children, they didn't want to leave. Stasiu stretched out his arms and screamed: "Tyćka Gina Tyćka Gin!" He meant Sister Longina who worked in the kitchen and loved him very much. The children used to call us "mateczki" (mothers), hence "Tyćka."

Apart from Sister Longina, Sister Bernarda and myself, there was also Sister Alfonsa Wąsowska. ... There was also Sister Jakuba. And, of course, our Mother Superior, Sister Emilia from Warsaw, a good and noble person, mother of the orphans.

Here is the testimony of Sister Alfonsa:

I was born in Węgrów, Poland. My father was a farmer. I had four brothers and sisters. My father bought animals for butchering, and he often did business with Jewish people. Jews were often in our home.

When I was thirteen I was badly hurt in a farm accident and was in a coma. My father promised God that if I lived he would give me to the Catholic Church. I recovered and in June of 1939, my father kept his promise and I became a nun. In August I joined the convent of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and took the name Sister Alfonsa.

Mother Superior, Emilia Małkowska, thought I would do well with children and sent me to the St. Joseph Orphanage in Przemyśl. We had about forty children, ages two to twelve, two of them we knew to be Jewish. Mother Superior decided we should save the Jewish children. ...

One day a little girl came to the orphanage crying. She said her name was Maria and that she was Catholic. I saw a couple in the woods some distance away. I suspected they were Jewish and I felt we had to save these children. Soon more children came. The parents were preparing to go to the death camps and wanted their children to survive. Each child had a Polish name and some knew some prayers. We treated them as Catholics so as not to arouse the suspicions of the other children or the Polish people who visited the orphanage. We knew we were risking our lives because we knew the Germans killed people who helped Jews, but what kind of Christians would we be if we put our own safety first?

We had to make-do in terrible conditions. I was very young myself, a teenager, but I had to learn how to nurse and how to make clothes. I made medicine out of foxglove and made valerian herbal tea to relax the children. We could never risk calling a doctor because two of the Jewish boys were circumcised. Maria contracted pneumonia and was close to death. I applied leeches and finally she opened her eyes and recovered.

Most of the time the children were quiet and nervous. They cried at night about missing their parents. We had no news of them, of course. Sometimes a child at a meal time would cry and throw food on the floor. We used psychology and acted as if nothing had happened, talking to the child gently until he felt better.

We told one of the Jewish boys who wanted to be a rabbi that if a stranger comes to the convent and asks what he wants to be when he grows up, he should say a priest. We took the Jewish children to church not to convert them but so that no one would know they were Jews. The Germans did come but they found nothing suspicious.

We had no heat, no toilets, and food was very scarce. We had to go out begging or scavenging for food. We cooked lollies which we exchanged with Ukrainian farmers for food. In my nun's habit I could go places where other people could not go. Once I went to the big German army hospital to ask for sauerkraut which was good for the treatment of worms. The German officers called me names and insulted me. I told them I was working only for God. I left without anything. A little while later a German soldier brought a huge barrel of sauerkraut to the orphanage. We had enough to share with other orphanages and poor people.

In 1944 we were liberated by the Red Army. ... In one case the parents came back and claimed a child. They could not find words to thank us. The father who was a shoemaker made me a pair of shoes to show his appreciation. The other Jewish children I took to



the Jewish Orphanage that was set up by the surviving Jewish community. Most of the children went to Israel.

The testimony of the nuns is corroborated by Jewish sources.

The nuns' rescue operation began one day in July 1942, when they found an abandoned infant crying piercingly at the convent gate. Because *Aktionen* and deportations from the Przemyśl [Przemysł] ghetto were occurring at this time, additional Jewish children were taken to the convent—several directly by their parents, some by Catholic go-betweens such as Kazika [Kazimiera] Romankiewicz, and others placed at the convent entrance with a note attached to their clothing. As devout Catholics, the nuns rescued the Jewish children even though they were aware of the personal risk. The children received devoted and loving care and the nuns kept them fed and clothed despite the state of deprivation at the convent. As part of the nuns' precautions, the Jewish youngsters were not issued official ration cards and Sister Alfonsa unhesitatingly begged and solicited donations for the convent children. Notably, the four nuns [awarded by Yad Vashem] had no missionary motive in their rescue effort and never attempted to convert the young wards. In November 1944, after Przemyśl was liberated, the nuns at their own initiative delivered the 13 Jewish children whom they had saved to the Jewish Committee that had been established in the town.<sup>546</sup>

Julian Ostrowski was wounded and later found by a Catholic priest near some railway tracks. He eventually made his way to the social services agency in Przemyśl, which placed him with the Sisters Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. When he ventured out of the convent one day, his Semitic appearance drew the attention of German officials, so he was transferred to an orphanage for boys in Przemyśl run by the Salesian Fathers. Several Jewish boys were sheltered there. Julian recalled that the Germans once arrived at the institution looking for Jewish boys. They came with a Jew—in a priest's habit—but fortunately all the boys passed the religion test that the "priest" administered to them.<sup>547</sup>

The Rinde sisters—Flora (later Blitzer, b. 1930) and Roma (later Buchman, b. 1933)—stayed at an unidentified convent in Przemyśl for about two months under the assumed names of Janina and Ewelina Kowalska, respectively, after escaping from the Przemyśl ghetto with their parents. Although the Rinde sisters had been taught some prayers before arriving at the convent, they made obvious errors during religious services that gave them away. Yet they got along well with the other children, who were all girls. After a visitor to the convent recognized them as members of a prominent, well-to-do Jewish family and threatened to denounce them, they could not remain there any longer. The girls rejoined their parents, who were hiding near Lublin. The entire family survived the war.<sup>548</sup>

<sup>546</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 852.

<sup>547</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 204.

<sup>548</sup> Testimony of Flora Blitzer, SFV, Interview code 327; Testimony of Roma Buchman, SFV, Interview code 13194.

Seven Jews were sheltered by the Franciscan Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice, commonly known as the Felician Sisters (*felicjanki*) at the convent of St. Hedwig (św. Jadwiga Śląska) on Waygart Street in Przemyśl, under the direction of the superior, Sister Maria Honorata (Irena Bielawska). The charges included Abraham and Ela Wajtman (Weitman), and their son Jakub; Mr. and Mrs. Poler (Fuller); and four-year-old Lila Blumenkrantz (later Lea Fried, b. 1939).<sup>549</sup>

The Felician Sisters also gave shelter to at least a dozen other Jews—among them the teenagers Bilha Wajtman (Weitman), Helena and Maria Poler, seven other children and two women—at the convent of Blessed Angela of Folgino on Szczytowa Street in Przemyśl, which was under the direction of the superior, Sister Maria Klara (Aniela Kotowska).<sup>550</sup>

The rescue efforts of these two nuns, both of whom were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, has been documented as follows:

In October 1942, Bożena Złamał [Bożena Złamał] helped the Wittman [Weitman?] family (father Abraham, mother Ela, son Jakub, and daughter Bilha) escape from the ghetto in Przemyśl [Przemyśl] and find shelter on the Aryan side of town. Bożena contacted two Polish nuns—Aniela Kotowska (Sister Klara) and Irena Bielawska (Sister Honorata)—and asked them to help rescue a Jewish family. Both nuns, each from a different convent in Przemyśl, agreed to hide the Wittmans. [The parents stayed in a cell-like room, whereas the two children, born in 1936 and 1939, were in separate locations.—Ed.] Abraham Wittman later wrote about Kotowska that she was “an angel in a human body,” emphasizing her goodness and compassion towards her [dozen Jewish] wards. [When he no longer had enough money to pay for food and board, his fears were stilled by Sister Klara: “Don’t worry; we shall keep you until the war’s end.”] During the war, Bielawska (Sister Honorata) also hid a Jewish couple named Fuller as well as a five-year-old Jewish girl called Lila Rosenthal [Blumenkrantz] (later Lea Fried). Both nuns acted without reward, receiving only small sums of money from their charges that covered the cost of their food. After the war, the Wittmans emigrated to Sweden. The fate of the Fuller couple is unknown.<sup>551</sup> [The Fullers or Polers remained in Przemyśl after the war.—Ed.]

<sup>549</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 47; Testimony of Lea Lila (Blumenkrantz) Frid, YVA, file O.3/5872 (Item 3560668); Leah Blumenkrantz-Frid, *Rikud ha-simhah veha-‘etsev* ([Lohame ha-Geta’ot]: Bet lohame ha-geta’ot: [Israel]: Be-yahad, 2005). After one of the Aktions in Tarnów, Lea (Lila) Blumenkrantz/Rosenthal/Fried (Frid) was entrusted by her mother to her good friend, Janina Wałęga, the niece of the bishop of Tarnów. After sheltering the child for a period of time, Wałęga brought her to Przemyśl, where she was placed with the Felician Sisters under a false identity (as the niece of the convent’s superior, according to one account). Wałęga contributed towards her upkeep. In her Yad Vashem testimony, Lila states that two Jewish couples were hidden in the attic of a building in the convent’s yard. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 215 (Janina Filozof-Walega).

<sup>550</sup> Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 183–84.

<sup>551</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 89. This entry has been supplemented with information from the previously cited Polish sources.

Gerta Zilber from Lwów (later Magdalena Orner), passing as Magdalena Szymańska, was one of the Jewish children sheltered at a Felician convent in Przemyśl. She arrived there at the age of ten, having stayed previously with two Polish women.<sup>552</sup>

The Passionist Sisters (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Męki Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa, commonly known as *pasjonistki*) are mentioned in several accounts. Dr. Abraham Kapilman turned to his friends, Stanisław and Helena Podrzycki, to shelter his seven-year-old daughter, Bronia (later Bela Choter). Helena Podrzycka took Bronia out of the Końskie ghetto and kept her for several weeks.

Afterwards, Bronia was sheltered by the Grabiński family and then by Dr. Czesław Lutyński, who was deported to Auschwitz in August 1943. The Central Relief Council eventually found a place for Bronia at a children's shelter in Końskie run by the Passionist Sisters. Bronia remained in that shelter until the end of the war. The Podrzyckis, who sheltered eleven Jews at various times, were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2016.<sup>553</sup>

The Passionist Sisters rescued a Jewish boy in their home in Łączka Zaklikowa, near Janów Lubelski. Here is the account of Sister Ewelina Nienąłowska.

I've been a member of our congregation since 1930. The war found me in Janow [Janów] Lubelski, where we had a home for old people and orphans. When the war broke out we had 200 senior citizens and 30 children. In the spring of 1940, the Germans moved us to Łaczka [Łączka] Zaklikowa. Through the entire occupation we had a Jewish boy with us—Janek Burak.

He came to us before the war. His parents had gone to Germany, where they had died, but before that happened they gave the child to us. A nun went to pick up the child at the border. When she brought him over to us, she still did not know how to walk. We did not know if he had been baptized, so he was baptized in November 1943 by Father Zielinski [Stanisław Zieliński] behind closed doors of Holy Spirit Church in Krasnik [Kraśnik] Lubelski. During the entire war the nuns hid Janek Burak from the Germans, as his features betrayed his Jewish heritage. When the war broke out, Janek was eleven years old. One day

<sup>552</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 49–50, 162, 175, 281, 282, based on the testimony of Magdalena Orner, YVA, file O.3/6745 (Item 3560372).

<sup>553</sup> Righteous Medal Award Ceremony in Łódź, August 30, 2016, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/i-have-no-other-memorabilia-my-grandparents-reason-medal-priceless-righteous-medal-award-ceremony>; Testimony of Helena Rodczycka [sic], JHI, record group 301, no. 4824; "Siostry Pasjonistki w Końskich 1938–1949," Internet: [konskie.org.pl/2016/07/siostry-pasjonistki-w-konskich-1938.html](https://konskie.org.pl/2016/07/siostry-pasjonistki-w-konskich-1938.html); "Moi dziadkowie Helena i Stanisław Podrzyccy: Sprawiedliwi wśród Narodów Świata," Internet: [konskie.org.pl/2018/07/moi-dziadkowie-helena-i-stanislaw.html](https://konskie.org.pl/2018/07/moi-dziadkowie-helena-i-stanislaw.html); Testimony of Bela Choter, YVA, file O.3/5708 (Item 3555242).

I sent him with some girls to Zaklikowa [Zaklików] for meat. The Germans were riding in a car, when they saw home. They jumped out of the car and shouted: “Jude!”—that is, Jew.

Then the girls fastened onto the Germans and started to shout: “He is not Jewish! This is our Janek! This is our Janek!” Finally, as the girls continued to scream, the Germans got back into the car and rode away. Janek was so shaken up, that he never wanted to leave our home again. And after that I never sent him out.<sup>554</sup>

The aforementioned Rev. Stanisław Zieliński of Kraśnik Lubelski was known to have provided food to Jewish children who came around begging.<sup>555</sup>

Fryderyka Rządzińska (later Shabry, b. 1938) was smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto in a sack by her mother, Gitla (Eugenia) Rządzińska. She was taken to the home of their friends, the Kosman family, who lived in the Mokotów district. She remained there with her mother and older brother, Aleksander (Olek), until the family was separated for safety reasons. Fryderyka was entrusted to relatives of the Kosmans who lived in Łowicz. After some time, they were afraid to keep her any longer. They placed the child, under a false name as a Polish orphan, in an orphanage in Głowno run by the Passionist Sisters. The Germans would come to the convent to inspect the residents and their documents. After the war, Fryderyka was reunited with her mother and older brother.<sup>556</sup>

The Antonine Sisters (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Opieki Społecznej pod wezwaniem św. Antoniego, commonly known as *antoninki*) worked as nurses in two hospitals in Wieluń, where they treated Jewish children admitted under false identities. They also treated Jews in private homes. A 12-year-old Jewish boy, Janek Leiman-Skowroński, was sheltered in their convent. After the war he was known by his original name, Izrael Schemberg.<sup>557</sup>

The Carmelite Sisters of the Infant Jesus (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Karmelitanek Dzieciątka Jezus) sheltered a number of Jewish children in the orphanage they opened for homeless children in Sosnowiec during the war. The local population was well aware of these activities. One of the Jewish children and her grandmother had been directed to the sisters by Rev. Mieczysław Zawadzki, the

<sup>554</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 161–62.

<sup>555</sup> *Regionalista* [Kraśnik], no. 3 (1995): 7.

<sup>556</sup> Testimony of Fryderyka Rządzińska, JHI, record group 301, no. 5958; Testimony of Gitla Rządzińska (Rządzińska), JHI, record group 301, no. 5189.

<sup>557</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 125; Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 148–49, 241; Agata Mirek, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 154.

pastor of Będzin.<sup>558</sup> The superior, Mother Teresa of St. Joseph (Janina Kierocińska), was awarded by Yad Vashem posthumously in 1992.<sup>559</sup>

Mother Teresa-Janina Kierocinska [Kierocińska] was mother superior of the ... Carmelite Sisters Convent in the town of Sosnowiec. On her orders and instructions, some local Jews were hidden in the convent. Among them were a Jewish woman, Pinkus, and her granddaughter, who was "christened" Marysia Wilczynska [Wilczyńska]. They stayed at the convent until the area was liberated in January 1945. Teresa Jablonska [Jabłońska], a Jewish girl who escaped the liquidation of the Sosnowiec ghetto, stayed with the nuns until after the war, when her mother came to reclaim her. In 1943, a Jewish baby was brought to the convent from the town of Szydłowiec [Szydłowiec]. On Kierocinska's express orders, the nuns took care of the little baby, passing him off as a Polish orphan called Jozef [Józef] Bombecki. It was only after the war that the child discovered his Jewish origins. Mother Teresa-Janina also sheltered Andrzej Siemiatkowski [Siemiatkowski], whose mother, a convert to Christianity, had perished in Auschwitz. The survivors of the Sosnowiec convent later remembered Mother Teresa-Janina as someone of exceptional humanity whose love of mankind was rooted in deep religious faith.<sup>560</sup>

One of the Jewish charges, then a boy, recalled, "As a Jewish child I encountered exceptional care and protection. The Sisters created for us family conditions and took care of us with the greatest open-heartedness. This was heroism! Their heroic attitude I attribute above all to Mother Teresa."<sup>561</sup>

The Carmelite Sisters of the Infant Jesus sheltered Leonia Jabłonka (Maria Leonia Jabłonkówna)—a stage director and theatre critic—at their convent in Czerna, near Krzeszowice. Previously, she had been sheltered in Warsaw with the help of a number of Poles. Leonia was baptized clandestinely by Rev. Jan Zieja in April 1944. She was wounded during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. After the evacuation of Warsaw, the Carmelite Sisters took care of her.<sup>562</sup>

<sup>558</sup> "Przechowywanie Żydów przez Matkę Teresę od św. Józefa-Janinę Kierocińską (1885–1946), współzałożycielkę Zgromadzenia Sióstr Karmelitanek Dzieciątka Jezus w Sosnowcu," Internet: [http://archidiecezja.lodz.pl/azkarmel/mT\\_wiecej.html](http://archidiecezja.lodz.pl/azkarmel/mT_wiecej.html).

<sup>559</sup> On the rescue activities of the Carmelite Sisters of the Infant Jesus, see Wiktoria Renata Szczepańczyk, "Zaangażowanie sióstr karmelitanek Dzieciątka Jezus w ratowanie ludności żydowskiej," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 86–95. See also the testimony of Andrzej Siemiatkowski, SFV, Interview code 35798.

<sup>560</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 346–47.

<sup>561</sup> "Sprawiedliwa wśród Narodów Świata: Rozmowa z siostrą Bogdaną Batog, karmelitanką Dzieciątka Jezus o Matce Teresie Kierocińskiej. Rozmawiał ojciec Bartłomiej Kucharzski OCD," *Głos Karmelu*, no. 4 (2006), Internet: <http://www.karmel.pl/rozmowy/rozmowa39.html>.

<sup>562</sup> Marcin Gugulski, "Wielka Sobota 1944," April 23, 2011, Internet: <http://gugulskim.salon24.pl/300753,wielka-sobota-1944>; Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 293–94.

Ada Kessler Kierszman placed her young daughter, Renata, in an orphanage of the Dominican Sisters in Kielce in 1942, ostensibly as the daughter of a deceased Polish officer. She took her daughter back in the summer of 1944, when she had settled in Warsaw.<sup>563</sup> Renata Kierszman was one of several Jewish children sheltered at that institution.<sup>564</sup>

The Sisters of the Most Holy Name of Jesus Under the Protection of the Virgin Mary Help of the Faithful (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Najświętszego Imienia Jezus pod opieką Maryi Panny Wspomożenia Wiernych, commonly known as *siostry Imienia Jezus* or *maryłki*) sheltered three Jewish girls at their orphanage in Klimontów, a small town near Sandomierz, under the care of Sister Urszula (Maria Herman): Eva Nisencwajg (later Eve Bergstein), who went by the name of Iwonka Szumielewicz; her three-year-old cousin, Lucy Nisencwajg; and, from September 1942, Maria Ropelewska, actually, Mania Sztajnmán (later Marion Staiman Weinzwieg, b. 1940).<sup>565</sup> The nuns also rescued a Jewish man who assumed the name Zasławski.<sup>566</sup>

Wiktoria and Stanisław [Stanisław] Szumielewicz lived in the village of Rytwiany near Staszów [Staszów] in the Kielce district during the war. In the summer of 1942, they sheltered Eva, the five-year-old daughter of prewar friends Moshe and Hena Nisencwajg. The Szumielewicz, who had moved to the area from Bydgoszcz upon the outbreak of the war, introduced Eva as “Iwonka, our orphaned niece.” Being a teacher by profession, Wiktoria provided Eva with an education. Some time afterwards, the Szumielewicz also sheltered Eva’s cousins, Lucy and Janek Nisencwajg. When someone informed on them and the children were in danger, Wiktoria decided to move them to the cloister orphanage. Janek did not go to the orphanage; instead he returned to his parents. A few days later, Lucy also ran away from the cloister and joined her family. ... Eva stayed in the orphanage

<sup>563</sup> Ada Kessler-Pawlak, *Nie chcę nocy: Dziewczyna i kanibale*, 2nd expanded ed. (Warsaw: Agencja Wydawnicza CB), 123–24, 157–58. See also Ada Pawlak, *Je refuse la nuit* (Paris: Giles Tautin, 1974).

<sup>564</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 126.

<sup>565</sup> Marion Weinzwieg Memoir, USHMM, Accession no. 1997.A.0302. In her Yad Vashem testimony, Eva Bergstein (Nisencwajg) states that the nuns were unaware that she and her cousin, Lucy, were Jewish, or else “we would be handed over to the Germans by the nuns.” See the testimony of Eva Bergstein (Nisencwajg), YVA, Internet: <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/szumielewicz/eva-bergstein-testimony.html>. This claim is not credible. Lucy would have had no exposure to Catholic rituals before her arrival at the convent, and thus her Jewish identity would have been obvious to the nuns. Moreover, the aforementioned rescue of a Jewish man by these same nuns obviates the validity of Eva Bergstein’s insulting and dismissive claim. It’s worthy of note that Eva visited the convent in Klimontów in 2017 to thank the nuns for saving her life. See Tomasz Lis, “Sprawiedliwi z ewangelicznym sercem,” *Gość Sandomierski*, no. 10 (March 7, 2019).

<sup>566</sup> “Klimontów,” Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/klimontow/5,history/>.



in Klimatow [Klimontów] for a year. When the cloister was bombed during an Allied air raid [actually, it was bombed by the Germans], Wiktoria located Eva and sheltered her once more. After the liberation, the Szumielewicz, along with Eva, returned to Bydgoszcz. There Eva was found by her uncle Henryk Nisencwajg and taken to Cracow [Kraków]. ... In 1947, Eva (later Bergstein) was sent to her mother's sister in Canada.<sup>567</sup>

The same order of nuns also sheltered Jewish children in Wilno and Suchedniów, near Skarżysko-Kamienna. Joanna Przygoda (later Joan Kirsten) was entrusted to the orphanage in Suchedniów as a child. In 2013, Yad Vashem recognized Adela Rosolińska (Sister Serafia), the superior, and Sister Kornelia Jankowska, Joanna's caregiver, as Righteous Among the Nations.

Zdzisław Przygoda and his wife, Irena (née Mizne), lived in Warsaw. Przygoda was an engineer. With the establishment of the ghetto, the Przygodas went to live with Irena's parents. There, in 1942, they had a daughter named Joanna—Joasia. [The three of them managed to escape from the Warsaw ghetto with the help of Roman Talikowski, a business colleague of Irena's father.] The place Roman had arranged for them was in the home of Maria Kaczyńska, whose house was a twenty-minute ride away from the center of Warsaw, in a sheltered wooded area outside of Milanówek [Milanówek]. Two other women were already hiding there, one of whom may have been Jewish. Irena Przygoda and her little daughter spent eleven months sheltered at Kaczynska's home. Zdzisław was away most of the time but kept in touch with his wife and daughter. On May 22, 1943, German soldiers came to the house and conducted a search. They killed Irena Przygoda and another woman.

For an unknown reason they did not touch Kaczynska herself, nor little Joanna. Irena's Jewish identity apparently did not become known, and she was buried together with the other murdered woman in the local cemetery in a grave, which bore a cross. ... Zdzisław took Joasia and brought her to Irena's sister Alicja and her husband, Mieczysław Dorthheimer, who were hiding with false papers in Tarnów. Zdzisław himself joined the underground and managed a factory in Radom, where he hid Jews and escaped POW's under the floor of a warehouse. He arranged a job for Mieczysław Dorthheimer in Suchedniów [Suchedniów] after the ghetto in Tarnow was liquidated. Joasia lived with Alicja and Mieczysław in Suchedniów until they were arrested. In January 1944 Joasia was brought to the Holy Name of Jesus convent in Suchedniów. There are different versions about the circumstances of her arrival. The nuns said that it was a German [officer, who had been bribed] who brought her along with a small suitcase. A document in the convent's archive states that she was brought by a woman. The Mother Superior of the convent was Sister Serafia (Adela Rosolinska [Rosolińska]). She chose one of the nuns, Sister Kornelia Jankowska, to care for Joanna. The sisters knew that the child was Jewish, and while there were 79 other children living in the convent's orphanage, Joanna—probably the only Jewish child—was cared for separately, living with Sister Kornelia in her quarters. Everyone loved Joanna at the convent—she was a pretty and intelligent child. She survived until the end of the war

<sup>567</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 797.

and was collected from the convent in 1945 by an acquaintance of her father's. [Joanna's father survived the war, as did her aunt and uncle, who adopted her after the war.]<sup>568</sup>

Assistance was often unorganized and random. Krystyna Kalata-Olejnuk recalls how, in April 1943, as a four-year-old child fleeing from the ghetto, she was plucked off the streets of Warsaw and whisked to safety by a nun, a stranger she met entirely by chance. She was taken to a home for orphans in Ignaców, near Mińsk Mazowiecki, run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, where a number of Jews, both children and adults, were sheltered.

I was born in Warsaw, but my autobiography actually begins the moment I stepped out of a sewer canal onto the Aryan side during the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. Sister Julia Sosnowska, no longer alive today, a nun from a nearby order on Nowolipie Street, was passing by near the canal [sewer]. She spotted a little girl with dark hair and helped her get out of the sewer. And that, indeed, was me. She decided to help and traveled with me to the children's home in Ignaców near Mińsk Mazowiecki. In precisely this home, where I was being hidden, I stayed until the end of the war. I supposedly had a small slip of paper with the name: Krystyna Olejnik, age 4. I stayed there until October 1945.<sup>569</sup>

Sister Julia Sosnowska, the nun who rescued Krystyna Kalata-Olejnuk, was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile.

In April 1943, Julia Sosnowska, a nun, noticed a young child in a tattered and torn dress crawling out of the sewer near the border of the Warsaw ghetto. Shocked by the spectacle, Julia picked up the girl, who was in a state of near exhaustion, and, guided by Christian love, took her back to her room in the house that she shared with other nuns. Julia learned that the foundling had tried to escape from the ghetto, but being too weak to stand had only managed to crawl as far as the sewer opening. Julia washed the girl, fed her, and looked after her devotedly until October 1943, when she placed her in an educational establishment in Ignacow [Ignaców], near Minsk [Mińsk] Mazowiecki, in the Warsaw district. The little girl, registered as Krystyna Olejnik in the Aryan papers that Sister Julia obtained for her, remained in the institution until the area was liberated. After the war, she was officially adopted by a Polish family and stayed on in Poland under the name of Krystyna Kalata.<sup>570</sup>

Another Jewish girl who made her way to Ignaców from the Warsaw ghetto was Ida England, then 15 years old, who assumed the name of Irena Kisielewska. As an adult, now Irena Majchrzak, she had fond memories remembered of Sister Irena, who took care of her attentively, recalling, "I felt her love."<sup>571</sup>

<sup>568</sup> Kornelia Jankowska, RD. See also Zdzisław Przygoda, *The Way to Freedom* (Toronto: Lugal, 1995), 62, 65, 88; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 2nd ed., 125–27; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota*, 3rd ed., 137.

<sup>569</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 280.

<sup>570</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 741.

<sup>571</sup> See her testimony, "W dziadku moje korzenie," in Turski, *Losy żydowskie*, vol. 3, 11.

Three Jewish teenagers from the Mińsk Mazowiecki area were also sheltered at the convent of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Ignaców: Fryda (Frida) or Franciszka (Frania) Szpigner (later Aronson or Aharonson), Irena Kuper (later Irit Romano), and Miriam Fiszman (later Miriam Saadia).<sup>572</sup> Fryda Szpigner states that there were nine Jewish girls in total that she was aware of, as well as an elderly Jewish woman and a Gypsy girl.

Sister Marianna Reszko (Sister Marcjanna), the superior, and Sister Janina Mistera (Sister Joanna) were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles, while other nuns whose kindness the orphans also remembered were not so honoured. All fourteen nuns serving at this institution—among them Sisters Kazimiera Krajewska, Janina Popławska, Irena Szpak, and Jadwiga Wróblewska—were aware of the presence of Jewish children, as was the chaplain. Jewish girls with marked Semitic features had to be concealed when German authorities inspected the premises. This dangerous conspiracy also involved the entire lay staff at the orphanage, which housed some 150 children.

Jan Gawrych lived with his wife and their four children in a small house adjacent to the Wolka Czarninska [Wólka Czarnińska] estate near the town of Stanisławów [Stanisławów], which is near Minsk [Mińsk] Mazowiecki in the Warsaw district. ... Jan Gawrych worked there as a forester. ... In 1942, when a young girl named Fryda Szpringer [Szpigner, later Aronson] escaped from the ghetto in Minsk Mazowiecki, which was about to be liquidated, she went straight to the house of the Gawrychs, who did not hesitate to accept her unconditionally into their home. They treated her kindly, gave her help, and told anyone who asked about her identity that she was a relative. In September 1942, the Stanisławów ghetto was liquidated and its inhabitants were taken to the extermination camp in Treblinka. Three of them—Chaskiel Paper, Tirza Zylberberg, and Moshe Aronson—escaped from the transport and after wandering through fields and villages arrived at the home of Jan and Aleksandra Gawrych, who at great risk took them in too and gave them food and lodging. ... On March 8, 1943, after somebody informed on them, German policemen raided the Gawrych home. The Jews hiding there tried to escape, but except for Szpringer they were all shot to death. The Gawrych home was burned down, Jan was arrested and transferred to the Gestapo in Minsk Mazowiecki, where he was tortured and murdered. Szpringer managed to flee the massacre and after wandering through the neighboring villages found shelter in a convent in Ignacow [Ignaców], where she remained until the liberation of the area in the summer of 1944 [under the name of Frania Malinowska]. After the war she immigrated to Israel.<sup>573</sup>

<sup>572</sup> See also the testimony of Franciszka Aronson (Fryda/Frieda/Frania Szpigner, later Aronson), Irit Romano (Irena Kuper), and Miriam Sada in Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 171–77, 191–97; Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 114–20, 215–20, 226–27; Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 90, 90, 96, 151–52, 156, 161, 177. See also Irit R. [Romano] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1805), FVA; Testimony of Miriam Saadia, SFV, Interview code 5137.

<sup>573</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 230–31.

In August 1942, during the liquidation of the Minsk [Mińsk] Mazowiecki ghetto in the Warsaw district, three girls—Irena Romano [née Kuper], Frania Aronson [née Szpigner], and Miriam Sada—escaped. After wandering through the area, the three reached St. Anthony's Convent (Swietego [Świętego] Antoniego) in the nearby village of Ignacow [Ignaców], where they were welcomed by Marianna Reszko, the mother superior. Although she realized they were Jewish refugees, Reszko took them in and put them to work as kitchen hands and maids. Joanna Mistera, a nun who was also let in on the secret, looked after them devotedly and watched out for their safety, especially when Germans visited the convent. The three Jewish girls stayed in the convent until September 1944, when the area was liberated and after the war immigrated to Israel.<sup>574</sup>

As a 14-year-old girl, Franciszka (Frania) Aronson, from a village near Mińsk Mazowiecki, survived by wandering from village to village, including villages where she was known, begging for food before she arrived at the convent in Ignaców in February 1943. Irena Kuper (Irit Romano) was about twelve years old when she started to wander in the countryside near her hometown of Mińsk Mazowiecki, posing as a Polish orphan.

Everyone who moved to a village had to be registered with the village headman and provide proper documents. After the farmer who employed Irena learned from other villagers that Irena was Jewish, she promised to bring him a document attesting to her Christianity. She then approached an unidentified priest in Mińsk Mazowiecki. He issued her a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Irena Kowalczyk.

She returned to her native city and in her despair asked the priest for a birth certificate, based on the names of her supposedly Christian parents. After being unable to find the name in the church records, the priest evidently understood the situation and told the girl to come back the following day. When she returned, he gave her a birth certificate in the name of a girl born out of wedlock. The peasant took the document to the village headman and came home happy and cheerful. From that moment, he no longer considered Irit to be Jewish, but an illegitimate Catholic girl.<sup>575</sup>

Franciszka (Frania) recalled her arrival and stay at the Ignaców orphanage in the following account:

It was February, 1943. I was dressed in a blouse with short-sleeves and my legs were bare. Suddenly an older woman stopped me and asked where I was going. I told her that I was displaced and that I was looking for work.

"You're looking for work?" she asked. "Do you have some documentation?"

"No," I answered.

"If you don't have documents then no one will take you," she replied.

<sup>574</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 668.

<sup>575</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 96.

“But you know what? Do you see that church steeple? There are nuns there, and a convent and an orphanage also. Maybe they will take you in. When you get to the convent, say, ‘Praise the Lord,’ [Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus] and kiss the nun’s hand and ask her whatever you want.”

I went off the main road and went to the convent. When I went inside, it was just like the woman said.

The mother superior, Sister Marcjanna, came out. I said, “Praise the Lord.” She didn’t ask me much. She asked me my name, where I was from, how old I was, and what kind of work I wanted to do. She said she was sorry but that diner was already over, and there was only bread and milk left. She called the postulant, Regina, to take me to the kitchen and give me something to eat.

In the kitchen I was given bread and milk. I ate. Then I was taken to the bathroom, where I was washed and given clothes. They were not new clothes but they were clean, from one of the children, for there were 150 of them there. Regina asked me what job I wanted to do and if I liked children. I replied that I liked them, so Regina led me to the so-called “barn.” This was a separate building in which one group of children stayed.

The work was not hard—simply helping out with the children. One had to help them make their beds, wash their cups, lay the table, etc. For some time I helped the teacher nuns, and later I was transferred to working in the hen house. ...

Once, when I was still working with the children, I came down from the bedroom and saw that the courtyard was filled with German soldiers. Whenever I saw Germans I always felt that they were there for me. I continually thought that someone would betray me and that the Germans would take me away. In this “barn” slept Sister Bronislawka [Bronislawka], the nun in charge of education (she had a room next to mine), and two other workers besides me. When I heard this nun coming out of her room (one could not enter the room of a nun) I went up to her and said: “Sister, what should I do?”

At the time I still didn’t have my work permit but only a piece of paper showing that I had registered at the police station. This police registration always worried me, for I feared that someone would try to verify the false information that I had given. I always felt that something bad could happen around the corner. At the time, there was a round-up of Jews hiding in the woods.

So I asked Sister Bronislawka what I should do. The sister replied that she would go to the big house, to the mother superior, because she didn’t know what to do. She opened the door.

“Halt! Who is there?”

Sister Bronislawka came from the German border and spoke the language well; so she answered in German:

“A group of children live here, along with me and three helpers—two grown-up and a young one.”

The Germans demanded documents, but when the sister said that I still didn’t have any, they had me summoned. When I came into the room they said that they had to take me to the big house to make sure that I hadn’t come to the convent just now at the time of the round-up of the Jews. Then I showed them my police registration and Sister Bronislawka translated it, the result being that they said I didn’t have to go with them. It was said that the Germans caught a lot of Jews in the forest that day.

The following day Sister Bronislawa came to me and stated that I had to go to Minsk [Mińsk] Mazowiecki to get myself a work permit.

"How can I get a permit?" I asked. "I don't even have a birth certificate!"

"I will take care of everything at the office," she replied.

Everyone who applied for a work permit got it after two weeks. With me it took three months. When I finally received it, I felt relieved. I stayed with the nuns until the liberation in 1944.

Throughout the entire time I was in the convent I was considered Polish.

The sisters never asked about anything. Even Sister Joanna, though we were such good friends. ... The sisters did not know that I was a Jewess. They could only suspect it. In the convent, however, there was an old priest, who, every time I went to confession, always mentioned something about Jews.

Obviously, since I was in a convent, I went to confession. This priest was served by Jozka Mankowska [Józka Mańkowska], and when she went to visit her family, I took her place. I brought him food and cleaned his room. One day the priest asked me why I wasn't writing a diary.

"Why should I write a diary?" I asked him.

"Because your life is more interesting than other peoples," the priest replied.

I think that he knew who I really was.

In the convent all the children belonged to the "Association of the Children of Mary," and every Sunday after dinner we had a meeting with this priest, who taught us and explained certain religious matters. At every one of these talks he would add something about Jews. Not against Jews, but he always put in a word on the subject. He would say that it was a great sin for someone not to confess to which religion he belongs and to accept holy communion without being baptized. We sat and listened. Irka [Kuper] was there too.... After that lesson we both came to the conclusion that we were committing a sacrilege because both of us were Jews.... It was, in truth, this Irka who took me to the woods and told me that she was committing a sin because she was Jewish.

How could she not be afraid to tell me about it? After all, if she had told someone else.... Irka told me that she sensed that I was Jewish also, and that is why she told me about herself.

I remember one more incident. The day I came to the convent, Sister Bronislawa sent me to get coffee for breakfast. Outside I met a teacher I knew from Wolka Czerniejowska [actually, Wólka Czarnińska], Irena Cudna, who knew me and my parents very well. I pretended not to see her. Through the entire time of my stay in the convent, she saw me everyday; despite this, she did not tell anyone about me to the end of the war. Only after the liberation did she tell her family that Szpigner's daughter had been staying at the convent. ...

As far as I know there were ten Jewesses living at Ignacow [Ignaców]. In my group there was a little girl, perhaps four-years-old, who did not know who she was.

She was called Marysia. I remember a game she played one day with the children. She placed all the chairs in a row and sat the children down, after which she crawled under a chair. When I asked her why she wasn't sitting on the chair but hiding underneath it, she replied: "Quiet, Miss Frania! If the Germans catch me, I'm dead!"

When I asked her why she said that and from where she came, the girl told me her story. She told me that she was once walking down a street in Warsaw with her aunt and



when they came to the doorway of her building, the aunt told her to remain on the street and if a policeman asked her any questions she was to say that she knew nothing. Marysia wound up in the Boduen [Baudouin] house [for children, at which the Sisters of Charity worked], and then Ignacow. I told her not to tell anyone what she had told me, but this was a child. ... She always hid under the chair, so that the Germans would not kill her. ...

During the war one of the convent buildings, the “barn,” burned down. The Germans stationed in nearby Janowa [Janów] proposed that the nuns use one of their barracks. The children were without a roof over their heads, so the nuns transported them to Janowa. Marysia did not go, however, but was placed in the “big” house. She was too Jewish-looking for the nuns to allow her to live among the Germans.

Aside from various inspections, the Germans would come to Ignacow for their walks, while the children cuddled next to the nuns for they needed a mother, and they didn’t have any. ... One day a German officer came to Ignacow for a walk with his wife. Marysia was holding onto Sister Bronislawa. Then that German woman—I was standing nearby—pointed to Marysia and said to Sister Bronislawa: “That girl looks Jewish!”

“We have absolutely no Jewish girls here!” the sister replied categorically. “We know where each child comes from.”

She was lying, of course, for there was no way for her to know from where each child came.

In any case, Marysia was kept hidden a lot, for she looked very Jewish.

Apparently, so was another girl, the slightly older Marysia Kuczynska [Kuczyńska], who couldn’t go to school with the rest of the children because she also looked Semitic. The nuns brought over a teacher to the convent to teach Marysia.

In the convent there were fourteen nuns, the old priest, 150 children and 50 other people, among whom were farm-hands and so-called “ladies”—women who were hiding. When I went to work in the sewing room, I moved to the bedroom of these ladies. Among them was an older woman named Maria Kowalska, who when she entered the chapel seemed to speak to God Himself, she was so religious.

After the liberation I joined the army and worked in the army hospital in Lublin. One day a doctor, a Jew, asked me to accompany his aunt from Szojadel [?]. You can imagine my surprise when I saw that the aunt of my doctor was the lady from Ignacow, Maria Kowalska, the woman with whom I had slept in one room! When we finally reached Lublin, Maria said to me: “Frania, let us go to church to say a prayer in thanks for our successful journey.”

I found this very funny, for she already knew that I was a Jew and that I knew she was a Jew, too, and yet. ... I’m laughing at Maria now, but I myself had in the convent a praying-desk by the main altar, and every free moment I would sit in the chapel and pray.

I came from a very religious Jewish family. Despite that, I believed in Jesus Christ. Because, firstly, a young person is very susceptible. Secondly, being in a convent will make a believer out of anyone! To be in those surroundings, a part of that life, of that wonderful life. The nuns lived so nicely! It was a peaceful life.

Materially? The war was on and not much was expected. But everyone had enough.

I valued life in the convent above all because I knew how I had lived before. I knew that I lived well here, that I got everything I needed. I did not get money, but I didn’t need it. I had enough to eat, a clean bed and a kind word—everything I needed at the time, everything that a person could need. ...

In the convent I was very religious. I began to believe in Christ when that old woman on the road pointed the convent out to me and had me go there.

I went off the road then, knelt and prayed to Christ to help me. That was the first time I prayed to Christ. I promised Him that if they accepted me in the convent and I survived the war, that would mean that he was the real God and I would never leave Him. I did not keep my word, but through the entire time I was in the convent I prayed, went to confession, took holy communion—I did everything, believing in it! I believed in it!

After the war, I couldn't decide whether to be baptized and change my faith, for I was brought up in the Jewish faith and all the people close to me were dead because they were Jewish. When I was older, I thought differently.<sup>576</sup>

One of the most remarkable rescue feats in all of German-occupied Europe was pulled off by the large network of employees of the Warsaw Social Welfare Department. With the cooperation of various Catholic institutions, they were able to rescue hundreds of Jewish children. Their efforts are all the more praiseworthy because, unlike rescue efforts in Western Europe, any assistance at all, given to a Jew in German-occupied Poland, was punishable by death. An integral part of this operation was the Father Baudouin Home for infant foundlings (Dom Małych Dzieci im. ks. Gabriela Piotra Baudouina), popularly known as the Father Boduen Home, located at 75 Nowogrodzka Street. The institution was founded by the French missionary priest Gabriel Baudouin in 1736.

The Father Baudouin Home played a significant role in providing shelter to Jewish children during the Second World War. As many as 200 Jewish children are believed to have passed through the home,<sup>577</sup> making this the largest single rescue conspiracy in occupied Poland. The Father Baudouin Home was one of a number of institutions in Warsaw maintained by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego à Paulo), commonly known as *szarytki* from the order's original French name, Les Filles de la Charité, where help was extended to Jews.<sup>578</sup> Many Jewish children stayed at the Father Baudouin Home temporarily before being placed with Pol-

<sup>576</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 171–77.

<sup>577</sup> The greatest influx of children was just before the final liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto in April 1943. In the first three months of that year, 57 Jewish girls and 66 boys were brought to the Father Baudouin Home. See Barbara Pamrów, "Działalność Domu Małych Dzieci im. ks. Gabriela Baudouina oraz dyrektor Marii Prokopowicz-Wierzbowskiej w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 95–121; Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 52.

<sup>578</sup> On the rescue activities of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, see Jadwiga Kisielewska, "Heroiczne zaangażowanie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego a Paulo prowincji warszawskiej w dzieło ratowania ludności żydowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 78–85; Anna Zechenter, "Szarytki otworzyły drzwi Żydom," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 12 (December 2017): 95–105.

ish families or transferred to other institutions, usually convents, including the Sisters of Charity's affiliated children's homes in Klarysew and Góra Kalwaria, outside Warsaw. Children whose stays at the Father Baudouin Home were brief did not get registered, so it is impossible to account for all of the Jewish children that were assisted there. The lay director of the Home, Dr. Maria Prokopowicz-Wierzbowska, oversaw a staff of more than 200 persons, including 35 nuns. Dr. Prokopowicz-Wierzbowska was recognized by Yad Vashem, as was Władysław Marynowska, the institution's guardian.

The Father Baudouin Home was under the jurisdiction of Warsaw's Department of Social Welfare and was therefore subject to strict control by the German authorities. The tacit cooperation of the personnel—all of whom were aware of the presence of a large number of Jewish children and several adult Jews<sup>579</sup>—was indispensable for the success of the operation. At least one Polish policeman was involved in the rescue.<sup>580</sup> Despite periodic raids by the Gestapo, not one Jewish child fell into the hands of the Germans. (Moreover, the Home was hit by bombs from both the Germans and Soviets.) Every child's acceptance required documents that certified birth, health and social background. The decision to accept Jewish children—whose identities had to be hidden from the German authorities—was made with the knowledge and full approval of Jan Dobraczyński, director of the Protective Care Section of the Department of Social Welfare. Dobraczyński, a writer and prewar National Democratic activist, has also been awarded by Yad Vashem. He used his contacts with Catholic religious orders to place Jewish children in convents and orphanages. His personal signature on a referral was the coded signal indicating that a Jewish child was involved. Priests from parishes in Warsaw as well as distant parishes such as those in Lwów were enlisted to provide false birth and baptismal certificates for the Jewish children.

A large and well-coordinated group of employees at the Social Welfare Department were another critical part of the operation. Among them were Irena Schultz (also recognized by Yad Vashem) and the nurse Helena Szeszko, both of whom had passes to the Warsaw ghetto and secretly took children out of there. The planned drop-off of a child was usually announced by telephone in a coded format that included information about the child's appearance and the time of its

<sup>579</sup> One of the Jews employed at the institution was 16-year-old Hania Festentsztat, who worked as a nurse. See Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 194.

<sup>580</sup> A member of the Jewish underground described how a Polish policeman worked with the social workers and staff in conveying Jewish children to the Father Baudouin Home, where they were accepted as "Aryan" foundlings. See Adina Blady-Szwajger, *I więcej nic nie pamiętam*, 2nd expanded ed. (Warsaw: Volumen, 1994), 109, translated as *I Remember Nothing More: The Warsaw Children's Hospital and the Jewish Resistance* (London: Collins-Havril, 1990).

arrival. Some of the Jewish children were brought to the Father Baudouin Home by their parents or by their Polish guardians who were fearful or unable to care for them any longer; others were brought by underground activists or employees of the Social Welfare Department. The chaplain, Rev. Piotr Tomaszewski, also brought children to the institution. (Two of Rev. Tomaszewski's sisters, Stanisława and Zofia, were Sisters of Charity who served in the Father Baudouin Home.) Lena Küchler, a member of the Jewish underground, claims to have smuggled several children out of the Warsaw ghetto, some with the assistance of a Polish Red Cross nurse named Sieradzka—likely, the aforementioned Helena Szeszko, and placed them in the care of a priest at the Father Baudouin Home.<sup>581</sup> Newly arrived children were hidden among those already there, fed and cared for. They often required medical attention. Children with a “bad appearance” had to be transferred out of the Home as soon as possible. They were placed with foster families, employees of the Social Welfare Department, or institutions run by religious orders.

Employees of the Social Welfare Department who were involved in this network included the legendary Irena Sendler, Jadwiga Piotrowska, Irena Schultz—all three of whom were awarded by Yad Vashem—Nonna Jastrzębska, Halina Kozłowska, Janina Barczak, Halina Szablak, and Izabella Kuczkowska-Trzaskalska. Many others collaborated in this rescue mission, including Stanisława Bussold, Jadwiga Sałek-Deneko, Wanda Drozdowska-Rogowicz, Zofia Patecka, Róża and Janina Zawadzka, Janina Grabowska, Jadwiga Bilwin, Maria Kukulska, M. Felińska, A. Adamski, Wincenty Ferster, Maria Krasnodebska, Stanisława Zybert, Lucyna Franciszkiewicz, Jadwiga Koszutska, Helena Małuszyńska, Helena Grobelna, Stanisław Papużyński, and Joanna Wald.<sup>582</sup>

<sup>581</sup> Lena Küchler-Silberman, *My Hundred Children* (New York: Laurel-Leaf/Dell, 1987), 22–23, 53, 223. This source, however, is not especially reliable, as Küchler claims that she dealt with Father Baudouin in person. Father Baudouin was an 18th century French missionary who founded the institution that bore his name.

<sup>582</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 41–62; Klara Jackl, “Father Boduen Children’s Home: A Gateway to Life,” June 10, 2012, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/father-boduen-childrens-home-gateway-life>; Klara Jackl, Jan Dobraczyński, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/i-singled-out-centres-exclusively-those-run-nuns-which-i-could-trust-story-jan-dobraczynski>; “Irena Sendler’s Network of Associates,” PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/o-sprawiedliwych/irena-sendlerowa/siec-wspolpracownikow-ireny-sendlerowej>. See also the following entries in *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 125–26 (Stanisława Bussold), 420 (Maria Kukulska and Anna Krzyżowska-Kukulska); vol. 5: *Poland*, Part 2, 612–13 (Jadwiga Piotrowska), 694 (Radeusz Sałek and Jadwiga Sałek-Deneko), 700 (Irena Schultz), 702 (Irena Sendler).

Among the former Jewish charges who attended the award ceremony in Warsaw in February 2007<sup>583</sup> were Krystyna Kalata, Teresa Lisiewska (née Sara), Katarzyna Meloch, Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz, Debora Stocker (née Rygier, then passing as Wanda Katarzyna Szymeczko), Barbara Schmid, Anna Szpanowska,<sup>584</sup> Michał Głowiński, Stan (Staś) Kol, and Aaron Seidenberg. Other former charges include: Ludwik Brylant (mentioned earlier); Mania Powązek's daughter;<sup>585</sup> Bruria (Bronia, Anusia) Taglicht;<sup>586</sup> Sabina Żelazko's son;<sup>587</sup> Bronisława Kotlińska's daughter;<sup>588</sup> Jakub Wilamowski's daughter;<sup>589</sup> Szmulik Kenigswein;<sup>590</sup> Piotr

<sup>583</sup> Anna Sierpińska, "Uroczystość nadania tytułu 'Sprawiedliwi Wśród Narodów Świata' ... w Domu Małych Dzieci im. Ks. G.P. Baudouina w Warszawie, 22 lutego 2007 r.," Internet: [https://dzieciholocaustu.org.pl/szab13.php?s=aktualnosci004\\_01.php](https://dzieciholocaustu.org.pl/szab13.php?s=aktualnosci004_01.php). Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz (b. 1939) was brought there temporarily to facilitate her placement with a Polish family. See Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 221. Leah Rygier gave birth to her daughter, Wanda Katarzyna Szymeczko (later Deborah Stocker), at the Father Baudouin Home in February 1943. The two remained there for some six to eight months. Afterwards, Wanda was sent to another orphanage on the outskirts of Warsaw. Towards the end of 1945, Wanda's parents picked her up from that orphanage. See "A Jewish child sits on a scale in a Catholic orphanage where she is hiding under a false name," Photograph no. 57917, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1143827>. Kołacińska-Gałazka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 316.

<sup>585</sup> Mania Powązek entrusted her four-year-old daughter to Antonina Baraniak. After a Gestapo raid on her home, during which Baraniak successfully concealed the child, she turned to Rev. Marceł Godlewski, who arranged for the child to be accepted at the Father Baudouin Home. After the war, the child was reclaimed by her father. See the testimony of Antonina Baraniak, November 23, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 5114.

<sup>586</sup> "The Topilsky family poses in their garden outside their home in Łódź," Photograph number 60747, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1151131>; Maria Taglicht, "Droga Heleno," *Wysokie Obcasy*: dodatek do *Gazety Wyborczej*, April 2, 2005. After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Michalina Taglicht and her five-year-old daughter, Bronia, were sheltered by the siblings Tadeusz and Jadwiga Sałek-Deneko. Bronia Taglicht was then taken in by the Sałeks' parents, and later placed at an unidentified orphanage in Radom.

<sup>587</sup> Testimony of Janina Prymowicz, JHI, record group 301, no. 5276. Both Sabina Żelazko and her child survived. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 694.

<sup>588</sup> Joanna Beata Michlic, "Daily Life of Polish Women, Dedicated Rescuers of Jews during and after the Second World War," in Simone Gigliotti, Jacob Golomb, and Caroline Steinberg Gould, eds., *Ethics, Art, and Representations of the Holocaust: Essays in Honor of Berel Lang* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 218; Joanna Michlic, "Stories of Rescue Activities in the Letters of Jewish Survivors about Christian Polish Rescuers, 1944–1949," in Glenn Dynner and François Guesnet, eds., *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 522–23.

<sup>589</sup> Testimony of Jakub Wilamowski, JHI, record group 301, no. 3949. After the war, the child was reclaimed by her father.

<sup>590</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 606.

Tober;<sup>591</sup> Elżbieta Palatyńska;<sup>592</sup> Barbara Guz;<sup>593</sup> Lucyna Trzonek (later Lange, b. 1934);<sup>594</sup> Rosa Rotenberg (later Rozensztroch, b. 1941), passing as Wanda Darlewska;<sup>595</sup> Teresa Lisiewska's brother, Mojżesz, passing as Wiktor;<sup>596</sup> Kazimierz Schmidt (whose rescue is described later on);<sup>597</sup> Jurek Brys;<sup>598</sup> Ryszard Nowiński;<sup>599</sup> and many others.

The rescue efforts of Dr. Prokopowicz-Wierzbowska, director of Father Baudouin Home, and some of her collaborators are described in the following accounts.

The Baudouin Home provided a sanctuary to more refugees ... During the war, its head, Maria Wierzbowska, took in many Jewish children. As Irena Sendler, who was responsible for the saving of children in Żegota, later testified, the Baudouin Home was one of a network of homes serving not only as an orphanage, but also as a transition point for children while Aryan papers were being created for them. Once the documents were ready, Wierzbowska would contact one of the neighboring monasteries, letting the nuns know it was time to come and collect the children. One of the monasteries was in Turkowice, next to Lublin,

<sup>591</sup> Meloch and Szostkiewicz, *Dzieci Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 3, 31.

<sup>592</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 435–36 (Wanda Kwiatkowska-Biernacka and Zofia Prager).

<sup>593</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 645; Maria Wierzbowska, RD (Barbara Guz-Schmid); Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 128, based on Leon Guz, *Targowa 64: Dziennik 27 I 1943–11 IX 1944* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1990), 135–43.

<sup>594</sup> Testimony of Halina Zalewska, SFV, Interview code 36458. Halina Zalewska (née Kowalska, then Trzonek) was Lucyna's mother, a Jewish woman who had married a Christian Pole before the war. She survived in Warsaw and vicinity with the help of numerous Poles.

<sup>595</sup> Diana Wang, *Los niños escondidos: Del Holocausto a Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Marea, 2004), 132, 167; Testimony of Rosa Rozensztroch, SFV, Interview code 36590.

<sup>596</sup> Teresa (Sara) and her brother, Mojżesz, were sheltered there from 1942. See Meloch and Szostkiewicz, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 4, 51–52. Teresa Lisiewska recalled, "On the 28th of June 1942, I arrived at Father Baudouin's Orphanage in Warsaw. My name was Sara and I was just a couple of weeks old. I was taken out of the ghetto—together with my brother Moses—by Walerian Janecki. At the orphanage I was given his family name, the name of Theresa and the birth date (7.06.1942). The date of my baptism was written in pencil, as was done for other Jewish orphans. Hence the expression 'pencil children'. My brother also received Aryan documents. I don't know how old he was, where he was being hidden or whether he survived the war. All trace of him was completely lost. After many years I found out that my Jewish parents knew Katarzyna Janecka—they all worked together at the hospital in Czysta Street. Maybe they asked her to care for me?" See Teresa Lisiewska, "My Jewish Parents, My Polish Parents," Internet: [https://moirodzice.org.pl/en\\_teresa\\_lisiewska.php](https://moirodzice.org.pl/en_teresa_lisiewska.php).

<sup>597</sup> Leokadia Schmidt, *Rescued from the Ashes: The Diary of Leokadia Schmidt, Survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oegstgeest, The Netherlands: Amsterdam Publishers, 2018), 282. The child was placed there with the assistance of Rev. Ludwik Świącki.

<sup>598</sup> Lucjan Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust in Poland: A Portrait Based on Jewish Community Records, 1944–1947* (Armonk, New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 103.

<sup>599</sup> Testimony of Richard Novinski, YVA, file O.3 V.T/6792 (Item 6326517).



where over 30 children from Baudouin found shelter and thus survived. Sendler wrote: “Upon their arrival at the Baudouin Home the children were often ill, starved, terrified, after horrible experiences. They found in the staff of the Home support and total care: medical, material and parental. For some of them, the Home was a place of temporary yet safe refuge; for some war orphans it became their own home; but to all it was salvation from the death to which the occupants had sentenced them.” Among the children taken in by Maria Wierzbowska and her staff were Michał Głowiński, Katarzyna Meloch-Jackl (both of whom were transferred to Turkowice), and Barbara Guz-Schmid, who survived there until the end of the war.<sup>600</sup>

During the occupation, Władysława [Władysława] Marynowska worked as a children’s nursemaid in an orphanage for abandoned children named after the priest Boduen [Baudouin]. Active in the underground and working in close cooperation with Irena Schultz, an underground activist who worked in the social affairs department of the city of Warsaw, Marynowska took advantage of her position in the orphanage to take in Jewish children in need of asylum under assumed identities, most of whom were sent from CENTOS children’s institution in the ghetto. Despite the constant danger to her life and the life of her young son, Marynowska did everything she could to safeguard the young children from the constant checks conducted by the Gestapo, who would periodically visit the orphanage and search for hidden Jewish children. Most of the charges left the orphanage after shelter was found for them with foster families in the city and outside it, in an operation that Marynowska participated in using her connections in the underground. The number of children who were saved thanks to Marynowska’s efforts is unknown, both because records were not kept and because the children who were saved left Poland after the war for localities all over the world.<sup>601</sup>

The arrival of children at the Father Baudouin Home followed various paths. Efforts to recreate these stories undertaken decades after the fact are often only successful in part. Anna Zielińska learned about her family’s story from a letter written by Jadwiga Wędrychowska, their rescuer, to her mother, Sabina Kalbarczyk. The letter also mentioned an unidentified infant who was delivered to the Father Baudouin Home.

You’ve asked me in one of your letters about the circumstances of your and your brother’s arrival in Warsaw. Well, a trade woman [tradeswoman] brought three children to Warsaw in 1943, I do not know whether the children were from Minsk [Mińsk] Mazowiecki or from its neighborhood. The identity cards the children had was a collective statement issued by a priest, but I do not remember the name of the priest’s parish. It was said that he had baptized the following children:

Kalbarczyk Sabina (you had to be 6 years old then)

Kalbarczyk Stanisław (I think he was 5)

[a boy of unknown name] (I think he was a year old)

This christening certificate I gave to a nun, who took you. You were placed in the Roman Catholic Charity House Res [Sacra] Miser—the old people home. The manager of

<sup>600</sup> Prokopowicz Family and Sobolewski Family, RD.

<sup>601</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 494.

this place asked me to take care of you. So, a Catholic nun (Szarytka [Sister of Charity]) brought you to me, just like that, you had only one dress. She told me that all the three children were given to a peasant to survive in hiding. Certainly the man received a lot of money for taking you, but apparently he was a bad man ... The trade woman felt pity for you and filled with compassion brought you to Warsaw. According to the nun the older boy found a place in an orphanage and the youngest child went to the Father's Boduen [Baudouin] orphanage as well. I think all the information the nun got directly from the trade woman. Your parents wanted to save you and therefore they gave you away under the peasant's care. They probably died in a camp or were shot.

Do you remember when we went together a few times to the trade woman's flat? She lived in Piwna Street, in the Old Town. But she never was home. I wrote her a few letters, saying that she shouldn't be afraid of me, because I didn't want to give you back but I just wanted to know where the boys were, because I wanted to give you a family. [The] Warsaw Uprising turned the Old Town into a heap of rubble and so the trade woman vanished from my sight. [Dear Sabina], the whole thing was very fishy—it was a terrible time of Gestapo's terror and everything could have cost our lives.<sup>602</sup>

Placing Jewish children in the Father Baudouin Home was not a straightforward matter, and it became increasingly more difficult. The German authorities clamped down and demanded records proving that the children were in fact orphans or foundlings, and not of Jewish origin. The following accounts regarding the aforementioned Barbara Guz-Schmid, who was later transferred to the orphanage of the Sisters Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś) in Turkowice, and Inka Grynszpan, illustrate some of the ruses that were employed.

At the end of 1942, a young couple, Leon and Alicja Guz, found themselves in a mixed Polish-Jewish group of laborers who worked in a metal plant near Minsk-Mazowiecki [Mińsk Mazowiecki]. Alicja was in an advanced state of pregnancy. As the due date neared, she and Leon were at their wits' end about where they could turn for help. But assistance arrived suddenly and unexpectedly. A Polish physician, Dr. Olgierd Mackiewicz, visited the factory regularly to treat sick workers. He noticed Alicja's condition but seemingly ignored her. Shortly before she was due to give birth, he gave her the address of a private maternity hospital in the city, telling her to go there when her contractions began. He said he had already arranged with the hospital's owner—who knew she was Jewish—that she would not have to pay. The lifeline that was suddenly thrown to them in their distress gave the couple new energy. When the time came, Alicja slipped out of the camp, reached the hospital, and gave birth to a daughter. It was not until after the war that the couple learned that Dr. Mackiewicz was working in the service of Żegota. In this case, the physician left the infant's future care in the hands of the parents. This occurred in December 1942 when the organization was still in its infancy, apparently not yet prepared to deal with

<sup>602</sup> Anna Zielinska-Mohit, "The Story of My Grandmother—Jadwiga Wydrychowska," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/story-my-grandmother-jadwiga-wydrychowska>.

such a complicated situation. Naturally, it was impossible for the baby to stay with the parents in the factory. Alicja sought the help of a Polish friend, Apolonia Przybojewska, who lived in Warsaw. In a plan of their joint devising, the infant was supposedly abandoned on Przybojewska's doorstep, and the next day she placed her in the Boduen [Baudouin] children's home.

Getting the infant admitted to this orphanage, which was located in the heart of Warsaw, was far from simple. The process involved an official request from the municipality's department of social welfare, and in the case of an abandoned child a police investigation of the circumstances in which the child had been acquired. Żegota personnel worked with doctors and nurses in the orphanage whom they knew could be relied on, in order to hide the Jewish origins of children they placed in the institution.<sup>603</sup>

Inka Grynspan was born in Warsaw on July 31, 1939, to Tadeusz and Halina (née Zylberbart). The next year, the family was incarcerated in the ghetto, where they stayed until March 1943, not long before the ghetto uprising. Before being taken to Umschlagplatz, Halina and Tadeusz managed to hide four-year-old Inka in a sewage pipe. There she was discovered by some workers employed by Walerian Sobolewski. The workers somehow knew to take the little girl to the home of Wanda Bruno-Niczowa, a Polish teacher and acquaintance of her parents, who was also hiding her cousins' child. When Walerian's wife Anastazja heard that a pretty little girl was being hidden there, she decided [to] try and adopt Inka, as she and her husband were childless. At Niczowa's home in Żoliborz, they finally met the blue-eyed, blonde-haired beautiful Inka. They were determined to look after her, but she was dressed in rags, she drew unwanted attention from onlookers as they travelled home by wagon. The Sobolewskis made an effort to speak loudly about their "cousins sending their daughter to the doctor" dressed in an embarrassing way. Luckily, they were not denounced and got home safely. After a while, a Russian neighbor told Anastazja that she suspected that Inka was Jewish. This was very dangerous, so the Sobolewskis asked Niczowa to formally register Inka (under the name of Joanna Kwiecińska) at the G. P. Baudouin Home for Infants in Warsaw. The papers obtained from the home allowed the Sobolewskis to keep up the pretense of having legally adopted a Polish child. In 1943, Walerian was arrested and incarcerated in Pawiak Prison, which was extremely stressful and frightening to his wife, but he survived and returned home. In 1944, the Sobolewskis moved to Milanówek with their adopted daughter and beloved dog, to live with their relatives. One day, a German officer came by the house, which terrified little Inka, but he ended up holding her and giving her a chocolate bar because the blonde child reminded him of his own. Inka grew up with the Sobolewskis until the 1960s. After the war, the family lived very comfortably, thanks to Walerian's business enterprise. However, after Walerian was arrested for alleged sabotage, and Anastazja suffered [a] fatal heart attack in 1958, someone revealed the truth to Inka about her adoption. This news set her searching for her blood relatives in advertisements and the Israeli embassy. When she discovered a family of cousins by the name of Prusak, Inka left Walerian and continued her life with her relatives.<sup>604</sup>

The sisters Wanda Wyrobek-Pawłowska and Wiktoria Nawrocka, from the Cwajgenhaft family, who had converted to the Evangelical faith in the interwar

<sup>603</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 128–29.

<sup>604</sup> Prokopowicz Family and Sobolewski Family, RD.

period, connected their associates from the children's section of the Warsaw Social Welfare Department with Jewish activists inside the ghetto. Jewish children were smuggled out of the ghetto through the court building on Leszno Street, turned over to Polish intermediaries, and placed with institutions and individuals on the Aryan side. Wanda placed one of the children, an infant, at the Father Baudouin Home. Wiktoria established contact with the Felician Sisters in Wawer, on the outskirts of Warsaw, who agreed to accept Jewish children. She and her colleagues smuggled seven children (four girls and three boys) out of the ghetto and entrusted them to the nuns.<sup>605</sup> There is more about the Felician Sisters convent in Wawer later on.

More than a dozen Jewish girls, several of whom have been identified by name, were lodged with the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul at their convent on Tamka Street in Warsaw. Two of them, Inka Szapiro and Halina Mirska, are mentioned elsewhere. Krystyna Sigalin, the 12-year-old daughter of Hanna Sigalin, was placed there for several months by their benefactor Sylwia Rzeczycka while they looked for private accommodations.<sup>606</sup> As one of a network of Poles who rescued a number of Jews, Rzeczycka stated that Catholic parishes were very accommodating in providing false birth certificates.<sup>607</sup> Rzeczycka was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile.<sup>608</sup>

St. Casimir's orphanage in Warsaw, also run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, took in Jewish children as well as some adults, whom they employed there.<sup>609</sup> Sister Weronika Hendzel, who was the director of the orphanage, was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2017 for her role in the rescue of Anita Zofia Bergerman Weinberg (b. 1935), who went by the names of Maciejewska and Biernacka.<sup>610</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Danuta Miron (b. 1931) was placed in the Our Lady of Loreto educational institution (Zakład Wychowawczy Najświętszej Maryi Panny Loretańskiej) of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent

<sup>605</sup> Testimony of Wanda Wyrobek-Pawlowska, SFV, Interview code 33226; Testimony of Wiktoria Nawrocka, SFV, Interview code 32869; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 907–8 (Wyrobek-Pawlowski).

<sup>606</sup> Testimony of Hanna Sigalin, JHI, record group 301, no. 5611.

<sup>607</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 171; Testimony of Sylwia Rzeczycka, JHI, record group 301, no. 5987.

<sup>608</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 689.

<sup>609</sup> Jadwiga Kisielewska, "Heroiczne zaangażowanie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego a Paulo prowincji warszawskiej w dzieło ratowania ludności żydowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 78–85, at p. 82.

<sup>610</sup> Weronika Hendzel, RD.

de Paul, located at 47 Czerniakowska Street in Warsaw, ostensibly as a Catholic child, by a Polish woman named Woźniak, to whom she had been entrusted by Danuta's mother, Maria Miron. Danuta went by the name of Danuta Woźniak at the time, and remained at the institution for about ten months.

After a raid by the Gestapo in November 1943, when a Jewish girl was seized, Danuta was removed from the institution as a cautionary measure. She then lived under the care of an elderly woman, and afterwards stayed with her maternal aunt, who was married to a Pole. Danuta survived the war and was reunited with her mother and younger brother, Jerzy, who was rescued by the Wróbel family. Her father perished.<sup>611</sup> About a dozen Jewish girls were sheltered at the Our Lady of Loreto institution.<sup>612</sup>

The following accounts, which describe the activities of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul at various institutions in Warsaw, are found in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*. Although some of these accounts claim the nuns did not know that their charges were Jewish, that impression is not very credible. The nuns would certainly have at least suspected the new arrivals were Jewish, if only because many of the children had no or little familiarity with Catholic practices.

Wacław [Wacław] and Helena Dutkiewicz lived in a large apartment building in Warsaw that belonged to the Warta insurance company, where Wacław Dutkiewicz worked. Dutkiewicz exploited his position as manager of the building to save Jews, particularly acquaintances, by hiding them in the offices of the insurance company, in the building's basement, in empty apartments, and sometimes even in his own apartment. Wacław's wife, who before the war had worked in a registry office, exploited her connections to obtain forged documents for the Jews they were hiding. Dutkiewicz also exploited his contacts with the Polish underground to save Jewish children, whom he transferred to the famous orphanage run by [named after] the priest Boduen [Father Baudouin Home]. Among their other activities, the Dutkiewiczes distributed money to needy Jews through their contacts with *Zegota* [Żegota]. As members of the Polish underground, the Dutkiewiczes considered saving Jews part of the fight against the common enemy. Among the many Jews who were helped by the Dutkiewiczes were Dr. Marian Zbarski, who fell in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, and his large family; an attorney named Kowalski and his family; Dr. Solowiejczyk [Sołowiejczyk] and his wife and cousin; Mr. Oldak, an attorney; and Dr. Pellier-Zagórski [Pellier-Zagórski]. Those who survived testified that the Dutkiewiczes were guided by

<sup>611</sup> Testimony of Danuta Sowa (Klimczuk-Miron), JHI, record group 301, no. 5841; Testimony of Maria Miron (Klimczuk), JHI, record group 301, no. 7215; Testimony of Maria (Klimczuk) Miron, YVA, file O.3/1393 (Item 3555892). On the rescue of Jerzy Miron, see *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 900–1.

<sup>612</sup> Jadwiga Kisielewska, "Heroiczne zaangażowanie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego a Paulo prowincji warszawskiej w dzieło ratowania ludności żydowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 78–85, at p. 83.

sincere humanitarian motives. In due course, most of the survivors moved to Britain, Sweden, and Israel.<sup>613</sup>

In 1938, soon after Eleonora Hopfenstand gave birth to her daughter, Juliana, Marianna Bronik [Kurkowska-Bronik] began working in her Warsaw home as a nursemaid, remaining there until the city's Jews were interned in the local ghetto. Bronik would often go into the ghetto, taking great risks, to bring Hopfenstand various foodstuffs. In July 1942, during the large-scale *Aktion* in the ghetto, Hopfenstand succeeded in smuggling Juliana out to the Aryan side of the city, where, as they had agreed in advance, Kurkowska-Bronik received her. From that day on, Kurkowska looked after Juliana as if she were her own daughter, telling anyone who asked that she was a relative whose parents had been deported to Germany. In Kurkowska's home, the child was given loving care, until one of the neighbors began to suspect that she was Jewish. It turned out afterwards that the neighbor was an agent of the Gestapo, who was later executed in her apartment by members of the Polish underground. But Kurkowska, whose experience had made her wary, preferred to place Juliana in an institution for children [on Czerniakowska Street<sup>614</sup>] run by nuns (Siostry Szarytki), without revealing that she was Jewish. The Jewish child remained there even after the children of the institution were deported with all the city's residents after the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, and it was there that her mother found her after the liberation in January 1945.<sup>615</sup>

When the Warsaw ghetto was sealed, Maria Kwiatkowska came to the aid of Jews interned in it. She smuggled foodstuffs and medications to them, and also helped some of her acquaintances to flee to the Aryan side of the city. In December 1942, when *Zegota* [Żegota] was established, Kwiatkowska became active in the organization. Without asking for anything in return, simply because she felt it was her moral duty to help Jews persecuted by a common enemy, Kwiatkowska became one of Żegota's most courageous and outstanding couriers. Risking her own life, Kwiatkowska helped Dr. Józef [Józef] Fuswerk and his wife, Maria née Adler (who perished in the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944), escape from the ghetto and housed them in her mother's apartment until she was able to find a permanent shelter for them. With Kwiatkowska's active assistance, Stefania Staszewska also fled the ghetto. Kwiatkowska obtained Aryan papers for her and employed her as a housekeeper in her home. After the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, Kwiatkowska transferred Staszewska to Zakopane, where she was liberated in January 1945. Kwiatkowska also saved Jewish children by taking them to Christian orphanages, in particular to the Father Boduen [Baudouin] children's home, where she was known and her activity was greatly valued. Kwiatkowska's apartment in the center of Warsaw was an address for Jews who fled from the ghetto and those seeking shelter on the Aryan side. Among the Jews whose lives were saved thanks to Kwiatkowska's help were Hipolit Bajera and Zygmunt Rukalski, who left Poland after the war.<sup>616</sup>

While still a youngster, Wanda Kwiatkowska [later Biernacka] was active in the PPS [Polish Socialist Party] in Warsaw. In 1940, Kwiatkowska met Jonas Benon in the home of a party activist who was married to a Jewish woman. In the summer of 1942, during the large-scale deportations from the Warsaw ghetto, Benon turned to Kwiatkowska, asking her to help

<sup>613</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 195.

<sup>614</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 286.

<sup>615</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 427–28.

<sup>616</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 435.



him and his family find a hiding place on the Aryan side of the city. Kwiatkowska did as requested and managed to get Aryan papers and accommodations in Warsaw for Jonas, his wife, Bronisława [Bronisława], and their two sons, nine-year-old Andrzej and two-year-old Stanisław [Stanisław]. After a while, Barbara Palatynska [Palatyńska], Bronisława's sister, also escaped with her two-year-old daughter, Elżbieta [Elżbieta]. Palatynska paid a Polish woman to look after her daughter while she herself moved in with her sister. Jonas, who found separate accommodations, worked to provide for the family. When, in the spring of 1943, neighbors became suspicious of the two sisters, they were forced to separate. Once again Kwiatkowska came to the rescue. She arranged for the Benons' older boy to move in with acquaintances, where he stayed until the end of the war, while Kwiatkowska arranged for Bronisława to move in with her cousin, Zofia Prager [née Michalak], who lived in Ozarów [Ożarów] Mazowiecki, near Warsaw. Although Prager realized that Bronisława was Jewish, she agreed to let her stay for about a year and a half, until January 1945, when the area was liberated by the Red Army, after which she was reunited with her family. Palatynska, who, thanks to her Aryan looks, managed to survive numerous hardships after leaving her sister, found work but was unable to find a long-term arrangement for her little girl. Kwiatkowska once again came to the rescue and with the help of a relative [Helena Michalak, Wanda's cousin<sup>617</sup>] who was a nun working in Father Boduen's [Baudouin] orphanage in Warsaw arranged for Elżbieta to be admitted to the orphanage, where she remained until the end of the war.<sup>618</sup>

Daniela Szykret was four years old in 1942, when a Polish acquaintance of her parents took her out of the Warsaw ghetto and handed her over to a family of Jewish refugees who were living outside the ghetto under false identities. Later, when someone informed on them to the authorities, the family that adopted Daniela was arrested and executed. Daniela was saved thanks to the intervention of Władysław [Władysław] and Stefania Lipski, who despite the danger to their lives testified that Daniela was not Jewish. They placed her, as a Christian, in an orphanage run by nuns (Siostry Szarytki), where she remained until the end of the war, after which she immigrated to Israel ... The Lipskis continued to save Jewish children and early in 1943 sheltered Lola Lew, a Jewish girl who had escaped from the ghetto, in their apartment and passed her off as a relative whose parents had been arrested by the Germans. Although Lola looked Jewish, Danuta, the Lipskis' daughter, would take walks with her in the street to cheer her up and dispel her feelings of loneliness. Lola remained in the Lipskis' home, although they received no payment from her, and all the members of the family, out of purely humanitarian feelings, treated her with great devotion. After they were expelled from the city following the Warsaw Uprising in late summer 1944, the Lipskis continued to look after the girl they were sheltering and did not part from her until their liberation in January 1945. After the war, Lola emigrated from Poland to France ...<sup>619</sup>

Shmuel Kenigswein, a well-known boxer, met Zygmunt Pietak [Piętak] when both were involved in the smuggling of food into the Warsaw ghetto. In the summer of 1942, during the large-scale deportation of the Jews of Warsaw to Treblinka, Kenigswein asked Pietak to help him escape together with his family and find a place to hide on the Aryan side of the city. Pietak immediately agreed to help his friend despite the great danger involved, and

<sup>617</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 288–89; Wanda Biernacka and Zofia Prager, RD.

<sup>618</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 435–36.

<sup>619</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 459.

demonstrating considerable resourcefulness smuggled Shmuel and Regina Kenigswein and their three young children [Mosze or Miecio, Sara or Stefcia, and Szmulik or Szulik] out of the ghetto. Pietak placed the youngest child [Szmulik or Szulik, b. 1942], still a baby, in the founding home run by Father Boduen [the home was named after Father Baudouin, who lived in the 18th century—Ed.] and hid the other four members of the family in a hiding place in an apartment which he had prepared for them ahead of time and where they hid until late 1943. Throughout that entire period, Pietak was the Jewish family's only contact with the outside world, visiting them frequently and bringing them provisions and other necessities. When the hiding place became too dangerous and it was feared that they would be discovered, Pietak moved the four fugitives to the care of Jan Zabinski [Żabiński], the manager of a zoo, who hid them in the zoo for two months. After that, the Kenigswein family hid with Feliks Cywinski [Cywiński], and until the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944, Pietak kept in constant touch with them, giving them moral support and caring for all their needs. Kenigswein participated in the Warsaw Uprising as a platoon commander and all five members of the Kenigswein family were saved.<sup>620</sup>

Genowefa and Jozef [Józef] Tomczyk lived in Wlochy [Włochy], near Warsaw, during the war. In the summer of 1942, they accepted Anna Jasinska [Jasińska] as a domestic worker after she was sent to them by an employment agency. Anna had managed to leave the Warsaw ghetto with her 15-month-old baby girl. When she was on the Aryan side of the city it occurred to her that she would not be able to find work if she was burdened with a child. She managed to place the child in an orphanage on Nowogrodzka Street [the Father Baudouin Home] and then began to look for work. She found the Tomczyks through the employment agency and soon afterwards began working for them. Almost immediately, the Tomczyks' neighbors accused them of hiding a Jew. Genowefa asked Anna about her origins and Anna answered that she was a Jew. She also offered to leave if the Tomczyks preferred her to do so. After consulting with her husband, Genowefa decided to let Anna stay. The neighbors were told that Anna was a prewar friend of the family. Jozef arranged a *Kennkarte* for Anna and the neighbors seemed satisfied with the Tomczyk's story. "The Tomczyks lived in difficult circumstances ... despite that, I received from them food, medicine, and even money for travel, since every Sunday I visited my daughter, who had been taken to a monastery [run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul] in Klarysew, near Warsaw. ... The food and medicine I brought saved my daughter's life and helped

<sup>620</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 606. According to Mieczysław (Miecio or Mosze) Kenigswein, later Moshe Tirosh, after their escape from the ghetto, the Kenigswein family stayed with the Rączek family for a few months before moving in with the Żabińskis. Later the family split up, with a shopkeeper agreeing to adopt Stefania (Stefcia or Sara). Mrs. Wala cared for Mieczysław until the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, when he was separated from her. The Polish underground placed Mieczysław in an orphanage, under the care of nuns. The orphanage was evacuated to a monastery near Kraków. There, Mieczysław enjoyed the protection of a priest, Fr. Andrzej. Since Mieczysław was circumcised, his Jewish origin was no secret. After the war, he was taken by a Polish family for a time before being transferred to an orphanage in Kraków, where he was reclaimed by his mother. The youngest of the three children, Stanisław (Szmulik), was also evacuated from Warsaw with other foundlings to the city of Częstochowa. See Vanessa Gera, "A Holocaust Survivor Remembers: Lost in the Rubble of Warsaw," Associated Press News, May 9, 2015. The remarkable story of the rescue of Jews at Warsaw's zoo has been described in Diane Ackerman's book, *The Zookeeper's Wife* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

many sick children in the monastery,” wrote Anna in her testimony to Yad Vashem. After the war, Anna brought her daughter to the Tomczyks and they stayed there until both families were able to organize their new lives.<sup>621</sup>

The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul ran or were on the staff—often as nurses—of hospitals throughout German-occupied Poland. Mention was already made of the hospital of the Transfiguration of Our Lord and the children’s hospital on Kopernik Street, both in Warsaw, where Jews were sheltered and given succor. Another such hospital, Szpital Wolski, was located in the Wola district of Warsaw. The entire staff, including some 30 nuns employed there, treated Jewish patients who were admitted clandestinely. Dr. Leon Manteuffel performed operations on Jews with Semitic-looking noses.<sup>622</sup> The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul also provided help to Jews at the hospitals in Biała Podlaska, Kielce, Opoczno, and Siedlce.<sup>623</sup>

Assistance was also provided to Jews at the Lutheran Hospital (Szpital Ewangelicki) on Karmelicka Street, adjacent to the wall surrounding the Warsaw ghetto. The hospital was staffed by a large contingent of Lutheran nuns with medical qualifications. Both the nuns and doctors extended help to Jews in need, both within and outside the hospital.<sup>624</sup> Irene Zoberman, who was employed there, passing as a Christian, recalled, “When some Jew came to the hospital for help, the nuns very often gave whatever they could. I supplied them with cotton, antiseptic, dressings and tablets.”<sup>625</sup>

<sup>621</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 820.

<sup>622</sup> Helena Anna Jurczak SM, “Siostry Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego à Paulo w szpitalu wolskim 1939–1945,” in Halina Geber and Halina Halweg, eds., *Szpital dobrej woli: Szpital Wolski w latach 1939–1945*, 2nd rev. ed. (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2004), 73–103; Agata Mirek, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at pp. 151–52.

<sup>623</sup> Agata Mirek, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 152.

<sup>624</sup> Stanisław Adamski et al., eds., *Jubileusz Parafii Ewangelicko-Augsburskiej Świętej Trójcy w Warszawie 1581–1781–1981* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Kościoła Metodystycznego w PRL, 1985); Testimony of Sister Joanna (Halina) Lossow in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 198.

<sup>625</sup> Goldenberg, *Before All Memory Is Lost*, 230. Irene Zoberman mistakenly refers to the religious ceremonies she attended in the hospital chapel as Catholic, whereas they were probably Lutheran. She was introduced to a Polish underground organization by Dr. Stefan Schmidt, who later fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, for which she distributed anti-German leaflets and took medicines for storage in abandoned apartments.

In her memoir, Leokadia Schmidt describes the assistance she and her husband Maniek (Józef), passing as Aleksander Przybysz, received from Rev. Edward Świącki, the prewar prefect of secondary schools in Warsaw. Rev. Świącki was himself wanted by the Gestapo for his connections with the Polish underground and was living under an assumed name. He encouraged his cousin, Maria Michalska, and her family (including Maria's husband Henryk Michalski, and Henryk's father, Antoni) to provide shelter for the fugitives from the Warsaw ghetto, arranged their false identity documents for them, and helped Maniek financially after he was apprehended by the Polish police and had to pay a large bribe for his release. Rev. Świącki placed the Schmidts' young son, Kazimierz (b. 1942), in the care of the Father Baudouin Home, where Rev. Świącki was the confessor of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul who worked at that institution. When the boy fell ill, Rev. Świącki and his cousin Maria cared for him. The Schmidts collected their son from the institution in March 1945.<sup>626</sup>

Vera Frister (b. 1937 in Lwów as Wera Hefter) described her stay at an orphanage (Zakład Wychowawczy Najświętszej Maryi Panny Loretańskiej) run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, located at 47 Czerniakowska Street, in Warsaw, where nine Jewish children were sheltered. Vera was placed there by her protector, Zofia Kuryłowicz, who passed her off as a relative, Janka Michalska. At the orphanage, she was cared for lovingly by Sister Teresa.

After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the Sisters and their charges were forced to leave the devastated city along with the rest of the population. Vera's mother, Zuzanna Ronen, for whom the Kuryłowiczes had arranged false identity papers as Maria Mokrzycka as well as employment, was also expelled from the city. After several days' journey in the countryside, marching from village to village with large numbers of evacuees, Vera's mother found her daughter. Vera spent the rest of the war hiding with her mother.<sup>627</sup>

Ilonka Fajnberg (Ilona Feinberg, later Róża Maria Górka, b. 1939) was one of several Jewish children sheltered by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul at St. Stanislaus the Bishop Educational Institution, a convent school located in the Warsaw suburb of Kamionek, in east bank Praga, where she went under the name of Marysia Kołakowska. Some Jewish adults, employed as staff, were also sheltered at that institution. When an inspection was announced, the

<sup>626</sup> Leokadia Schmidt, *Cudem przeżyliśmy czas zagłady* (Kraków and Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1983), 54, 160, 203–6, 218, 242–43, 256; Leokadia Schmidt, *Rescued from the Ashes: The Diary of Leokadia Schmidt, Survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oegstgeest, the Netherlands: Amsterdam Publishers, 2018), 174, 237, 241, 250, 282, 298, 316, 408.

<sup>627</sup> Vera Frister, *Strzępy pamięci* (Warsaw: Nowy Świat, 2015). See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 430.

Jewish charges were secluded in the typhus ward, thus avoiding contact with the Germans who came to inspect the premises.<sup>628</sup> The superior of the convent, Sister Maria Pietkiewicz, was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2004.

Sister Maria Pietkiewicz belonged to the order of “Sisters of Charity” (Szarytki) in Warsaw. In the 1930s she established the children’s convent at 365 Grochowski [Grochowska] Street, which housed a kindergarten, elementary school, and boarding school. She served as the institution’s Mother Superior until 1956. In 1942–1943, a girl named Roza Gorska [Róża Górka] was brought to the convent and was received by [Sister] Maria. The girl’s real name was Ilona Feinberg. Her mother, Blima Chaja Feinberg, had removed her from the ghetto and placed her in the custody of a Polish woman. However, the woman was afraid of the consequences of being discovered hiding a Jewish child and brought Ilona to the convent. Only [Sister] Maria knew that she was Jewish, a secret she kept until the day of her death. Roza recalls her with great love. In her testimony Roza notes that [Sister] Maria was an educator who loved children and that she was particularly attached to her and protected her, as she was an orphan and no one from her family ever visited her. Roza herself did not discover that she was Jewish until the 1980s. She wanted to show her gratitude for [Sister] Maria’s compassion in rescuing her by having her recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.<sup>629</sup>

In her account, “I Found My Roots,” Ilonka Fajnberg recalled:

In the spring of 1943 I found myself in the Sisters of Charity convent in Kamionek. From that time on, my guardian was the mother superior in this convent, Sister Maria Pietkiewicz, a woman of great heart, which she, however, tried not to show. She was stiff and unapproachable and aroused fear and respect, not only among the girls in her care.

At the convent I was the only fully orphaned child, left without even an extended family. It was very sad for me when families took the other children on Sundays and holidays, and I had to remain alone. When I grew up a bit, I complained about this to Mother Superior, and she became angry, “What do you mean you have no family; we’re your family!”

And that’s how it was left.<sup>630</sup>

Another Jewish charge at that institution was Sulamit Rosenberg (later Zofia Żukowska, b. 1936), who was placed there by Zygmunt Bielski, a Home Army leader, ostensibly as his orphaned niece, Zofia Wróblewska, with a genuine birth and baptismal certificate of that deceased girl. She remained at the school from the end of 1943 until she was reunited with her mother in the summer of 1945.

<sup>628</sup> Jadwiga Kisiełewska, “Heroiczne zaangażowanie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego a Paulo prowincji warszawskiej w dzieło ratowania ludności żydowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej,” *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 78–85, at p. 83.

<sup>629</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 604.

<sup>630</sup> Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 40.

Sulamit had nothing but praise for the nuns, whom she referred to as “splendid” (*wspaniałe, świetne*).<sup>631</sup>

The situation for children, especially Jewish children, was especially tragic after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Hena Kuczer, then 11 years old, passing as Krystyna Budnicka, recalls her experience. Poles rescued her from the ruins of the ghetto, and a Polish family took her in. Soon they too found themselves homeless and dispossessed.

At the transit camp in Pruszków, they turned to the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, who themselves were being evacuated with a group of children from their orphanage. Budnicka recalled, “They accepted me, although not even for a moment did they have any doubts about my origins, especially since I was unable to produce any documents.”<sup>632</sup>

My name is Krystyna Budnicka, my true family name is Kuczer, Hena Kuczer. I first used my Polish name when Mr. Budnicki, a Pole, who had been looking after me, handed me over to some nuns who ran an orphanage as we were leaving a burning Warsaw after the Uprising in October 1944. When the nuns asked my name I didn’t hesitate for long. Krystyna Budnicka, I said. And it stuck. ...

I couldn’t show my face in public because I looked very Semitic. The next day a female liaison came in the morning, put a bandage around my head and took me by tram to Dobra Street. And that’s how I found myself at the Budnickis’. Anka [her sister-in-law] was already there.

The Budnickis helped Jews; they were a middle-aged childless couple. I know that when the summer holidays started, Mrs. Budnicka went to a summer vacation spot with some Jewish children, somewhere in the Otwock area. When the Uprising broke out, she wasn’t in Dobra Street. Anka cooked there. I recall that the Poles captured a heating plant somewhere nearby and there was great joy, euphoria. During the Uprising we would go down with everybody else to the cellar, the shelter. At that time I didn’t hear a bad word directed at us. You could say that people felt a stronger solidarity with one another, all felt the same danger. We walked out of Warsaw on 6th September with the Budnickis. We crossed Warsaw, which was ablaze. I parted with Anka in Wola [a district of Warsaw]. First, there was a night stopover under the open sky, and in the morning selection for work duties.

Mr. Budnicki noticed some nuns, Grey Nuns [a mistranslation of “szarytki”— actually, Sisters of Charity] from Warsaw, from Ordynacka Street. He went up to the Mother Superior and told her that he had an orphan, that he wasn’t her father. She said, “You will come to get her after the war?” “Yes, yes, of course,” said Budnicki. When the nun saw me, she asked, “My child, what’s your name?” I said, “Krysia Budnicka.” I went with the children from the orphanage to the Pruszkow [Pruszków] transit camp. Later it turned out that out of eighteen children, six were Jewish. ...

<sup>631</sup> Testimony of Zofia Zukowska, SFV, Interview code 17145.

<sup>632</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 21.



At Pruszkow we spent only one night. I remember I was given an empty food can, with which I went to get soup. From Pruszkow the whole children's home was moved to Bobrowce near Mszczonow [Mszczonów]. The trek took several days. We were billeted in a school. A few of the girls were Jewish, but of course I knew nothing of that. We were all very poor, we had left Warsaw after the Uprising with nothing. The nuns scoured the villages and brought us bits of food and old clothes. I got a moth-eaten coat, I remember that was a luxury; the other children envied me. My looks were a big problem and the nuns protected me. When the other children went into the village to dig potatoes, the nuns kept me back. They told the other children that I had a wounded finger. I don't think I was very popular. Nobody taunted me for being Jewish, but the other children used to call me a creep because I was very obliging—probably because after the hell I'd been through I wanted to show my gratitude for being taken care of. We were in Bobrowce when the liberation came [the Russians entered Warsaw on January 17, 1945], and in February we were moved to Osuchow [Osuchów], to the abandoned palace of the Plater family. There I started going to school. I was 13. In May 1945 we were taken to a village called Szczaki Zlotoklos [Złotokłos], where we continued to go to school.

The nuns wanted to baptize me right away, in October 1944, but a priest said that he couldn't approve, that baptism could take place only in the event of a life-threatening emergency. "We shall wait, the war will end soon, she is a big girl and she must decide for herself," he said. I was baptized in Szczaki Zlotoklos. That was something I really wanted. I was very keen to fulfill all my religious duties conscientiously. Some men came to Szczaki Zlotoklos looking for Jewish children. The nuns brought them to me and I told them everything I remembered about my family. They said they would start looking, and that perhaps someone might have survived. I don't know what organization they can have been from. Six of us girls were Jewish. One was found by her father. I remember the tears. Another one was taken to Israel. She was very small, seven years old. First she was taken to the Jewish children's home, then to Cracow [Kraków], and today she lives in Israel. They tried to persuade me to go as well, but I didn't want to, and I was old enough that they could hardly have forced me. The same people came to the children's home several times, and they carried on coming when we were back in Warsaw, too. [The children's home returned to Warsaw in 1946, and was located on Czerniakowska Street.—Ed.] Once a man came to visit me claiming to be my cousin and telling me he was going to take me to Palestine. But I knew he was no relative of mine. I was very hurt that he tried to deceive me.

I stayed with the Grey Nuns [Sisters of Charity] for a very long time, up to my grammar school graduation, that is, until 1952.<sup>633</sup>

The aforementioned Irena Sendler, an employee of the Warsaw Department of Social Welfare who worked with Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews, recalled the obstacles she had to overcome in rescuing Jewish children. These children were often placed in Catholic convents.

<sup>633</sup> Testimony of Krystyna Budnicka, August 2003, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/krystyna-budnicka>.

Within the framework of our social duties, my friend Eva worked with the leaders of the Jewish community, who gave us the addresses of needy families, and I went there. Imagine: I went to homes of these people who had never seen me before, and announced that I could save their child. All of them asked the same question: could I guarantee that their son or daughter would survive? But there were no guarantees. I wasn't even sure of getting out of the Ghetto alive. Certain parents were suspicious, and refused to let their child go. I would go back the next day in the hope of convincing them, and sometimes their flat was in ruins. The Nazis set it on fire just for the pleasure of seeing Jews burn. But more often they gave me their child. The father, the mother, and the grandparents would be crying, and I would lead the little one away. What a tragedy, each time! The children, separated from their mothers, sobbed ceaselessly all along the road, and we were crying as well. To avoid alerting the Germans with their cries, our driver had found a solution: he brought a fierce dog in the ambulance. As the guards approached we made him walk and his barking covered the children's cries...

With some friends, I arranged for four social assistance centers, where they could stay as long as necessary—days, weeks, whole months—to overcome the shock into which the situation had plunged them. We even had to teach them how to laugh again. Only then could we place them. Sometimes in welcoming families, but more often in convents, with the complicity of Mothers Superior. No one ever refused to take a child from me. I placed them with Sister Niepokalanski [Niepokalanki—Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary], at the Visiting Sisters of Christ [mistranslated], and at the convent at Plody [Płudy, run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary]. We also had a house at 96 Lesno [Leszno] where we hid some of the mothers who had escaped from the Ghetto. It took a lot of money to sustain it all. Around 1942, the Germans started to control us more strictly, and we couldn't use social aid funds any more. Happily, in the autumn of that same year, Żegota [Żegota] was formed ... Żegota had access to funds supplied by the Polish government in exile in London.<sup>634</sup>

Sendler's story has been dramatized recently in a play, *Life in a Jar*, which was adapted for television as *The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler*. A PBS documentary film, *Irena Sendler, In the Name of Their Mother*, is based on Anna Mieszkowska's biography, *Irena Sendler: Mother of the Children of the Holocaust*.<sup>635</sup> Sendler belonged to a large network in Warsaw that saved hundreds of Jewish lives.<sup>636</sup>

<sup>634</sup> Halter, *Stories of Deliverance*, 9–11.

<sup>635</sup> Anna Mieszkowska, *Irena Sendler: Mother of the Children of the Holocaust*, (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2011), translation of *Matka dzieci Holocaustu: Historia Ireny Sendlerowej*, 2nd ed. (Warsaw: Muza, 2005). A revised edition of Mieszkowska's biography was published under the title *Prawdziwa historia Ireny Sendlerowej* (Warsaw: Marginesy, 2014). A more recent biography is Tilar J. Mazzeo's, *Irena's Children: The Extraordinary Story of the Woman Who Saved 2,500 Children from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster, 2016), which claims that Sendler's story was "buried for decades" (p. xi). In fact, the Żegota and Sendler stories were mentioned frequently in Polish publications and the popular media from the 1960s onward.

<sup>636</sup> Karolina Dzieciołowska, "Irena Sendler's Network of Associates," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/o-sprawiedliwych/irena-sendlerowa/siec-wspolpracownikow-ireny-sendlerowej>.

A successor to an earlier provisional committee, the clandestine Council for Aid to Jews (Rada Pomocy Żydom), known by its code name “Żegota,” was established on December 4, 1942. Part of the Polish Underground State, the Council was attached to the Delegate’s Office (Delegatura) of the Polish government in exile. It included representatives of Polish political parties and organizations operating in the underground—Catholics, Socialists, and Democrats—as well as members of Jewish organizations. Julian Grobelny (whose code name was “Trojan”), an activist in the Polish Socialist Party, was the Council’s chairman. Though Grobelny suffered from tuberculosis, he and his wife, Halina, were personally involved in rescuing a large number of Jews.

The Grobelnys gave most of their time and energy to this work, turning their small house in Cegłów, near Mińsk Mazowiecki, into a temporary shelter for Jewish children, until more permanent accommodations could be found. The Grobelnys were in close contact with Irena Sendler, head of the children’s section of Żegota. They also supplied Aryan papers, money and medicines to Jews who fled from the ghetto. In March 1944, the Gestapo arrested Grobelny, but during a furlough to receive medical care, he escaped.<sup>637</sup>

Grobelny personally helped rescue Chaja Estera Stein (later Teresa Tucholska-Körner, b. circa 1929), with the assistance of Rev. Franciszek Fijałkowski, the pastor of Cegłów. Rev. Fijałkowski provided Grobelny with false birth and baptismal certificates, among others for Chaja. Chaja was sheltered in the rectory until, passing as Teresa Tucholska, she could be more safely taken to Warsaw.<sup>638</sup>

Estera came from the village of Cegłów, not far from Warsaw, and in 1940, the year Estera turned thirteen, she was interned in the ghetto in Mrozy with her parents, Aron and Faiga, and her little sister, Jadzia [Jochewet]. In 1942 the Mrozy ghetto was liquidated. Aron, Faiga and Estera fled the roundups with their lives and huddled together that first night in an old garden shed on a farm outside the village. But little Jadzia had been left behind in the chaos alone, and her mother was frantic. Aron laid his hand on his wife’s shoulder and promised: he was returning to the ghetto. He would find her. For days the mother and daughter waited in the shadows. Then Faiga understood that Aron and Jadzia were never returning.

Faiga looked at her hungry and tired daughter. They couldn’t stay in a garden shed forever. In the darkness, Faiga crept for help to the only person in the village she could think might help them. Aron owned a factory, and his business was making soda water. Julian Grobelny owned one of the large farms in the village—perhaps even the farm where Estera and her mother were hiding. Julian and Aron were great friends, both with each other and with [Rev. Franciszek Fijałkowski] the local priest in the parish church. Estera’s

<sup>637</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 255–56.

<sup>638</sup> Edward Kopówka and Paweł Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki: Polacy z okolic Trebłinki ratujący Żydów* (Oxford and Treblinka: Drohiczyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe and Kuria Diecezjalna w Drohiczyń, 2011), 288, 305, Internet: <https://tesinblog.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/dam-im-imie-na-wieki.pdf>.

image of her father was always one of him and the priest walking together, her Orthodox Jewish father with his long beard and black gabardine coat and the priest in his swaying cassock. When Faiga knocked on the door of the parish house, the old priest gave her food and water and promised he would help her. But Faiga did not survive the return journey. She was captured and murdered. The priest sent urgent word to Julian that they would have to hurry if they were to save Estera.

Julian turned, as always, to Irena [Sendler], the director of Żegota's child welfare cell, who sent a courier to the priest with new identity papers. Estera's new Aryan name was now "Teresa Tucholska." [According to Estera's testimony, the birth and baptismal certificate of a deceased child was provided by Rev. Fijałkowski.] ... The priest walked Estera to the train station and showed her which compartment to enter, and when the Germans asked to see her papers, Estera remembered what to say perfectly.<sup>639</sup>

Somehow, Grobelny managed to find Estera and organized for her a transport by train. Although the train station was being occupied by the Germans, they let the little girl in. A prearranged person in one of the carriages began to wave to her, indicating a coach to get on. The man led her to the priest. Estera was never to see her parents or sister again. The priest ("or maybe Grobelny") transported Estera (now called Teresa) to Warsaw to Irena Sendler, where she stayed for a few days. Irena then left the girl in her friends' care: Zofia Wędrychowska and [her partner] Stanisław Papużyński. In the apartment where she lived, there were already four children of Stanisław Papużyński and additional three Jewish children in hiding. Teresa was an eighth child in the room. In February 1944 one of the Gestapo agents burst into the apartment located in Ochota (at 3 Mątwicka Street). Seeing that older boys of Papużyński and their friends were practicing shooting, the Gestapo officer shot a few times in their direction, wounding one of the boys, and retreated for back-up.

Zofia Wędrychowska, fearing a hasty return of the Gestapo police, stayed with the wounded boy and sent the rest of the children away. Teresa, being the eldest child in the group, led the kids to the friends on Krucza Street to the address she had received from Zofia. Soon the Gestapo returned to the apartment in Ochota, taking the wounded boy and the woman along with them. The boy died on the way, while Zofia was transported to the prison on Szucha [Avenue] for interrogation. On 26 April 1944 she was executed in Pawiak.

Irena Sendler put Teresa and other children in the holiday camp near Garwolin, where the girl stayed until winter 1945. After the Warsaw Uprising, Irena came back to Warsaw and took Teresa to her apartment. Teresa lived there for a few years together with her rescuer and her husband, Stefan Zgrzebski.<sup>640</sup>

Jadwiga Piotrowska also worked with Irena Sendler, devoting her life to the welfare of her Jewish charges and helping to place many Jewish children in convents. Jadwiga's daughter, Hana, and her sister, Wanda, supported these ef-

<sup>639</sup> Mazzeo, *Irena's Children*, 208–9.

<sup>640</sup> "Chaja Estera Stein (Teresa Tucholska-Körner): The First Child of Irena Sendler," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/chaja-estera-stein-teresa-tucholska-korner-first-child-irena-sendler>.

forts. Her charges often stayed at the home of her parents, Marian and Celina Ponikiewski.<sup>641</sup>

Jadwiga Piotrowska was a member of a devout Catholic family. During the occupation, Piotrowska lived with her parents in Warsaw and worked in the social services department at City Hall. Piotrowska, who faithfully assisted Jan Dobraczynski [Dobraczyński], who was responsible for street children in the same department, happened to find herself in the Warsaw ghetto in her professional capacity, where she witnessed the hardships of the Jewish children firsthand. In the framework of her work, Piotrowska made contact in the ghetto with people who cared for children, including Janusz Korczak, whom she considered, as she put it, “a saint, although he was not a Christian.” In time, Piotrowska joined Zegota [Żegota] and helped smuggle children out of the ghetto and save them on the Aryan side of the city. Piotrowska was one [of] Zegota’s most active members and personally cared for many Jews who came over to the Aryan side without any address or money. She provided them with places to hide and financial support. Her home served as a transit station for Jews, both adults and children, and they found respite there from the terrible anxiety and fear they endured. She helped prepare them for their life on the Aryan side of the city. She personally took a number of Jewish children to hide with Polish families and in convents. Among those she saved were Pola and Mieczysław [Mieczysław] Monar, their two children, their niece, Halina Złotnicka [Złotnicka, actually, Złotnik], Józsek Buschbaum, a youth who stayed in her home from 1943 to 1946 (who she considered adopting), the Rapaczynski [Rapaczyński] family, the girls Maria and Joanna Majerczyk, and others. Piotrowska considered the help she extended to Jews her moral duty and the saving of their lives both a patriotic and a religious calling.<sup>642</sup>

Another vital member of this network who worked closely with Catholic Church and lay institutions to rescue Jews was the journalist Irena Schultz. During the occupation, she worked in the Warsaw Social Welfare Department with Jan Dobraczyński, Irena Sendler and Jadwiga Piotrowska. One of her many missions involved obtaining a large number of blank birth and baptismal certificate forms from Rev. Władysław Pokiziak, a vicar at St. Nicholas parish in Lwów.

Irena Schultz worked already before the war in the Social Welfare Department of Warsaw. This Department also cared for poor Jews, providing ca. 3,000 of them with inexpensive meals, medicine, clothing and money. After the closing of the ghetto, 90% of Jews found themselves walled in it. Irena Sendler procured for herself and for Irena Schultz a work permit of the sanitary task group for fighting infectious diseases. This enabled them to enter the ghetto freely, beginning in January 1943. They made contact with the organization CENTOS, a relief organization for Jewish children, and with Ewa Rechtman. They also renewed old contacts with their charges and made new ones. The two, Irena Schultz especially, entered the ghetto sometimes two and three times daily, bringing with them food, clothing, medicine and money. They delivered ca. 1,000 vaccines against typhoid fever. Other workers of the sanitary task group secretly brought a further 6,000 vaccines. Irena specialized in getting Jewish children out of the ghetto, either by the underground

<sup>641</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 47.

<sup>642</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 611–12.

corridors of the court building on Leszno Street, or through the tram depot in Muranów. In the court building, the janitors received a small reward, “because of the risk.” Those children were placed with Polish families who received, if needed, a certain amount of money for their expenses from Żegota; others were placed in the Boduen [Baudouin] orphanage, directed by Dr. Maria Propokowicz-Wierzbowska and operated by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. To make it impossible to place in it Jewish children, Germans made a rule that the children could be placed there only with police approval and escort. Once, when a young Jewish mother wishing to go for work in Germany appeared with a newborn baby, the baby was presented at the police post as the child of the janitor, whose wife often left him to go to the country. And so the baby, called Feliks, was accepted in the orphanage. On another occasion, Irena Schultz extricated from a manhole a small Jewish girl who had a note pinned to her garment giving her age only. The girl was in such lamentable state that nobody would take her in and it was necessary to put her in the Boduen orphanage. The little girl had fair hair and blue eyes, so nobody suspected that she was Jewish. At the police station Irena was suspected of being an unnatural mother who brought her daughter to such a terrible state and tried in this way to get rid of her. Fortunately in that orphanage there were some people to whom the truth could be told. The orphanage advised the police that it found the mother of the girl on their own and so Irena was free of the suspicion of abusing her child. In spite of those difficulties, the [Father] Boduen orphanage accepted ca. 200 Jewish children, part of the several hundreds already there. A Blue policeman warned one of its doctors, Dr. Helena Słomczyńska, “You are accepting too many children, it is not good.” Irena saved many people especially from the medical world. In 1942 she went to Lwów and [through the intermediary of Professor Izydora Dąmbska made contact with and] obtained from priest [Władysław] Pokiziak [of St. Nicholas parish] many birth certificate forms, supposedly from a church [St. Mary Magdalene] that had burnt down. They served later as the basis to get “Kennkarten” (German identity cards). Irena Sendler said that “what was impossible for others, Irena Schultz always achieved with success.”<sup>643</sup>

*The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations* provides the following additional information:

Early in the occupation, [Irena] Schultz, together with Irena Sendler, began helping Jews in the ghetto by providing them with medicine, money, and clothing and was one of the first members of *Zegota* [Żegota]. Schultz’s job involved frequent visits to the ghetto, occasions she exploited to cooperate with CENTOS, a relief organization for Jewish children. On the eve of the ghetto’s liquidation, Schultz, as a member of *Zegota*, helped smuggle children out of the ghetto to the Aryan side of the city. Schultz became an expert in the field, so much so that her co-workers later testified that no one could smuggle children out of the ghetto as successfully as she. Schultz also let her home be used as a transit point and temporary shelter for Jewish fugitives until they found permanent shelter. At her own initiative, Schultz provided a number of Jewish intellectuals and doctors with forged documents and found them hiding places. Among those who owed her their lives were Helena Witwicka

<sup>643</sup> “Schultz, Irena,” Internet: <http://www.savingjews.org/righteous/sv.htm>. See also Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 478; Statements by Irena Sendler, Wincenty Fester, and Tadeusz Witwicki, JHI, record group 301, no. 6274.



and her daughter, Mira Pazynska [Pażyńska], and Aleksander Dubiński [Dubieński] and his sister, Gizela Gebert.<sup>644</sup>

Another participant in this rescue network was Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska (née Rusinek), who joined the Polish underground as a teenager. She personally placed Jewish children in convents and with Polish families.

Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska [Grodzka-Gużkowska] (née Rusinek) was 15 years old when she joined the Polish Underground against the Germans. In 1943, she met Jadwiga Piotrowska, later recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, and joined her in rescuing Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto. Magdalena collected the children, cared for them and escorted them to their places of refuge with Polish families or in convents. She displayed enormous dedication and love, although she was placing her own life at serious risk. Before bringing the children to their hiding places, she taught them Christian customs in an effort to disguise their Jewish identity.

One such rescue activity saw Magdalena save the life of a six-year-old Jewish boy called Adas [Adaś], who had been severely injured by local thugs. Magdalena took the boy for medical care at the hospital, and then moved him to a hiding place in a monastery. She also saved the life of five-year-old Włodzio [Włodzio or Włodzimierz] Berg. In spring 1943 his parents managed to smuggle him out of the ghetto and bring him to an elderly couple [Stefan and Maria Magenheim<sup>645</sup>]. Someone denounced the family, and a new place had to be found for the child. Magdalena brought him to a safe place. She brought him food every day, as well as colors with which to draw pictures. Eventually he was brought to a convent [of the Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary] in Otwock. Włodzio Berg, now called William Donat, survived the Holocaust and requested that Yad Vashem recognize his rescuer as Righteous Among the Nations.<sup>646</sup>

Maria Winnicka was part of a network of Poles in Warsaw who found hiding places for Jews. One of the many Jews she helped was Zygmunt Szczawiński, a high school teacher and author of mathematics textbooks. He eventually found shelter in a convent in the Wola district but perished during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. The order of nuns who took him in has not been established.<sup>647</sup>

Leon Weinstein described how he left his 18-month-old daughter, Natasha Leya (later Natalie Gold-Lumer, b. 1940), on the doorstep of a childless Christian

<sup>644</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 700.

<sup>645</sup> Magenheim Family, RD.

<sup>646</sup> "Ceremony Honoring Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska from Poland as Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem," YVA, Internet: <https://www.yadvashem.org/events/06-january-2009.html>.

<sup>647</sup> Maria Winnicka, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/i-wanted-show-my-solidarity-it-was-question-my-conscience-i-could-not-have-acted-differently-story>.

lawyer and his wife in Warsaw with a note saying the child's name was Natalia Jasińska, and that her mother, a widow, could no longer take care of her.

The sudden appearance of a child at this apartment would not have gone unnoticed by neighbours, while the absence of a compelling alibi and a birth and baptismal certificate would have clearly indicated that the child was Jewish. It is not surprising, therefore, that those frightened people delivered the foundling to a police station, as was required by law. Fortunately, a police officer at the station took the child to an unidentified convent.

After the war, Weinstein was able to recover the child and identify her by a distinctive birthmark. She had been transferred from one convent to another when the residents of Warsaw were evacuated after the uprising of 1944. She finally made her way back to a convent in Warsaw.<sup>648</sup>

During the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Berta Weissberger's protector, a Pole named Stefan Broda, persuaded her to enter into a Catholic marriage in order to better her chances of not being detected during the evacuation of Warsaw. Rev. Stanisław Olszewski performed the ceremony in the church of the Holy Redeemer, well aware that it was a fictitious marriage involving a Jewish woman and a Catholic Pole.

Mother and Stefan agreed that she and I would be better off in a large crowd, rather than among a relatively small group of people. In 1944, when the Nazis once again required all Poles to have their identification papers revalidated, neither Mother nor I had submitted our Kennkarten. ...

A young couple passed us on the street. Stefan knew the woman, and we stopped to speak with them. They told us that although there was no explicit ruling, there were rumors about that if neither husbands nor wives had taken part in the insurrection, being married would give the couple a better chance of remaining together. They were on their way to be married in Kościół Świętego Zbawiciela [Kościół Najświętszego Zbawiciela]—Church of the Holy Savior [Redeemer]—and they asked us if we would be their witnesses at the ceremony. The woman told Stefan that the priest of the church on nearby Plac Świętego Zbawiciela was coming to the rescue of distraught unmarried Polish couples. On numerous occasions, when suddenly in need of a hiding place, this church had provided me with a refuge. The priest was issuing marriage certificates to couples whose plans to be married had been thwarted by the outbreak of the insurrection. ...

We readily agreed, and as we accompanied them, Stefan and I exchanged some thoughts. "As a married couple," Stefan said, "they might send us to a labor camp rather than a concentration camp. We might be able to remain together. Without this type of document,

<sup>648</sup> Kurt Streeter, "A Holocaust Survivor Raised a Fist to Death," *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 2011; Testimony of Natalie Gold-Lumer, SFV, Interview code 8524; Natalie G. [Gold] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-317), FVA. Leon Weinstein survived with the assistance of the Imiołek family. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 283–84.

neither of us stands a good chance. If we stay together, I may be able to help your mother. So what do you say, Krysia, should we try?"

Should we try? Stefan had asked. I was overwhelmed by gratitude. I could not speak. I smiled and nodded my head in happy acquiescence. Ever since the A.K. [Armia Krajowa—Home Army] capitulated to the Nazis, I had not been able to shake the feeling that our efforts to survive, to outwit the Nazis, were doomed. Every other order to the defeated Poles included some reference to the Jews in their midst, who had been the instigators of this Polish calamity. Much of my energy was spent in combating my fears. It was churning up my insides and pulling me down. All of a sudden there was a glimpse of light.

I knew the priest, Father Stanisław [Olszewski]. On several occasions I had heard him celebrate mass. I was astounded by his humanity. In black garb without the elaborate vestments, addressing him as Father somehow seemed natural. He addressed us as "my children," and he questioned Stefan with regard to some of the events he knew about but had not witnessed. At first, upon hearing that neither of us had been a member of his parish and that at no time had there been a posting of the banns at any church, I feared that our request would be denied. Stefan was doing most of the talking, but while he did so, the priest's eyes, so it seemed to me, never left my face. He was a man in his sixties, tall and gaunt and slightly stooped. His eyes were gray, tired looking, and wise. He asked each of us a number of questions. I told him that I was Jewish and that my mother was alive. "So your mother knows that you are here. I am so glad that you have a mother, my child. There has been too much suffering. So much killing. I must not deny you. The Lord is full of compassion."

"I am so grateful," I whispered.

"I cannot enter your marriage in the registry, but I will issue a document of marriage. I pray that it will help you. But you must promise me," he put his hand on my head, "you must promise me, both of you, that when the war is over, and if you are sure that this is what you want to do, you will come back to this church with the certificate I will give you, and that you will enter into a marriage as prescribed by the Roman Catholic Church."

"Yes, I will, Father," I said.

"Thank you, Father," Stefan said. "The Lord willing, we will be back."

On a piece of paper we wrote down our respective names, places and dates of birth, and he names of our parents. The priest understood that all the information I gave him was false, but when I wanted to explain, he just waved his hand and said, "No, not now. Once the war is over, and you come back. It is better for me not to know."

We watched as he carefully filled in the blank spaces on an official-looking form. He signed the document and affixed the seal of the parish. "As far as the Nazis are concerned, and whatever German authority you will have to face, this document is legal. I know, you know, and the Lord knows that it is not. I will pray that it may save your lives."

When I looked around, I saw other people waiting to see the priest. He had given us a great deal of his time. I felt very grateful. I reached for his hand. I wanted to kiss it as was the custom, but he did not want that. "I am not a bishop," he said. The document stated that on October 3, 1944, Stefan Broda and Krystyna Zolkos [Zołkos] had entered into the holy state of matrimony, in accordance with the laws prescribed by the Roman Catholic Church.

It was not the third of October, but we were sure that the priest knew what he was doing. Both of us felt that we had been most fortunate to have met this wise and kind man.<sup>649</sup>

After the Warsaw Uprising was quelled (fighting lasted for 63 days, from August 1 to October 3, 1944), Catholic institutions including convents and orphanages were forced to evacuate the ruined city and its surrounding areas. At great risk, nuns spirited their young Jewish charges to shelters in other parts of the country. One such child was Necha Baranek, who was evacuated from a convent near Warsaw to Zakopane. After the war, Necha and four other Jewish children (two girls and two boys) were taken by the Jewish Committee and sent to an orphanage in France, where Necha eventually met up with her mother, who had also survived the war. Here is her testimony:

I was born July 7th, 1940, in Wierzbnik, Poland. My parents, Zion and Sala Baranek.

In 1942 just before Hitler liquidated all Jews from Wierzbnik, my parents gave me away to a Polish couple in Warsaw and I took the identity of Zosha Murofska [Zosia Murawska]. I was two years of age and spoke perfect Polish.

Two days after my parents gave me away, they were taken to a labour camp in Wierzbnik, called Tartak. From Tartak, my parents communicated with the Pole who kept their child. He was to keep them informed about her health and they in turn would pay him at regular intervals—as agreed upon. After a few months, my parents were transferred from Tartak to Myufka [Majówka] and they had no choice but to ask somebody in Tartak to communicate with the Pole on their behalf. My parents gave this person all the information and money to pay for me. When the Pole came, this person paid him and at that time asked him to take the son of Mortry Maslowicz—a little boy who was hidden in the Tartak Camp with him. The Pole agreed and took the little boy to his home. This, I believe, was a very important step in my life—an actual turning point. The only recollection of this part of my childhood, was a little boy walking back and forth, back and forth, and me sitting crossed-legged like an Indian, for days on end. The pole [sic] was arrested by the Germans and his wife, being in fear for her life, especially since she was hiding a Jewish boy, had no alternative and found us and took us to our new home—beside Warsaw. The Nuns were very good to us and tried to keep us alive with what little they had. I can remember the hours we spent on my knees in prayer, the Virgin Mary was taught to be our one and only Mother. I do not know the date, but I remember when again, I had to leave my home. The Germans made the Nuns evacuate their Home and we all had to get out within hours. Those who were healthy, had to walk the long journey to Zakopany [Zakopane]. Babies and the sick rode in buggies. It was winter and those who had no shoes had to walk barefoot in the snow. When we arrived in Zakopany it was Christmas and I will always remember the warmth and light of that very beautiful Christmas tree. My new home consisted of tables for beds, bread and milky soup once a day, and devoted prayers.

<sup>649</sup> Betty Lauer, *Hiding in Plain Sight: The Incredible True Story of a German-Jewish Teenager's Struggle to Survive in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, 2004), 306–9.

When the war ended, we were taken away from Zakopany, by a Jewish lady. There were five of us—three girls and two boys. It was a rainy night and I can remember being carried out to the horse and buggy that would take us to a new home. From the horse and buggy we went into trucks that had been waiting for us and it was here that I got my first taste of sugar—in cubes. I recall being very sick for quite a long time, and at this point, we arrived at our new home—a Jewish orphanage in Bellevue, in the outskirts of Paris, France.

My father died in Motthousen [Mauthausen]. My mother survived and in 1944 she began her long journey in search of her child.<sup>650</sup>

After being smuggled out of the Wierzbnik ghetto, Henryk Maslowicz (b. 1940), the son of the aforesaid Mortry Maslowicz, was placed in a convent in Kraków. He was subsequently taken by a woman who hid him in an attic above a candy store. After the war, he was seized by a Jewish social worker and sent to Palestine. He was reunited with his father eight years later, and settled in Ecuador.<sup>651</sup>

After leaving the Warsaw ghetto in the early part of 1943, Maria Kasman (née Brauner, b. 1881) was sheltered by several Polish families in Warsaw, among them her son-in-law, Jerzy Kreczmar, a Catholic; Jan Kott, who was a convert of Jewish origin (and himself was being sheltered by Poles<sup>652</sup>); and Adam and Wanda Henrych, who also sheltered several other Jews. While in hiding with the Henrychs, Maria met a Jewish woman by the name of Klajnman, who was being sheltered by their neighbours, Zygmunt Majewski and his wife. Maria was forced to leave Warsaw when the city was evacuated after the uprising of 1944.

She eventually took refuge for a short period in Podkowa Leśna with the family of her son-in-law. That family was sheltering another Jewish woman, a pianist from Lwów. Afterwards, Rev. Franciszek Kawiecki, the pastor of Brwinów and a relative of her son-in-law, took Maria under his care and placed her in the home of his sister, Zofia Librowska, where she remained until the liberation. Maria's grandson, Lolek, the son of her deceased son Salomon, was taken to an orphanage in Częstochowa by another priest. Both Maria and her grandson survived the war, as did her daughter-in-law, Felicja, the wife of Jerzy Kreczmar.<sup>653</sup>

According to another account, the Brwinów parish rectory was raided by the German police in 1943 on suspicion of harbouring Jews. Both Rev. Kawiecki

<sup>650</sup> Mark Schutzman, ed., *Wierzbnik-Starachowitz: A Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: Wierzbnik-Starachowitz Relief Society in Israel and Abroad, 1973), 51.

<sup>651</sup> "Henry Maslowicz," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, USHMM, Internet: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/id-card/henry-maslowicz>.

<sup>652</sup> Kott, *Still Alive*.

<sup>653</sup> Testimony of Maria Kasman, March 10, 1948, JHI, record group 301, no. 3334; Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 173.

and his vicar, Rev. Jan Górny, were detained, as was their housekeeper, Waleria Pokropek, who was severely beaten but did not reveal anything.<sup>654</sup>

The Janasz family, consisting of parents, two children and their nanny, made arrangements to be smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto and sheltered by the Cynka family on the outskirts of Warsaw. Their situation was disrupted by the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, when all of the residents were driven out of their homes. Walenty Cynka took Sara Janasz (later Leslie Silver, b. 1932) to a convent located near Łowicz. She was placed there under the name of Lucyna Janaszewska. Not familiar with the Catholic faith, Sara's cover was soon exposed. Nonetheless, the nuns agreed to keep her and treated her just the same as the other children under their care. Conditions were harsh, with food and clothing shortages affecting everyone. After the war, Sara was found by her nanny and reunited with her family.<sup>655</sup>

After leaving the Warsaw ghetto, Władysław Lubliner placed his daughter, Tamara (Tamar, b. 1935), in a suburban Bielany children's home, under the care of Maria Falska.<sup>656</sup> Tamara was transferred to a sanatorium (Instytut Higieny Psychiczej) in Zagórze, outside Warsaw, under the direction of Professor Kazimierz Dąbrowski. The children's section was staffed by several nuns. Sister Janina Molendzianka (Molenda) personally looked after Tamara, who had nothing but praise for the nuns.<sup>657</sup>

The nuns in question were Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus (Grey Ursulines), who had a convent in nearby Radość. When alerted to an imminent Gestapo inspection, the nuns took the Jewish children to the homes of trusted people.<sup>658</sup> Another Jewish charge was Joanna Neuding (later Podgórska, b. 1936), who stayed at the sanatorium for only a short period of time.

In the summer of 1942, during the large-scale deportation from the Warsaw ghetto, Janina Neuding, a widow, her six-year-old daughter, Joanna, and her mother-in-law, Anna Neuding, escaped from the ghetto. The three hurried to the home of Irena Chmieleńska [Chmieleńska], a friend of Janina's, who immediately took them in. A few days later, after Irena provided them with Aryan documents, Janina and her mother-in-law rented a room,

<sup>654</sup> Grzegorz Przybysz, "Ks. Franciszek Kawiecki: Wspomnienia," Internet: <http://zmigrodzki.pl/kawiecki/brwinow/>.

<sup>655</sup> Testimony of Leslie Silver, SFV, Interview code 15041.

<sup>656</sup> Maria Falska was recognized by Yad Vashem for her rescue efforts. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 212.

<sup>657</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 163, based on the testimony of Tamara Lubliner, YVA, file O.3/1307 (Item 3555390).

<sup>658</sup> Testimony of Eugenia Dąbrowska, SFV, Interview code 33030. Eugenia Dąbrowska was the wife of Kazimierz Dąbrowski, the director of the sanatorium.



while little Joanna was sent to Irena's parents, Maria and Ludwik Chmielenski [Chmieleński], who lived near Warsaw. The Chmielenskis, who were dentists, looked after her devotedly, despite the danger of discovery by patients who came to their clinic. A few months later, when Joanna's presence in the Chmielenskis' home began to arouse suspicion, she was transferred to a local boarding school [actually, the children's sanatorium in Zagórze]. In order to protect and help her, Irena worked as a volunteer in the boarding school where Joanna stayed until the area was liberated. Joanna later went to live with her mother and grandmother in Poland.<sup>659</sup>

According to Irena Chmieleńska, a Jewish boy also resided at the sanatorium.<sup>660</sup>

Two women, Maria Siwek and Jadwiga Urbańczyk—who are described as nuns but were probably tertiaries who did not take formal religious vows but lived in a manner similar to nuns—are credited with the rescue of six Jews in the village of Brzączowice, near Kraków. These two women, whose deeds must have been known to their priest confessor, were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles.

In the fall of 1943, two Jewish families, the Freunds and the Najers, six people in all, fled from the town of Mysłowice (Katowice County, Upper Silesia District) and went to the home of the Freund's [sic] housemaid in the hope of finding refuge with her, but she was not prepared to take them in because she said her neighbors were watching and it was too dangerous. They then turned to two nuns, Jadwiga Urbańczyk and Maria Siwek, who lived in Brzączowice [Brzączowice] (Kraków District). Kurt Freund knew them, as they used to come to buy produce in his vegetable store. At first the nuns were hesitant to take six Jews into their home because they were aware of the risk that involved, especially since a German officer and his family lived above their apartment. Finally, they agreed and emptied out a small bedroom for them. The nuns shared their food with the Jews they were hiding and did not ask for any payment, not even for rent, and of course nothing could compensate them for the risk they were taking. The nuns remarked, "God led you to us and He will protect us too." The Jews hid in the nuns' apartment until the liberation early in 1945, and survived.<sup>661</sup>

<sup>659</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 137. See also the testimonies of Janina Podgórska, SFV, Interview code 25561 and Janina Neuding, SFV, Interview code 25565. Janina Neuding expressed her gratitude to many other Poles who helped her but were not awarded by Yad Vashem: Wanda Ptaszyńska, Ludwik Goryński (of Jewish origin), Ewa Rybicka, Irena Słońska, Kazimierz Dąbrowski, Magdalena Bogucka, Maria Tarnowska, Zofia Derwisz, and Eugenia Stypułowska. Although she lived openly and was employed at various places in Warsaw, she did not experience any encounters with blackmailers.

<sup>660</sup> Testimony of Irena Chmielenska, SFV, Interview code 29543. Irena Chmieleńska's father and brother had ties with the National Democrats (Endeks). After the war, she worked in the pedagogical publication field which was dominated by Jewish communists at the management level.

<sup>661</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 627.

The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul provided assistance to Jews in various locations throughout Poland. Jadwiga Dudziec, who was immersed in the rescue of Jews in Wilno, placed two Jewish infants with the nuns in that city.<sup>662</sup> Two young men from Kraków, Lotek Spigel, or Spiegel (later Eliezer Shafir), and Yehiel Steiner found refuge at the nuns' convent in Kraków after escaping from the Płaszów concentration camp.

The two young men finally decided to escape in September 1943. As they snuck out of the camp in the dead of the night they heard dogs barking, and then gunshots; Lotek was hit in the arm. They managed to hide in a field, and then made their way to the home of Maria Platek, who had worked as a maid for the Spiegel family. Maria took them in and sent her husband to fetch Andzia [i.e., Anna Kaczorowska, who had worked for the Steiner family before the war]. After a long discussion, they decided that Yehiel and Lotek cannot stay in Platek's house, as Maria was anxious about her two small children. It was decided that Yehiel and Lotek should be taken to the house of Anna Madej, who had also worked as a maid for the Spiegel family. Anna and her husband Piotr welcomed the two young men, and Piotr secured for them work and shelter at the monastery in Szarytki, where he himself worked.

After a while, Yehiel and Lotek regained enough strength to be on their way. They decided to try to get to Slovakia, and from there—to Palestine. Their rescuers provided them with money and supplies for the journey, as well as false identity papers. After a long journey, Yehiel Steiner and Lotek Spigel (today Eliezer Shafir) arrived in Palestine.<sup>663</sup>

The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul took in Jews at their old age home in Kraków, the Helcel Institution, which was evacuated to Szczawnica, in southern Poland. Sister Bronisława Wilemska, the superior, and their chaplain, Rev. Albin Małysiak, later auxiliary bishop of Kraków, were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles. Rev. Małysiak recalled those events in an article he published in 1987.

In the spring of 1944, the Germans transferred to Szczawnica the well-known Helcel Institute, a home for the aged in Kraków ... I was the chaplain of that institute. Along with Sister Bronisława Wilemska, the superior, we sheltered among the residents of the institute two Jewish women and three Jewish men. Of course, it was necessary at the outset to obtain for them the so-called Kennkarte or identity documents. ...

All of the charges of the institute as well as the personnel [nuns and lay staff] knew that there were Jews hidden among us. It was impossible to conceal that fact, even though it was known what danger faced those who were responsible for sheltering Jews.

After the passage of weeks and months many of the residents of Szczawnica learned of the Jewish retirees. No one betrayed this to the Germans who were stationed in the immediate vicinity ...<sup>664</sup>

<sup>662</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 512.

<sup>663</sup> Anna Kaczorowska, RD.

<sup>664</sup> Albin Małysiak, "Zakład Helclów a ratowanie Żydów," *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Kraków], March 15, 1987.

The following account in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations* offers another perspective on those same events.

During the occupation, Reverend Albin Małysiak [Małysiak] and Sister Bronislawa [Bronislawa] Wilemska helped five Jews. At that time, Sister Bronislawa was the head of the Helcel Home for the Aged and Retarded in Cracow [Kraków], where Reverend Albin was chaplain. In 1943, five Jews came to the home and stayed there as wards: Katarzyna Styczen [Styczeń], 45; Helena Kachel, 50; Zbigniew Koszanowski [Kozanowski], who was in his forties; Henryk Juanski [Juański], who was in his thirties, and another man who was aged between 30 and 35. They were provided with forged papers, meals, and clothing. [Zbigniew Koszanowski's false birth certificate was provided by Rev. Jan Wolny of Nowy Targ.<sup>665</sup>] "We helped them for humanitarian reasons. Jesus Christ told us to love everybody," wrote Reverend Albin in his testimony to Yad Vashem. In the spring of 1944, all the tenants of the Home, including the sisters, nurses, and secular staff, were deported by the Germans to Szczawnica Zdroj [Zdrój], Nowy Soncz [Sącz] district. The five Jews also went along to Szczawnica as if they were regular residents of the home. "Nearly all those living in the Home knew that Sister Wilemska and I were hiding Jews," wrote Reverend Albin. Many of the residents of Szczawnica knew it too, but no one informed the authorities, despite the fact that there was a German police post in the neighborhood. Helena Kachel died in the fall of 1944. Soon afterwards, Katarzyna Styczen also died. The men survived until the liberation in January 1945. Katarzyna's daughter, Maria Rolicka, went to Szczawnica after receiving news of her mother's death. "I talked to the sisters and the reverend father who helped my mother and the four other Jews," she wrote. Reverend Albin told her that he and her mother had many "long talks and discussions. We used to walk in Gorny [Górny] Park in Szczawnica and discuss different problems of Jews, Poles, and humanity in general."<sup>666</sup>

Mary Rolicka, the daughter of Katarzyna Styczeń, one of the Jews sheltered at the Helcel Institution, documented the fate of her loved ones and commented on the skewed portrayal of Poles that abound.

My first encounter with Holocaust documentation was watching a scene from the movie Shoah, which, by chance, I saw on television. The scene struck me as unfair to the Poles, and I decided that I had an obligation to tell my side of the story. ...

Despite what Raul Hilberg has said in his book *The Destruction of the European Jews*, thousands of Jews escaped from the Warsaw ghetto, and thousands—not "several hundred"—were living in Warsaw. The people who escaped (Hilberg called it "evasion") either hid with the help of Poles, or became partisans, or, like me, lived openly by using Polish identities. The latter was possible only if one did not "look Jewish," and could blend with the Polish background, as far as language and behaviour are concerned.

<sup>665</sup> Testimony of Albin Małysiak, YVA, file O.93/47476 (Item 7428386); Grzegorz Górny, *Sprawiedliwi: Jak Polacy ratowali Żydów przed Zagładą* (Izabelin-Warsaw: Rosikon, 2013), 116. See also the testimony of Albin Małysiak, SFV, Interview code 47476; Albin M. [Małysiak] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-3176), FVA.

<sup>666</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 487.

This was a dangerous life; many did not make it. But living with Poles gave me an insight in the Polish way of thinking about the Jews and the Holocaust. I met all kinds of Poles; they did not know I was Jewish, nor anything of my personal background. My father founded the Zionist organization in Chmielnik; my grandfather, founder of a synagogue in Chmielnik, was a Zionist and taught his sons to follow his path.

In the scene of Shoah that I saw, a stupid-looking group of country folk was asked by Claude Lanzmann, the director of the film, why the Holocaust had happened. They replied that perhaps the Jews had their blood on their own hands, because they had killed Jesus Christ. I never heard this anti-Semitic statement during the Holocaust. The implication is that the idea comes from the Catholic Church, but in that case would the Church have helped the Jews?

I must state here positively that many Poles, and the Church too, helped the Jews, knowing that there was a death penalty for that. I do not say there was no anti-Semitism in Poland, or that there were no Polish blackmailers, or collaborators with the Gestapo, paid “per capita” for denouncing Jews. All of us passing as Poles had very painful encounters with such criminals. But how can one expect that there would be no criminals among the Poles? Is there any country in which criminals would not take advantage of the vulnerable? ...

Nazi propaganda described deportations from the ghettos as “resettlement for work.” Many wanted to believe this: Jews are optimists, and the truth about deportations was difficult to believe for the Jewish victims in the ghettos, and for the West, where these facts were known. Clandestine data were brought to Chmielnik by Anielewicz, the hero of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; my mother believed him. She decided that the family had to flee, and got the necessary Polish documents. My grandfather was shot by the SS. My father was sent to Buchenwald. But four members of my family escaped in the last week before the deportation. My mother found shelter in Warsaw; it did not work out. She ran to Cracow [Kraków], to which I had gone directly from Chmielnik. A mother of my Polish friends recommended me to a woman who had a room to rent. My mother, however, had to rely on little hotels, boarding houses, and pensions, swamped by Jews escaping from the ghettos, where a witch hunt for Jews was going on. My mother went through a terrible ordeal: she stayed only a few days in each place. I kept finding new accommodations for her. She could barely survive.

But then a landlady recommended her to the Sisters of Charity, a group of Roman Catholic nuns. She found a safe haven in the Retirement Home in Szczawnica, where she survived the war with other Jewish “retirees”—as far from retirement age as she was. I met her in 1944 in Cracow [Kraków], where she was brought by the Sisters. She could not find words to thank them. They gave her not only economic but moral support, without which she could not have survived the many months of anguish about my fate, especially the two months of the Warsaw Uprising [of 1944]. Nothing is equal to what the Sisters did for my mother.

With this tale of survival in Poland, I hope to rectify some of the unjust treatment of Poles in historical accounts of the Holocaust.<sup>667</sup>

<sup>667</sup> Mary Rolicca, “A Memoir of Survival in Poland,” *Midstream*, vol. 34, no. 3 (April 1988): 26–27. See also Mary Rolicca, “A Miracle of Survival,” *Midstream*, vol. 42, no. 3 (April 1996): 22–23.

The Daughters of Mary Immaculate (Zgromadzenie Córek Maryi Niepokalanej—*córki Maryi Niepokalanej*) extended help to Jews in various localities: Hrubieszów, Kielce, Końskie, Lida, Radom, Rawa Mazowiecka,<sup>668</sup> Warsaw, and Wiszniew, near Wołożyn. The following accounts pertain to the towns of Hrubieszów and Lida respectively.

Sisters in Hrubieszów aided Jews especially during the liquidation of the ghetto. Sister Błażeja Bednarczyk ... transported Jews and their belongings from the ghetto to the town square and she fulfilled their requests such as buying food, fruit and other items. On several occasions she thought that she would not manage to survive the ordeal, because the Gestapo had caught her red-handed [and she was nearly shot].<sup>669</sup>

One day, we found on the porch [in Lida] two small children of Jewish nationality aged one-and-a-half and two-and-a-half years old. The children were horribly neglected. One of the boys suffered from trachoma and the other had an enormous furuncle on his head. It was the war—one could not get necessary medicines, and there were no separate rooms for them so they had to sleep in a common room with the healthy children. Sister Konstancja [Bolejko] worked hard during the day and watched over the children during the night. She suffered all that hardship only to save the children and spare them from death. She baptized the boys, giving them both the name of Antoni. We kept it most secret from the other children that they were Jewish. But somehow somebody must have found out about it and informed the Germans since an automobile soon arrived at the house. The Germans asked to speak to the director and they immediately asked about the whereabouts of the Jewish children. I replied that there were no Jewish children in our place and asked Sister Nela to bring the children which had recently come to us. We had previously agreed that we would show Polish children whose nationality would be easy to prove, and that we would hide the small Jews. That time we succeeded and the Germans left empty-handed. ... One morning in the spring of 1944, two persons dressed in military uniforms and carrying rifles and rucksacks appeared and headed straight for our barn, where we hid with the children. ... They said that we are looking for our children, those who had been left on the porch. ... The parents were overjoyed to see their children.<sup>670</sup>

The two boys left at the nuns' home in Lida were found and taken in by Sister Kamila Zdanowicz, the director of the orphanage. The parents made no subsequent effort to acknowledge the rescue of their children.<sup>671</sup>

<sup>668</sup> A Blue policeman and a worker delivered a Jewish infant girl to the nuns' orphanage in Rawa Mazowiecka in the early spring of 1943. The child survived under the devoted care of Sister Alina Stanisława Wilczyńska, with the assistance of her superior and some villagers. See Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 392–94.

<sup>669</sup> Jan Żaryn, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce (1944–1989)* (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN, 2003), 17–18.

<sup>670</sup> Jan Żaryn, "The Catholic Church Hierarchy vis-à-vis Polish-Jewish Relations Between 1945 and 1947," in Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn, eds., *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom* (Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2006), 83.

<sup>671</sup> Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at pp. 157–58.

The rescue of Dr. Olga Goldfein (Goldfajn) was especially unusual. She twice took refuge in the convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Family (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Misjonarek Świętej Rodziny—*misjonarki Świętej Rodziny*) in Pruzana, in northeastern Poland. Unable to remain there permanently, dressed in a nun's habit, she made her way with Sister Dolorosa (Genowefa Czubak) to her benefactor's family home near Łowicz, in central Poland. Along the way, they were assisted by many priests and nuns—in Białowieża, Łapy, Sokoły, Dąbrowa Wielka, and Małkinia. Czubak was recognized as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem.

The following account was penned by Dr. Goldfein in 1945, shortly after the events in question.

The war caught me in the border town of Pruzhany [Prużana], where I was a doctor in the hospital. ...

At 5:00 A.M. on November 2, [1942] Gestapo men encircled the ghetto and announced that we would be evacuated. ...

On November 7, I received a note from a nun whom I knew—Sister Chubak [Genowefa Czubak]. She asked me to meet her. I went to the barbed-wire barrier and saw her. She gave a liter of vodka to the sentry, and we were permitted to talk. She gave me 300 marks to bribe the guards. I told her that I was exhausted and in no condition to struggle any further; I said it would be better if I left this life. When we separated, I decided to be rude to the guard so that he would shoot me. ... But the sergeant did not shoot me.

Then I went to Berestitsky, a barber friend of mine. I knew him to be a resolute person. I called him out into the alley and said: "I wanted to take poison, but poison didn't work; I wanted to be shot, but German bullets won't kill me." I asked him to help me. Berestitsky carefully raised the barbed wire; I crawled under it, crossed the street, the gardens, and the yards, and rushed to the convent. Soon I was with my acquaintance, the nun. She immediately gave me different clothes and hid me. I had three places to take refuge—in the cow shed, under the stairway, and between two cupboards. I sat locked up and constantly looked out of the window to see who was coming. All this time I had terrible toothaches, and I could not sleep at night, but I could not go to a dentist. The week passed in constant terror. In the daytime I hid in the room, and at night I would come out in the yard and listen to what was happening in the ghetto. It was dark and terrifying. Fires blazed around the ghetto, and machine guns and light tanks were stationed all around. Planes flew over the ghetto.

At the end of the fifth week of my stay in the convent a representative of the Judenrat came to me with letters from the chairman of the Judenrat and my husband. They wrote that the Germans were interested in my health. (The Germans believed that I was still sick after the poisoning.) If I did not return, the ghetto would suffer because of me.

I did not take long to think the matter over: if the ghetto was in danger because of me, I would return. But I did not know how to enter the ghetto. The messenger said that he would disguise me as an employee of the commissar who was going to the ghetto to find good wool to knit him a sweater.

A few hours later I was in the ghetto. ...



At 5:00 A.M. of January 28, [1943] troops approached the ghetto, and at 7:00 an evacuation was declared. At 8:00 many carts were brought in to remove us from the ghetto. ... The first group of carts set off at 9:00 A.M., and I was one of the passengers.

It took us five hours to reach the Linovo [Linowo] station, where the Germans told us to get out of the carts. Everyone was beaten on the head with whips until he or she lost consciousness. I received two such blows, and my head buzzed like a telegraph pole. ... We were kept at the train station for three hours ... We were thrown into the cars like sacks of potatoes. ...

At the last minute, just before the car was to be sealed, I jumped out onto the tracks. My "badge" was covered with a large kerchief. I walked quickly down a street, came to a garden, and walked along a fence into a field. After that I walked only through fields, since there were Gestapo men on the road. ...

In this fashion I walked until 2:00 A.M. Finally I reached the town. I wandered around the outskirts of the town for two hours, afraid to meet anyone. I approached the convent with extreme caution and quietly knocked on the window. The mother-superior opened the door and immediately began to rub my hands. My friend, Sister Chubak, put me in her bed, and I fell asleep.

In the morning (January 29) I was awakened by crying. It was one of the nuns; it turned out that she was afraid that my return to the convent would doom the nuns. Sister Chubak tried to convince her that we would leave the following day ... At that point I broke into the conversation and said that if I had managed to jump from a death train, I would manage to leave this house without causing any unpleasantness.

Announcements appeared in town declaring that all barns, attics, cellars, and outhouses should be locked to keep the Jews out. Dogs were to be leashed. If a Jew was found in any house, the entire population would be killed.

The sixteen-year-old serving girl of the convent, Ranya Kevyurski [Renia Wewiórska], walked twelve kilometers to the village to find a cart for me. She returned late that night and said that a cart would come in the morning.

The cart arrived at 10:00 A.M. I donned the habit of a nun and put on dark glasses. Sitting on the cart, I stared stubbornly at the bundle in my hands. Sister Chubak went ahead on foot. I left the town under the eyes of the Gestapo men. Kalinovsky [Kalinowska], a Polish woman whom I knew, came toward us and made a sign to Sister Chubak indicating that I was well disguised. This frightened me, because I was afraid that she would turn me in. My companion assured me that Kalinovsky sympathized deeply with the Jews in their misfortune. She had come out onto the road, because she had learned that there were plans to save me, and she wanted to be sure that everything went well.

We were on the road until 5:00. The horse was exhausted, and we decided to spend the night in the nearest village. My companion asked the village elder for permission to spend the night, but he declared that there was no room; twenty German gendarmes were spending the night in the village. We decided it would be better for us to leave, got back on the cart, and moved on. The exhausted horse could hardly walk. We entered an enormous forest—the Białowieża [Białowieża] Forest. Along the road we saw a small house. My companion went in and met a former pupil there. We were well received and spent the night in a warm place. We continued our journey at dawn. Finally we arrived at

Białowieża and headed for the Catholic Church. Then we went to Chainovka [Hajnówka], from there to Belsk [Bielsk Podlaski], and from Belsk to Białystok [Białystok] by train. On the train we learned that the Germans had surrounded the ghetto on February 2 and that a slaughter was taking place there.

In Białystok we went to the main convent. I asked the mother-superior to hide me, but she was frightened and ordered us to leave immediately.<sup>672</sup> ...

That night we found ourselves on the street and did not know where to go. Then my companion remembered that she knew the address of the brother of one of the nuns. He was not home, but his wife received us gladly. At that moment the Jews of Białystok were being slaughtered. The town was full of Gestapo men, and all the residents were afraid that they might be suspected of being Jews. There were no tickets being sold at the train stations. We asked the head of the station to give us poor nuns, who were forced to beg for charity, a ticket without a pass. At first he refused, but then he gave in. ...

In this fashion we left Białystok on February 13 by train and went to the Łapy [Łapy] Station.<sup>673</sup> From there we went by cart to various Catholic churches—Dąbrowa [Dąbrowa Wielka], Sokoly [Sokoły], Mokiny [Małkinia]. From there we travelled to Warsaw by train. ... From Warsaw we went to Łowicz [Łowicz], where my companion's family lived. We spent sixteen months there; no one knew that I was a Jew. I worked as a nurse and had a large practice.

In May, 1944, we decided to move to Naleczów [Nałęczów], near the River Bug. ... On July 26, 1944, Naleczów was liberated by the red Army, and on July 29 I set out east—partly on foot, and partly by automobile. I eventually made my way to my home town of Pruzhany.

Pruzhany had been liberated on July 16. Of the 2,700 Jews who had taken refuge in the forest only about twenty young people returned to the town; all the rest perished. The local people were very happy at my return and my friends, acquaintances, and patients literally made pilgrimages to me.<sup>674</sup>

<sup>672</sup> It should be noted that when Genowefa Czubak and Dr. Olga Goldfein arrived in Białystok, the ghetto was under siege and searches were underway for Jewish escapees. The mother superior invited them to stay for lunch, but explained that a longer stay could imperil the entire convent. See Michel Borwicz, *Vies interdites* (Tournai, Belgium: Casterman, 1969), 108–9. As documented later on, the convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Family in Białystok was known to have provided food and other forms of assistance to Jews.

<sup>673</sup> In Łapy, a woman directed Czubak and Goldfein to a priest, who arranged for a carriage to take them to Dąbrowa. See Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 109.

<sup>674</sup> Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman, eds., *The Black Book: The Ruthless Murder of Jews by German-Fascist Invaders Throughout the Temporarily-Occupied Regions of the Soviet Union and in the Death Camps of Poland During the War of 1941–1945* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 206–12. See also Vasily Grossman, "The Story of Olga Goldfain," in Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman, eds., *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 172–76. There is no basis to question the authenticity of Dr. Goldfein's detailed account, which is corroborated by another account she provided shortly after the war—see the testimony of Dr. Goldfajn, JHI, record group 301, no. 138, and by the account of Joseph Elman, a family friend, cited later. There is no question that her presence was known to the Sisters during her first stay at the convent, and that she left because she was summoned back to the ghetto. There is

Dr. Goldfein and Sister Dolorosa remained on the best of terms with the superior of the convent in Prużana throughout this time, as borne out by the testimony of Joseph Elman, who returned to his hometown of Prużana after the liberation as part of the Soviet forces.

The doctor, which I mentioned, the neighbor of mine, that Olga Goldfein, arrived in Proushinna [Prużana]. She was saved—from the station at night and she came to Proushinna to the—to that convent ... And she was befriended with a nun and her name ... is DellaRosa [Sister Dolorosa]. Because, she came with her in Proushinna, when I was in Proushinna [after the liberation]. ... And she escaped from the wagons and she followed 10 kilometers and she came to Proushinna to the nun. The nun gave her ... she got the clothes and she put a cross on her. But ... she told me—this is after the liberation, now, she told me that ... the Mother Superior ... wasn't satisfied, she says better take her and go away with her, deep in Poland, where nobody knows. She was afraid that—you know, sometimes ... maybe somebody'll discover. You can't blame her, you know, they discover. So she took—you know, when she came in and the next day, you know, with the blessing with the Mother Superior, the blessing, she went the—she actually comes from the different town. She comes some—the towns near Łódź [Łódź]. And she—they travelled somehow with her—with the doctor. ... So when ... she came back, in Proushinna with this nun, ... of course I will help. So, I tried ... I was able to help this nun ... even the whole convent to

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no question that she also left the convent on good terms after her second, shorter stay. Why else would Genowefa Czubak (Sister Dolorosa) have returned to the convent after the German occupation and Dr. Goldfein solicited help for the nuns? After her return to Prużana, Czubak had a falling out with her religious order. The circumstances of that falling out are not clear, but were doubtless compounded by the invitation she and Dr. Goldfein received from Ilya Ehrenburg to go to Moscow to record their wartime experiences. Yad Vashem has disseminated a markedly different, and rather unlikely, version of these events, based on testimony by Czubak provided many years later. According to Yad Vashem, "Czubak hid Goldfajn [Goldfein] in her convent cell without the Mother Superior's knowledge. After hiding in Czubak's cell for about a month, Goldfajn's presence was discovered and she was sent back to the ghetto, while Czubak was severely reprimanded. In January 1943, when the Germans destroyed the Pruzhana ghetto, Dr. Goldfajn managed to escape from the transport. Having nowhere else to go she returned to the convent, where once again she was turned away by the Mother Superior. Czubak, unable to accept the Mother Superior's decision, dressed Goldfajn in a nun's habit and left the convent, her—her home for 18 years—together with her. The two women wandered through the surrounding villages, staying in farmhouses and living off donations. Somehow or other they survived until the area was liberated in July 1944. After the war, Dr. Goldfajn emigrated to France, while Czubak, who was not allowed back into the convent, moved to Lodz [Łódź]." See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 161. A somewhat different version is found in Borwicz, *Vies inerdites*, 104–13, which acknowledges that all of the nuns in the convent were supportive of the rescue effort, except for the new superior, who thought that Dr. Goldfein's disappearance from the ghetto would be detected and imperil the entire convent.

supply, make sure they have enough food. It was ... still with the Russians. It's still ... 1944, still the war was going on and all that.<sup>675</sup>

Lorka (Gizela) Waszkowitzer (Waschkowitzer) was in her mid-fifties and living in Kraków with her husband and daughter when the war broke out. Her husband, Józef Waschkowitzer, a Second Lieutenant in the Polish army, perished in 1940 when the Soviets murdered thousands of captured Polish officers in the Katyn forest. Her daughter, Greta (Małgorzata), married a Polish Christian, Artur Woźniak, managed to secure Aryan papers and relocated to Warsaw.

Lorka remained in Kraków, living on her own. She had to be operated on when her eyesight started to fail and was hospitalized for six weeks. After a brief stay with her son-in-law's mother, with the assistance of her son-in-law, she was placed in a shelter run by the Albertine Sisters. This was likely the shelter at 10 Koletek Street, which was primarily a nursery for children. She remained there until the nuns had to leave in May 1944 and relocated to Rymanów, near Krosno. Lorka was transferred to Rymanów with the children and a group of women. She remained there until the area was liberated.<sup>676</sup>

Finding herself in Kraków, Ronia Brück (later Cwengel, b. 1926) was advised by someone to turn to the Catholic women's shelter, known as Stowarzyszenie Katolickiej Służby Żeńskiej pod wezwaniem św. Zyty, on Mikołajska Street. She introduced herself as Bronisława Sokołowska, and said that she had left her documents on the train she escaped from on her way to forced labour in Germany. She was employed in the canteen as a helper and lived at the shelter until the end of the war.<sup>677</sup>

Not all rescue efforts ended well. A number of Jews found shelter at a convent in Kraków mistakenly identified as Benedictine (the Benedictine Sisters did not have a convent in that city), only to be seized by the Germans during a raid on the convent. This was in fact the shelter on Krakowska Street, run by the Albertine Sisters.

Among those housed there were Anita Lobel (then known as Aneta, or Hanna Kempler), an eight-year-old girl with a noticeable Semitic appearance, and her six-year-old brother, Bernard (Bernhard), who was disguised as a girl because

<sup>675</sup> Oral history interview with Joseph Elman, USHMM, Accession no. 1998.A.0113, RG-50.030.0390, 67–68.

<sup>676</sup> Testimony of Lorka Waszkowitzer, JHI, record group 301, no. 3217.

<sup>677</sup> Testimony of Ronyah Tzvingel, SFV, Interview code 34271; "Ronia Brück (Bronia Sokołowska), Ronia Cwengel—A Survivor," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/ronia-bruck-bronislawa-sokolowska-ronia-cwengel-survivor>.

the shelter accepted only girls. They resided there posing as the children of their Christian nanny. The story is told in Anita's memoirs.

When Niania [nanny] came for us at the ghetto bridge, she had brought with her a piece of black cloth. As soon as we were out of danger, she made a makeshift bandage and wrapped it around my head, covering my right eye. "I have found a place to stay," Niania said. "We will be safe." She had found a shelter at a convent of Benedictine Sisters. The hospital across the street from the convent was run by the brothers of the same order. We needed to stay at the shelter so that I could see a doctor. I needed treatment for my eye, was the story Niania had told the nuns. I don't know what else she told them. The Benedictines let us in. ...

Life in the convent was good. The nuns were nice. ... When we didn't go to the little Benedictine chapel for mass, we went to kościół Mariacki (Church of St. Mary), the big church in the main square. ...

We were kneeling together with the nuns in the little chapel ... Over the mix of our voices, singing a hymn, we heard, "Alles raus!" ("Everyone out!") and then the heavy steps running up the stairs. "Juden! Wo sind die Juden?" ("Jews! Where are the Jews?") Rifles in their arms, the Nazis came crashing in. "Schnell! Alles raus! Schnell!" ("Fast! Everyone out! Fast!")

The mass had been interrupted just before the communion. The soldiers rushed up to my brother and me and Niania, guns pointing straight at us. "Raus! Raus!" Now they were behind us. I felt a rifle in my rib. The chapel stairs were not steep. There were only a few steps down. But I stumbled, almost fell. My brother was right behind me. And Niania was crying, "Nie, nie, nein! Moje dzieci! Sie sind ... moje dzieci." ("No, no, no! They are my children.") She was mixing the few German words she knew with Polish. The Nazis, ignoring Niania, were shouting at the nuns. "Alle! Alle Juden hier." ("All Jews over here.") Demanding they hand over all Jews. The nuns protested, were shoved aside. In no time everyone Jewish had been flushed out. They had caught up with us at last. It was Christmas Day.

They lined us up facing the wall. ... I was shaking and shivering. ... I was freezing. I wasn't scared. ... Niania was here. In the convent, among holy sisters, the Nazis could shout, but the Holy Mother would protect us.

Except for Niania, everybody who was not a Jew had stayed in the chapel. She sobbed and pleaded with the Germans in Polish. Insisted that we were her daughters. One of the Nazis began to laugh. He pushed my brother into a corner. He made him lift up his skirt and pull down his underpants. For a moment my brother's little circumcised penis flashed into view. "Und du, bist du auch ein Knab [Knabe]?" ("Are you a boy, too?") ...

I had never known that other Jewish people had been sheltered at the convent. There was a young man. A very pale, thin young woman I had never noticed before. A woman who walked with a limp. I had seen her on the soup line with her bowl and her cane. A woman and her teenaged son. I had seen them. Both of them had blond hair. I had never thought they were Jewish. The nuns had hidden us in broad daylight. We had all blended quietly into the life at the Benedictine shelter. A thought had time to cross my mind. I had never seen any of these people at mass. They were Juden. And I had become one of the Juden. ...

With the rest of their catch, the Nazis shoved my brother and me toward a canvas-covered truck that they had parked in front of the entrance to the courtyard of the convent.

... There were other people already in the truck. Both men and women. They must have been rounded up somewhere else. Shivering, silent, they stared with empty eyes at the newcomers.

Then we saw Niania running toward the truck with our coats and scarves. I was afraid the Nazis were going to shoot her. But they allowed her to throw our clothes into the truck. Still pleading and crying, she was shoved aside with the butt of a rifle. ...

As if they were closing a curtain, the Nazis pulled a canvas covering over the back of the truck. The engine started. The truck began to move. I had no idea where they were taking us.<sup>678</sup>

Upon capture, Anita and her brother, Bernard, were imprisoned in the Płaszów concentration camp. They were transferred to Auschwitz and finally to Ravensbrück, where they were liberated. The Red Cross sent them to Sweden, where they were reunited with their parents. While they were held in Płaszów, their nanny managed to bring extra food to the children with the assistance of another Polish woman and her fiancé, who was employed at the camp. Their story is also recounted elsewhere, with some conflicting details.

Franciszka Ziemianska [Ziemańska<sup>679</sup>] worked in Cracow for the Kempler family taking care of their children, Bernhard and Anita. When there were no more doubts about the Germans' intentions towards the Jews, Bernard and Anita's mother arranged that Franciszka be registered as the children's mother using false documents. In the period from 1940 to 1944, the children moved around and even fell into the Gestapo's hands a few times but were saved by Franciszka. One day, however, a Gestapo agent appeared at her apartment and inquired about the children. She answered that they were in the yard and the Gestapo agent replied that he would be back by evening for the children. Franciszka immediately ran out to the yard and took the children from their play to Rozalia Natkaniec, with whom they stayed for a few weeks. Later, Franciszka hid the children in her native village (without telling anyone they were Jewish), in a convent, and in other hiding places until the day that they were apprehended and put in Plaszow [Płaszów], from where they were transported to Auschwitz and later to Ravensbrueck [Ravensbrück]. Everything that Franciszka had done for the two children she did for purely humanitarian reasons and without any compensation. The children survived the war and afterwards immigrated to Israel.<sup>680</sup>

Rozalia Natkaniec was a village girl who had worked in the home of the Gruenberg family in Cracow [Kraków] before the war. Immediately after the occupation, Natkaniec decided to remain with the Gruenberg family in order to repay them for their kind treatment and the concern they had shown for her while she worked for them. As the persecution of the Jews worsened, Natkaniec came to the assistance of her employers, but was only able to save their daughter, Ziuta, after the child's parents were seized and murdered. Ziuta hid with Natkaniec for two years until the liberation, and after the war she immigrated

<sup>678</sup> Anita Lobel, *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War* (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1998), 54–56, 74–77.

<sup>679</sup> Franciszka Ziemańska, RD.

<sup>680</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 542.



to Israel. Natkaniec also saved Bernhard and Anita Kempler, Ziuta's cousins [children?], who were hiding under an assumed identity in a monastery in Cracow [actually, a shelter on Krakowska Street run by the Albertine Sisters<sup>681</sup>]. Unfortunately, their identity was discovered [during a raid shortly before the city was liberated by the Soviet army] and the Gestapo transported them to the Plaszow [Płaszów] concentration camp. When Natkaniec learned of this, she risked her life and smuggled them out of the camp and then hid them in her home. The Kemplers survived and after the war, immigrated to the United States.<sup>682</sup>

The Jews sheltered in the Capuchin monastery in Kraków were more fortunate. The Capuchins had taken in hundreds of refugees including clergy expelled from western Poland, as well as the sick. Brother Baltazar (Andrzej) Cekus was particularly active in the rescue efforts. He prepared Jews for baptism and taught them religious practices, allowed Jewish boys to act as altar servers, and found safe houses for Jews.

Twenty-three Jews came forward after the war to attest to Brother Baltazar's good deeds. Several Jews found refuge at the monastery later on, including Helena Manaster Ramer, who posed as the Catholic wife of a Polish army officer.<sup>683</sup> She took refuge in Kraków together with her husband, Norbert Ramer, a medical doctor and rabbi from Lwów. Warned of a threat of denunciation, Helena and her infant son, Artur, were able to escape safely and find other hiding places.

The Polish papers we had previously secured and hidden with us all the time now proved valuable. I [Helena Manaster Ramer] became Helena Dobrowski and Norbert, Tadeusz Dobrowski ... When we arrived in Krakow [Kraków] I was lost, but my husband had studied mathematics there and had many acquaintances and friends. We went at once to the home of one of these, a bachelor, and he took us in. After all these years I've forgotten his name, but he kept us with him for three days. Norbert got in touch with other friends and we made contact with the underground. We also managed to get a little money so that we could get by.

We were no longer Jews, however. We lived in different skins. Someone urged me to smile more and I did my best. We had to smile all the time, to remain above suspicion. ...

By this time it was February 1943 and I was pregnant. Still Norbert and I remained apart as much as possible to avoid suspicion. While I didn't look Jewish, Norbert had a more difficult time and had to spend much of his time indoors when he could. We found places to sleep but it was always harder to find places to spend the days and in the spring and summer the days were so long. We walked in the parks and in the stores and banks. We spent hours in the churches. We generally went to the churches to meet. Sometimes, too, we met in the waiting rooms of local doctors. Some people knew who we were and were even helpful to us.

<sup>681</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 370–73.

<sup>682</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 939.

<sup>683</sup> Martyna Grądzka, "Kościoł katolicki w okupowanym Krakowie w pomocy Żydom: Zarys problematyki badawczej," in Klimek, *Kościoł krakowski 1939–1945*, 143–45.

At that time there was an 8 o'clock curfew and you had to be off the streets after that hour. All our efforts in the days were at finding places for the night. Sometimes we even found places where we could stay in the daytime too. Then we could bathe and get some food. ...

Then, one day I found myself in a difficult situation. I had an arrangement on that day to spend the following night with some people but I had nowhere to go that night. I couldn't wait until the following evening so I went to the people who were supposed to take me in the next night ...

They were having a party and I couldn't go inside because I didn't want to be seen by too many people so I sat in the hallway of the building ... There were two apartments in that hallway, one occupied by a university professor who was a known anti-Semite and I was very worried. At that time, many Poles were being executed by the Nazis in the east and there were many orphans. The professor's daughter, it turned out, was the head nurse of an organization that was engaged in rescuing these children. While I was sitting there she came out and saw me, pregnant, in the chair, in the middle of the night. I told her my husband lived in Hungary and that I had nowhere to go. Her face softened and she offered to help me. ... She took me to a monastery that night.

She took me to the Order of the Kaputzyn [Capuchins]. They had several buildings in Krakow and a vast garden. One of the buildings was being used to house refugees and the sick and they put me there. I stayed in that place for more than a year and that's where my son, Arthur, was born. ...

I arranged to go to the hospital when I was due to give birth and the manager of the refugees' house, a pious young man named M. Detz, took me. My son, Arthur, was born in October there but he took sick soon after I returned with him to the monastery and I had to take him back to the hospital for care several times. ... People at the monastery thought he might die and urged me to baptize him ... finally, I did. ... It was now July and I began to hope we would survive by remaining in the monastery. I got money from the underground but I spent very little and lived there for almost two years. ...

Later a more serious incident occurred. I found something that looked like a crudely made mezuzah, the little ornamental box containing a prayer that is put on the doorways of Jewish homes. It had been placed in the night on my doorpost. Someone was telling me that they knew what I was. It was then May 1944 and I had been in Krakow since February 1943. One evening, Mr. Detz, the manager, came to see me and said, "You can't stay here any longer. Two of our patients are going to denounce the Jews we are hiding here."

This was the first time that I realized I was not the only Jew at the monastery. One of the older men there, a man who used to visit me quite often and tell me stories of how he always prayed to Jesus and the Virgin Mary and relied on their help for everything, was a Jew, too. Mr. Detz said I had to leave at once.

I had retained contact with the underground and one of them, a Miss Eiserle, took me in. Her father was a Polish officer in exile in England but her mother was a Jew in hiding. ... I now took Arthur from place to place in the six months remaining until the

liberation in January 1945. We were here a week, there a week, in places the underground arranged for us.<sup>684</sup>

Witold Goldberger was sheltered at the Benedictine abbey in Tyniec, on the outskirts of Kraków, from the spring of 1942 until the end of the war, working as a gardener's assistant. His ethnicity was known to the prior of the abbey, Fr. Karel (Karol) van Oost, a native of Belgium, and to Fr. Kazimierz Ratkiewicz, who arranged a forged Kennkarte (identity card) for Goldberger under the name of Florkowski.<sup>685</sup>

At the outbreak of the war, Franciszka Goldberger was on a training farm in Lwow [Lwów], which had been annexed to the Soviet Union. In 1941, after the Germans occupied the city, Goldberger was interned in the local ghetto, and toward the end of the year transferred to the Janowska Street camp. In 1943, Goldberger fled from the camp and reached her native town, Kraków, where her parents used to live. When she discovered that her entire family had perished, she made her way to the home of Bronisław and Maria Florek, family friends. The Floreks gave her a warm welcome and offered her food, but were unable to hide her in their apartment. Nevertheless, Maria Florek accompanied Goldberger to acquaintances of hers who lived in the nearby village of Wrząsowice, where, despite the danger, she rented a room for her. The Floreks visited Goldberger each month, paid her rent, and saw to all her needs. Goldberger stayed in her hiding place until the area was liberated. After the war, she immigrated to Israel. Franciszka was not the only member of the Goldberger family whom the Floreks helped. Even before her arrival, the Floreks looked after Wincenty Goldberger, Franciszka's uncle, after he escaped from the local ghetto. They hid him in their home throughout the winter of 1942 and later arranged for him to stay with the Benedictine monks in Tyniec, near Kraków. The Floreks also helped other relatives of Goldberger, including Frania and Dolek Nichtberger who, after the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto, hid in the town of Mielec, where the Floreks sent them food and money until the liberation.<sup>686</sup>

The Tenenwurz family, consisting of Dr. Bronisław (Bunim) and Dr. Betty Tenenwurz and their two children, Emanuel (b. 1928) and Ruth, were interned in the Miechów ghetto. When the ghetto was about to be liquidated, Emanuel's mother made arrangements with her Catholic friend, Mrs. Terlecka, to take her son. Terlecka contacted her friend Stanisław Gadomski, who provided Emanuel with false identity documents in the name of Jan Wójcik and took him to the Cistercian monastery in Mogiła, near Kraków, where he worked. Initially

<sup>684</sup> Jafa Wallach, *Bitter Freedom: Memoirs of a Holocaust Survivor* (Schuylkill Have, Pennsylvania: Hermitage, 2006), 184–87. See also the testimony of Helena Manaster, SFV, Interview code 18145.

<sup>685</sup> The Florek Family, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-florek-family>.

<sup>686</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 218; Florek Family, RD.

passed off as a convert, Emanuel was accepted as a novice for the priesthood by the prior, Fr. Robert Kuhar (Kuchar), in August 1942.

Fr. Kuhar, a native of Yugoslavia (born in what is now Slovenia), soon learned that Emanuel was Jewish by religion and treated him very well. Emanuel remained at the monastery until April 1943, when a rumour had spread that he was Jewish. Gadomski got in touch with his friend Stefan Jagodziński, who took charge of the boy and sheltered him in Stary Korczyn for a period of time. Later that year, Jagodziński made arrangements through the underground to smuggle Emanuel to Hungary, together with his mother and sister. In 1990, Emanuel Tenenwurz, then going by the name of Tanay, dedicated a plaque in the monastery church in honour of Fr. Kuhar. The Germans raided the monastery soon after Emanuel's departure and arrested Fr. Kuhar and others for their involvement with the underground resistance. Fr. Kuhar was imprisoned in Auschwitz in August 1943. He also survived the Mauthausen and Dachau concentration camps, where he was transferred afterwards.<sup>687</sup>

Jews did not always accept offers of sanctuary. In the summer of 1942, during the Great Deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka, the three remaining rabbis—Dovid Shapiro, Menachem Ziemba and Shimshon Stockhammer—received an offer of asylum from senior members of the Catholic clergy of the Warsaw archdiocese. This offer was declined; the rabbis decided that they could not abandon their co-religionists in their hour of adversity.<sup>688</sup> The meeting between the three Warsaw rabbis is described as follows:

<sup>687</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 293–94; Account of Emanuel Tanay in Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, eds., *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 52–53; Emanuel Tanay, *Passport to Life: Autobiographical Reflections on the Holocaust* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Forensic Press, 2004), 68–92.

<sup>688</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 126; Philip Friedman, ed., *Martyrs and Fighters* (Polish Jews, Inc., 1954), reprinted in Roselle K. Chartock and Jack Spencer, eds., *Can It Happen Again? Chronicles of the Holocaust* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 1995), 248–49; (Reb) Moshe Shonfeld, *The Holocaust Victims Accuse: Documents and Testimony of Jewish War Criminals*, Part 1 (Brooklyn, New York: Neturei Karta of U.S.A., 1977), 34–35; Simon Zuker, comp., *The Unconquerable Spirit: Vignettes of the Jewish Religious Spirit the Nazis Could Not Destroy*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Zachor Institute, 1980/1981), 78. According to a Polish historian, Rabbi Ziemba perished soon after during the Warsaw ghetto revolt; Rabbi Stockhammer was imprisoned in German concentration camps and killed in 1945, three days before liberation, when a bomb struck the train in which he was being evacuated from a camp; Rabbi Shapiro survived the war. See Sholom Friedmann, "Hiddush HaCaim," May 17, 2017, Internet: <http://ellykleinman.com/kiddush-hachaim/>; Alan Jay Gerber, "The 70th Yahrzeit of Rabbi Menachem Ziemba's Martyrdom: A Tribute to a Warsaw Ghetto Legacy," *The Jewish Star*, March 21, 2013, Internet: <http://thejewishstar.com/stories/The-Kosher-BookwormThe-70th-yahrtzeit-of-Rabbi-Menachem-Ziembas-martyrdom>

It is not known how much time the silence lasted. Perhaps a minute; perhaps hours. Reb Dovid, who was the youngest of the three, broke the silence and said, “I am younger than both of you. My words do not obligate you. It is obvious to all of us that it is not in our hands to help these people in any way. Nevertheless, by the very fact that we are with them, that we did not leave them, there is some encouragement for them—the only encouragement. I do not have the strength to leave these people—and there is no place bereft of Him. Will we hide from the Almighty? The same God who is found there is found here.”

The words came forth from the youngest rabbi and the silence continued. Then it was replaced by crying. Not one word was said. Only crying gushed forth from within the three hearts. Then they left the room and Reb Menachem said, “we are not to conduct any debate in this matter.”<sup>689</sup>

A similar offer from the bishop of Łódź is said to have been rejected by Rabbi Y. Pinner.<sup>690</sup> The revered Ostrowiec rabbi, Yechezkel Halstock (Yehiel Halevi Halshtok), turned down Bishop Jan Kanty Lorek’s offer of shelter, saying that he could not abandon his community to save himself.<sup>691</sup>

“My own father,” the survivor who told us this story recalled, “had contacted the bishop of Tzozmir (Sandomierz) and begged him to hide the rabbi of Ostrowiec. The bishop had actually agreed to remove the rabbi from the ghetto and to give him shelter for the duration of the war, but when my father informed the rabbi of the bishop’s offer, he said that he would not save his own skin while his community perished.”<sup>692</sup>

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domA-tribute-to-a-Warsaw,3957. According to a Polish source, the offer of assistance was inspired by Canon Roman Archutowski, the rector of the Archdiocesan Seminary, but he had already been imprisoned in November 1942. However, another rabbi by the name of Khane did accept an offer of shelter and was hidden in the archdiocesan library. See Franciszek Kącki, *Udział księży i zakonnic w holokaucie Żydów*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (Warsaw: Adiutor, 2002), 54.

<sup>689</sup> Forverts [New York], March 1, 1947.

<sup>690</sup> Shonfeld, *The Holocaust Victims Accuse*, 35. It is not clear which bishop of Łódź made this offer—Bishop Włodzimierz Jasiński, the ordinary, or his suffragan, Bishop Kazimierz Tomczak—and when this occurred. Bishop Jasiński gave approval in 1939 for 22 Jews to convert to Catholicism for reasons other than religious; as vicar general of the diocese, Bishop Tomczak was responsible for issuing the supporting church documents. Bishop Tomczak was arrested on November 9, 1939, and interned in a prison camp in Radogoszcz, where he suffered mistreatment. After his release ten days later, he was placed under house arrest. Both Bishop Jasiński and Bishop Tomczak were arrested in May 1941 (along with other priests) and detained in Szczawina near Zgierz, before being expelled to a monastery in Biecz, in the Generalgouvernement, in August 1941. Bishop Jasiński remained there until November 1944, while Bishop Tomczak was allowed to leave for Warsaw in 1943. See Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 302, 387 n.19, 389.

<sup>691</sup> Feldenkreis-Grinbal, *Eth Ezkera—Whenever I Remember*, 553.

<sup>692</sup> Zuker, *The Unconquerable Spirit*, 26.

The bishop of Sandomierz, Jan Kanty Lorek, who had intervened on behalf of the Jews in September 1939, as well as other priests from Sandomierz, continued to provide assistance to Jews during the German occupation. Bishop Lorek intervened with the German authorities in 1942 to protest the shooting of Jews who left the ghetto illegally to obtain food.<sup>693</sup> During the liquidation of the ghetto, a number of Jews were sheltered in the bell tower and catacombs of the Sandomierz cathedral, as well as in the cellars of the seminary. Bishop Lorek also spoke out against looters of Jewish property.<sup>694</sup>

The Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin Mary of Mariówka (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służek Najświętszej Maryi Panny Niepokalanej z Mariówki, commonly known as *służki*) sheltered a young Jewish woman by the name of Czapnik, who had escaped from the Sandomierz ghetto and was directed to them by Bishop Lorek. At first, she was hidden in their convent in Sandomierz. When that became too dangerous because of German searches for members of the Polish underground, Sister Helena Łoboda took her to another convent, in Czyżów Szlachecki. Czapnik survived the war and later returned to Sandomierz to express her gratitude to the nuns who saved her life.<sup>695</sup>

The efforts of Rev. Jan Stępień of Sandomierz on behalf of Jews—he did everything in his power to persuade the Germans to exclude from labour duties Jews who were old and disabled—are described in a Polish account as follows:

In organizing Jewish work brigades in Sandomierz, the Nazis requested that Father Jan Stępień [Stępień] serve as an intermediary between themselves and the Jewish community. As a professor of biblical studies in the diocesan seminary of Sandomierz, Father Stępień knew the Hebrew language and spoke German. He did all in his power to persuade the Nazis to exclude from the work brigades Jews who were old and disabled. At times, he was successful in his persuasions. The Jews of Sandomierz respected him.

One time, Father Stępień went to a watchmaker in the city who happened to be an elderly Jewish man and asked him to repair his watch. The watchmaker took the watch and asked the priest to pick it up the following day. When the priest came back the next day,

<sup>693</sup> Agnieszka Dąbek, "The Conduct of the Sandomierz Diocese Priests: The Case Study of Bishop Jan Kanty Lorek and Rev. Ignacy Życiński," *Studia nad Totalitaryzmami i Wiekami XX / Totalitarian and 20th Century Studies*, vol. 5 (2022): 390–401, at p. 396.

<sup>694</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 444; Testimony of Stanley Kornacki, SFV, Interview code 54762. According to a Polish historian, Bishop Jan Kanty Lorek appealed to the German authorities for moderation in their policies toward Jews. Together with Stanisław Górski, the owner of an estate in Kliszów near Jędrzejów, he embarked on a mission to rescue Jewish children by seeking out Polish families willing to take them in. See Agnieszka Dziarmaga, "Kościół wobec Zagłady Żydów na Kielecczyźnie," *Niedziela* [Kielce], no. 5 (January 31, 2018).

<sup>695</sup> Tomasz Lis, "Sprawiedliwi z ewangelicznym sercem," *Gość Sandomierski*, no. 10 (March 7, 2019).



the watch was repaired. The priest asked the watchmaker how much he owed him. "One single zloty [złoty]," was the answer. The priest looked at the Jewish man with disbelief because one zloty represented very little monetary value. The watchmaker noticed his customer's surprise and said, in a way of explanation, something to this effect.

A long time ago there was a very famous monarch. One of his ministers was a Jew. On the occasion of the king's birthday, he invited his friends to his palace for a banquet. A Jewish minister was one of the invited friends. When the dinner was over, the king went around the tables and offered each guest a cigar. Men lit their cigars and began to smoke but the Jew did not. He held his cigar respectfully in his hand and waited. The king noticed this and asked as to why he did not smoke the cigar. The minister replied, "This cigar, which came from your majesty, is too valuable for me to smoke. When I return home, I will frame this cigar and inscribe underneath. This cigar was given to me by His Majesty, the King. My children and grandchildren will read it with a great respect and admiration." You understand what I am trying to tell you, Father? I will not spend this single zloty I asked of you. I will frame it and write under it that it came from a priest who knows our sacred language and who saved me and many other Jews from the Nazi forced labor and possible death. My children and grandchildren will view it with a great reverence.<sup>696</sup>

Because of his involvement in the Polish underground, Rev. Stępień had to flee Sandomierz in March 1942, when the Germans started to carry out mass arrests of the Polish intelligentsia. He moved to Warsaw, where he became the chaplain for the Discalced Carmelite Sisters. The Carmelite convent on Wolska Street served as a meeting place outside the ghetto for liaison officers of the Jewish Fighting Organization, about which more will be said later.<sup>697</sup>

<sup>696</sup> Marian S. Mazgaj, *In the Polish Secret War: Memoir of a World War II Freedom Fighter* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2009), 36–37.

<sup>697</sup> After the Soviet "liberation" of Poland and installation of a puppet regime, Rev. Jan Stępień was wanted by the Communist Security Police. He had to assume false identities while moving from place to place. He was arrested on July 5, 1947, underwent a show trial for spying, subversion, and cooperating with Jesuit plotters in the Soviet Union, and sentenced to death on November 29, 1947. On the intervention of Adam Cardinal Sapieha and Bishop Lorek, his death sentence was commuted to 15 years imprisonment. He was released in April 1955, after the death of Stalin. He was interrogated by Józef Różański (Goldberg), the head of the Investigation Department of the Ministry of Public Security and notorious sadist who persecuted members of the anti-Communist underground with zeal. (Although said to be a Communist who severed his ties to the Jewish community, Józef Różański was buried in Warsaw's Jewish cemetery.) In his memoirs, Rev. Stępień recalled that only two of his interrogators, out of more than a dozen, were not Jewish. See Leszek Żebrowski, "Księża niezłomni: Godnie przeżył swój czas," *Nasz Dziennik*, March 31–April 1, 2007. During the years 1944–1954, 167 of the 450 top positions in the Ministry of Public Security, or 37.1 per cent, were occupied by people of Jewish origin. Ethnic Poles accounted for only 49.1 per cent, and the balance were filled for the most part by Soviet officers (Russians, Belorussians, and Ukrainians), who accounted for 10.2 per cent of the cadre. Of the 107 voivodship Security Office heads and their deputies, 22 were Jews. See Krzysztof Szewczyński, "Żydzi w kierownictwie UB: Stereotyp czy rzeczywistość," *Biuletyn*

Another Jewish source confirms this information and mentions the favourable attitude of a number of priests from Sandomierz.

Out of the gravestones pillaged by the local people and returned due to the intervention of Bishop Jan Lorek, together with thousands of broken gravestones lying around in the graveyard [destroyed by the Germans], a magnificent monument was erected in memory of the Holocaust victims and the Rabbi of Ostrowiec, murdered in the Sandomierz ghetto. ...

In 1946, we were approached by a priest, formerly a teacher at the Teacher's Seminary in Sandomierz ... who told us that his housekeeper, a village woman, had placed a girl named Rozia [Rózia Ungar], daughter of the eldest of the Unger brothers, in the care of her farmer brother in order to save her from deportation. The girl was lucky that despite her semitic looks she was accepted by the farmer's neighbours and all others in the vicinity as the illegal offspring of this housekeeper and her employer, the priest. The members of the family did not deny this gossip and the girl was called "The Bastard" by everybody. Rózia tended geese and later on cows. ... The aunt took the eight-year old Rozia to her home in Bytom where she was brought up and went to school. She later finished her medical studies in Poland and emigrated to the United States.<sup>698</sup> ...

Fifteen Jewish children from Sandomierz were saved ... One of the children, a girl, was hidden in a monastery and saved. ...

One day, I met the priest Babsky [Rev. Aleksander Babski, the wartime pastor of Za-jączków] who had been my classmate in the Government high-school in Sandomierz. After a few words of greeting, the priest told me that a farmer of his parish was in possession of a Torah Scroll which he had found and taken away the day the Jews were deported. ... He had hidden the Torah Scroll in his home. ... The Torah Scroll remained with the Dean [Rev. Adam Szymański] who asked us to return to him with a "Minyan" of Jews (this was his expression), one of us at least with a Talith, since he desired to read a portion of the law out of this Torah Scroll.

We complied with the request of this honourable old man who was well known for his kindness and friendly attitude towards Jews. He was said to have supplied birth certificates to Jews who wished to leave town before the "Aktsia" holding Aryan papers.

We, a group of Sandomierz Jews, reached the reception hall of the Seminary and brought a Talith as promised. Jukel Schweitzman wrapped himself in the Talith and prayed. Then, Dr. Szymansky read out the Genesis portion of the Law in the pleasant voice of an experienced reader. Listening to his reading, we all shed tears. ...

A second Torah Scroll was also brought to the Wasser House where we lived at the time and given to us free of charge by the priest, Dr. Lagec [Rev. Michał Łagocki], a teacher at the Priests' Seminary. He had received the Torah Scroll from a farmer who had hidden it in order to return it after the war to a grain dealer of Sandomierz ... My cousin, Shia

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*Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (November 2005): 37–42; Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk, ed., *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w Polsce: Kadra kierownicza*, vol. 1: 1944–1956 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2005).

<sup>698</sup> See also the testimony of Rózia Ungar, JHI, record group 301, no. 3699.

Soberman, identified the Torah Scroll we received from the farmer as belonging to the synagogue in our town.<sup>699</sup>

The rescue activities of Rev. Adam Szymański, rector of the diocesan seminary, who gathered sacred books to prevent them from being profaned by the Germans, issued false baptismal certificates to Jews, provided them with material assistance and agreed to safekeep their property, are confirmed by other Jewish survivors from Sandomierz. Anna Dembowa states that Rev. Szymański offered to find a shelter for her mother, who was a friend of his, but she declined. Although Dembowa's parents received many offers of assistance, they did not want to go into hiding so as not to endanger anyone else's life.<sup>700</sup>

On his return to Sandomierz after the war from captivity in German concentration camps, Sam Nerenberg turned to Rev. Szymański, a prewar client of his. Rev. Szymański was happy to see him. He gave Nerenberg bundles of straw (which were used as mattresses at the time) and instructed nuns to feed him and other returning Jews. Friends with whom Nerenberg had left money and

<sup>699</sup> Feldenkreis-Grinbal, *Eth Ezkera—Whenever I Remember*, 542–43, 544–45.

<sup>700</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 534–35. Anna Dembowa's father, who chose not to go into hiding, stated his reason for not doing so with blunt honesty: "I do not want anyone to lose his head because of me, because I would probably not do the same myself." Altruistic attitudes like this were rare, and occurred mostly among older people who had a keen awareness and understanding of the predicament of others. Similarly, Mania Weindling's father's friend, a priest in Myszków, south of Częstochowa, offered to hide the family, but her father refused, fearing for the man's life. See Mania Weindling (née Feldbaum), Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, Internet: <<https://mchekc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/AppendixA.pdf>>.

Another example of a Jew who would rather sacrifice their own life than endanger the lives of their benefactors is Sabina Zisser of Szczucin, near Dąbrowa Tarnowska. Although invited to take refuge in the home of the Lech family, Sabina refused because she felt it was too risky for her hosts, so she stayed in the barn. Despite assurances from her benefactors that they were willing to keep her longer, one of the reasons she decided to leave them and go to the Tarnów ghetto was that she did not want to jeopardize the family's safety. They were not the ones who were condemned to death, she reasoned. Furthermore, she contemplated, why should they risk their lives for her? Before the war, they had not even been close friends, just acquaintances who used to shop at her family's store. See Serge-Allain Rozenblum, *Les temps brisés: Les vies d'un itinéraire juif de Pologne en France* (Paris: Éditions du Félin, 1992), 93–94.

Regina Ruskin was a 13-year-old girl who was taken in first by the Kowalski family, and then by the Kosiński family in the village of Tołwin, near Bielsk Podlaski. After a raid by German gendarmes, overwhelmed with guilt for endangering the Kosiński family, Regina announced that she was leaving. Mrs. Kosińska vehemently opposed the idea and did not let her leave. See Kosiński Family, RD. Such cases, however, were extremely rare, as most Jewish fugitives were preoccupied with their own survival and not the safety of their hosts.

a gold watch for safekeeping returned his property to him; they also provided him with material assistance.<sup>701</sup>

Before her involvement in Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews, Zofia Kosak-Szczucka co-founded the conservative underground organization of lay Catholics known as Front Odrodzenia Polski (FOP—The Front for the Rebirth of Poland) in 1941, and became editor of its newspaper, *Prawda* (Truth).<sup>702</sup>

<sup>701</sup> Testimony of Sam Nerenberg, SFV, Interview code 9511.

<sup>702</sup> The underground Catholic organization Front Odrodzenia Polski (FOP—Front for the Rebirth of Poland) was co-founded in 1941 by the prominent Catholic author Zofia Kosak-Szczucka and Rev. Edmund Krause, a priest from the Holy Cross parish in Warsaw, and included among its members Rev. Donat Nowicki and Rev. Jan Zieja. Its activities were well regarded by the Catholic hierarchy and supported by the clergy. In September 1942, the FOP set up a temporary committee to help Jews, the precursor of the Council for Aid to Jews, Żegota, founded in December 1942. See Michał Bobrzyński, “Front Odrodzenia Polski,” in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 5 (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1989), cols. 726–27; Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 40, 45; “Edmund Krause,” Wikipedia, Internet: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund\\_Krause](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Krause). According to Teresa Prekerowa, “Catholic priests rendered an enormous service to Jews in hiding by supplying them with authentic baptismal and marriage certificates of the people who, by that time, were dead, or had vanished or were absent from the country (before and during World War II, church parishes in Poland performed functions of Registries).” See Teresa Prekerowa, “The Relief Council for Jews in Poland, 1942–1945,” in Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews In Poland* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 166. Prekerowa expands on the role of the FOP in the success of this enterprise as follows: “By searching out and furnishing these kinds of identity documentation ... the Church authorities provided an invaluable service to Jews who were hiding, including many who were charges of Żegota. In Warsaw, among the most helpful in this regard were the parishes of All Saints, Blessed Virgin Mary, Holy Cross, St. Anthony, Christ the Saviour and others. The Catholic FOP, an organization that formed part of the Council for Aid to Jews, had the broadest contacts with pastors, though members of Jewish underground organizations also frequently established [direct] contact with certain priests and nuns. Helena Merenholc, for example, obtained many baptismal and marriage records from the parish in [suburban] Łomianki.” See Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945*, 148.

The authors of a biography of the famed Polish courier Jan Karski, who attempted to inform a disbelieving Western World about the realities of the Holocaust, and who was very closely connected with FOP, strongly suggest that FOP was attacked by the Catholic establishment for its support of the Jews: “Yet, in the name of Catholicism, the Front’s members put their lives on the line to support the Jews. They encountered the hostility not only of the Germans, but also of elements within the Church establishment. A Vatican official who was in contact with Poland during the war wrote of the ‘intense battle’ waged by traditionalist priests against the FOP. The group’s members, wrote the official, ‘lacked any serious dogmatic foundation.’ Their publications ‘were crammed with false ideological propositions whose frank heresies made them really dangerous.’ These people had no history of philo-Semitism, yet they took up the cause of Jewry in the face of major obsta-

cles; something must have changed in their hearts.” See E. Thomas Wood and Stanisław M. Jankowski, *Karski: How One Man Tried to Stop the Holocaust* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994), 106. However, the sources these authors cite (discussed below) do not in any way corroborate the implied claim that the pro-Jewish activities of FOP were under attack by the Church establishment.

The Vatican “official” referred to is Luciana Frassati, the Italian wife of the Polish diplomat Jan Gawroński. Frassati’s book, *Il destino passa per Varsavia* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1949; reissued by Milano: Bompiani, 1985) is quoted extensively by Carlo Falconi, *The Silence of Pius XII* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 168–70. Frassati writes: “[FOP’s] members, in good or bad faith, lacked any serious dogmatic foundation. Their leaflets, entirely financed by the ZWZ [Związek Walki Zbrojnej—Union For Armed Struggle], were crammed with false ideological propositions whose frank heresies made them really dangerous. My interlocutor quoted a few extracts which justified distrust of the whole movement.” Note: Falconi omits the impugned extracts cited by Frassati at pp. 201–2 (1985 ed.), which are all theological in nature and totally unrelated to the Jewish issue: “Natural ethics don’t exist in practice. They don’t exist even where there is no shadow of Christianity or Catholicism. The grace of redemption is the fountain of life. All that is good is caused and inspired by Grace. In Catholic life, Grace is the principle element for the development of life; natural ethics, therefore, for a Catholic cannot exist in any manner ... The national instinct comes from the intimate nature of man; the religious one from the external nature.” Falconi continues: “The priest was very depressed and told me he had started an intense battle against these statements. But though his campaign seemed simple and just in appearance, in practice it was very hard-going by reason of the strange opposition, indirect though it was, brought by various Catholic authorities, including bishops and archbishops, as well as superiors of religious orders and communities. An active priest who was known for his pro-papal zeal and his tenacious and unbending opposition to these half-heresies, was transferred without explanation from Warsaw into the country [in the capacity of a private chaplain. Even though he presented the responsible superior with the reasons for wanting to remain in the city at such a critical moment, he did not secure a revocation of the order and had to leave.—Ed.] Yet he did not give up: taking advantage of the peace and solitude of the country, he had written a violent pamphlet defending the Holy Father. And as he intended to print 10,000 copies of it, he was desperately looking around for the necessary money.” Thus, according to Frassati, this priest’s one-man campaign, based on purely theological grounds, against some statements made by the FOP unrelated to Jews, was effectively silenced by his banishment to the countryside after it had met with the opposition of the Church leadership. This is a far cry from what Wood and Jankowski suggest was the prevailing situation. As for having had no history of philo-Semitism, the authors (Thomas Wood and Stanisław M. Jankowski) are apparently unaware of Zofia Kossak-Szczucka’s prewar writings, e.g., her well-known memoir, *Pożoga: Wspomnienia z Wołynia 1917–1919*, with its riveting descriptions of the Ukrainian pogroms in Płoskirów (Proskurov), in Volhynia, which she witnessed with horror in February 1919.

Kossak-Szczucka’s appeal (“The Protest”) has been minutely “dissected” and widely criticized by pundits because of the author’s anti-Jewish views and its supposed anti-Semitic content which, allegedly, dampened, rather than increased societal support for the downtrodden Jews. As in the case of Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, that narrow approach is unacceptably one-sided, as both Kossak-Szczucka and Fr. Kolbe espoused traditional,

mainstream Catholic teachings that were practically a mirror image of traditional Jewish views about Christians. Tellingly, Władysław Bartoszewski, then a young idealist, recalls “The Protest” as his rallying call and its author as his beacon. See Witold Bereś and Jerzy Skoczylas, “Władysław Bartoszewski—świadek epoki,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 16, 2002. “The Protest” has been criticized for appealing to the Poles’ Christian convictions rather than to their civic duty to come to the assistance of fellow citizens (i.e., the Jews). This charge is particularly flimsy because its stated intention was to give primacy to universal Christian teachings over narrow nationalistic ambitions, however justified. Given the author’s personal involvement in the rescue of Jews, her sincerity has never been effectively challenged. Kossak-Szczucka also levelled harsh criticism at those Catholics who failed to see that the commandment to love one’s neighbour extended to the Jews. See some of her other publications, e.g., the pamphlet entitled “Jesteś katolikiem ... Jakim?” (“What kind of Catholic are you?”). See Władysław Bartoszewski, “75 lat w XX wieku: pamiętnik mówiony (6),” *Więź* [Warsaw], (July 1997): 118–19.

“The Protest” contains a much criticized passage referring to Jews as “political, economic and ideological enemies of Poland,” and states that—despite the massive crimes perpetrated against them by the Germans—many Jews “hate us more than they hate the Germans, and ... make us responsible for their misfortune.” However, there is more than ample evidence for that charge in Jewish wartime and postwar writings. Emanuel Ringelblum noted, in his wartime journal, that hatred towards Polish Christians grew initially in the Warsaw ghetto because it was widely believed that the Poles were responsible for the economic restrictions against the Jews. See Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, 1st ed., 118. Jews played into this by spreading anti-Polish propaganda, going so far as to claim that the Poles were inciting the Germans. Towards the end of 1942, if not earlier, an “extremely hostile outlook” set in: “Jews began to see the Poles as party to their persecution and there were even those who blamed the Poles for the Germans’ determination to annihilate the.” See Havi Dreifuss (Ben-Sasson), *Relations between Jews and Poles During the Holocaust: The Jewish Perspective* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2017), 203. A wartime report from the Warsaw ghetto spoke of the author’s efforts to convince Jews “about the feelings in Polish society towards the Jews. They are inciting the occupier against the Jews, in order to save themselves by this stratagem.” He also questioned the sincerity of the Polish democratic opposition and preached about the “abject baseness of behavior among the Poles.” See Marian Małowist, “Assimilationists and Neophytes at the Time of War-Operations and in the Closed Jewish Ghetto,” in Joseph Kermish, ed., *To Live With Honor and Die With Honor!...: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives “O.S.”* [“Oneg Shabbath”] (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 619–34, at pp. 631, 633. In December 1943, Mordechai Tenenbaum-Tamaroff wrote: “Were it not for the Poles, were it not for their passive and active help in ‘solving’ the Jewish issue in Poland, the Germans would never have dared to do what they were doing.” See Dreifuss, *Relations between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust*, 185.

A jealousy built on false premises and contempt set in. Many Jews could not comprehend why it was they, rather than the Poles, who were suffering the brunt of German brutality. Stories spread in the ghetto that Poles were leading “normal lives” outside the ghetto: “Everything there is brimming with life. Everyone eats and drinks until they are full. ... On the other side, the houses are like palaces ... there is freedom to the full ... complete safety ... justice reigns.” See the diary of Jehoszua Albert cited in Marcin Urynowicz, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Warszawie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” in Żbikowski,



*Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 563. A Jew who was imprisoned in a hard labour camp in Częstochowa wrote: “I often heard the ringing of church bells in the city and saw priests walking in black their soutanes. This sight did not make a good impression on us. We knew that it was they who were responsible for the misfortune that befell the Jews. The church standing on the hill [i.e., the Jasna Góra monastery] was for us the symbol of the backwardness of Polish anti-Semitism.” See Mosze Rubinstein, “Between Life and Death,” in Shimon Kanc, ed., *Yisker-bukh tsum fareybikn dem ondenk fun der khorev-gevorner yidisher kehile Ryki* (Tel Aviv: Ryki Societies in Israel, Canada, Los Angeles, France and Brazil, 1973), 458 ff. A Jewish woman who survived in “Aryan” Warsaw declared, shortly after the war, that the Germans were *ordered* to hate the Jews and the Gestapo *had* to kill them, but she did not mince her words about the *true nature* of the Poles, whom she condemned as a whole: “Why did the Germans carry out this—unheard of in the history of crime—mass murder of the Jews precisely in Poland? It was not only because this was where the largest concentration of Jews was, but above all and mainly because they knew that in Poland they had the moral support of the majority of the population for this savagery, because they counted in advance on the approval of the lion’s share of the Poles ... That’s why the Germans found it worthwhile to transport Jews from the most distant countries of Europe to Auschwitz and Treblinka, to the General Government, because in no other country, on no other patch of land, could these their deeds be imaginable.” See the memoir of Maria Nowakowska in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 532. Of course, there is absolutely no trace of any such rationale in official German documents from that period, and reputable scholars have made short shrift of such irrational, polonophobic views, which, unfortunately, are all too common among Polish Jews.

Yisrael Gutman, director of research at Yad Vashem and editor in chief of the four-volume work *The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), has gone on record as stating: “I should like to make two things clear here. First, all accusations against the Poles that they were responsible for what is referred to as the ‘Final Solution’ are not even worth mentioning. Secondly, there is no validity at all in the contention that ... Polish attitudes were the reason for the siting of the death camps in Poland. Poland was a completely occupied country. There was a difference in the kind of ‘occupation’ countries underwent in Europe. Each country experienced a different occupation and almost all had a certain amount of autonomy, limited and defined in various ways. This autonomy did not exist in Poland. No one asked the Poles how one should treat the Jew.” See *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (1987): 341.

In the political sphere, after surveying the Jewish underground press published in the Warsaw ghetto, historian Teresa Prekerowa noted that there were strong pro-Soviet sentiments among certain Zionist factions. Leftist Zionists saw their future linked with the Communists, whom most Poles considered to be an enemy on par with the Nazis. Their loyalty was to the Soviet Union rather than Poland, which they often referred to as “former Poland” in their publications. The Hashomer Hatzair faction regarded the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, which partitioned Poland between those two invaders, to be a “wise and justified move.” Mordechai Anielewicz, who became the commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB), was the editor of a periodical (*Neged Hazerem*) that openly embraced Communism over capitalism and the Soviet Union over Poland. See Teresa Prekerowa, “The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 9: *Poles, Jews, Socialists: The Failure of an Ideal* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 148–57, at pp. 151–53.

In August 1942, just after the Germans embarked on their Großaktion (Great Action), the first large-scale deportation and mass murder of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto, the FOP published an appeal authored by Kossak-Szczucka in an underground leaflet titled “The Protest,” which called the destruction of the Jews then in progress “the most terrible crime history has ever witnessed.” The leaflet continued as follows:

In the face of crime, it is wrong to remain passive. Whoever is silent witnessing murder becomes a partner to the murder. Whoever does not condemn, condones.

... We have no means to actively counteract the German murders; we cannot help, nor can we rescue anybody. But we protest from the depths of our hearts filled with pity, indignation, and horror. This protest is demanded of us by God, who does not allow us to kill. It is demanded by our Christian conscience. Every being calling itself human has the right to the love of his fellow man. The blood of the defenceless victims is calling to the heavens for vengeance. Who does not support the protest with us, is not a Catholic.

We protest also as Poles. We do not believe that Poland could benefit from the horrible deeds of the Germans. ... The forced participation of the Polish nation as observers of the bloody spectacle taking place on Polish soil may breed indifference to injustice, sadism, and, above all, to the dangerous conviction that those close to us can be murdered with impunity.

Whoever does not understand this, and whoever dares to connect the future of the proud, free Poland, with the vile enjoyment of your fellow man’s misfortune—is, therefore, not a Catholic and not a Pole.<sup>703</sup>

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Unlike Irena Sendler, who accommodated with the Soviet-imposed Communist government, Zofia Kossak-Szczucka and Władysław Bartoszewski were persecuted by the Communist regime, notably at the hands of Jakub Berman, who exercised control over the Ministry of Public Security. Berman was the brother of Adolf Berman (alias Borowski), who acted as the secretary of the presidium of Żegota. (After the war, Adolf Berman became the chair of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland. He immigrated to Israel in 1950, where he was active in the Communist Party.) Kossak-Szczucka was unceremoniously expelled from Poland in 1945. In lieu of having her thrown into prison, Berman summoned her to his office and said: “I owe your family a debt which I want to repay. You rescued my brother’s children from the ghetto ... I can assure your departure from the country.” Kossak-Szczucka hesitated. She had sacrificed the war years risking her life for the liberation of her country, and speaking out for Jews persecuted by the Nazis. It was not an easy decision. Berman continued, “I am in a hurry, I have much to do. I recommend that you go.” Within two days’ time, she left for England via Sweden. Kossak-Szczucka lived in exile until her return to Poland in 1957, after Stalin’s death. See Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 1st ed., 104; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 2nd ed., 98; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota*, 3rd ed., 100; Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 1998), 132–33, 342 n.326.

<sup>703</sup> Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, ed., *Polacy–Żydzi, Polen–Juden, Poles–Jews, 1939–1941: Wybór źródeł, Quellenauswahl, Selection of Documents* (Warsaw: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walki i Męczeństwa, Instytut Dziedzictwa Narodowego, and Rytm, 2001), 212–16.

Ludwik Hirszfeld, a renowned immunologist who had converted to Catholicism long before the war, mingled and conversed with all strata of Polish society—"landed gentry, clergy, peasants"—while hiding in the Polish countryside. He moved eleven times and was helped by numerous Poles. In his memoir, published in 1946, Hirszfeld expressed his belief—based on that broad exposure—that the vast majority of the Polish population condemned the German atrocities against the Jews: "no one approved of these methods." He cautioned about making unwarranted generalizations based on the narrow perspective of individual survivors and the propagation of stereotypes.

I was told the story of a [German] gendarme in Tuszcz who boasted he had killed 150 Jews with his own hands. ... Local people told me this story with tears in their eyes. They showed me the nameless graves of people who were killed without guilt or need, were wept for by no one, and yet were pitied by the local people.<sup>704</sup>

Hirszfeld recalled his own experiences before he went into hiding.

The Polish people frequently displayed goodwill and friendliness toward me. I was touched most when this was displayed by persons whom I did not know personally. I remember how gallant Polish policemen were when we were being displaced from our home [to move into the Warsaw ghetto], how they encouraged us, apologized, and emphasized: "You will come back here." When I once asked the city government to disinfect my apartment, the disinfectors did not want to take a tip, saying: "One does not take money from Professor Hirszfeld." I remember a worker from the telephone company who repaired the telephone on our apartment in the presbytery. He asked my daughter whether I was a relative of that professor. When he learned that he was in that professor's apartment, he refused to accept payment.<sup>705</sup>

While the decimated and beleaguered Catholic hierarchy in Poland lacked meaningful avenues to protest the persecution of Jews, or of Polish Catholics, representatives of the Catholic Church hierarchy in exile spoke out. Rev. Karol Mieczysław Radoński, the bishop of Włocławek, who escaped from Poland and took up residence in London, participated in the Polish government's campaign to inform the world of the crimes being committed in German-occupied Poland. In a BBC radio address delivered on December 14, 1942, echoing the words of "The Protest," Bishop Radoński stated:

As concerns the Jewish populace, its suffering has exceeded everything that hatred and the bestiality of the oppressor is capable of inventing. The murders committed openly on

<sup>704</sup> Ludwik Hirszfeld, *Ludwik Hirszfeld: The Story of One Life* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 285, 318.

<sup>705</sup> Hirszfeld, *Ludwik Hirszfeld*, 273–74.

Jews in Poland midst the blustering and jibes of the executioners and their vassals must evoke horror and disgust in the entire civilized world. ...

As a Polish bishop I condemn with all certainty [most categorically] the crime committed in Poland on the Jewish population. The words of the Front Odrodzenia Polski FOP (Front for the Rebirth of Poland) which have reached us from the Homeland, beating with a truly Christian spirit of brotherly love and human compassion, are an expression of that which every Pole and Christian feels.<sup>706</sup>

Cardinal August Hlond, the Primate of Poland, who was exiled in France, was similarly well informed. His report to the Vatican on the situation in occupied Poland, issued in Lyons at the beginning of 1943, contained information about the confinement of Jews in ghettos and the horrible conditions there, the deportation to Poland of Jews from other occupied countries, and the mass execution and gassing of Jews. These accounts came to him from the Polish government exiled in London. Cardinal Hlond's report was published in the foremost French Christian journal of resistance, *Cahiers du témoignage chrétien*, and played an important role in spreading the news of the fate of Polish Jewry in the West.

Finally, it should be mentioned that German-occupied Poland constitutes a ghetto to which all the Jews from Poland and Germany have been brought, and Jews from other occupied countries are presently being transported. They are interned in ghettos, which are found in all the larger towns. They are shot to death for escaping from the ghetto. They are exhausted and in many cases are worked or starved to death, or freeze to death. Sometimes Gestapo forces enter the ghettos and carry out massacres. Every day the Jews are shot in mass executions and killed in gas chambers. Thousands of them were killed in Przemyśl, Stanisławów, Rzeszów, and Dębica; some 55,000 Jews were killed in Lwów alone. In total, about 700,000 Jews were cruelly murdered on Polish territory. There can be no doubt about Hitler's plan of total and unequivocal annihilation of the Jews on the European continent.<sup>707</sup>

<sup>706</sup> "Przemówienie biskupa Radońskiego," *Dziennik Polski*, December 17, 1942, reproduced in Kunert, *Polacy–Żydzi, Polen–Juden, Poles–Jews, 1939–1941*, 108–10.

<sup>707</sup> "L'ordre nouveau en Pologne," *Cahiers du témoignage chrétien*, nos. 13–14 (January–February 1943), 12. The report in question, "O położeniu Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce po trzech latach okupacji hitlerowskiej, 1939–1942," was reprinted in *Chrześcijanin w świecie*, no. 70 (October 1978): 25–53; the relevant passage is found at p. 33. Even before the war, in response to anti-Jewish disturbances, Cardinal August Hlond condemned violence against Jews, just as other members of the Polish hierarchy had done. In his pastoral letter of February 29, 1936, he wrote: "... it is not permissible to assault, strike or injure Jews. In a Jew you should also respect and love a human being and your neighbour." (Did Polish rabbis implore Jews to love Christian Poles?) According to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency dispatch of November 17, 1931, "The Metropolitan of Cracow [Archbishop Adam Sapieha] has issued an appeal to his clergy and to all Catholics, in which he exhorts the population to keep the peace and not to allow themselves to be led away by acts of provocation committed against the Jews. The Metropolitan goes on to condemn those who are inciting the people against the Jews and demands that they should be punished."

Jewish sources confirm that, while in exile in Lourdes, France, Cardinal Hlond provided Catholic documents to many Jews and placed Jewish children in monasteries.<sup>708</sup>

Bishop Józef Gawlina, who was attached to the Polish armed forces fighting outside Poland, delivered a stirring sermon in London on October 3, 1943, in the presence of the President of Poland and members of the government in exile, calling for solidarity with and support for Jews on the part of the Polish nation and the Catholic Church, even though the Church itself was being persecuted and had limited possibility to extend assistance. Bishop Gawlina underscored that “All are children of God and children of the Motherland” without distinction as to religion and nationality, and that Jews in particular were being persecuted and murdered as a people by the Germans.<sup>709</sup>

Remarkably, British historian Richard Evans (one of many) claims that the Polish Catholic Church not only did not take a clear stance against the Germans’ murderous policies towards Polish Jews, but rather, “if anything, the opposite was the case.”<sup>710</sup> The Polish hierarchy, it must be remembered, did not issue

<sup>708</sup> Joseph Tenenbaum, *In Search of a Lost People: The Old and New Poland* (New York: Beechurst Press, 1948), 236. An academic at York University in Toronto, however, claimed, contrary to all facts: “There was no coincidence in the fact that the Germans chose Poland as the site of their most horrendous concentration and extermination camps. ... The [Polish] clergy, generally speaking ... was against the Jews and preached in the churches not to help save those who tried to escape from the camps or detention. The Polish Cardinal Hlond was officially against saving or helping those who could have been saved ... These are historical facts which cannot be denied.” See Isaac Bar-Lewaw, Letter, “Jews in Poland,” *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], April 3, 1978.

<sup>709</sup> Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, ed., *Józef Feliks Gawlina Biskup Polowy Polskich Sił Zbrojnych* (Warsaw: Adiutor, 2002), 123; Damian Bednarski, “I vescovi polacchi e la salvaguardia degli ebrei,” in Mikrut, *La Chiesa cattolica in Europa centro-orientale di fronte al Nazionalsocialismo 1939–1945*, 748.

<sup>710</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich at War, 1939–1945*, 64. Writing in a similar vein, American historian Timothy Snyder put forward equally bizarre conclusions for which he provides no hard evidence: “The dominant Roman Catholic Church in Poland took no stance against the mass murder of the millions of Jews who had lived for centuries among its adherents. Catholic doctrine at the time deemed Jews collectively responsible for the killing of Jesus, and Catholic teachings about modernity connected the blight of communism to Judaism. As a result, the motivations of Roman Catholics who rescued Jews had to arise from some sort of individualism, either their own or that of their parish priests. Such Roman Catholics tended to express religious beliefs that were unorthodox or heretical.” See Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tom Duggan Books, 2015), 291. In fact, many Polish rescuers as well as their Jewish charges pointed to the rescuers’ strong Catholic faith as their motivation for risking their lives to help Jews.

Unfortunately, one can find statements in the memoirs of highly educated Holocaust survivors that are oblivious to the wartime fate of the Polish Catholic clergy. See, e.g., Carolyn Gammon and Israel Unger, *The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid

public pronouncements about the fate of Catholic Poles or its own clergy. Unfortunately, such baseless charges are characteristic of Western literature on wartime Poland. Columbia University historian István Deák, an authority on the subject, remarked, “No issue in Holocaust literature is more burdened by misunderstanding, mendacity, and sheer racial prejudice than that of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II.”<sup>711</sup>

Members of the Jewish underground would often meet at Catholic institutions on the “Aryan” side of Warsaw, as these were considered the safest meeting places. A popular venue was a kitchen run by the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Resurrectionist Sisters) on Sewerynów Street. This quiet, secluded spot was a regular meeting place not only for Żegota, but for the Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa—ŻOB). Vladka Meed (Feigle Peltel, later Miedzyrzecki), a member of the Jewish underground who had been brought out of the ghetto in December 1942 by Michał Klepfisz, provides the following description:

Michal [Michał Klepfisz] informed me that Mikolai [Mikołaj] Berezowski (his original name was Dr. Leon Feiner) wanted to see me. He was the Bund representative of the coordinating committee on the “Aryan side,” and the central figure in the Jewish underground, and our liaison with the Polish underground. ...

I was to meet him at Sewerynow [Sewerynów] 6, between two and three in the afternoon, in a convent, which had a restaurant open to the public. It served as a rendezvous for our small circle of underground activists. Since our group had no steady meeting place, we had to use quiet public sites, and could not meet too often in the same locale.

Michal accompanied me to the convent, which was on a quiet lane where people rarely passed. Next to the kitchen were a small waiting room where one could smoke, a cloakroom, and two spacious halls. Our group usually lunched in one of these halls, which was screened by old green palms set near the window. A rare serenity prevailed here. The diners were predominantly office clerks and impoverished middle class people. Compared to other public kitchens, the prices here were very moderate.

Michal guided me to a vacant table, whispering instructions. Two men were dining at a table to the right. One of them was forty years old, with a crop of black hair, a somber face and unassuming black clothes. He looked like a minor Polish government official.

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Laurier University Press, 2013), at p. 156: “Perhaps the most depressing feeling was seeing the huge church next to the town where Jews had been assembled and tortured prior to being murdered. We saw priests and nuns walking to the church. ... It was very rare that the Catholic clergy protested against what was being done on their doorstep.” Unger, whose family was rescued by Poles in Tarnów, also writes candidly: “I desperately wanted to be Canadian. I was ashamed of being born in Poland. I still have difficulty with that today. Poland was something I did not want to be associated with. I have no feelings for Poland. It is too much of a Jewish graveyard.” Ibid., 72.

<sup>711</sup> István Deák, “Memories of Hell,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 26, 1997, 38–43.



(Dr. Adolf Berman, representative on the Aryan side of the Jewish National Committee, and leader of the Left Poale Zion). Beside him sat a blonde gentleman with a well-groomed moustache, calm and confident in bearing. This was Henryk (Salo Fishgrund), who had been a Bund activist in Cracow [Kraków] prior to the war. Our own Celek [Jankel Celemenski] was sitting by himself at a table opposite.

Shortly, a tall, elegant elderly man with silvery hair and an upturned moustache, bright eyes, and rosy cheeks—the image of a Polish country gentleman—entered. Like Henryk, he had an air of self-confidence. This was Mikolai. He took in the scene at a glance and, catching sight of Michal, joined us.

After exchanging pleasantries, we ordered our meal. Even-tempered, with a faint smile, Mikolai spoke to me with fatherly warmth. ...

“Our task is to get more volunteers,” he remarked. “But we must be very careful; if we make one mistake, we can get a lot of people into very bad trouble.”

“What will my assignment be?” I asked.

“As you are doubtless aware, our main tasks are to establish contact with Gentiles, find living quarters for women and children, assist Jews who are in hiding, and, in particular, to find sources of arms.”

Michal and I listened closely, as Mikolai continued his instructions in a low voice. ...

As the waitress approached, we stopped our discussion. After she had left, Mikolai asked me whether everything was clear to me. ...

Again, for the benefit of the waitress, we changed to comments on the weather and our delicious meal. When she had gone, we agreed that I would meet Henryk and Mikolai at this convent every day for lunch. All issues would have to be settled at this meeting-place. On special occasions, however, I was to visit Henryk at his home ...

This quiet conversation over lunch in a convent kitchen marked a turning-point in my life and activities. From now on I was to be an integral active part of the underground.

I started a new life. We carried on our activities in accordance with the quiet conversations we had had in the convent refectory where practically all the activists who could move about in public because of their Aryan looks converged.<sup>712</sup>

Michael Zylberberg, another Jewish patron of the same kitchen run by the Resurrectionist Sisters, in his memoirs, notes that many Jews frequented that place and that this fact was likely no secret to the nuns.

Jews in hiding often met by chance in the streets, restaurants and churches. In Sewerynow [Sewerynów] Street you would find the Catholic Community Centre of St. Joseph, which had a well-patronised restaurant. The fact that it was in a quiet street and that the service by nuns was so pleasant attracted many Jews to that place. They came there for lunch and to meet friends, both Jews and Gentiles. It was known to nearly all Jews hidden in Warsaw, and offered an hour's respite from the cruel outside. The atmosphere was peaceful; everyone knew everyone else and fear was temporarily at bay. I went to the restaurant every day for more than a year. On principle I avoided those whom I suspected of being Jewish; I always tried to sit with Poles. It turned out that these so very Catholic Poles were, in fact,

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<sup>712</sup> Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, 84–85.

Jews. Among the diners I often saw previous friends and pupils of mine. We glanced at each other but conversation was out of the question.

There was one diner who always attracted particular attention; a heavily-veiled woman in black who always wore widow's weeds. No one ever saw her face. The heavy mourning garb, which she wore in summer and winter, and the thick veil were symbols of some great tragedy—and I was certain that she was Jewish too. One day I asked a fellow diner who she was. He told me she was Mrs. Basia Berman, the wife of the active Jewish underground worker Adolf Berman. She acted well, and sometimes overacted, the part of a veiled Catholic.<sup>713</sup>

The Jewish underground was known to turn to the Catholic clergy for assistance. They established contact with the Discalced or Barefoot Carmelites (Mniszki Bose Zakonu Najświętszej Maryi Panny z Góry Karmel, commonly known as *karmelitanki bose*), a cloistered order, through Irena Adamowicz, a member of the Polish underground.<sup>714</sup> The nuns' convent on Wolska Street in Warsaw, near the ghetto, was one of their meeting places. It also served as a storage place for arms destined for the ghetto fighters. A cot was kept behind the screen in the locutory for Arie Wilner ("Jurek"), a liaison officer of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) to sleep overnight if necessary. (Previously, Wilner had stayed at the Dominican nunnery in Kolonia Wileńska, which became a hiding place for members of the Wilno Jewish underground.)

... the Discalced Carmelites gave shelter to the especially endangered leaders of Jewish underground organizations. In their home at 27 Wolska Street in Warsaw, situated near the ghetto walls, help was given to refugees in various forms; this was one of the places where false documents were delivered to Jews; there, too, liaison men of the Jewish underground on the "Aryan" side—Arie Wilner, Tuwile Szejngut, and others—had their secret premises. In 1942 and 1943, the seventeen sisters lived under permanent danger of [death] but never declined their cooperation even in the most hazardous undertakings.<sup>715</sup>

The superior of the Carmelite convent was Jadwiga Komaiszko, known as Mother Mary Joseph of Jesus (Maria Józefa od Jezusa). The spirit of those times was captured with unusual poignancy by Polish-Jewish journalist Hanna Krall, who interviewed the mother superior for her book, *Shielding the Flame*.

As the ŻOB's [ŻOB's] representative on the Aryan side ..., Jurek [Arie Wilner] used to get in touch all the time with "Wacław" [Wacław, i.e., Henryk Woliński of the Jewish Department of the Home Army's Bureau of Information and Propaganda] and the officers, and when he was unable to take all the packets [of arms and ammunition] to the Ghetto, he would

<sup>713</sup> Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary*, 120–21.

<sup>714</sup> "W tym też czasie...", *Historia karmelitanek bosych w Warszawie*, Internet: <https://www.karmelitankibose.warszawa.pl/w-tym-tez-czasie>.

<sup>715</sup> Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 189–90.

leave them at Mr. [Henryk] Grabowski's or with the barefoot Carmelite nuns on Wolska Street: sometimes guns, sometimes knives, or even explosives. At that time the barefoot Carmelite nuns did not have strictures as severe as those they observe today and they were allowed to show their faces to strangers, so Jurek, tired after carrying sacks, used to rest on a cot behind a screen in the locutory. I am sitting now in the same locutory on one side of a black iron bar, with the Mother Superior in a nook on the other side, at dusk, and we are talking about those arms transports for the Ghetto that went through the convent for almost a year. Didn't they have any misgivings? The Mother Superior does not understand ...

"After all, arms in such a place?"

"You mean, perhaps, that arms serve to kill people?" asks the Mother Superior. No, for some reason she had never thought about it that way. Her only thought was for the fact that Jurek would eventually be making use of these arms and that when his last hour came, it would be good if he managed to make an act of contrition and make his peace with God. She even asked him to promise this to her, and now she asks me what I think; did he remember the promise when he shot himself in the bunker, at 18 Miła Street?

While Jurek and his friends were making use of those arms, the sky in this part of the town became red and this glow even reached into the convent's vestibule. That's why precisely there, and not in the chapel, the barefoot Carmelite nuns would gather each night and read psalms ("Yea, for Thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake! Why sleepest thou, oh Lord?"), and she prayed to God that Jurek Wilner might meet his death without fear.<sup>716</sup>

In preparation for the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto in April 1943, the Jewish Fighting Organization received military training in a Catholic church.

Mikolai [Mikołaj, i.e., Leon Feiner] introduced Michal [i.e., Michał Klepfisz] to a Polish underground officer named Julian, who was an expert on explosives. Their first meeting took place at dusk in a church on Fabryczna Street. Michal soon learned the art of manufacturing grenades, bombs, and "Molotov cocktails." Silent but pleased, he would return from the church, loaded with leaflets and formulae, to sit up all night studying the material.<sup>717</sup>

The main arms depot for the right-wing Jewish underground organization, the Jewish Military Union (Żydowski Związek Walki—ŻZW), was located in Warsaw's St. Stanisław Hospital for Infectious Diseases, at 37 Wolska Street, a place that the Germans were reluctant to enter. The Polish underground organized a cell at that hospital comprised of medical staff, nurses—both nuns and lay personnel, and the hospital chaplain, Rev. Władysław Smyrski (nom de guerre, "Jawor"), which worked closely with the Jewish underground.<sup>718</sup> Chaim Lazar

<sup>716</sup> Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 100–1.

<sup>717</sup> Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, 125.

<sup>718</sup> Maciej Kledzik, "Biało-czerwona opaska z gwiazdą Dawida," *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], March 12, 2005; Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 40.

Litai records the following story of assistance for the Jewish Military Union by Catholic priests in his monograph, *Muranowska* 7.

A Catholic church served the Z.Z.W. [Żydowski Związek Walki—Jewish Military Union] as a highly-effective hideout.

There were in the ghetto at that time a considerable number of former Jews who had converted to Christianity; one of their centres was the Church of the Holy Virgin in Leszno St. ...

... One of these converts was a man called Fodor [Rev. Tadeusz Puder], a priest at the Church of the Holy Virgin and a close friend of Dr. Marceł Godlewski, a leading Catholic Church dignitary. Fodor was later saved by Godlewski from deportation and hidden in the Aryan section of the city.<sup>719</sup>

In the course of their joint efforts, Father Godlewski became friendly with a number of Jews, among them Lopata [Łopata], one of the Betar leaders and a member of Betar. Very soon, Lopata was able to exert considerable influence on the priest. This gave rise to the idea of digging a tunnel leading from the ghetto to the church, through which Jewish children could be evacuated. The tunnel would also be used by the Jewish Military Organization for transferring men, supplies and arms, and as a means of communication with the Aryan side.

The tunnel was dug from a building near the church on Leszno St. under the crypt of the church, where a large bunker was excavated. A well-concealed aperture was made in the floor of the crypt to the bunker below (the floor of the crypt was actually the roof of the bunker). This aperture gave access from the bunker to the crypt, whence, by means of a ladder, one emerged through removable floorboards into the vestibule of the church, a few paces from the entrance. A short stairway led down to Leszno St. a busy thoroughfare open to Poles and Aryans, transversed by tramway from the west of the city to the eastern suburbs.

The bunker had another exit through a hole in the wall of the crypt. This led to an adjacent building which was occupied by nuns. In an emergency, an additional means of escape was afforded by the “chimney,” a narrow shaft in the hollow wall behind the church altar, which led down to the bunker. Built by engineers, members of the Z.Z.W., the bunker was fitted with electricity, an alarm system and other essential installations. ...

Gabriela “Bronka” Lajewska [Łajewska], a non-Jewish girl, maintained liaison between the A.K. [Armia Krajowa—Polish Home Army] and the Z.Z.W. headquarters. ... Her main task lay in helping the evacuation of Jewish children from the ghetto. As a rule she would take charge of the children at the mouth of the tunnel in the cemetery or near the All Saints Church and hand them into the care of Father Godlewski, the priest. The last time she was in the ghetto, shortly before the major Aktion [summer 1942], she was caught trying to get a group of children out through the passage near the Pawiak, and sent to prison. In July 1944 she was transferred from the prison to a camp at Ravensburg [Ravensbrück]. ... In all, Gabriela rescued more than seventy children, many of whom she transferred to

<sup>719</sup> The story of Rev. Tadeusz Puder being in the ghetto is a legend. The circumstances of his rescue are described earlier in the text.

the Home for Blind Children [run by the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross] in the town of Laski [near Warsaw].<sup>720</sup>

Jewish converts posed a unique challenge for the Catholic clergy. Several thousand Catholics of Jewish origin, some from families who had converted one or two generations previously, were classified as Jews by the Germans and forced into the ghettos. In addition, many Jews decided to convert inside the ghetto.<sup>721</sup> Converts, as well as assimilated Jews who spoke only Polish, were generally disliked and even suffered harassment at the hands of other Jews.<sup>722</sup>

<sup>720</sup> Chaim Lazar Litai, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada-P.E.C. Press, 1966) 135–36, 169–70.

<sup>721</sup> The number of Jewish converts to Christianity who resided in the Warsaw ghetto is variously estimated at between 2,000 and 6,000. According to official sources, as of January 1, 1941, just after the closing of the ghetto, there were some 1,750 Jewish Christians, but this is likely understated. See Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 66–68.

<sup>722</sup> According to a recent study, converts were “generally despised by the wider ghetto society.” They were “accused of lack morality, of having spiritual complexes of megalomania toward Jews, and of having an inferiority complex toward Christians.” See Katarzyna Person, *Assimilated Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1940–1943* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 46. Rabbi Chaim Aron Kaplan expressed tremendous rancor toward Jewish converts, attributing to them the vilest of motives and rejoicing at their misfortune: “I shall, however, have revenge on our ‘converts.’ I will laugh aloud at the sight of their tragedy. ... Conversion brought them but small deliverance. ... This is the first time in my life that a feeling of vengeance has given me pleasure.” See Katsh, *Scroll of Agony*, 78–79, 250. The Orthodox members of the Jewish council attempted to deny converts the rights and help provided to Jews in the ghetto. See Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 70. Converts were repeatedly harassed when they left church services and, on occasion, the German authorities had to intervene to protect them from enraged Orthodox Jews. See the diary of Alceo Valcini, Warsaw correspondent of the Milan, *Corriere della Sera*, *Il calvario di Varsavia, 1939–1945* (Milano: Garzanti, 1945), translated into Polish as *Golgota Warszawy, 1939–1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973), 235–36. Crowds of Jews would gather in front of the Christian churches on Sundays and Christian holy days to take in the spectacle of converts attending mass. At Easter in 1942, the crowd of onlookers at the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Leszno Street was so large that the Jewish police (Ordnungsdienst) stationed a special squad there to maintain order and protect the converts. Cited in Christopher R. Browning and Israel Gutman, “The Reports of a Jewish ‘Informant’ in the Warsaw Ghetto—Selected Documents,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 17 (1986): 263. Hostilities also occurred during the Sunday mass at All Saints Church, where a large mob of Hasids gathered with sticks to beat up the converted Jews as they left church. The Jewish police were called in to disperse the Hasids. See Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 85. A Jewish woman who was not a convert describes in her memoirs how Jews in the Warsaw ghetto harassed Jewish Christians who attended church services. See Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump For Life*, 32. This is confirmed by another Jew who observed Jewish youths standing in the street as converts walked to church services and calling out mockingly, “Good Yontiff!” (Good holiday!). See Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p.,

Converts required both spiritual care and material assistance. However, the activities of the Polish clergy were not confined to converts. All Saints Church, which was located inside the walled Warsaw ghetto, remained open until the so-called Great Action, at the end of July 1942. Monsignor Marcelli Godlewski, the pastor of All Saints church, and his vicars, Rev. Antoni Czarnecki and Rev. Tadeusz Nowotko, extended help to everyone. Some 22 families of Jewish converts as well as non-converts, around 100 people in all, were housed in the parish rectory and buildings. The Catholic relief agency Caritas operated a kitchen where food was served to the needy, regardless of their religion. The secretary of the metropolitan curia, Monsignor Aleksander Fajęcki, visited the parish from time to time. Jewish children from Janusz Korczak's orphanage were invited to play in the church's courtyard garden. Rev. Godlewski opened the church's crypt to Jews who made their way out of the ghetto, provided false documents to many, and helped smuggle Jewish children to the Aryan side. Since he resided outside the ghetto, Rev. Godlewski had a special pass which allowed him to come and go. He was thus able to smuggle food into the ghetto and take children out when he was leaving.

Rev. Godlewski brought at least a dozen Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto to his home in Anin, on the outskirts of Warsaw, which housed a children's shelter (orphanage) staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. There is more about the rescue activity in Anin later on. Bronisław Anlen, a member of the Communist Party, stated that Rev. Godlewski brought food for him into the ghetto from Antoni Mokrzycki, who was the head of a dentists' association and member of the National Democratic Party.<sup>723</sup> Rev. Godlewski also provided birth and baptismal certificates for Jews who passed as Catholic Poles outside the ghetto. The Jasik family, the rescuers of Larissa Sztorchan (later Cain), obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from Rev. Godlewski for their charge, in

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1985), 86. A Pole who entered the ghetto recalled the caustic remarks made by onlookers about Jews who attended religious services at All Saints Church. See Waclaw Sledzinski, *Governor Frank's Dark Harvest* (Newtown, Montgomeryshire, Mid-Wales: Montgomerys, 1946), 120. A similar situation prevailed in Kraków. When priests and nuns would enter the ghetto to tend to the spiritual needs of the converts, they were spat at and cursed by indignant Jews. "Converts were not popular in the ghetto. ... 'We're foreigners and they hate us.'" See Roman Frister, *The Cap, or the Price of a Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 84, 89–90.

<sup>723</sup> Ruta Pragier, *Żydzi czy Polacy* (Warsaw: Rytm, 1992), 80–81. Antoni Mokrzycki welcomed Bronisław Anlen into his home after his escape from the Warsaw ghetto and found him a safe hideout. Mokrzycki's two sons belonged to the far-right National Radical Camp; all three were executed by the Germans on July 16, 1943, reportedly for helping Jews. See Władysław Bartoszewski, *Warsaw Death Ring, 1939–1944* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1968), 189.



the name of Marysia Kozłowska.<sup>724</sup> According to Yad Vashem, who recognized the prelate as a Righteous Gentile in 2009, Rev. Godlewski was instrumental in rescuing at least 70 Jews.<sup>725</sup> He is the subject of a monograph in Polish titled *The Pastor of the Ghetto*.<sup>726</sup>

The assistance rendered by Rev. Godlewski and the priests from All Saints Church is mentioned in many publications. Rev. Godlewski has been described as an anti-Semite. He was disliked for promoting Polish businesses, workers' unions and credit unions, which undermined the prewar economic advantages enjoyed by Jews, and for his association with the right-wing National Democracy.

When the walls were erected around the Warsaw ghetto, All Saints' church was enclosed within them. Its parish priest [pastor] was Marceli Godlewski, known quite well before the war for his anti-Jewish views. However, once he witnessed the terrifying persecution of the Jews, Godlewski turned his energies to the task of helping as much as he could. He did so by remaining in the ghetto and ministering to the Jews who had been converted to Christianity. He also offered the shelter of his church to any others who turned to him.

Father Godlewski gave the Jews who came to him birth certificates of deceased parishioners, thus providing those ready to escape with an "authentic" document. He smuggled children out of the ghetto under his robes, and helped find shelter and provide food on the other side for those who did make it out.

Godlewski frequently had meetings with Adam Czerniaków, the chairman of the Judenrat, listening sympathetically and trying to give hope. Caritas, a Catholic welfare organization, opened a soup kitchen in the ghetto operated by a Father Michał Kliszko, [vicar at the cathedral parish of St. John the Baptist]. It was open to anyone who came. Several hundred Jews were kept hidden with Godlewski's former parishioners on the Polish side and in a chapel at 49 Żłota Street.

Father Godlewski and his young curates remained in the ghetto until they were expelled, but continued their work outside the walls.<sup>727</sup>

One of the most famous Poles of Jewish origin who witnessed Rev. Godlewski's commitment to both his parishioners and to Jews in the Warsaw ghetto was the bacteriologist Ludwik Hirszfeld. Hirszfeld, who had converted to Catholicism long before the war for patriotic reasons, described his experiences in his memoir, which he completed in 1944 and published in 1946. Together with his

<sup>724</sup> Mateusz Szczepanik, "Ta ceremonia jest ukorowaniem mojego ratowania," August 24, 2018, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/ta-ceremonia-jest-ukorowaniem-mojego-ratowania>.

<sup>725</sup> Marceli Godlewski, RD. The Jews rescued by Rev. Godlewski are listed by name.

<sup>726</sup> Karol Madaj and Małgorzata Żuławnik, *Proboszcz getta* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej-Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2010).

<sup>727</sup> Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 2nd ed., 36; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota*, 3rd ed., 27–28.

wife and daughter, Hirszfeld took refuge in the rectory of All Saints Church until they were able to escape from the ghetto. Hirszfeld survived on the Aryan side with the help of a number of Poles.<sup>728</sup>

[I]n September 1941, we received our own apartment in the rectory of the Church of All Saints on Grzybowski Square. Unlike the church on Leszno Street where it was primarily only priests who lived in the [much smaller] parochial house, in the rectory of the Church of All Saints, all rooms and apartments were given to the parishioners except for the apartment of the Reverend Prelate Godlewski. ...

Prelate Godlewski. When I utter his name, I am overcome with emotion. It was passion and love in one soul. He had once been a militant anti-Semite, a priest waging war by word and letter. But when fate brought him in touch with this abyss of misery, he discarded his attitude and devoted himself to the Jews with all the ardor of his priestly heart.

When his beautiful gray head appeared, reminiscent of [painter Jan] Matejko's [renowned Jesuit preacher Piotr] Skarga, heads bowed down before him in love and humility. We all loved him: children and old people alike and we would snatch him from one another for a few moments' talk. Nor did he spare himself. He taught the children catechism, headed the [charitable] Caritas movement in the district, and ordered that soup be handed out to all those who were hungry, regardless of whether they were Christians or Jews. He often came to see us, to comfort and hearten us.

We were not the only ones to think much of him. I would like to pass on for the records what the President of the [Jewish] Community [Adam] Czerniaków, thought of him. We got together at Docent [Juliusz] Zweibaum's to mark the first year of our courses. The president told us how the priest had shed tears in his office when speaking of the Jews' misery and how he was trying to help and ease that misery. He told us how much heart this priest—a former anti-Semite—was showing the Jews.

Father Antoni Czarnecki was prelate Godlewski's assistant and deputy. He was a young priest and did not have the prelate's passionate relationship with life, but he possessed the sweetness and goodness of a clergyman. He was liked and respected by all. And his pleasant and sincere manner had a soothing effect.

It was a strange life. Never had I had such close contact with the church as when I lived in the Jewish district. For a year, every day, morning and evening, I soaked up the atmosphere of quiet in the church. And I lived near people whose profession was a mission of goodness. On Sundays, all [Jewish] Christians—not only Catholics—went to mass. Every one participated: doctors, lawyers, those for whom baptism has been an act of faith,

<sup>728</sup> Among Hirszfeld's benefactors, Yad Vashem recognized Rev. Marceli Godlewski, Paweł Horbaczewski, Irena Janicka, Stanisław Kiełbasiński, Aldona Lipszyc, Stanisław and Maria Popowski, Juliusz and Jadwiga Saloni, and Hanna Taborska. Hirszfeld mentions many others in his memoir. Ludwik Hirszfeld was one of eight members of the clandestine medical school in the Warsaw Ghetto who are known to have survived on the "Aryan" side with the help of Poles. The others were Emil Apfelbaum, Henryk Brokman, Ari Leo Heller, Henryk Lewenfisz Wojnarowski, Henryk Makower, Ludwik Stabholz, and Juliusz Zweibaum. See George M. Weisz, Andrzej Grzybowski, and William Randall Albury, "The Fate of the Warsaw Ghetto Medical Faculty," *The Israel Medicine Association Journal*, vol. 14 (April 2012): 209–13.

those for whom it was a symbol of national identity, as well as those who had at one point been baptized out of self-interest. But every one felt the need to assemble at least once a week in the church for worship. I observed many people who were not only believers but practicing: even daily mass attracted regular churchgoers. ...

Many people were baptized in the district—both older and younger people, sometimes even entire families. Among them were some of my students, both men and women. Sometimes I was invited to be godfather. What motives could they have had? No profit was to be had: the change of faith in no way changed their legal status. No—they were drawn by the charm of religion—the religion of a nation to which they felt they belonged. ... For Christianity came to power because it gave the unhappy and despised the right to equality and human dignity. Equality before God—so maybe ... before man as well.

In the first half of July 1942, persons who had contact with the Germans warned the Community Board that the Jews were in danger of being deported from the ghetto. ... At the same time, the frequency of killings sharply increased. ... people belonging to the most diverse social strata were being murdered. Almost every day, men and women, Poles and Jews, were brought from the Aryan side and killed, usually in the door of houses in Orła [Orla] Street or in ruins. This was usually done in broad daylight. ... On July 20, the murders began to multiply in number. On July 21, so many murders were committed that on Chłodna Street, for example, there were twenty-six bodies ... Professor [Franciszek] Raszeja was killed on that day. He was summoned to a sick person's house, and he had a legal pass. His former assistant, Dr. Kazimierz Polak, a nurse, and relatives were all present. SS men broke into the apartment and murdered them all. Shortly thereafter, the order was given to close both churches and take the keys and the passes from the priests.

I remember the moment when Rev. Czarnecki, pale from emotion, came and communicated this dismal news to us. We had the impression that an abyss was opening before us. A friend of mine, the young lawyer Tadeusz Endelman, had long had the intention of being baptized. In view of the approaching death threat, he asked the priest to perform the ritual immediately. Rev. Czarnecki did not refuse him this last comfort. After the baptism, the priest went up to the altar and began to pray. A handful of parishioners were present. Everyone felt that the moment was a farewell to life; everyone cried. Later, Rev. Czarnecki visited all tenants of the parochial house to say good-bye and to encourage them. I came back from the city that day. He said good-bye to me with tears in his eyes, made the sign of the cross, and left.<sup>729</sup>

**A**fter the liquidation of the so-called small ghetto, All Saints Church was no longer within the enclosed ghetto and was allowed to reopen. Rev. Edward Gorczyca became the acting pastor. Assistance was once again provided to Jewish fugitives. Rev. Antoni Czarnecki, the vicar, arranged for Rudolf Hermelin to be smuggled out of the ghetto. In February 1943, two Poles brought Hermelin to

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<sup>729</sup> Hirszfeld, *Ludwik Hirszfeld*, 244–45, 260–61.

the church rectory. Hermelin remained there for several weeks before moving on.<sup>730</sup> His rescue involved the cooperation of a network of dedicated Poles.

The engineer Rudolf Hermelin (born 1897) found himself in the Warsaw ghetto together with his wife and daughter. In April, they moved into the All Souls [Saints] parish church on Plac Grzybowski which was inside the ghetto grounds. During the large ghetto liquidation operation in 1942, his entire family ended up in the Treblinka extermination camp. He remained alone in the so-called “ghetto remains,” keeping in contact with the parish priests.

At the beginning of February 1943, at the request of Father Godlewski, All Saints parish priest, Adam Świąder, made contact with him. He helped him to cross into the so-called “Aryan side.” For several months, Hermelin remained in hiding with the help of numerous Poles.

The first of these were Adam and Maria Świąder, who had earlier provided help to many Jews, as well as hiding Home Army weapons in their home. On one occasion, a Gestapo agent appeared at the Świąder home trying to arrest Hermelin and a Jewish boy who was also hiding there. They bribed him to leave.

Next, thanks to a friend of his sister, Hermelin turned for help to a single woman, Magdalena Miedziejewska. She was the housekeeper in the home of a certain German. The woman hid him in her small apartment. After a few days, Hermelin again turned to the Świąder couple who, this time, hid him with a group of Jews in the basement. Fearing discovery by the Germans, he would soon seek further help. In the summer of 1944, he was hidden by Franciszka Sętkowska, Adam Świąder’s sister.

Following the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, Sętkowska moved to the countryside. She suggested that Hermelin join her, but he declined due to his bad health. The woman provided him with food supplies and entrusted his care to her neighbour, Marta Kielak (1905–1993). She also provided him with help. During a Gestapo search, she introduced him as her cousin and continued to care for him until liberation in January 1945. They remained in contact for many years thereafter.<sup>731</sup>

The activities carried out on behalf of Jews, especially converts, in the three Catholic parishes located inside the Warsaw ghetto are described in Peter Dembowski’s book, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*.

Before the war, there was no specific Jewish district in Warsaw. Jews lived in all districts, but there was a higher concentration of poor Jews in the northern part of what would be called in the United States the downtown area. Thus the Germans created the Jewish living quarter in that area, where up to 40 percent of the population consisted of non-Jews. When the Jewish living quarter became the ghetto, it contained three Roman Catholic parishes

<sup>730</sup> Testimony of Rudolf Hermelin, March 8, 1948, JHI, record group 301, no. 4151. Rev. Edward Gorczyca also assisted in the transfer of possessions belonging to Jews into the Warsaw ghetto. See Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1020.

<sup>731</sup> Mateusz Szczepaniak, “Righteous Ceremony Held at Royal Castle in Warsaw,” January 15, 2018, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/righteous-ceremony-held-royal-castle-warsaw>.

within its boundaries: Saint Augustine, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (henceforth B.V.M.), and All Saints. The Church of the Nativity of the B.V.M. has been sometimes referred to by its former name of “the Carmelite church.” ...

Before the ghetto was sealed off [in November 1940], all three Roman Catholic parish churches served as regular places of Catholic worship, for both the “Aryan” and “non-Aryan” Christians. In Saint Augustine Church on Nowolipki Street, the nominal pastor was Rev. Karol Niemira, auxiliary bishop of Pińsk. After 1939 [when Pińsk was occupied by the Soviet Union], he was appointed to the head of the parish. His second in command and acting head was Rev. Franciszek Garncarek, who followed church laws requiring the pastor to remain with the church as long as he could. The other assistants were Rev. Zygmunt Kowalski and Rev. Leon Więckowicz [actually, Więckiewicz]. A postwar copy of the regularly kept church register ... bears the following marginal note, obviously written after the war: “Sometimes after the sealing off of the ghetto, the church functioned as a place of worship for the Catholics of Jewish origin who lived in the ghetto. There were about five thousand of them. The priests lived outside the ghetto and commuted to the church with permanent passes. After some time, however, they were forbidden to enter and the services in the church ceased. This is according to the statement made by Rev. Zygmunt Kowalski, then the assistant in Saint Augustine parish.” In July 1941, after the church was deactivated, a well-known Jewish-Christian director, Marek Arenszajn, acting in Polish and Yiddish under the name of Andrzej Marek, organized a theater in the church hall. He was baptized in the ghetto. After the *Aktion*, the Germans turned the church into a furniture warehouse.

We know that Rev. Garncarek and his assistant were active in providing all sorts of help to the ghetto dwellers, but we do not have any details concerning this help. We know that Janusz Korczak (pseudonym of Dr. Henryk Goldszmit), the director of a large orphanage next to Saint Augustine Church, a renowned educator, physician, and writer, addressed a letter to Rev. Garncarek in February 1942: “[Since] Providence has thrust upon you a missionary role, I urge you to attend a meeting of the personnel of our orphanage to discuss ways of saving the lives of the children from destruction. [You could] perhaps offer some good advice, perhaps an ardent prayer.” ... We also know that Dr. Korczak maintained a friendly relationship with the priests of All Saints as well. Two priests of Saint Augustine did not survive the war. Rev. Garncarek died on December 20, 1943, outside the ghetto; he was shot on the steps of the presbytery of another church. His assistant, Rev. Więckowicz [Więckiewicz], was arrested for helping Jews on December 3, 1942, and died in the Gross-Rosen concentration camp on August 4, 1944. ...

The other two parishes, the Nativity of the B.V.M. on Leszno Street (now Solidarność Street) and All Saints on Grzybowski Square, were functioning places of Catholic worship until the first days of the *Aktion* [in July 1942]. The Nativity Church was in the middle of the ghetto and the All Saints Church in the southeast corner. The church on Leszno was mentioned often by Jewish diarists of the ghetto, probably because it was more or less in the center of the closed quarter. All Saints, on the other hand, was mentioned more often by the Christians, because many of them lived in the vicinity. ...

Throughout the existence of the ghetto, the curate of the Nativity of the B.V.M. Church was Monsignor Seweryn Popławski, who was assisted by Rev. Henryk Komorowski, Rev. Teofil [in fact, Władysław] Głowacki, and Rev. [Aleksander] Zyberk-Plater. Rev. Popławski remained at his post even after the *Aktion*. Rev. Komorowski would be remembered as

a charismatic, well-loved priest. He was in charge of the young people of the parish. From the fall of 1942 until the spring of 1943, when the church was on the southern tip of the residual ghetto, many people used its large basement as an escape route to the partly destroyed parts of the former ghetto. ...

The pastor at All Saints [on Grzybowski Square] was Monsignor Marcelli Godlewski. His assistant and second in command was Rev. Antoni Czarnecki. Rev. Tadeusz Nowotko also served in the parish. Rev. Godlewski lived outside the ghetto and came to his parish every day; Rev. Czarnecki lived permanently in the rectory of the church. He left a brief memorandum, "The All Saints Parish" ("Parafia Wszystkich Świętych") written in 1973. Obviously conscious that he was writing under an unfriendly political regime, he prudently cites published sources and concentrates on the pastoral aspect of his work. Rev. Czarnecki's caution was fully justified. Rev. Godlewski's successor at All Saints, Rev. Zygmunt Kaczyński, was arrested in 1949 and received a ten-year sentence for "political crimes." He was murdered in prison in 1953, and rehabilitated by the Communist regime in 1958. Despite its caution, Rev. Czarnecki's article is important for many details. He mentions the visits of Dr. Janusz Korczak and his orphans to the church grounds. He also writes briefly about baptisms in the ghetto and the reasons for them. His opinions here are quite realistic: "It is difficult to ascertain now how much these catechumens were inclined to embrace the teaching of Christ because of their desire for faith and their supernatural intention, or how much they were motivated by a secret hope that the Christian confession figuring in their identity card could save them from destruction in that inhuman epoch." ...

Rev. Godlewski was doubtless a key figure among the Christians in the ghetto. During the time of his ghetto activities, he was already an old man, having been born in 1865. ...

The All Saints parish was situated in a heavily Jewish neighborhood. Well before the war, Rev. Godlewski organized the housemaids in his parish and elsewhere, seeing to it that their employers, who were often Jews, paid the health insurance rates. He also organized the local artisans, who were often in conflict with the more numerous Jewish artisans. He was active in journalism and in Christian labor organizations. He founded an interest-free loan association, apparently using the Jewish Interest-Free Loan Association, as a model; he took its constitution and substituted the word "Jews" with "Poles." He was a nationalist and an "Endek," a member of the National Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Narodowo Demokratyczne, or ND). [From 1928, it was known as Stronnictwo Narodowe, or National Party.—Ed.]

In Godlewski's activities, he often came into conflict with local Jews and Jewish organizations and as a result acquired a reputation as an anti-Semite. It is important to note that this idea of anti-Semitism was based on the economic competition between [the two groups, i.e. Jews and Poles]. ...

The complexity of what can collectively be called anti-Semitism can be seen from [Judenrat chairman] Czerniaków's entry for July 24, 1941. He writes about meeting a priest: "I returned a visit to Rev. Popławski who called on me at one time on the subject of assistance to the Christians of Jewish origins. He proceeded to tell me that he sees God's hand in being placed in the ghetto, [but] that after the war he would leave as much an anti-Semite as he was when he arrived there." But "anti-Semitic" meant many things. Monsignor Seweryn Popławski headed the Nativity of the B.V.M. parish between 1934 and



1944. He refused to leave the ghetto and is known to have helped the persecuted Jews and saved many of them, particularly children. Just before the Polish uprising, the Germans removed him from the church, which they used for storage. He died at seventy-four years of age, during the fighting in August 1944, under the ruins of his church.

People like Rev. Popławski and Rev. Godlewski were profoundly shocked by the Nazis' savage persecutions of the Jews, and of course by the fact that the Nazis considered the baptized Jews to be Jews at all. I fully agree with Rev. Czarnecki's judgment concerning Rev. Godlewski, and probably Rev. Popławski: "Before the War [Rev. Godlewski] was known for his unfriendly [*niechętnie*] attitude toward Jews, but when he saw all the sufferings, he threw himself with all his heart into helping those people."

My personal experiences have convinced me that in the face of persecutions and horrors, the attitude toward the victim was, in the final analysis, dictated not so much by prewar political convictions as by the mysterious quality of human decency.

... one of the former residents of the parish buildings at All Saints, Dr. Louis Christophe Zaleski-Zamenhof, ... is the grandson of Dr. Ludwik Lazar Zamenhof (1859–1917), the creator of Esperanto; the main street of what used to be the northern ghetto bears his name. ...

When he was fifteen, Zaleski-Zamenhof lived in the ghetto with his mother, who had just been released from Pawiak prison. His mother was a widow; her husband had been executed in Palmiry (a forest near Warsaw, the site of numerous executions carried out by the Gestapo), at the beginning of the occupation. His sister, a medical doctor and also a recent widow, lived with them. They were invited to live in the All Saints parish hall by the pastor, Rev. Godlewski. Later, the pastor helped the young Zamenhof to escape from the ghetto and to find a humble factory job in suburban Anin. ...

Dr. Zaleski-Zamenhof speaks in glowing terms of Rev. Godlewski. He does not consider him as an anti-Semite: "He did not ask me what was my religion, but whether I was hungry." On the contrary, he maintains that even from a purely theological point of view, the ideas propagated by Rev. Godlewski in the Warsaw ghetto were forerunners of the new ecumenical view, later accepted by Vatican II, that Jews were not the "rejectors of Christ" but "the older brothers of the Christians." ...

The All Saints Church was situated in the southern part of the ghetto, sometimes referred to as the small ghetto. Some details about the parish life at All Saints can be found in the short and cautious article by Rev. Antoni Czarnecki ... He gives some of the names of those who lived in the parish hall. Besides Professor Ludwik Hirsfeld and his wife and daughter, there were Rudolf Hermelin (engineer) and his family, Polkiewicz (lawyer) and his family, Feliks Drutowski (engineer) with his mother and sister, Zygmunt Pfau and his wife (Bronisława) and daughter, Dr. Fedorowski and his parents, Dr. Gelbard (later known as Gadowski), the Grynbergs, the Zamenhofs, and others. ... (Henryk) Nowogródzki, a lawyer, and Dr. Jakub Weinkiper-Antonowicz.

Rev. Czarnecki remembers that many people who were moved into the ghetto found homes by exchanging apartments in the vicinity of All Saints, "so that ... a considerable part of the population there was constituted by Catholics or Christians of other denomination, or of sympathizers with the Church. The great majority of the new parishioners belonged to the intelligentsia: they were scientists, doctors, artists and lawyers." Given this membership, the parish council naturally included members of the intelligentsia and

“outstanding personalities such as Dr. Antonowicz, Dr. Górecki, Dr. Grausam, the lawyer Ettinger, the engineer Hermelin, Mrs. Bronisława Pfau and others.” ...

Dr. Ludwik Hirszfeld is the most knowledgeable informant about the Christians in the ghetto and about many aspects of the daily life of the ghetto dwellers. His autobiography, *The Story of a Life* (2000)<sup>732</sup> is the most important document by a Christian about the Christians of the Warsaw ghetto and about the Church of All Saints. ...

Hirszfeld's activities during his next year and a half in the ghetto were of two kinds: he offered [Judenrat chairman] Czerniaków his services as an expert on combating typhus, and he participated in organizing and offering important courses for medical practitioners (doctors, pharmacists, and dentists) and also collaborated in a semiclandestine course for medical students ...in fact it was a program of the first two years in medical school. ... His motivation was frankly spiritual and, as we have seen, often expressed in a clearly religious language. ...

His first lecture for medical practitioners met with some resistance because of his mekhes [convert] status: “The Chairman [Czerniaków] is present, evidently to prevent any demonstrations against me by the Jewish nationalists. At the door a woman doctor, a nationalist, urges the boycott of my lecture. ... My first words are a call to maintain dignity.” ...

In the chapter entitled “In the Shadow of the All Saints Church,” Hirszfeld describes Jewish Christian life in the ghetto. In August 1941 the Hirszfelds obtained living quarters at All Saints in the large church building containing the rectory and a church hall. After almost seven months of living on Twarda Street, in the midst of noise and filth and with constant exposure to the terrible street scenes, they found themselves in an oasis of relative peace. Hirszfeld describes this new place in terms similar to those Alina Brodzka Wald used about the Church of the Nativity of the B.V.M.: “The windows of our very small dwelling were facing a small but beautiful garden. These gardens surrounded by walls have a strange charm. We had an impression of finding ourselves in a recess of meditation, silence and goodwill, a recess preserved in the midst of hell. And the priest of this recess was Monsignor Godlewski.”

Hirszfeld praises Rev. Godlewski in the highest terms. We have already seen the same homage offered by another survivor of the rectory of All Saints, Dr. Zaleski-Zamenhof. Hirszfeld, who insisted that he was not endowed with literary talent, always speaks lyrically about the monsignor. ... “Monsignor Godlewski. When I pronounce this name, I am seized with emotion. Passion and love dwelling in one soul. Once upon a time he was an anti-Semite ... But when fate made him encounter bottomless misery, he abandoned his previous attitudes and turned all the ardor of his priestly heart toward helping the Jews.” ...

Hirszfeld says that his admiration for the pastor of the All Saints parish was shared by many: “Whenever his beautiful white-haired head ... appeared, the other heads bowed in admiration and love. We all loved him: children or old people fought for a moment of conversation. He did not spare himself. He taught catechism to the children. He was the head of Caritas for the whole ghetto, and ordered that soup be given whether the hungry person was a Christian or a Jew.” Hirszfeld insists that this love and respect was shared

<sup>732</sup> Ludwik Hirszfeld, *Historia jednego życia* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1946; Pax, 1957), translated as *Ludwik Hirszfeld: The Story of One Life* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2010). See especially pp. 244–46 and 261 of the English translation.

by people outside the Jewish Christian group as well: “We [Christian Jews] were not alone in the appreciation of Rev. Godlewski. I would like to transmit to future generations the opinion of the Head of the Jewish Council [Czerniaków]. During a meeting that Dr. [Juliusz] Zweibaum called to observe the first anniversary of the medical courses, the Head of the Council told us how this Monsignor wept in his office when he spoke about the misery of the Jews, and how he tried to alleviate this misery. Czerniaków stressed the great assistance rendered by this former anti-Semite.”

Rev. Godlewski lived in Anin, a nearby suburb of Warsaw, and commuted to the ghetto every day using a permanent pass. His relative freedom of movement was extremely important for making contacts, for smuggling small quantities of food and medicine, and, according to a well-established tradition, for smuggling out little children hidden in the fold of his large cassock. His assistant and second in command at All Saints was, as we know, a much younger Rev. Czarnecki, who lived permanently in the rectory and who apparently was not touched by prewar anti-Semitism. Hirszfeld speaks about him also in high terms: “The helper and deputy of the Monsignor was Rev. Antoni Czarnecki. He was a young priest, who did not have the same passionate approach to life as the Monsignor, but he was certainly endowed with a gentleness and goodness worthy of a priest. He was liked and respected by all. His pleasant and loving ways [*sposób bycia*] had a soothing and comforting effect.”

This chapter is the only one in which Hirszfeld speaks about the Christian Jews as a group: “On Sunday all the Christians, not only the Catholics, attended Mass. Everybody was there: doctors, lawyers, those whose baptism was an expression of faith, those for whom it was a [Polish] national symbol, and those who, at a certain moment, accepted their baptism to further their own self-interests. But all felt the need to gather at least once a week in the church and to participate in the service.” ...

Hirszfeld’s reflections contradict the views of those Jewish writers who saw in the ghetto baptisms nothing but a search for some kind of material profit. ...

What struck me in reading these pages for the first time—many years ago—was the insistence on patriotism, on an inalienable union of God and Country. I remember that during the war in Poland this was precisely the common, accepted, and indisputable view.<sup>733</sup>

Accounts gathered by Yad Vashem, which has recognized Rev. Władysław Głowacki as a Righteous Gentile, attest to the following.

From October 1940 to August 1942, Władysław Głowacki [Władysław Głowacki] exploited his position as priest of the Leszno Street church [of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary] in the Warsaw ghetto to provide a number of Jews, including Amelia and Rudolf Arcichowski, Aleksander Bender, Tadeusz Seidenbeutel, and his father, Maksymilian, with Aryan papers. Głowacki also sheltered Helena Labedz [Łabędź] in his apartment [in the

<sup>733</sup> Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 59–61, 63–65, 107–8, 115, 121–22, 125–27, 129–30.

parish rectory in the suburb of Służewiec where he was transferred in August 1942<sup>734</sup>] from the summer of 1942 until January 1945, when the area was liberated.<sup>735</sup>

One of the parishioners of the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin was Alina Brodzka-Wald, who was born in Warsaw in 1929 to Nikodem and Helena Brodzki. Her mother was Russian. Alina lived in the Warsaw ghetto with her parents from November 1940 until her escape to the Aryan side, at age twelve, on July 22, 1942. She left the ghetto with a falsified birth and baptismal certificate issued by Rev. Henryk Komorowski, a vicar at the church. She survived under the protection of Catholic nuns: the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Warsaw, and the Sisters of the Resurrection in Warsaw and Częstochowa. Alina's parents, as well as her older half-brother, Jan, all survived the war.<sup>736</sup> Her story is told by Peter Dembowski:

She was baptized early in her life, following her mother's wishes. Her godfather was Stanisław Wiesel (or Wizel), a convert of long standing. ... Alina's parents went to the ghetto in November 1940 because of their deep attachment to their own parents, who were old and had refused to go into hiding, although they could have done so because their Polish was fluent and faultless. [Alina's grandparents] Salomon and Gustawa Brodzki died peacefully in the ghetto, before the *Aktion* ... One of Alina's aunts, Eugenia Brodzka Jakubowicz, was baptized in the ghetto ... As a little girl, Alina felt the antipathy of the ghetto population: "We were not loved, we were strangers."

The day that Alina's family arrived in the [Warsaw] ghetto he father took her to the Church of the Nativity of the B.V.M. For the next almost twenty months, she went to the parish every day to attend the school, taught by priests as well as lay teachers. She remembers the horror of those trips. Daily life in the ghetto was rendered particularly difficult because, among other things, of the incredibly crowded conditions in the streets. One especially dreaded street was the narrow Karmelicka, the only passage, until the fall of 1941, from the southern part (small ghetto) to the northern part (larger ghetto). Alina had to take this passage to reach the church on Leszno Street from her home on Orła Street. ...

For Alina, entering the small door into the church garden, after the horrors of Leszno and Karmelicka Streets, was like entering another world, a world of green nature, one of tranquillity and a sense of security. She knew the head of the parish, Monsignor [Seweryn] Popławski, Rev. Teofil [Władysław] Głowacki, and Rev. [Aleksander] Zyberk-Plater, whom she remembers as the "intellectuals of the parish." Alina belonged to the parish children's group, which had several dozen members. The leader of this group was Rev. Henryk Komorowski, the priest whom Alina remembers best. He played volleyball with "his" children, and Alina's most cherished souvenir that she managed to bring from the ghetto is

<sup>734</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 155.

<sup>735</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 239.

<sup>736</sup> Testimony of Alina Brodzka-Wald, SFV, Interview code 45905; Ewa Wilk, "Uśmiech do losu: O ludzkiej egzystencji ostatnia rozmowa z prof. Aliną Brodzą-Wald," *Polityka* [Warsaw], November 20, 2010.

a photograph of the parish volleyball team dedicated to her by Rev. Komorowski as “his dear player.” He was truly a charismatic person, not only respected but loved. He enjoyed the total trust of his wards.

The school offered the usual subjects as well as a course of studies in the Christian tradition. Besides sports, the parish offered dancing and rhythmic gymnastics lessons given by Irena Prusicka. The parish had run an elementary school since the inception of the ghetto. At first it was a clandestine operation, but in October 1941 it became a legal Catholic school. Regular religious education was offered both in the school and outside it.

We know that the gardens of both the Nativity and All Saints churches were greatly admired, desired, and envied as the only islands of green in the sea of overcrowded and noisy streets. The Nativity parish garden was more substantial than the garden of All Saints or the deactivated Saint Augustine. ... the elite among the converts used to meet in the garden of the Nativity Church: doctors, professors, engineers, and teachers. ...

Alina left the ghetto on the first day of the *Aktion*, July 22, 1942, she simply walked through the checkpoint with slightly falsified papers, in which the Jewish name Brodzka was modified to the more “Aryan” spelling Brocka. But nobody asked her for papers. She explains it as a combination of luck, youth, and her “Slavic” looks. ...

Alina’s first protectors was Jadwiga Bielecka, the wife of a well-known “Endek” who was at that time a prisoner of war in Germany. [Tadeusz Bielecki, a National Democrat leader, actually escaped to France, and then to England.] Alina spent the rest of the German occupation with the Sisters of the Family of Mary [on Hoża Street], and then with the Sisters of the Resurrection [at their boarding school on Mokotowska Street] in Warsaw. After the Polish uprising, during which this fourteen-year-old girl worked in a hospital, Alina was sent with the Sisters to Częstochowa in the western part of Poland. Both Alina’s parents survived on the “Other Side.” Her older brother, who left the ghetto well before her, was an active AK [Home Army] member and took part in the Polish uprising. ...

“I have received nothing but kindness from people. Who am I to speak about the Shoah? I do, of course, speak about the Shoah—I do not hide my past experiences. But I have received the grace and the good fortune to be always with good people. No blackmailer [*szmalcownik*] was ever on my trail.”<sup>737</sup>

A day-care was organized at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Leszno Street in February 1941 for the children of parishioners. It was soon transformed into a clandestine school which accepted non-Catholics and engaged Jewish teachers. Approximately 70 per cent of the students were non-Catholics. Because of the increasing number of students, the school was moved to 4 Wolność Street. The enclosed outdoor recreation yard in both buildings welcomed children regardless of their faith.<sup>738</sup>

<sup>737</sup> Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 108–10.

<sup>738</sup> Anna Natanblut, “Di shuln in varshevergeto,” *Yivo Bleter: Hodesh-Shrift fun Yidishn Visnshaftlekhn Institut*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1947): 173–85; Testimony of P. Landsbergowa and A. Górská Oppenheim, JHI, record group 301, no. 4809.

After being forced to relocate to the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1940, Antoni Oppenheim, a lawyer, continued his underground activities for the Socialist Party. His wife, Franciszka Anna, continued working in her profession as a teacher. They lived near the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Leszno Street and benefitted from the generosity of that parish. According to the testimony of their son, Ludwik Oppenheim ...

My father began his secret underground activities even before moving to the ghetto. In the ghetto, he formed a cell of the Organization of Polish Socialists, which reported to the governmental authorities of the Republic of Poland in London. ...

Our next apartment was in the gardener's house of the Church of Our Most Holy Lady Mary on Leszno Street (Catholic). It was thought to be safe from the conspiratorial point of view, and the organization acted as an intermediary in making the arrangements. ... Clandestine meetings were also held there. ...

Mama and her colleagues conducted a kindergarten on the grounds of the church garden from spring to fall of 1941, through the kindness of priests.<sup>739</sup>

Rev. Karol Niemira, the auxiliary bishop of Pińsk, was forced to evacuate his home in Polesie (Polesia), in September 1939, after the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland. He relocated to Warsaw, to St. Augustine's church, where previously he had served as a parish priest. The area around the church was now within the confines of the walled ghetto. According to his testimony, Bishop Niemira worked closely with the Security Corps (Korpus Bezpieczeństwa), an underground military organization of the Home Army which had ties with the right-wing Jewish Military Union (Żydowski Związek Walki).

As a curate of long standing of a parish which was directly adjacent to the former Warsaw Ghetto, I was in contact with the organization called Armed Liberation Zbrojne Wyzwolenie and later with the Security Corps Korpus Bezpieczeństwa in the persons of the commander-in-chief General "Tarnawa" (Andrzej Petrykowski), and Major "Bystry" (Henryk Iwański) who was under his command. The aforementioned led a rescue operation to conceal Jews, from 1941 up to the liberation. This rescue operation, conducted in keeping with the Christian ideal of doing good to your neighbour, provided reassurance and real help for the terrorized Polish citizens of Jewish origin. I looked after Polish citizens of Jewish nationality, fed them and sent them to Major "Bystry" who, with complete dedication, found shelter for them, thus saving them from the Nazi bestiality. Other priests also took part in this operation, including: Father [Zygmunt] Surdacki, who was the administrator of the Lublin diocese; Prelate Wiwcik [Witold Iwicki], himself of Jewish origin, director of the secondary school in Pińsk; Father [Franciszek] Garncarek, curate of St Augustyn parish, my successor; Friar Anicet [Wojciech Kopliński], a Capuchin from the Miodowa Street Monastery; and many, many others.<sup>740</sup>

<sup>739</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 126–27.

<sup>740</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 331–32.



Here a Jewish witness describes some of Bishop Niemira's activities:

Henryk Szladkowski (Slade) ... was assisted by the Catholic Bishop Niemira of Warsaw. When the Jews were being ordered into the Ghetto he rang the diocesan offices and asked for "Mr. Bishop Niemira." The Bishop supplied him with a Certificate of Baptism and other falsified documents and before parting asked Mr. Szladkowski to refer to him any Jew who may need financial or other assistance.<sup>741</sup>

**H**alina Kalmus (later Gorcewicz, b. 1926) was thirteen years old when the war broke out. Her mother was a Polish Catholic and her father a Jew who had nominally converted to Catholicism to marry her mother but retained a strong identification with his Jewish roots and traditions. Forced to live in the Warsaw ghetto, the Kalmus family were parishioners of St. Augustine's Church on Nowolipki Street.

Although the parish was formally closed, some priests remained, including Bishop Niemira, the nominal pastor, and Rev. Franciszek Garncarek, the acting head of the parish. The priests of this parish were active in smuggling Jews, especially converts, out of the ghetto. Their work was continued later at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also inside the ghetto, which remained open longer. It is there that Halina went for help after the revolt in the ghetto was crushed by the Germans in early May of 1943.<sup>742</sup>

Early the next morning Mama went outside the wall on a special mission to the nuns ...

She had not been able to arrange anything with the nuns. The Germans had extended their attentions even to them. So she went to the Church of St. Augustyn [Augustine] at Nowolipki and found there not only the parish priest but also His Excellency, Bishop Niemira. She explained our situation to them. It was agreed that they would take the children. So she was comforted in this respect ...

We decided to ask engineer [Joachim] Jachimowicz what possibilities there were for the boys. Especially since they could be exposed to danger without Polish documents. They must accept that risk. And, of course, the condition that they take a vow not to give away how they found themselves on the other side.

Because I was still unable to give the boys any help I stood guard in the evening when they managed to get the children through the passage-way to the other side. Mosze came back happy and delighted, announcing that everything went off fine and the children were in a shelter beneath the church.

"So many children, oh boy!" he added. "I thought they wouldn't have room for ours. The nuns took them away at once. I told them I'd come for them when the storm had passed over our place. You know, Hana, that tall, older one ... well, I've forgotten his name. You know, that ... sort of rabbi of yours ... you know ..."

<sup>741</sup> Andrzej Chciuk, ed., *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945* (Clayton, Victoria: Wilke and Company, 1969), 50.

<sup>742</sup> See also the testimony of Halina Gorcewicz, SFV, Interview code 12829.

“Ah, you mean Bishop Niemira?” I put in.

“That’s him!” Mosze picked up. “He patted me on the arm and said: ‘I’ve heard about you! I’ve heard what a brave boy you are. Remember—we’ll find a place for you here as well in case of need. Just come to me.’ I thanked him as best I knew how and ran off because there wasn’t much time left to get back through the passage-way.” ...

On my way back to my room I looked in on Mama. ... She told me that she was very worried about the next day, especially about me and the boys. ... She began to explain further:

“Lala, my dear. For a long time now I’ve been trying to get papers—not only for you, but also for others—but it is not easy. ... Remember one thing always. In case of anything, sometime, about some need, or at a difficult moment—your last chance is to reach His Excellency Bishop Niemira. You are to remember that. But as long as I am by you and with you and I do whatever is within my means, it is not yet time to go to him. He has problems of helping others on his mind at the moment and the most important thing is to tear out of this hell at least some of the youngest children who can be saved.” ...

[May 1943]: I was at Nowolipie and from here it was not far to the church [of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary] at Leszno. ... That was my one and only chance of escape. My old church of St. Augustyn at Nowolipki had ceased to exist as a church long since. ...

And so I moved off, alone and deserted, over holes, craters and burial grounds of embers and rubble in which people lay buried. ...

In this way I covered a good distance from the place of slaughter. Somewhere beyond the corner of Karmelicka St. I found a half-buried cellar. I did not know what I might find there. But it was from there that, in 1939, tunnels led to a larger shelter—and from there right under the church. I did not have a torch or light of any kind. The question was—would I find the way? Had the tunnels collapsed or been filled in? ...

A small hole at the entrance. I just managed to squeeze through. ... So, very carefully, I lowered myself bit by bit, finally to touch the ground with my feet. ...

Complete silence—a deathly hush. But suddenly it seemed to me that I could hear a murmur above this ceiling. I could not believe my ears. Should I call out? Try to find out if there was someone there? No. better not risk it. I had no weapon with which to defend myself if it came to that. ...

Using both my hands and my head, I exerted all my strength to find out whether this flap really could not be moved. It did move a little and I even saw a weak ray of light through the gap, but I did not have sufficient strength to lift the flap clear. It was heavy. ...

Finding one more cross-piece, I climbed higher by using it, bending down as I felt the flap against my head. ... I had to open it completely. But what if it fell with a crash? I could feel cold air coming through. Perhaps this really was a prison dungeon? Such thoughts raced through my brain. ... I could not go back—back to what? Where? So it was God’s will. Whether to die there among the corpses in the dark—or here. Surely better here, even if it was a prison. ...

So ... One, Two, Three! The flap fell to the floor with a crash which echoed in all directions. I disentangled my arms and legs from the ladder. A weak ray of light was coming as if from a candle shimmering in the distance. It helped me to find a grip and pull myself up. ... Suddenly I felt someone’s warm hand touch mine and help to pull me up. For a second I lacked the strength to look up and see who this could be. ... Stretched out on the floor,

I saw a man's gray head leaning over me, the body draped in a dress reaching the ground. A warm voice—such a warm voice!—spoke to me quietly:

“Dear child, how did you get here? Are there many with you? We’ve waited so long!”

When the initial impression wore off I could not believe that I was alive, that my eyes were seeing a man who was a priest—and that the place I had reached was a church.

He put his protective arms round me and led me to the other end of the second cellar where the small candle was burning, asking about others for whom he had been waiting, who were supposed to come here. That was why the entrance had been blocked, because they knew the password which they were to use so that he would open the flap. ...

He was surprised by my appearance and although I was very tired I told him as concisely as I could how I had got there. I mentioned the bodies lying there, which I could not see in the darkness. ...

He stroked my hand and told me to sit down in a soft armchair. He excused himself for a moment, saying he would bring me some warm [grain] coffee. When he had gone I saw in the candlelight that the place was not large, but there was an altar. It was a small chapel in which this priest had sat waiting for those people from below the ground. He must have been a good man.

Deep in thought, I did not sit in the indicated armchair because I was too dirty. I knelt before the small altar, empty but for a Sacred Cross and the one candle. I lost myself in a prayer of thanksgiving ... I also prayed for those who had remained in that “Dante’s Inferno” on earth and for all those who had not reached here. ...

I felt a soft touch on my arm although I had not heard approaching footsteps. And these words:

“Come, child. You need a wash and you must be hungry! And you are surely tired, so you must rest.”

“You are in a reasonably safe place, but not to the extent that you can feel completely free. Here is our other underground chamber.”

I turned and saw two men in clerical clothes. I looked at them and rubbed my eyes, unable to believe what I was seeing. I fell on my knees again, saying:

“Praise be to our Lord. Is that His Excellency, Bishop Niemira?”

“Yes, child,” came the reply. “We were arrested by the Gestapo at one time because of the children we rescued. But they released us. We have our chambers upstairs. They do not know about this hideaway, fortunately. That is why the new father, whom you did not know, is keeping vigil here. We only come here occasionally. It is not safe for us to be away from upstairs for long, or the Germans might discover this place.”

“We have been waiting for several days for a larger group of those heroic ghetto fighters, then you came alone. Fr. Sebastian has told me everything. I have forgotten your name, child. I know you and your parents. Wait—just a minute, just a minute—especially your Mama. Ah, I know! After that Gestapo investigation my brain has dimmed a little. Yes, you’re from Pawia, right? Oh yes, Mme. Zuzanna is your mother. A splendid woman!”

“Does your Excellency perhaps know something about my Mama? Is she alive?”

“Oh, yes. She has been very ill. She is with Mme. Oziembłowska [Oziembłowska] at present. She gazes at the burning ghetto in which she has long since buried you—and you are alive, thank God!”

“Yes,” I replied. “Only thanks to the merciful Almighty, that is true, was I able to reach here. And for this favour I am grateful with all my heart.”

“You will have to change your clothes before you can get out of here. Father Sebastian will give you anything at his disposal. I have, however, something in mind which I want to suggest to you, dear child. You were given the name Halina at your christening. That is not a Catholic name. I saw, however, how you prayed. ... Have you been confirmed?”

“No,” I answered.

“Then, I will confirm you myself. But not today, only tomorrow—and not in the morning but here, at night. Later you will leave here with God and go to your mother. It is a great pity that those for whom we’ve waited have not reached here. And now goodnight with God, darling. Father Sebastian will tell the rest.”

His Excellency Niemira blessed me, raising his worthy hands above my head, whispering a prayer. When he finished, he whispered:

“I am proud of you! You are a brave girl. May God be praised.”

“Amen,” I replied. I rose from my knees, but with such difficulty that if Fr. Sebastian had not supported me, I would have found myself on the floor. I had no strength left.

Fr. Sebastian led me down a similar shaft to the one which had brought me here to another, lower underground chamber. These were mattresses there and blankets for those who had been expected. There was a basin with water and a little soap, also a wash cloth and a lot of women’s and men’s clothing on a chair in the corner.

Fr. Sebastian told me to have a wash, choose something for myself from among the underwear and clothes to change into. When ready, I was to pull on a string in the corner which would ring a bell letting him know. He would then provide me with a meal. I now felt acutely how tired and hungry I was. There was a wooden ladder here coming down. There was a small shelf on one wall on which stood a Crucifix and a small candle shone. So it was not dark. ...

A few moments later Fr. Sebastian came down, carrying a tray with a modest meal. Hot grain coffee, one slice of black, clay-like bread and an army biscuit. ...

“Eat, dear child, with a good appetite,” said Fr. Sebastian. “There’s not much of it, but our circumstances also are such that we must ration ourselves. And this is not supper, but breakfast—for it is morning now. You would not know it here, without a window. This is a special hideaway. ... You must sleep, for you are very tired. It is quiet here. Should anything unexpected happen I will wake you and let you know. Here are some matches. I will douse the candle as I go out. ... Good-night! Stay with God!”

... when I opened my eyes the candle burning on the shelf with the Crucifix again cast its soft light, penetrating the darkness. Father Sebastian was sitting by me, stroking my cheek.

“Come, child, get up! Before you get another meal you must offer yourself to God. Everything is ready for your confirmation, which His Excellency Niemira will administer to you himself. Here you are—here is a rosary if you would like to pray first. The ceremony will be upstairs.”

“And my confession?” I asked.

Father Sebastian replied:

“Last night you confessed to us both the finest deeds of your life. You need not add anything more. You are as pure as snow and may you remain so always. I am going up-

stairs. You pray and come up right away. It is still and quiet underground now because it is night. ...”

I wanted to pray, say at least part of that rosary, but I could not. ...In place of prayer, my lips whispered once more: “What for? Why, oh God, why? I live, I have survived and they are all dead. Why?”

From upstairs came Fr. Sebastian’s voice:

“Come up now, dear!”

I smoothed down my hair and my dress and went up. Fr. Sebastian was waiting and he led me to the altar before which I had knelt yesterday. Waiting there was His Excellency Bishop Niemira.

Although he administered the confirmation sacrament to me, my thoughts, strangely, were not here where I had received help, kind words, where I was fed, clothed and where I slept safely. I was still with all those ghetto fighters who had fallen. ...

Bishop Niemira’s words broke into my thoughts:

“I name you Maria-Magdalena, who is your patron saint from this moment and through whom you will address yourself to God.” ...

Following Bishop Niemira’s blessing, I kissed the ring on his finger with great reverence. This was a very fine man, not only as a spiritual person, but in himself—a great man. I was very pleased that it was through him that I received the confirmation sacrament. Although I did not know it then, that was the last time I saw him alive.

That same night I was given a new pass from the PCK [Polski Czerwony Krzyż—Polish Red Cross] school and also the pass which I lost during the memorable fur search, confirming my employment in the Out-patient Clinic of the dept. of Social Security. No longer Smulikowski St., but now at Praga, at 34, Jagiellonska [Jagiellońska] St. I was to continue my work with Dr. [Henryk] Cetkowski, who was now employed there.

In the morning, after curfew, I was led out by Fr. Sebastian through a different section of underground passages with which I was not familiar to a tram stop. I was going to take a tram to Praga in order to reach Szeroka St., where my Mama was living with friends. Fr. Sebastian gave me money for the fare. While saying goodbye to me he became very emotional and could not control himself. Blessing me on my further, new, journey he told me:

“You must contact your old friend, the helpful Dr. Cetkowski, at once. Give him my regards. Go on being yourself as you have been up to now. Remember, Maria-Magdalena!”

“Yes, Father,” I replied.

A tram came up and Fr. Sebastian told me to take it. I kissed him sincerely. What a pity that I did not know his full name. The name Sebastian was probably also not his own, only adopted with his priest’s vows—possibly even that was different now? What a warm heart he had shown me. ...

Following the directions given to me by Fr. Sebastian, I reached Szeroka St. at Praga safely and proceeded to the indicated address where my mother was staying. ...

During this initial period, I continued to use the false documents provided by Fr. Sebastian. ...

Towards the end, I should stress the fact that the Polish Community—those true Poles—gave self-sacrificing help to the people locked in the ghetto. It is not relevant whether they did so altruistically (some did) or for large sums of money (they were risking their own lives

and those of their families). But the fact itself that such help existed and that through it the lives of many Jews and Jewish children were saved—that should always be remembered.

It should also be stressed with what great self-sacrifice and devotion the convent sisterhood operated, as well as many priests. Among those who gave the greatest assistance were the clergy with His Excellency Bishop Niemira at the head, from the Church of St. Augustyn at Nowolipki. In the first phase many hundreds of Jewish children (the tiniest ones, the small ones and those older ones) went through their hands. ... Also the clergy from the ... Church of the Holiest Virgin Mary—and many, many others.<sup>743</sup>

**M**iriam Chasson (née Finkielsztajn) survived the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Before her deportation to Majdanek, Miriam's mother obtained a baptismal certificate for her daughter under the name of Irena Lewandowska. According to one version, the document was provided by the Carmelite Sisters; however, according to another version, which is more likely the case, it came from the Church of St. John of God on Bonifraterska Street, near the Warsaw ghetto, which was under the care of the Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God, known popularly as Bonifratrzy.<sup>744</sup> Miriam turned to family friends and survived with the help of a number of Poles in the vicinity of Łowicz. Miriam confided in Rev. Zenon Ziemecki, the pastor of Bełchów, and he assisted her in her ruse as a Catholic. She survived the war and settled in Israel.

In the late spring 1943 the family named Laska in the Bełchów village (powiat Łowicz, voivodship Łódź) took in a ten-year-old girl, who introduced herself as Irena Lewandowska, an orphan from Przemyśl.

Miriam Chasson, née Finkielsztajn, the only daughter of Roza [Róża] and Gustaw Finkielsztajn ... In the fall of 1941 the Jewish population of the town [of Łowicz] was resettled by Germans to the Warsaw ghetto.

In 1942 Gustaw was caught in a street round-up and taken to Umschlagplatz; he was killed in Treblinka. Roza managed to arrange for a fake baptismal certificate for her daughter with the help of Carmelite nuns from the convent bordering on the ghetto at Bonifraterska street. In spite of the famine they managed to survive until the April ghetto uprising. They sought shelter in one of the bunkers with 30 other people. On May 4, 1943, the Germans brought them all outside.

Ten-year-old Miriam showed her baptismal certificate to one of the German policemen and told him that her name was Irena Lewandowska, and that she was a Christian girl who found herself in the ghetto by accident. She was taken to a Gestapo station while all

<sup>743</sup> Halina Gorcewicz, *Why, Oh God, Why?*, Internet: <http://whyohgodwhy.blogspot.com/p/about-halina-gorcewicz.html>. See the chapters titled "Ghetto, end of September 1940," "Ghetto, the last days of April & May, 1943," and "Warsaw, end of May, 1943," previously found at Internet: <http://www.books-reborn.org/klinger/why/Why.html>.

<sup>744</sup> Katarzyna Piotrkiewicz, "Kto ratuje jedno życie—ratuje cały świat," *Łowiczanie: Kwartalnik Historyczny*, no. 2 (July 2013): 1, 4.



the other—including her mother—went to Umschlagplatz. In the general confusion the girl managed to leave the station and cross to the “Aryan side.”

She does not remember any more how she got Mr. Bobotek’s address in Nieborów. Her aunt, who had escaped from the ghetto during the uprising and was hiding at the “Aryan side,” could not take her in, but gave her some money. Miriam bought a small cross and a train ticket. When she reached Mr. Bobotek’s house and asked for help. He placed her as a nanny with a family with four children.

Miriam did not complain, but she was not comfortable there. “... I took care of their children, but one beautiful day I went for a walk in that village. There was a farm of Stanisław Laska. Here was Nieborów, then a highway, the grass-covered fields. ... Bełchów was two, maybe three kilometres further. And they were somewhere in the middle, just that house. They had orchards. I thought: ‘what’s there to lose? I’ll try.’ I went in and asked if maybe they need some help with the cows or pigs. Because they had a big farm.”

Józef and Marianna Laska, and their four children, worked their own farm in Bełchów near Nieborów. They had four children. “... there was Stanisław, he was still a young man, 26 years old,” remembers Miriam Chasson. “Then there was his mother, Marianna, and his grandmother. There was his sister Helka and another one, Julka, born after Helka. The oldest one was Stacha, married to a railman, but she didn’t live with them, she had a small house, close to them, but not together. There was no father, because he had also been a railman and died in a railway accident.” ...

“First they asked me if I was hungry. I said yes and at once they gave me something to eat, potatoes and sour milk, and they told me: ‘You can stay, if you like’. ... So I went back to that Mr. Bobotek and told him: ‘You know, I was really unhappy with those people [family with 4 children]. I was just walking around and I dropped in to Mr. Laska, and they need someone to help with the cows and housework. Could I move in with them?’ And he said ‘yes’, and I went to them.”

They accepted her as Irena Lewandowska, orphan from the Zamojskie [Zamość] district.

“At that time they took those children in the Zamojskie district, and she came from there. She had the certificate,” recalls Stanisław Laska. His memory of her arrival differs from Miriam’s story: “She was brought by a lady who lived in Łowicz, they had a house there, she came here and brought that little Jewish girl,” he says.

Miriam gets emotional when she remembers her stay with the Laskas: “they took me in, put me in a tub, because I had lice from that bunker and everything ... and then I went to bed, the same as Helka. They didn’t treat me as if I dropped down from Mars or another planet. They were the people ... there are no such people in the whole world ... I found a home. ... I worked because everyone worked there. I slept together with Helka.” ...

“After a while I started going to school in the village. I attended religious instruction lessons. I was a good student and the priest even praised me from the pulpit. And they [the Laskas] were very proud of me.” Irena took her First Communion: “She was keen to do it because she had a friend and they took Communion together,” says Stanisław.

The girl told about her origin only to the priest [Rev. Zenon Ziemecki] during confession. The Laskas were guessing she was Jewish but it did not matter to them.

“I had quite forgotten I was Jewish,” remembers Miriam. “... when we were sitting together in winter weaving linen, there was talk about Jews. ... they talked about my grandpa.

They had known him, bought ploughs from him and other stuff ... those relatives of mine, Finkielsztajn-Adler, were very well known in Łowicz ... of course, I didn't say anything ...

They never asked me about that certificate. I told them that Germans had killed my parents ... They never asked."

Miriam-Irena stayed with the Laskas for two years.<sup>745</sup>

After being smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto with her brother in July 1942, Ada Rems or Remz (later Stortz, b. 1930) and her younger brother, Eugeniusz (b. 1934), were sheltered by an unidentified Polish woman in Warsaw. Ada's brother was sent to live with the woman's mother, Kuszyńska, in Radość, outside Warsaw. After giving himself away by wearing a hat in church, Ada's brother was not allowed to venture out of the house. Ada's benefactor was warned by the tenement building administrator where they lived to send Ada away because of the danger this exposed the residents to. A priest known as Fr. Albin arranged temporary lodging for Ada in Warsaw, and then placed her with a woman named Neuman in Świątniki Górne, near Kraków. Ada remained there as Adela Rosińska from May 1943 until June 1945. After the war, the children were reunited with their mother, Fania Rems, who was sheltered in Warsaw by Antonina Kerner. Their father had perished. The family eventually settled in Argentina.<sup>746</sup>

Rev. Henryk Hilchen, the pastor of Our Lady of Częstochowa Church, then located on Łazienkowska Street in Warsaw, provided Jews with false birth and baptismal certificates and helped them find hiding places. After leaving the Warsaw ghetto, Eugenia Kulczycka (Steinberg, later Komar Zalejska, b. 1919) turned to Rev. Hilchen, who was unknown to her. Rev. Hilchen directed her, with an endorsement, to Stanisława Kirst, the owner of an estate near Mogielnica, near Grójec, where she remained in hiding for two years. According to Yad Vashem's records, Rev. Hilchen also assisted in the rescue of Alicja Kirsztejn (later Alice Prusicki, b. 1924). He was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2018.<sup>747</sup>

<sup>745</sup> The Laska Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-laska-family>.

<sup>746</sup> Testimony of Ada Rems (Remz), November 21, 1945, JHI, record group 301, no. 1221; Testimony of Ada Stortz, SFV, Interview code 23969; Testimony of Fanny Rems, SFV, Interview code 11325.

<sup>747</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1028–29; Testimony of Halina Lachs in Edmund Mazur, "Po prostu człowiek: Materiały dotyczące pomocy niesionej Żydom w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej w Warszawie," *Palestra*, no. 11 (1968): 65–104, at pp. 92–93; Henryk Hilchen, RD.

After the tragic revolt in the Warsaw ghetto in April 1943, members of the Polish underground attempted to rescue the small number of Jews who managed to escape deportation and remained hidden in bunkers and cellars of the demolished ghetto. They turned to Catholic priests for assistance in hiding the fugitives.

Zdzisław [Zdzisław] Szymczak and his wife, Jadwiga, lived in Warsaw during the war. In 1941, he began helping Jews. His brother, Józef [Józef], also actively assisted him in this endeavor. One of the many Jews who received help from the Szymczak brothers was Mieczysław [Mieczysław] Karol Dubiński [Dubiński], a schoolmate of Zdzisław's from the Warsaw Polytechnic. They were also both involved in the Socialist Student Union group known as "Life" (OMS "Życie" [Życie]). They had met again at the turn of 1941, when Zdzisław helped Dubiński find a hiding place in Piaseczno (near Warsaw) for a few days. At the same time, Jehuda Leibel (later Roman Malinowski)—who was also a prewar schoolmate from the Polytechnic—approached Zdzisław. In November 1942, the Szymczak brothers arranged the escape of Maria Malinowski from the Tarnów [Tarnów] ghetto. Maria (Rachel Markus) was Roman's wife. The brothers brought her to Warsaw and helped her establish herself on the Aryan side. Zdzisław also hid Benjamin Leibel (Roman's father) in his apartment for one week. He eventually found a hiding place for Roman's father-in-law, Moshe Markus, as well. In December 1942, the Szymczak brothers helped Rachel's sister, Felicia Markus (Izabelle Minz), escape from the Tarnów ghetto. They took her to Warsaw and put her up for a few days in their mother's apartment. They also arranged Aryan papers for her and helped her find an apartment. Zdzisław also helped Roman's sister, Lili Rosenblum, flee the ghetto. In July 1943, the teenager David Plonski escaped from the [Warsaw] ghetto through the sewage system. He tried to contact the Polish underground to arrange for the escape of the handful of fighters who had remained alive in the destroyed ghetto. The Szymczak brothers came to his aid and provided him with food and arms. They also helped him return to the ghetto through a manhole and then, for three nights, waited for him and his group of comrades to leave the ghetto. They kept in contact with the fighters after finding hiding places for all. In 1944, following the end of the Warsaw Uprising, Zdzisław helped Roman to relocate his family.<sup>748</sup>

The aforementioned Zdzisław Szymczak provided additional details of his exploits in his own recollection of these events, including the assistance he received from Rev. Paweł Iliński of Zalesie Górne, near Warsaw.

The aid that I organized for the Jews had a three-fold character, first of all moving Jews to safe places. Often through my mediation, people found shelter with partisan units [who operated in the Kielce woods]. The point of contact for moving Jews was my own residence at 15 Granica [Graniczna] Street in Warsaw. During the occupation, nearly 100 people passed through my apartment. To avoid provocation of the Germans, those Jews who came to my home first called upon people whom I knew and in whom I had confidence. That same day or the following day, the Jews were moved to other apartments in City Center, Powiśle, or Wola. These apartments were specially prepared with secret tile stoves on rollers, in the event of a German search. The Jews were also moved often to the apartment of my

<sup>748</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 806–7.

in-laws at 43 Królewicz Jakub Street, where in a one-family dwelling two secret places to hide Jews—one in the cellar and one in the loft—had been built. ...

Second, I helped to provide food to Jews who lived in the ghetto, even during the Ghetto Uprising. After the end of the Ghetto Uprising, I received from Mieczysław Kadzielski (the name he used during the occupation) information about the location of a camouflaged bunker in the ghetto. I decided to help this group out of the ghetto. To gain entry to the ghetto, I hired myself out for several days with a group of transport workers who worked for the Germans. This groups' [sic] task was to carry away industrial machinery from the ghetto. I assumed the risk, convinced that there was no other possibility to save the people in the bunker. During the time of my work in the ghetto, I detached myself from the other workers, with the agreement of the supervisor, and went to the address of the bunker. All I got there was information that Kadzielski had moved to another bunker and would indicate later where he was. After several weeks, a fifteen-year-old Jewish boy, Little Jurek [Jerzy Płoński], a member of Kadzielski's group, came to my apartment. He had gotten out of the rubble of the ghetto through the sewers and he brought news of Kadzielski's location. Together with my friends, we decided to help Kadzielski and the people who were with him get out through the sewers. At a designated manhole exactly at midnight we would take them out. We leased an apartment near the entrance to the sewer, where we would immediately be able to get to the survivors. We anticipated using armed guards. The escape was successful. Kadzielski stayed first in the apartment on Królewicz Jakub Street and found himself later in Zalesie Górne near Warsaw, where he was hidden by Father [Paweł] Iliński, a member of the Home Army, in the home of the Matysiak family.

In my third way of aiding Jews, it often happened that I traveled by train to escort Jews to Warsaw. On one of these trips I went to Częstochowa to escort the twelve-year-old niece of Mrs. Kadzielski. After several days, we moved her to the house in Zalesie Górne. The girl calls herself Ola Harland now and lives in Paris.

During the entire occupation, although I was registered as living at 15 Granica [Graniczna] Street, I tried to be there very rarely because I was being pursued by the Gestapo. The Gestapo possessed documents concerning my prewar Communist activities at the Warsaw Polytechnic. I succeeded in avoiding arrest three times. Since I myself was being pursued by the Nazis, it seemed reasonable for me to help the persecuted Jews.<sup>749</sup>

Many other priests from Warsaw assisted Jews during the German occupation. The following members of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, also known as the Pallottine Fathers, extended help to Jews in Warsaw: Rev. Franciszek Pauliński, the rector of the residence on Miodowa Street; Rev. Wiktor Bartkowiak, the chaplain of the transit camp on Skaryszewska Street; Rev. Jan Stefanowski, who assisted both Polish and Jewish children; and Rev. Jan Młyńczak, who was active in the Polus shelter for the homeless in the suburb of Praga.<sup>750</sup> Rev. Józef Dąbrowski, who lived in the Pallottine residence in Ołtarzew (Ożarów), is men-

<sup>749</sup> Lukas, *Out of the Inferno*, 166–68.

<sup>750</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 664.

tioned earlier in the account of Dr. Zofia Szymańska. Jews were also sheltered in the Pallottine residence in Ołtarzew (Ożarów).<sup>751</sup>

Fruma Bregman found shelters for herself, her husband and her daughter, as did other Jews, thanks to contacts provided by the aforementioned Fr. Alojzy Chrobak, from the Jesuit church, and Rev. Michał Kliszko, a vicar at Warsaw's cathedral parish of St. John the Baptist. Fr. Chrobak was acquainted with Fruma's husband, at whose store he shopped before the Bregman family moved to the ghetto. Fr. Chrobak gave him his address in case his family needed help. For a time, Fruma and her daughter, Zosia, lived with Maria Szymczyk, with whom she made contact thanks to Fr. Chrobak. Fruma describes her as a "saintly woman" who would distribute money to the sick and those in need.<sup>752</sup>

Fr. Chrobak served as a Home Army chaplain and was seriously wounded during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. After the war, he was persecuted by the Communist authorities. He was arrested in 1949 and put on trial for alleged anti-Communist activities, and sentenced to a prison term of four years. The Bregman and Lubaczewski families, whom Fr. Chrobak had helped rescue during the war, sent unsuccessful pleas for clemency. He was released from prison in February 1952 in poor health.<sup>753</sup>

Ludwika Oberleder (later Aran, b. 1920), together with her older sister and her mother, all three of whom were natives of Kraków, moved to Warsaw during the German occupation. They assumed Christian identities under the name of Piekarczyński, using birth and baptismal certificates that an unidentified priest in the Praga district of Warsaw supplied them with. Ludwika's father eventually joined them. While living in outlying Milanówek, ostensibly as Polish Catholics, the family was protected by Rev. Jerzy Modzelewski, the pastor of the local parish (St. Hedwig), who assisted with their cover-up and performed marriage ceremonies for Ludwika's sister, Irena, and for a cousin. Both priests were said to have been very helpful to Jews.<sup>754</sup> After the war, Rev. Modzelewski was nominated an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Warsaw.

<sup>751</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 664.

<sup>752</sup> Testimony of Fruma Bregman, JHI, record group 301, no. 1984, noted in Michał Czajka, Marek Józwik, Teresa Mahorowska, and Apolonia Umińska-Keff, eds., *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespół 301, Nr. 901–2000 / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue: Jewish Historical Institute Archives, Record Group 301, No. 901–2000*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000), 370. See also Barbara Engelking and Dariusz Libionka, *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2009), 219.

<sup>753</sup> Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at p. 151.

<sup>754</sup> Testimony of Ludwika (Aran) Oberleder, YVA, file O.3/5434 (Item 3554886).

With the assistance of Rev. Edmund Krause from Holy Cross Parish in Warsaw, Lusia Polirsztok and her son Jerzy were sheltered at a retirement home for priests in Marki, near Warsaw. They left the home in May 1943, after Rev. Krause's death, to live with friends in the Praga suburb of Warsaw.<sup>755</sup> Rev. Krause was the co-founder and chaplain of the Front for the Rebirth of Poland (Front Odrodzenia Polski), which initiated the temporary committee that was later transformed into Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews.

Rev. Stefan Ulatowski, the vice-rector of the Archdiocesan Seminary in Warsaw, was approached by his friend, Aleksander Prażmowski, with a request to shelter Ignacy Zylberberg. Since the seminary was under surveillance after the arrest of its rector, Rev. Roman Archutowski, it was too dangerous to keep Zylberberg there. Rev. Ulatowski escorted him, after dusk, to the residence of Missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul at the nearby Holy Cross Church. While waiting to enter that residence, Zylberberg, who had distinctive Semitic features, was detected by the Polish police and arrested. He was able to secure his release with a bribe; he survived the war in hiding with the assistance of several Poles.<sup>756</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Helena Kirjanow was helped by Maria and Andrzej Dobrodziej, who in turn directed her to Jan and Józefa Dziuba. The Dziubas sheltered Helena in their home in Warsaw until the uprising broke out in August 1944. Afterwards, Józefa took refuge at the Archbishop's residence on Miodowa Street, together with her charge. There, Rev. Zygmunt Choromański, the vicar general of the archdiocese, protected Helena, as did Rev. Józef Podbielski. (The Warsaw archdiocese was vacant at the time. Its previous Apostolic Administrator, Archbishop Stanisław Gall, had died in September 1942. The auxiliary bishop, Antoni Szlagowski, was interned by the Germans in September 1944. Rev. Choromański was appointed auxiliary bishop of Warsaw in May 1946.) After the war, Helena joined her husband in France and then immigrated to Argentina.<sup>757</sup>

Chana Gorodecka was hospitalized during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 under an assumed identity. The hospital was evacuated to the Okęcie suburb, where she remained for several weeks in a very poor state. She stuttered deliberately

<sup>755</sup> Jerzy Lando, *Saved by My Face: A True Story of Courage and Escape in War-torn Poland* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 2002), 224.

<sup>756</sup> Testimony of Janusz Roszkowski, October 14, 1949, JHI, record group 301, no. 3936.

<sup>757</sup> Paweł Ryteł-Andrianik, "Nieznani bohaterowie," *Nasz Dziennik*, February 1, 2014.



in order to disguise her faulty Polish. One of the priests who visited the patients at the hospital brought her extra food and warm clothing.<sup>758</sup>

After the suicide of her husband, Adam Czerniaków, the head of the Jewish Council, Felicja Czerniaków escaped from the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942. She was sheltered by several Poles, among them her former housekeeper, Anna Blum, her schoolmate, Dr. Grabowska, and Apolinary Rudnicki. During the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the Germans evicted the residents from their homes. Felicja hid in a shelter with Rev. Czesław Oraczewski of St. James Church. She disclosed her true identity to the priest and asked him to pray for her. Felicja survived the war.<sup>759</sup>

The Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś) ran an orphanage in Chotomów outside Warsaw. The nuns were part of a network composed of lay organizations, such as the Warsaw Department of Social Welfare headed by Jan Dobraczyński, who referred Jewish children to convents, and priests, such as Rev. Stefan Ugniewski, who headed the foundation responsible for the orphanage in Chotomów. During the German occupation some 80 to 90 girls, mostly orphans, were under the care of eight nuns, including the superior, Sister Teofila Kozłowska, and Sister Witolda (Bronisława) Krzemińska, an educator. Sisters Teofila Kozłowska and Bronisława Krzemińska were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2017.<sup>760</sup>

Some ten Jewish girls were sheltered at the orphanage among them: Joanna (Joasia) Majerczyk (later Gomułka, b. 1931), who was referred in November 1940 by Mother Urszula Ledóchowska of the Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus; Feliksa Brylant (later Gziut, b. 1931), who was later transferred to the orphanage of the Sister Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś) in Turkowice to join her brother Ludwik; Idalia (Dalia) Gołąb (b. 1938 as Taragin); Anna Paprocka (b. 1939 as Mendelson); Urszula

<sup>758</sup> Memoir of Chana Gorodecka, JHI, record group 302, no. 288; published as *Hana: Pamiętnik polskiej Żydówki* (Gdańsk: Arext, 1992), and translated as *Chana: A Memoir of Survival* (United Kingdom: n.p., 2010).

<sup>759</sup> Basia Temkin-Bermanowa, *Dziennik z podziemia* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny and Twój Styl, 2000), 184, translated as Basia Temkin-Berman, *City Within a City* (New York: International Psychoanalytic Books and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2012). See also “Czerniaków Adam,” Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/biographies/5875-czerniakow-adam>.

<sup>760</sup> Teofila Kozłowska and Bronisława Krzemińska, RD. The following persons are acknowledged in the Yad Vashem Righteous Among the Nations database as having been rescued at this institution: Joanna, Janina, Majerczyk, Gomułka; Anna Monat; Irena Monat Stern; Feliksa, Danuta Brylant Gziut; Dalia, Idalia Gołąb Taragin; Halina Węgiełek; Janina, Julianna Lesiów Krakowicka; Danuta Rolnik; Urszula Staros; Jadwiga Czernek; Maria Majerczyk.

Staros (b. 1939); Halina Węgiełek (b. 1938 as Halina Ajzner), who was placed there by Fr. Alojzy Chrobak; Jadwiga Czernek (b. 1931, possibly as Szpigelman); the sisters Irena and Anna Michalska (b. 1933 and 1936, respectively, as Monat); Janina Lesiów (b. 1936 as Julianna Krakowiecka); and Danuta Rolnik (b. 1937 as Vishnitzer). Joanna Majerczyk's mother, Maria Majerczyk, arrived there when the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944 and remained with her daughter. In October 1944, the orphanage was evacuated to Modlin, then to Częstochowa, and finally to the nearby village of Krasice.<sup>761</sup>

Ten-year-old Fejgele Inwentarz was placed in the Chotomów orphanage by her mother, Bella Inwentarz, but she was so attached to her mother that she left on her own without telling anyone. She and her mother then relocated to the Warsaw ghetto, where they perished.<sup>762</sup> However, Fejgele's older brother, Josek Inwentarz (later Josef Carmeli or Yosef Karmeli, b. 1930) survived with the assistance of many Poles, including his prewar neighbours, the Lisowski family, and an unidentified priest.<sup>763</sup>

The fall of 1943 approached. Having no place to stay I went in the direction of the place of my birth which I knew from childhood—the area of Tarchomin, Winnica, Henryków, Wiśniew. During the day I hid in the brushwood near the Vistula River. At night, like a wolf, I approached farmsteads asking for a place to sleep and something to eat. Nowhere did anyone refuse me some food. Sometimes I was allowed to stay overnight in a house, barn or stable. Everywhere I got some bread and milk for the road. Often I would enter a stable

<sup>761</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 805–7; Ajzner, *Hania's War*, 151 (Halina Ajzner, passing as Węgiełek). The daughter of Michał Mendelson and Bela Rochman was taken from the Warsaw ghetto to the home of Stanisław and Kazimiera Trzaskalski, and then transferred to their daughter, Izabella Kuczkowska-Trzaskalska, an employee of the Warsaw Social Welfare Department, who registered the child as Anna Paprocka, the daughter of her housekeeper. The child remained there until the end of 1943, at which time Izabella Kuczkowska-Trzaskalska had to hide from the Gestapo. The child was placed in the Chotomów orphanage by Jadwiga Piotrowska, another employee of the Warsaw Social Welfare Department. Izabella Kuczkowska-Trzaskalska also took in another Jewish girl, Halina Schumacher (Szumacher, b. 1931), who went by the name of Helena Matusiak. After she had to go into hiding, Jadwiga Piotrowska placed the child in a Catholic institution run by nuns in the Czerniaków district of Warsaw. After the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, the older girls at that institution, including Helena, were taken to Germany for forced labour. Both of Izabella Kuczkowska-Trzaskalska's charges survived the war. See the testimony of Izabella Kuczkowska-Trzaskalska, JHI, record group 301, no. 6340. See also the testimony of Feliksa Gziut (née Brylant), SFV, Interview code 29004; and the testimony of Joanna Gomulka (née Majerczyk), SFV, Interview code 30863. J. Szpigelman, 12 years old at the time, was referred to Chotomów by Stefania Moszczeńska, possibly as Jadwiga Czernek (Czernek). See Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 216; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 517.

<sup>762</sup> Kołacińska-Gałązka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 16–17.

<sup>763</sup> Testimony of Yosef Karmeli, SFV, Interview code 26371; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 461.

or cowshed without the farmer's knowledge. I ate the food that the farmer left for the horse (cereal) or pigs (boiled potatoes). For quite some time I lived in the attic of a parish rectory. The priest knew I was a Jew. He gave me shelter and fed me ... I had a warm place under a roof, a full stomach and was under the care of the priest. However, I couldn't stay too long in any one place. My instincts told me that I should change my whereabouts.<sup>764</sup>

Aleksandra Mackiewicz-Niemczyk, a liaison officer for the Polish underground who was involved with Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews, describes how she openly transported a Jewish girl with Semitic features on a crowded train from a railway station in Warsaw to the Chotomów orphanage of the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś).

One Spring Sunday, I was to take a child (a 9-year-old girl) to a certain institution run by nuns [in Chotomów<sup>765</sup>] in the vicinity of Nowy Dwór ... The previous evening I had gone to the parents of the little girl—they were of the intelligentsia from Lvov [Lwów]—and discussed with them matters pertaining to her departure. They were very rich people and the clothing they were preparing for the little girl to take to the institution seemed to me to be too elaborate, to which I called their attention. Nonetheless, when I came for the child the next morning, I found her dressed in a manner that made her conspicuous among children on the Warsaw wartime street. Moreover, she was a child with marked Semitic features. There was no time, however, nor any sense in arguing about such details in view of the great despair of the parents, so I took the child and went to the station. The train we boarded was full of smugglers, women delivering milk, so tightly packed that the people were standing in the compartments and in the corridor. At the instant my—take note—very elegant and very Semitic ward shoved some woman away with both hands, crying out “Uff, rifferaff!” The people in the compartment became silent and surged together, everyone turned their attention to us. I called her attention to us. I called her attention with a sharp tone to her discourtesy—and I must admit that in my heart I considered the case lost. The train was still standing at the station and it would not be difficult to summon the first representative of the authority through the window. Yet there was not a person in the whole packed compartment who considered it right to give away this Jewish child. At the institution to which we then came without further disturbance, I consigned the little one to the proper nun.<sup>766</sup>

There are a number of recorded accounts that mention the muted yet tolerant reaction of Polish passengers who became aware of the presence of Jews on their train. Others appear elsewhere in the present work.

<sup>764</sup> Kołacińska-Gałązka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 19.

<sup>765</sup> See Krzysztof Jasiewicz, ed., *Świat niepożegnany: Żydzi na dawnych ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII–XX wieku* (Warsaw and London: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Rytm, and Polonia Aid Foundation Trust, 2004), 90.

<sup>766</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 385.

Jewish converts were often assisted by the Catholic clergy. Jadwiga Keiferowicz (b. 1924), her younger sister, Teresa (b. 1925), and their widowed mother, Elżbieta Keiferowicz, converted to Catholicism in 1936 in their hometown of Lublin. After the war broke out, Jadwiga helped out at the children's shelter run by the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union. In 1941, when the Lublin ghetto was created, they relocated to Warsaw, with a reference from Mother Stanisława Manowarda. Mother Pia (Helena) Leśniewska, the mother general of the Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus (Grey Ursulines), directed Elżbieta's mother and sister to a boarding school for girls whose director was Sister Irena Szczepańska (Sister Augustine of the Cross). The boarding school was located on the order's premises at 30 Tamka Street, which was a hotbed of conspiratorial activity. The chaplain was Rev. Jan Wosiński, who later became the auxiliary bishop of Płock. Another Jewish convert, who was a postulant at the time, also resided there. Jadwiga found employment at an institution for children with tuberculosis. Afterwards, she was employed at the Institution for Blind Children in Laski, outside Warsaw, which was run by the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross.

Jadwiga's mother and sister had to leave the boarding school after a denunciation. They were taken in briefly by Rev. Jan Zieja, the nuns' chaplain. Sister Franciszka (Antonina) Popiel of the Grey Ursulines found safer accommodations for them with Polish families, despite Jadwiga's mother's Jewish appearance. (Sister Franciszka Popiel perished during the Warsaw Uprising when she went out to care for those in need.) At times, Jadwiga's mother stayed at the Grey Ursulines' home for nuns with tuberculosis in Radość, on the outskirts of Warsaw, and her sister stayed at the Grey Ursulines' convent on Gęsta Street in Warsaw. All three of the Keiferowicz family survived the war and remained in Poland. After becoming a medical doctor, Jadwiga joined the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś), and was known as Sister Elżbieta.<sup>767</sup>

A Jewish woman from Rutki, near Zambrów, had converted when she married a Catholic Pole named Sznip. When she was arrested by the authorities, Rev. Czesław Dziondziak, the local pastor, presented falsified documents attesting

<sup>767</sup> Meloch and Szostkiewicz, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 4, 137–42; Agata Mirek, "Udział siostr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 142; Elżbieta Jadwiga Keiferowicz, *Zapis Pamięci*, Internet: <http://zapispamieci.pl/elzbieta-jadwiga-keiferowicz/>.

to her Catholic origin. These papers, together with a large bribe, secured her release. She survived the war in hiding with her husband's relatives.<sup>768</sup>

Dr. Eleonora Reicher converted to Catholicism as a teenager. She later became a prominent educator who worked at a clinic at the University of Warsaw. Because of her Jewish appearance, from November 1940 she hid under an assumed name in the convent of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary on Raclawska Street in Warsaw, where she worked as a nurse in the children's home, and with the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross in Laski, outside Warsaw. Nonetheless, she was active in the underground, taught nursing, and managed to help several Jews survive the war. During the Warsaw Uprising, she served as a doctor. After the Uprising, she stayed at the parish rectory in the Okęcie suburb of Warsaw.<sup>769</sup>

With the assistance of her friend Princess Aniela Woroniecka and the latter's housekeeper, Jadwiga Turek, Eleonora Reicher arranged for Elżbieta, the five-year-old daughter of her cousin, Dr. Edward Reicher, who was not a convert, to be sheltered by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Międzyzlesie. Passing as Elżbieta Zofia Jankowska, the child remained there until the eve of the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944, when she was reunited with her parents. The Reicher family survived the war, with the assistance of a number of Poles.<sup>770</sup>

Through Fr. Jacek (Adam) Woroniecki, a renowned Dominican scholar and close family friend of Eleonora Reicher, several boys of Jewish origin were accepted at the boarding school for boys run by the Marian Fathers in the Warsaw suburb of Bielany. Rescue was precarious because part of the premises had been taken over by Germans. One of the Jewish boys, Piotr Kormiol (b. 1932), had characteristic Jewish features. Reicher arranged for these boys to receive weekly food parcels.<sup>771</sup> Piotr Kormiol recalled the assistance he received from various persons, among them Fr. Woroniecki.

The Majackis solved Aunt Basia's [Dr. Eleonora Reicher] problem by agreeing to take me to their house [in 1942]. And that was what happened. It was very nice for me at the Majackis'

<sup>768</sup> Waldemar Monkiewicz and Józef Kowalczyk, "Pomoc Żydom w regionie białostockim podczas II wojny światowej," *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 2 (1989): 362–79, at p. 375.

<sup>769</sup> Robert Gawkowski, "Eleonora Reicher: Zapomniana profesor i jej niebanalny życiorys," *Uniwersytet Warszawski*, no. 2 (62) (March–April 2013): 40–41.

<sup>770</sup> Reicher, *Country of Ash*, 159–60, 173–74, 211; Aniela Woroniecka, RD.

<sup>771</sup> Testimony of Aniela Reicher in Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 37. See also Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 680.

house. My aunt and Miss Helenka [her housekeeper] came to see me every week. Even though the time I could spend outside was limited, I was not bored. I had a friend there, the Majackis' son, Janusz. ...

I also did not behave the way I should have at the Majackis'. I was very talkative. This irritated Mr. Majacki. Luckily at that time Father Jacek Woroniecki, a Dominican, Mrs. [Teresa] Potocka's brother, was in Warsaw. It was he who helped my aunt put me in the dormitory run by the Marian Fathers in Bielany [a suburb of Warsaw].

Part of the dormitory was occupied by the Germans and that was very dangerous. The people there were also very unfriendly towards me. Because of my completely Semitic features, they would call me a Jew in front of everybody. Once I even had problems with a German. One of my friends from the dormitory told him straight out that I was a Jew. Who knows how badly everything might have ended, if the rector, a priest, had not calmed the situation down. But I could not stay there anymore. It was dangerous for me, and the rector was afraid. My aunt did not know where to put me. ... Finally, Mrs. [Jadwiga] Strzańska came up with a solution. She inspected orphanages of the Polish Red Cross. She put me up in the orphanage founded by my aunt.<sup>772</sup> ...

In July [1944], the entire orphanage was sent to the country for summer vacation. I was the only one who could not go [perhaps because of his appearance] and I had to stay behind. ... So I stayed with Mrs. Bilińska and with several people from the orphanage's staff. This was where I was when the uprising broke out [on August 1, 1944]. ... The uprising was put down, and the Germans sent me to the camp in Pruszków. ...

When I was in Pruszków, I did not know what was happening to my aunt, or to Miss Helenka. After three days, they took me with a transport to Kielce. I did not know anyone in Kielce, so I got on a train and went to Kraków. Mrs. Potocka's brother lived in Kraków, Father Jacek Woroniecki, who put me in a municipal orphanage [actually, a home for delinquent boys, mentioned again later on] in Bronowice, near Kraków. Life was miserable [for all the children], and there was lots of work. ... no one knew about my background. A few weeks later, my aunt found me, but she could not take me out of the orphanage. ... This is how I survived until Poland was liberated, without any real changes. ... When Kraków and Warsaw were taken over [by the Soviets] I returned to Warsaw and am living at my aunt's house again.<sup>773</sup>

**A**nother Jewish charge at the Marian Fathers' boarding school in Bielany was Jerzy Grossman (b. 1930), who was passing as Jerzy Jedlicki. He came from an assimilated family that had converted to Calvinism before the war.

<sup>772</sup> This may have been the orphanage run by Jadwiga Strzańska and financed by the Central Relief Council, which was transferred from Warsaw to Poronin, near Zakopane, after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. The orphanage housed about a dozen Jewish children and had some Jewish staff members. The Polish staff either knew or surmised the truth, yet none of the Jewish children or personnel fell into German hands. See Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 87, 93; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 760.

<sup>773</sup> Testimony of Piotr Kormiol, JHI, record group 301, no. 489.



In 1940, when the Jews of Warsaw were interned in the ghetto, Wilhelm and Wanda Grossman and their two children, ten-year-old Jerzy and eight-year-old Witold, remained on the Aryan side of the city. Wilhelm managed to obtain Aryan papers for all four of them, enabling them to rent an apartment outside the ghetto. In early 1942, the Grossmans got to know Maria Jablonska [Jabłońska], who distributed the *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, an underground paper put out by the AK [Armia Krajowa—Home Army]. Jablonska, knowing they were Jewish, offered to help them. At Grossman's request, Jablonska entered the closed ghetto in 1942 and at great personal risk smuggled Grossman's nephew, ten-year-old Lucian Meszorer, and his four-year-old sister, Ludwika, out of the ghetto and took them to the home of acquaintances, where they remained until the area was liberated. In September 1943, when the four Grossmans' identity was discovered and they had to flee from their apartment, Jablonska immediately found alternative hiding places for all four of them. Wanda and Witold were sent out of town, Jerzy was placed in a monastery in the Bielany neighborhood, while Wilhelm Grossman stayed in Jablonska's apartment, even after she died from a malignant disease in October 1943.<sup>774</sup>

The Marian Fathers also took in Zygmunt, the 13-year-old son of Stefania Pik-Szafrńska, who introduced herself to them as a Jewess. She came to collect her son shortly before the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.<sup>775</sup>

Fr. Henryk Sulej, a Marian priest from Bielany, obtained a Kennkarte and found a guardian to care for the teenage Regina (Renia) Hądyńska.<sup>776</sup> Maria Kann, who was decorated by Yad Vashem for her role with Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews, obtained birth and baptismal certificates for Jewish charges, among them a child sheltered by Mrs. Garztecka, from Fr. Sudra, a priest in Bielany.<sup>777</sup> This may refer to the aforesaid Fr. Sulej.

Rev. Władysław Kulczycki, the pastor of St. Michael's parish in Kraków, agreed to marry Maria Gregorowicz and Ignacy Hirsch, an assimilated Jew who underwent baptism, which gave him the cover of being a Catholic Pole.

The Gregorowicz family came from Lwów. Leon was an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army. He died in 1919. In the 1930's, Mrs. Gregorowicz, with her daughters Maria and Leonia settled in Kraków.

In the first year of the war, Maria married Ignacy Hirsch, an assimilated Jew, who agreed who agreed to be baptised. The wedding was performed by the priest, Władysław Kulczycki, an activist in the resistance movement involved in helping Jews.

The young couple worked in a firm run by an Austrian, Wilhelm Faude, who knew about Hirsch's Jewish origin and supported the Gregorowicz family, both materially and morally. His affectionate nature distracted suspicion of any illegal activity.

<sup>774</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 289.

<sup>775</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 338, based on the testimony of Stefania Pik-Szafrńska.

<sup>776</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 691–92; Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 295.

<sup>777</sup> Testimony of Maria Kann, YVA, file O.3/2727 (Item 3556573).

Leonía joined the resistance. Helping Jews was only one aspect of her fighting against the occupiers, as well as an expression of her belief that every human being was equal. In 1942, she led Ignacy's mother, Zofia, out of the ghetto. She found a hiding place for her and, for safety, moved her to other places, among others, to Mrs. Mazur in the Olsza settlement, to Mrs. Krzyściak in the officers' settlement, and to Mrs. Dąbrowicka on Moniuszko Street.

Sometimes, Ignacy's sister, Eugenia, would also hide in these places. However, she was recognised as a Jew on the street and was arrested. She spent the rest of the war in camps. When liberated, she was in Buchenwald.

Solecki, the father of Maria's friend, also benefitted from the overnight accommodation of the Gregorowicz family. The 8 or 9-year-old Sztegieŕ girl spent a month in their home. Józef Bratter, a doctor friend from Lwów, spent a few weeks there.

The Hirsch family, the Sztegieŕ girl and Dr. Bratter all survived the war. Ignacy took his wife's surname. In the 1990's, Eugenia was present when Leonía was awarded the title "Righteous Among the Nations."<sup>778</sup>

After leaving Lwów in August 1942, Anna Weissberg took refuge in Kraków, where she posed as a Christian. In April 1943, she met a Polish acquaintance from Lwów whom she married. The priest that performed the ceremony, a cousin of the groom, antedated their marriage certificate. In May 1944, Anna ran across Sylwia Szapiro, an employee of the Arbeitsamt in Lwów and a known Gestapo confidante. Szapiro wanted to know Anna's place of residence. Anna bluffed Szapiro with a threat of retaliation from well-placed individuals, and thus she managed to escape.<sup>779</sup>

Rev. Józef Sykulski came to the assistance of his former schoolmate, Fryderyk Gans, who was passing as Alfred Górny, and his parents, Alfred and Ann Gans, who were passing as Poles near Kraków. Rev. Sykulski provided Anna Gans with false documents in the name of Stefania Gawlik. Both Alfred and Anna died of natural causes during the German occupation. Rev. Sykulski officiated at their funerals.<sup>780</sup>

Rywka Kuberska from Kubra, a small village near Radziłów, and her four children decided to become Christians. They turned to Rev. Stanisław Skrodzki, the pastor of Przytuły, who baptized them in July 1941. Fifteen-year-old Sara Fajga Kuberska became Helena; her baptism entry was backdated to 1926, the date of her actual birth. Rywka, Helena and her brother, Icehak (Icek), survived

<sup>778</sup> The Gregorowicz Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-gregorowicz-family-0>, with corrections based on the Polish version.

<sup>779</sup> Testimony of Anna Weissberg, July 2, 1945, JHI, record group 301, no. 432.

<sup>780</sup> Testimony of Alfred Gorny, SFV, Interview code 22077. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 402–3 (Krokowski). Alfred Gorny mentions other helpers, including his future wife, Ludwika.

with the help of a number of Polish families in various nearby villages. But Helena's two older brothers, who lived on their own, were killed by the Germans. After the war, the Kuberskis lived in Jedwabne. Helena married Antoni Chrzanowski, a Pole, and remained in Jedwabne for the rest of her life.<sup>781</sup>

Not all conversions were genuine. As mentioned earlier, some Jews underwent conversion simply to facilitate their survival, only to revert to Judaism after the war. At their own request, Chaya and Yisrael Finkielsztejn were baptized by Rev. Aleksander Dołęgowski, the pastor of Radziłów, as were their four children. Under the name of Lipiński, the entire family survived as Christian Poles, moving around from farmer to farmer—staying with as many as two dozen Polish families who were aware of their Jewish origins—in several villages near Radziłów until the area was liberated in January 1945.<sup>782</sup>

Jewish converts—even those with a pronounced Jewish appearance—often lived openly among Poles and survived the occupation without being denounced.<sup>783</sup>

<sup>781</sup> Marek Kozubal, "Zapomniani sprawiedliwi czekają," *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], August 20, 2017; Anna Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego* (Warsaw: Prószyński, 2004), 274, 299, 313–14, 374; Anna Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 477–78.

<sup>782</sup> Waldemar Monkiewicz and Józef Kowalczyk, "Pomoc Żydom w regionie białostockim podczas II wojny światowej," *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 2 (1989): 362–79, at p. 365; Machciewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 317 n.58; Testimony of Israel and Chaia Finkelstein, YVA, file O.3/3033 (Item 3556665); Testimony of Ann Finkelstein-Walters, SFV, Interview code 10328; Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*, 299–300, 307–11; Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence*, 478.

<sup>783</sup> Henryk Palester, who was known to be a convert, continued to live openly in his apartment in Warsaw's Mokotów district. See Ewa Teleżyńska, "Po drugiej stronie bramy," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 7 (2011): 233–51, at p. 236. Wanda Likiernik, a Jewish woman who had married into an assimilated family of converts, survived in a small town outside Warsaw. "Mother was ostensibly Mrs. Malinowska, and her real name was supposed to be a closely guarded secret. In fact, all of Konstancin and its environs knew her true identity, but nobody had betrayed her to the Germans." See Stanisław Likiernik, *By Devil's Luck: A Tale of Resistance in Wartime Warsaw* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 2001), 153. Maria Turek (née Grunewald), a Catholic convert married to a Pole, lived openly in Kraków without being denounced or blackmailed. See Krystyna Samsonowska, "Pomoc dla Żydów krakowskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 852. A convert named Meizner lived openly in Sokoły, near Białystok, with his wife and two children. "Meizner was circumcised; even the lines of his face bore witness to his obvious Jewishness. At first sight, his wife looked like a typical Jewess; her manner of speaking also could not hide her origins. ... Meizner's apostasy was a manner of livelihood and maintenance, and nothing else. He did not go to church, and he never went to the priest to confession. ... at the time of expulsion, Meizner found shelter in the villages, in spite of the fact that the farmers knew of his Jewish origins and the recognition that they would be given the most severe

The following account concerns the Herman family who lived in the Warsaw suburb of Włochy, where they had the support of the local Catholic priests.

I had visited also the Herman family, father, mother, and a daughter Ewa, living in Włochy, a small town near Warsaw. I personally knew the family, because Ewa was a close friend of my sister, the two attended the same school and the same class during the Soviet rule in Lwów, they often met in our house. The Herman family occupied a small house in Włochy, all for themselves. They entertained me cordially. They all three had very distinctive Semitic features; each of them looked not like one Jew, but like ten Jews, together. I think that all the surrounding knew that they are Jews. It was impossible not to. They survived the war; I met them after the war in Kraków. Ewa told me that they had support of the local priest; by the way all Herman family had been converted Jews, and a very pious and devoted Christians.<sup>784</sup>

Not all rescue efforts ended well. The four-member family of Dr. Artur Władysław Elmer, who had converted to Catholicism in the early 1920s, took refuge in the residence of the archbishop of Lwów, Bolesław Twardowski, for a period of two years, having been brought there in July 1941 by Rev. Zygmunt Hałuniewicz, the chancellor of the metropolitan curia. They were cared for by the Notre Dame Sisters, among them Sister Urbana Lejawka.

Unfortunately, when Dr. Elmer's youngest son, Janusz, went out on August 8, 1943 to collect the morning milk delivery from the caretaker's home, he was stopped by Gestapo men because of his distinctly Semitic features. Upon ques-

punishment for hiding a Jew. The Polish police also knew who Meizner was and were silent. The apostate went around freely, as if the entire matter of persecution did not relate to him." See Michael Maik, *Deliverance: The Diary of Michael Maik: A True Story* (Kedumim, Israel: Keterpress Enterprises, 2004), 181–82. Czesław Wala, then a young boy, lived with his mother, a Jewish woman who had converted to Catholicism, and his sister in Rudnik, near Stalowa Wola. During the war, the residents of Rudnik and the nearby village of Stróża protected the Wala family. See the interview with Czesław Wala, by Małgorzata Pabis and Franciszek Mróz, "Miejsce, które ukazuje piękno polskiej duszy," *Nasza Arka*, no. 1 (2010): 11. A Jewish woman with Semitic features who had converted to long before the war lived openly with her Polish husband and family in Annopol, near Kraśnik. See Nachman Podróznik, *Pozorowana tożsamość: Historia przetrwania pod okupacją niemiecką* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2020), 76. Shlomo Berger, who passed as a Pole in a small town near Czortków working for Tadeusz Duchowski, the Polish director of a company who was aware of his identity, recalled, "I rented a room in Niżniów with one of the Polish workers. I learned from him that the man who was in charge of the office was the son of a judge who was a Jew who had converted to Catholicism. The son was probably raised as a Christian, but by German criteria he was still Jewish. The people at the office knew who he was, but nobody said anything." See Ronald J. Berger, *Constructing a Collective Memory of the Holocaust: A Life History of Two Brothers' Survival* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1995), 55.

<sup>784</sup> Arnon Rubin, *Against All Odds: Facing Holocaust: My Personal Recollections* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2005), 151.

tioning, he informed them that he resided in the archbishop's palace. When the Germans arrived there to investigate, Dr. Elmer fled in panic and was shot. His family was arrested and executed on the outskirts of Lwów.

Remarkably, Archbishop Twardowski did not suffer any repressive measures.<sup>785</sup> However, since Dr. Elmer was in possession of a false document identifying him as an Armenian Catholic, this led to an investigation of the records of the Armenian-rite Roman Catholic archdiocese, which is described later in the text.

A young Jewish woman from Pruszków by the name of Balbina Synalewicz was taken to work as a labourer on a farm in Czerniaków, outside Warsaw. One day she received word about the fate of her parents, who were confined in the Warsaw ghetto, from an unknown priest who had met her father by chance.

One day, as I was working in the field, someone came to tell me that a man was waiting for me. I brought the raft to the other side and ran to the kitchen, where I introduced myself to the man. He was about twenty or twenty-two years old. His face was round, he had dark blond hair and blue eyes. He wore a sport jacket and black trousers. He got up to greet me.

"I have a message for you from your father."

"How are my parents?" I blurted. "How did you happen to meet them? Where are they?"—A cascade of words, questions: I asked so many things. He couldn't answer some of these questions because he didn't know. Others, I suspected, he wouldn't answer because he knew too much.

"I saw your father in the place where he worked. He gave me your address, and asked me to see you."

"How were you able to travel?"

"I'm a priest. The Germans don't allow us to wear our religious habits. I have to dress in civilian clothes."

"What was my father doing when you saw him? Did you see my mother?"

"No, only your father. They are locked up in the ghetto. In the morning the SS take them out for different chores outside the ghetto. Your father wanted to know how you were. He asked if you had heard from your sister."

"Are you allowed to enter the ghetto in Warsaw?"

"I'm sorry, no, I can't. It has been sealed off."

<sup>785</sup> Bizuń, *Historia krzyżem znaczone*, 123, 187–89; Grzegorz Chajko, *Arcybiskup Bolesław Twardowski (1864–1944): Metropolita lwowski obrządku łacińskiego* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Rzeszowie, 2010), 386–88; Grzegorz Chajko, "The Clergy of the Archdiocese of Lviv of the Latins in Aid of the Jewish Nation during the Years of the German Occupation from 1941–1944: An Outline of the Events," *The Person and the Challenges*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2013): 143–55, at pp. 145–47; Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 153.

We talked for a while. Chana asked him to stay with us for supper. But he excused himself and left.

I tried to think of something to say that would help my parents in some way. But nothing occurred to me. I wrote a letter to my sister, telling her about the priest's visit. If Dad had been able to contact a priest, perhaps he was also able to do other things to ensure their safety, I said.<sup>786</sup>

Later, with the help of the Polish underground, Balbina Synalewicz obtained false identity documents in the name of Elżbieta Orlański and moved to Kraków. An arrangement was set up by Irena Adamowicz, a member of the Polish underground, for Balbina to maintain contact with Warsaw through letters sent to a nun who lived there.

One day in the middle of summer of 1942, we were coming from the fields when someone said that Leah wanted to see me. She was in the kitchen with another woman, chatting. Leah introduced me to her as Irena Adamowicz.

Irena was a leader in the [Polish] Scout movement. Outraged by the injustice done to the Jews, she helped out however she could. Irena travelled across the country making contact with halutzim in the major ghettos and telling them about how the clandestine movement operated. ...

Irena talked to me for a while. She told me that I would be sent to Krakow [Kraków]. She asked me how I felt about the work and whether I knew how to pray. I told her I knew the prayers by heart after so many years of hearing the Catholic students saying their prayers every morning at school. She seemed satisfied with my answers. Irena gave me an address, and told me to send a letter there on the seventh day of every month as a sign that I was still alive. Whenever the underground needed me, they would let me know. She handed me a prayer book. "Be careful, and good luck," she said. ...

As Irena had instructed me, I addressed my monthly letters to the Mother Superior; absolutely no one else knew.<sup>787</sup>

Jews who had acquaintances among the Catholic clergy turned to them for protection in the face of the unfolding terror and uncertainty. Alfred Szancer (later Królikowski), born in Kraków in 1928, recalled the efforts of his father, Zygmunt Szancer, to secure the family's future by turning to his former classmate, Rev. Stanisław Proszak, the pastor of the parish in the nearby village of Biały Kościół.

It was impossible to live in the empty apartment on Rzeszowska Street [in Kraków] because of the expectation that it would later be included in the ghetto area, and my father was determined to avoid being enclosed in the ghetto. Thus he made contact with a former classmate, Father Stanisław Proszak, a parish priest in the village of Biały Kościół, eighteen

<sup>786</sup> Thon, *I Wish It Were Fiction*, 24–25.

<sup>787</sup> Thon, *I Wish It Were Fiction*, 31–32, 61.



kilometers from Kraków, in the direction of Ojców. This priest helped us a great deal, giving his guarantees on our behalf when we rented a room at a local farmer's, and later, by recording in the parish books a fictitious baptism of our entire threesome (Father, Mother [Zofia], and me) and issuing us certificates of baptism. At that time our given names were also changed for the first time—Father's to Stanisław Zygmunt, Mother's to Jadwiga Zofia, and mine to Jerzy Alfred. According to our thinking then—somewhat naive, as it turned out later—this was supposed to disorient the Germans in case they discovered our escape from Kraków.

On the basis of these documents and thanks to Father Proszak's connections, we received temporary identification documents from the local administration—which we used as evidence of our identities for a brief period of time. For a time, Father, unable to make a living in the village, worked in Kraków at the Władysław Klimek Iron Foundry, owned by a friend of his, and on Sundays, he rode his bicycle to Biały Kościół. This lasted until the spring of 1941, when Father was warned—I don't know how and by whom—of the necessity to flee further.<sup>788</sup>

Pauline Witriol (b. 1937) and her sister were sheltered by a long string of Polish families in the countryside around Kraków. In all likelihood, their presence was widely known to many other villagers. At various points, their rescue was assisted by a priest and nuns. Their parents did not survive the war.

In the winter of 1942 my family already had been exiled from our town and my father, along with other male members of our family, was put into a labor camp in a neighboring town. My father and my mother's brother, Yaakov, made their way back to our town to ask the priest there for baptismal certificates for us, my sister and I. He thought the certificates would make it safer for us to live with Polish people. ...

Throughout the war my sister and I stayed with various Christian Polish families. These days I can't remember if it was seven or nine families all together. We couldn't stay with each family too long because they were so terrified of being found out and caught by the Gestapo, or the Polish police. Plus, it was war-time and no one had enough food to feed their own family, let alone extra people. ...

The family we stayed with next hid us under the kitchen floorboards, in a hole in the dirt. That family had a dog outside that would bark when people came to the house to visit. One day our mother came to the house and saw us in the hole, all dirty, and she started crying. We asked her why she was crying, she said she was so happy to see us. We said, if you are so happy to see us why aren't you laughing. She replied I've forgotten how to laugh. We thought that was so funny, how could she forget to laugh? When it was time for her to go we refused to say good-bye.

Overnight between families again, once we stayed in an abandoned house. It was a Jewish house, who else would it have belonged to? We were given bread and water to eat, and told to stay under a table. There was a window above the table, and anyone passing would have seen us. We did go up to the attic though and found it filled with books,

<sup>788</sup> Alfred Królikowski, "Helped by Żegota," in Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 134–35.

Hebrew books. At one point we saw a rat and gave it some bread. We were just like that rat, dirty, unwanted.

My sister and I had each other for company and when we were lying in our hiding places, when strangers were visiting, after a length of time it was easy to forget ourselves and start to play and whisper. Then the woman of the house would quickly stamp her feet and say something like, “Darn these mice!” This was a signal to us that we had been heard. If the visitors present were wise to the situation, they never let on, fortunately for us.

In one family we were hidden on top of their stove. They had a cooking oven and a brick oven that stuck out into the next room where there was space on top. We were hidden on top, with boxes all around us. One day the couple’s two children started fighting right below us. The sister started crying and crying. As we peered around the boxes one fell. Someone walking by came into the house to see what was going on, and saw us on top of the oven. The father of the house ran in from the field terrified that the police were going to come. He marched us way out into the forest and hid us there without any food or water.

The people who kept us could not confide in any neighbor or friend for fear that they would be given away for the Gestapo and then, together with the whole family we would all be shot. The women in some of these families, because of their greater sympathy for little children, would sometimes take much abuse from their husbands and grown children because of this real and terrible fear. Some of the women would be able to confide in the nuns who came to visit. The nuns would nod and smile to us with gentle smiles, and sometimes bless us or give us religious medals to wear on pretty blue ribbons. At such times we were able to feel that it shouldn’t be held against us that we were Jews.

A few months after the war we were taken from the Polish family by an aunt, who had been liberated from a concentration camp.<sup>789</sup>

The Rozman family, consisting of parents, Edward and Stefania, and their three children, Leopold, Adam and Stanisława, remained in their home in Wyciąże, near Kraków, until 1942. When policemen showed up to deport them, they fled to the nearby village of Branice, where they found a place to hide. After someone informed on them, they were forced to leave the village and wandered about. During that time, they were helped by Rev. Leon Katana, the pastor of Ruszcza, who provided them with food and allowed them to stay in his barn.

Eventually, they were taken in by a former acquaintance, Julia Piękosz, who lived in the village of Borzęcin, near Brzesko. At times, the Rozman family had to hide in the nearby forest to avoid German raids. The entire family survived the war and converted to the Catholic faith. Rev. Katana and his vicar, Rev. Jerzy Iżowski, also extended their protection to six Jews (four men and two women) who were evacuated from Warsaw to the village of Ruszcza after the Warsaw

<sup>789</sup> Pauline Witriol interviewed by Miriam Barrere, *California Holocaust Memorial Week, April 28–May 4, 2008*, April 2008, 101–3.

Uprising of 1944 was crushed. The priests instructed them on Catholic religious practices and assisted them in passing as Catholics.<sup>790</sup>

Regina Kempieńska (née Riegelhaupt) and her newborn daughter survived the war with the help of a large number of villagers. When she returned to her native village of Wojakowa, near Czchów, after a deportation operation towards the end of 1942, she was greeted warmly by the villagers with whom she sought shelter. Soon the entire village learned that she had returned. Rev. Aleksander Budacz, the local pastor, called on his parishioners to help the fugitives. No one betrayed her.

We travelled seven kilometres. ... The Germans realized that several Jews had not reported for deportation. They ordered a halt and started to search the area. It is then I decided that I had to escape at any cost, and despite my severe pains [due to her advanced pregnancy] I got off the wagon and disappeared into a crowd of school children. At one point I turned left and took a short cut in the direction of Wojakowa. After an hour I found myself in my village and entered the Jachnas' house. They were happy to see me, gave me bread and milk ... Mr. Jachna went immediately for the midwife and that evening I gave birth to a girl. The Jachnas were poor, but they did more for me than was possible for them. They gave me underwear and diapers for the child. ... Mrs. Jachna moved her children to the attic, even though it was September and already cool, so I wouldn't have to feel embarrassment. She carried out all the tasks I needed. The next day my husband arrived and the Jachnas took care of him. Instantaneously, the entire village found out about me, but no one denounced me. The village priest, Leon Badacz [actually, Aleksander Budacz], called on his parishioners from the pulpit to help me. Several weeks later I left the Jachnas and moved to Maria Pajor, a peasant woman. Mrs. Jachna cried when she said goodbye, but I did not want to remain there longer because I realized that Mr. Jachna was afraid to keep me longer, even though he never said anything about that. After several months, I moved to another place. They were very poor people. They had seven children and very little to eat because it was before the harvest. I stayed there until the following May [1943].<sup>791</sup>

Afterwards, Regina and her daughter took refuge with many other villagers, but she did not identify everyone that helped her by name. Among their other benefactors were: Dr. Zygmunt Orzeł, Jan Jarzmik and his wife, Wincenty Tucznia, Maria Tucznia (Wincenty's sister), Mr. Trojanowski, Dorota Brzęk, Mr. Puchnik, Andrzej Figiel, the family's former housekeeper Różia, Bil, Katarzyna Kondras, Władysław Mleczko, Julian Mleczko, the Pająk family, Bronisława and her sister-in-law Julia Skrężyna, the Pajor family (who sheltered 15 Jews), Anna Błoniarczyk, and the Serafin family. Their final and longest place of refuge was with the Jarosz family (who sheltered 19 Jews) in the nearby village of Stańkowa.

<sup>790</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 603–4; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 820–21.

<sup>791</sup> Testimony of Regina Kempieńska, JHI, record group 301, no. 3733.

Of all these many rescuers (at least thirty), only the Jarosz family was awarded by Yad Vashem.<sup>792</sup>

An entire network of Poles, including members of the clergy and the Home Army, took part in the rescue of Sabina Honigwachs (later Bruk, b. 1921). After escaping from the ghetto in Gorlice, Sabina and her family members hid for a brief period in an empty tomb in a cemetery, where they had been directed by the local pastor, Rev. Kazimierz Litwin. Sabina's family returned to the ghetto and were deported to a death camp in a subsequent German raid. Jan Benisz, a Home Army officer, placed Sabina with several trusted families connected with the Home Army (Wroński, Puchajda, Horodyński, and Tokarski). She was furnished with a false identity document in the name of Maria Wójcik. Both Jan Benisz and his wife, Helena, helped the Honigwachs family as well as other Jews, among them Irena Aleksandrowicz, the daughter of a lawyer from Gorlice, who was placed in a convent in Warsaw where she survived the war. (The Germans arrested Benisz, together with some twenty Home Army members, including his two sons. They were all executed on October 19, 1943.)

From early 1943, Sabina was sheltered by the Sisters Servants of the Virgin Mother of God Immaculately Conceived (of Dębica; Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek Bogarodzicy Dziewicy Niepokalanie Poczętej) at their convent in Dominikowice near Gorlice, where the nuns had an orphanage. So as not to raise suspicions, Sabina was dressed in a nun's habit and shared a room with some of the nuns. The superior of the convent at the time was Sister Serapiona (Zofia Liszka), who died in May 1943. The nuns directly responsible for Sabina were Sister Czesława (Stefania Kądziaława) and Sister Chrystiana (Julia Mikoś).

While at the convent, Sabina was protected by the Missionary Fathers of (Our Lady of) La Salette, who were in charge of the nearby parish in Kobylanka, and she received visits from Poles belonging to the underground who continued to care for her. To maintain her cover as a nun, Rev. Stanisław Łach, the convent's confessor, visited her regularly, and the local pastor, Rev. Julian Filoda, allowed her to receive Communion when she attended mass, even though he knew she had not been baptized. After Sister Czesława's death in August 1943, Sabina left the convent and stayed again with various families active in the Home Army (Habela, Stankowski, Tokarski, "Jurek").

Sabina returned to the convent towards the end of the summer of 1944. The new superior, Sister Ambrozja (Marcjanna Łączniak), entrusted her to the care of Sister Atanazja (Zofia Śliwka). On her own insistence, Sabina became involved with the activities of the Polish underground, delivering arms for the Home Army dressed as a nun. At the end of the German occupation, in January

<sup>792</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 304.

1945, Sabina was transferred to the order's mother house in Dębica. According to the order's chronicle, another unidentified Jewish woman was also sheltered at the convent in Dominikowice.<sup>793</sup> Of all Sabina's many benefactors, only Zofia Liszka (Sister Serapiona), Jan Benisz, and Marcjanna Łączniak (Sister Ambrozja) were recognized by Yad Vashem. Sabina deposited an extensive testimony of her rescue with Yad Vashem.

Apart from the superior [Sister Serapiona—Zofia Liszka], only two senior sisters, namely, Czesława [Stefania Kądziaława] and Chrystiana [Julia Mikoś], knew about me and were aware of my Jewish origin. The superior made them privy to everything. During the first few days of my stay at the convent I remained in the room where I was put when I first arrived there. There were many workers and novices at the convent, therefore appropriate preparations had to be made before I could be brought into that company. So I was confined in my room for several days. ...

After a few days, Sisters Czesława and Chrystiana came to my room and informed me that from then on, I was to lead a normal life in the convent. They brought with them a nun's habit and told me that they were entrusting it to me, and that I should never sully or bring shame to it. From then on, I was to behave like a good nun. At that time, they placed the appropriate clothing on my head and allowed me to keep my hair. As I mentioned, all of the sisters except for the novices had their heads shaved. This was therefore a great distinction for me. My hair was cut very short, they then placed a coif on my head that held my hair tightly in place, and afterwards the veil and tunic.

A photographer accompanied the sisters into my room, and he was told to wait. (He was a member of the Home Army, the Polish underground.) When I was fully dressed, he took my photograph. Afterwards I put my fingerprints on the *Kennkarte* [an official German-issued identity card] I was presented. This time my *Kennkarte* bore the name Janina Bularska, a resident of Przemyśl. My previous *Kennkarte* was issued under the name of Marja Wójcik. When I came to the convent, I hid it between some beams and I could no longer find it. The photographer made me a new *Kennkarte* as a nun under the name of Janina Bularska as well as a duplicate of the *Kennkarte* I had lost. I hid the duplicate *Kennkarte*, since in the convent I needed the new *Kennkarte* as a nun. ...

In the village of Kobylanka, [adjacent to Dominikowice] where the convent was located, there was a young priest from Krosno [Rev. Stanisław Łach (1914–1981)]. The nuns visited him from time to time and made their confessions to him. When the superior learned that I would be taken into the convent, she went to that priest for counsel as to how to act in

<sup>793</sup> Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 105–10. The testimony of Sabina (Honigwachs) Bruk, YVA, file O.3/1841 (Item 3555977), is reproduced, in part, in document 16, at pp. 153–55. See also the 2nd rev. ed. (Rzeszów and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2020). See also Michał Kalisz, "The Story of Sabina Honigwachs," *Przystanek Historii*, Institute of National Remembrance, Internet: <https://przystanekhistoria.pl/pa2/tematy/english-content/42901,They-took-good-care-of-me-and-they-never-stopped-being-friendly-towards-me-The-s.html>; Account of Sister Renata Pytko, May 10, 2014 (in the author's possession).

this situation, not concealing the fact that I was a Jew. The priest counselled her to take me into convent at once. Thus this priest, the superior and the two senior sisters knew that I was Jewish. In time, the prelate [Rev. Julian Filoda (1899 – 1989), who also served in the same parish and lived in the rectory in Kobylanka, also learned that I was Jewish. He was an elderly man, 73 years of age, who had been expelled from Poznań. His attitude towards me was especially cordial. He came to the convent every Sunday, he looked after me, and at every opportunity he demonstrated his heartfelt attitude towards me. Only these few individuals I mentioned knew about my true origin. For the rest of my surroundings, I passed as a Pole who had entered the convent because she had been persecuted by the Germans for her political beliefs.

One day the local commander of the Home Army known as “Michał” [Mieczysław Przybylski] took shelter (in the convent). [This occurred after Sabina returned to the convent in late summer 1944.] ... Michał was a brave and wise person. During the period I had contact with him he tried to help Jews. He hid in the convent for two weeks. At that time [Jan] Benisz was no longer alive. New people were operating in the area whom I did not know—some new cell created within the Home Army, and yet these people, without anyone’s command, continued to care for me and did not abandon me. ...

From the time I established contact with Michał in the convent, I could no longer sit idly and lead a tranquil convent life. I wanted to go into the forest in order to take an active part in fighting the Germans. I told Michał about this but he was categorically opposed to it. He said that there was no room in the forest for a girl. The tasks that one carries out there were suited only for men. Besides there were a lot of soldiers roaming around in the forest. When I kept insisting, the superior and senior sisters forbade me point-blank from leaving as they thought that I would surely waste myself away. Since I could no longer sit idly, I was given the task of delivering weapons.

It was then I found out that weapons were being stored in the convent. I received instructions from people in the resistance movement who were engaged in transporting weapons. Weapons were brought to the convent at night. Most often they were brought by unknown persons in carts with hay or wood. Weapons were also concealed in suitcases. There were thick forests surrounding Kobylanka. At night a wagon would come out of the forest and bring concealed weapons to the convent. The senior sisters were privy to everything and received the weapons.

So I started to travel together with Sister Chrystiana delivering weapons. Our most frequent destination was Ciężkowice. ... The weapons were either hidden on our persons or concealed in suitcases. We travelled in our convent habits usually during the day. Someone usually awaited us at the station that was our destination, and there we handed over the weapons. Sometimes we took weapons to a specified address in a particular locality, to some home or people we did not know. Occasionally we delivered weapons to a village near the train station. We would often deliver weapons to Dębica, where our main convent [mother house] was located. We usually travelled in a pair and in addition to weapons we took various brochures and notices. It also happened that we delivered some valuable packages whose contents we did not know at all. In Dębica our parcels and instructions were always received by one and the same nun. It was a large convent and only a small part of the sisters knew about its underground activities.



I thus delivered weapons for several months. ... Our last delivery of weapons to Ciężkowice was two weeks before the liberation [in January 1945].<sup>794</sup>

A priest from the parish in Kobylanka, possibly the aforementioned Rev. Julian Filoda, also sheltered a young Jewish woman from Drohobycz known as Józia Kogut, whom he later entrusted to a Polish family in Gorlice.<sup>795</sup>

The Sisters Servants of the Virgin Mother of God Immaculately Conceived (of Dębica) sheltered Jewish children at their convent in Dębica, near Tarnów,<sup>796</sup> as well as adults. Dr. Aleksander Mikołajków and his wife, Leokadia, sheltered thirteen Jews, including eleven members of the Reich family, in Dębica. The Mikołajków family were assisted by Słowikowski, the head of the Polish police and secretly a Home Army member, who warned of impending German ghetto operations, and a Pole that worked at the labour office (Arbeitsamt), who provided identity cards (Kennkarten) for Jewish fugitives. An elderly couple named Kurzyńska, who were very religious, sheltered the Jews in their small cottage in times of danger. When the Germans began their retreat as the Soviet front advanced, these Jews were also taken in by the nuns. On the day of liberation, in August 1944, Dr. Mikołajków was killed by shrapnel as he tended to the wounded.<sup>797</sup>

Several Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś)—Balbina Pieczara (Sister Seweryna), Julia Barnaś (Sister Frydolina), and Franciszka Hapońska (Sister Gertruda)—worked as nurses at the hospital in Gorlice, under Dr. Jan Rybicki, the director of the hospital. They entered the ghetto with him to assist in performing operations.<sup>798</sup>

Gusta Rück, a young girl from Jodłowa, was sheltered for a time in the rectory of a village priest near Brzostek, north of Jasło. The priest's housekeeper was fearful for their safety, so Gusta's mother, Cyla, placed her with a peasant

<sup>794</sup> Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 153–55.

<sup>795</sup> Testimony of Adam Miksz, February 24, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 3384.

<sup>796</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 72 n.68.

<sup>797</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 444–48, at p. 448; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 515–16; Mikołajków Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-mikolajkow-family>; Testimony of Leokadia Mikołajków, SFV, Interview code 35580; Tomasz Frydel, "Powiat dębicki," in Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018), 427.

<sup>798</sup> Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 112.

woman. Gusta was then passed on to other Polish farmers, as was her older sister, Regina (b. 1935). The girls' mother reclaimed her daughters after the war.<sup>799</sup>

Eugenia Jare (later Gina Diamant), who was born in Frysztak, near Jasło, in 1915, received assistance from several priests. Rev. Gabriel Marszałek, the pastor of Borownica, near Sanok, provided her with a false birth and baptismal certificate and an identity card and employed her as his housekeeper for several months; Rev. Jan Keller, the pastor of Sławęcín, gave her temporary shelter; and Rev. Tadeusz Świrad of Barycz, provided her with references when she moved to Lwów, where she passed as a Catholic Pole. When she was arrested in Lwów by a Ukrainian policeman on suspicion of being a Jew, she was released with the help of a priest. Rev. Marszałek, alone, was awarded by Yad Vashem in 2015.<sup>800</sup>

Rev. Jan Gielarowski, the pastor of Michałówka near Radymno, north of Przemyśl, with the assistance of an elderly priest from a nearby village, provided false birth and baptismal certificates to a number of Jews and sheltered Jews in the parish rectory. He provided Jadwiga Bałaban with a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Jadwiga Kowalczyk. Bałaban states in her testimony that Rev. Gielarowski sheltered a Jewish woman and her nine-month-old child. The Germans arrested Rev. Gielarowski in December 1942, but he gave no one away during his interrogation at the Jarosław prison. He was deported to Auschwitz, where he perished on March 21, 1943.<sup>801</sup>

The rescue effort of Rev. Bolesław Hołub, a catechist in Jaworów, was more successful. He sheltered Matylda Goldschlag from Sanok, who passed as

<sup>799</sup> Testimony of Regina Rück, November 17, 1945, JHI, record group 301, no. 4697. See also the testimony of Regina Rueck, YVA, file 0.62/172A (Item 3732366), renumbered as file 0.3/1841.

<sup>800</sup> Testimony of Eugenia Jare, January 16, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 1406; Testimony of Gina (Yaari) Diamant, YVA, file 0.3/3376 (Item 3740042).

<sup>801</sup> Józef Krętosz and Maria Pawłowiczowa, eds., *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945* (Opole: Wydawnictwo i Drukarnia Świętego Krzyża, 2007), 67; Smólski, *Za to groziła śmierć*, 113–19; Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 4, 292; Stanisław Zygarowicz and Witold Jedynak, eds., *Świadkowie wiary Diecezji Przemyskiej z lat 1939–1964* (Przemyśl: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Przemyskiej: 2001), 85–86; Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 2, 213–14; Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 77–78; Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod okupacją niemiecką, Institute of National Remembrance, Internet: <https://straty.pl>; Testimony of Jadwiga Bałaban, JHI, record group 301, no. 5476.

his niece, and provided her mother, Emma Goldschlag, with a false birth and baptismal certificate.<sup>802</sup>

Rev. Jan Lewiarz, an ethnic Pole, was an Orthodox priest. From 1941, he served in the village of Ciechania, near Krempna, south of Jasło, and from 1943, in the nearby village of Bartne, near Gorlice. He sheltered Lila Flachs (later Zofia Trembska), a native of Lwów, who assumed the identity of Zofia Lewiarz, the priest's deceased sister. Lila's father, Jan Flachs, also stayed with Lewiarz in Ciechania for about a year before relocating to Warsaw, where he perished. After the Red Army arrived, Lila went to live with her fiancé, a Ukrainian, and later settled in Israel.

A local Jew is known to have survived among the Lemko population of Ciechania by moving from one farmer to another.<sup>803</sup> Another Orthodox priest who helped rescue Jews was Rev. Piotr Gutkiewicz of Białystok, who provided a birth and baptismal certificate for Edik Ceytlin, a Jewish boy sheltered first by Aleksandra Leonowicz and later by Jan and Maria Gonczar.<sup>804</sup>

Various forms of assistance were provided to Jews and Jewish converts by the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross (Siostry Franciszkanki Służebnice Krzyża). They both sheltered Jews among themselves and found Christians who would take them in.<sup>805</sup> Several accounts attest to the assistance extended by the nuns of this order. Sister Klara (Bronisława) Jaroszyńska was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile. The Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross ran an institution for blind children in Laski, near Warsaw, where a number of Jews found refuge.<sup>806</sup>

A large group of blind children from Laski was transferred to Żułów, near Krasnystaw, where a branch of the institution was established at the outset of the war. Rev. Władysław Korniłowicz joined them in Żułów as their chaplain,

<sup>802</sup> Zych, *Diecezja przemyska obrządku łacińskiego w warunkach okupacji niemieckiej i sowieckiej 1939–1944/1945*, 203.

<sup>803</sup> Zuzanna Schnepf-Kołacz, "'In the Ciechania Presbytery': The Story of Saving Zofia Trembska: A Case Study," *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 2 (2010): 363–83; Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 93–94; Testimony of Jan Lewiarz, April 9, 1964, JHI, record group 301, no. 6006.

<sup>804</sup> Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 956; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 246.

<sup>805</sup> Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 147.

<sup>806</sup> One of their charges was a young Jewish woman named Hela, who worked in the kitchen. See Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 228.

having to flee Laski because of the public stand he took against the German invaders when the war began. After the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, the remaining children at Laski were transferred to the convent of the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Resurrectionist Sisters) in Bukowina Tatrzańska, near Zakopane.

In August 1942, during the liquidation of the Radom ghetto in the Kielce district, Jakub Lautenberg [also given as Jakob Lotenberg], his wife, Karola, and their eight-year-old daughter, Anita, fled to Warsaw. With the help of an acquaintance, Anita was taken in by Jozef Jaroszynski [Józef Jaroszyński], a teacher, and his wife, Halina, a former senior lecturer at the technical college. ... The Jaroszynskis agreed to shelter Karola in their apartment and found a hiding place for Jakub in a rented cellar in the Bielany suburb of Warsaw. During raids or visits by friends, Anita and her mother moved into the cellar until it was safe to return. In due course, Anita was sent to a home for the blind run by the [Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross, misidentified as the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth] in Laski Warszawskie, where the Jaroszynskis' daughter, Klara [Jaroszyńska], worked as a nun. Klara introduced Anita as a relative of hers [Halina] whose father worked as a pilot for the Polish Army-in-Exile. [This ruse was not necessary for the benefit of the nuns because, as we know from other accounts, a number of Jews were sheltered at Laski.—Ed.] Before leaving for the convent, Maria Furmanik, a close friend of the Jaroszynskis [in fact, Maria was their daughter] who lived with them, drilled Anita in the Christian prayers. Later, Maria visited Anita in the convent and took her out for walks in the local parks. The Jaroszynskis, meanwhile, continued to supply Anita with clothes, textbooks, and stationery, without expecting anything in return. On the eve of the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944, the Jaroszynskis sheltered Anita's parents until they arranged accommodation for the entire family with friends in the village of Bukowina Tatrzańska [Tatrzańska] in the Tatry Mountains, in the county of Nowy Targ, where they remained until the area was liberated in January 1945.<sup>807</sup>

During the Second World War the Scout instructor Jadwiga Luśniak used to hide Jews in the boarding house she was running in the Warsaw district of Żoliborz. The staff of the institution was involved in underground activity—due to this fact the place was often controlled by the Nazis [i.e., under German surveillance]. Among the people Jadwiga Luśniak helped were Tomasz Prot [b. 1930] and his mother [Zofia Prot, née Deiches]. Before the war the Prots—an assimilated Jewish family—lived in the Warsaw district of Bielany. Towards the end of December 1939 they moved to the Center for the Blind in Laski. They stayed there until 1942, when their presence became too dangerous for the institution.<sup>808</sup> ...

In June 1942 the mother of Prot took him to Nowinki near Warsaw, to the boarding school of the Central Welfare Council (Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, RGO) for orphans and children of Polish soldiers who were killed or captured. The boarding school was ran [sic] by Jadwiga Luśniak and Jadwiga Żak. In July 1942 Prot was accepted to the Stefan Czarniecki Boarding

<sup>807</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 304–5.

<sup>808</sup> See also the testimony of Tomasz Prot in Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 4, 41–42; Tomasz Prot, "Moje wspomnienie o siostrze Klarze," Stowarzyszenie "Dzieci Holocaustu," Internet: [https://dzieciholocaustu.org.pl/szab5.php?s=sprawiedliwi\\_10.php](https://dzieciholocaustu.org.pl/szab5.php?s=sprawiedliwi_10.php).

School for Boys, which had its seat in Warsaw. He had a so-called “Semitic appearance” and his full name, which appeared in his documents, was Prot-Berlinerblau—Jadwiga Luśniak and her collaborators certainly guessed his descent. Other Jews were also hiding under false names in the boarding school. Prot stayed in the institution until the end of 1943, when due to security reasons he was transferred to boarding schools in Józefów, and then Konstancin. He later returned under the care of Jadwiga Luśniak and stayed there until June 1944. ...

After the defeat of the Warsaw Uprising, the Prots were sent to a camp in Pruszków, and later to Kraków and Bochnia. They remained there until the Soviet Army entered in January 1945.<sup>809</sup>

Sister Klara (Bronisława Jaroszyńska) was instrumental in rescuing other Jewish children as well. She came to the aid of Ewa Kupferblum (later Eva Kuper, b. 1940), who managed to escape from the Warsaw ghetto with her father in the summer of 1942, after miraculously avoiding deportation to Treblinka with her mother. Dr. Lande, a family friend, arranged for Ewa to be taken in by Hanna Rembowska, a school teacher and illustrator of children’s books. Rembowska had tuberculosis, and when she became too sick to care for Ewa, she entrusted her to the care of Sister Klara.

When Ewa first saw Sister Klara, she grabbed the nun’s leg and yelled, “Pick me up!” Sister Klara took little Ewa in her arms and continued to protect her for the duration of the war. Ewa spent the final years of the occupation in Bukowina Tatrzańska, together with evacuees from the Laski Institution for the Blind. Whenever the Germans came to the village, Ewa had to be hidden away.

My father turned to Dr. Lande, who had been the pediatrician who looked after the children of the fur trade union members. He had known my parents since my birth, and my father was sure that he would be sympathetic to our plight. He begged Dr. Lande to find a safe place for me; since my father could not work and hide his remaining family while caring for a young child, I could not be safe with him. Dr. Lande agreed and told my father that he would be in touch with him in a few days. True to his word, he placed me with Hanka Rembowska, an artist and illustrator of children’s books who was a wonderful woman already caring for a little girl, Zosia, who, although not Jewish, had been orphaned by the events of the war. Hanka, who was suffering from tuberculosis, took care of us until she became too sick to do so. The antibiotics used to treat tuberculosis today were not yet known in 1942. Dr. Lande then took us to a farmhouse about 450 kilometres away in Zakopane in the Tatra Mountains, in the southern-most part of Poland.

My own somewhat vague memories begin in the farmhouse, which was located on a hill overlooking the town. There were many nuns, one priest and many blind children, all boys except for Zosia and me. Times were very hard and there was not much food. I remember potatoes. All the children sat in a large circle outside, peeling potatoes. Since

<sup>809</sup> Jadwiga Luśniak, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-jadwiga-lusniak>.

the boys could not see, they would peel as best as they could, then pass the potatoes to Zosia and me to remove the missed spots before putting them into the big pot filled with water, in the middle of the circle. Potatoes were the staple of our diet. There was also a cow that I loved. I remember going to get the cow from the pasture at the end of the day when it was time to bring her home for milking. I would hold the thick cord around her neck and pat her soft fur. That milk and the bit of butter that could be made from it were the only wholesome parts of our diet. I also remember sitting around a long rectangular table at meal times with all the other children, the nuns and the priest. The priest sat at the head of the table with me on his left side. He was the only one who would get a small square of butter for his bread. He would butter a piece of bread, cut it in half and pass me one half under the table. He did not have enough to go around. I was the lucky one. I was always very small for my age, marked for life by those early years of hunger and deprivation.

Whenever the Nazis invaded the village to renew their supplies and take whatever they wanted, someone would run up the hill to warn the nuns. Perhaps it was not because they knew that a Jewish child was being hidden there. It was good to know when the Nazis were around so that anything of value, such as food and supplies, could be hidden before it was confiscated. Whenever this happened, I would also be hidden. I remember vaguely being outside in the pasture, in a hole that had been excavated for that purpose. I would climb in, a board would be placed over the opening and the sod would cover the board. I sat quietly in there until the danger passed. Strangely enough, I don't remember being frightened. I have no idea what might have been said to me to make it feel okay. I was used to being quiet. Somehow, I was made to feel safe, which is unbelievable to me now, since when I imagine placing my children or my grandchildren in such a situation, I am terrified at the psychological damage that would result. I lived in this farmhouse for three years and through to the end of the war. ...<sup>810</sup>

Food was in scarce supply. Sister Klara recalled that once a week she would take an empty sack and walk twenty kilometres to the surrounding farms to ask for food for "her children." The farmers would give her some carrots, onions, potatoes, whatever they could spare. After the war, Ewa was found by her Aunt Zofia, who reunited her with her father. (Ewa's father, Abram or Antek Kupferblum, survived in hiding, as did two of his brothers, Leon and Tanchum, known as Stach.) In 2005, after 60 years of separation, Ewa was reunited with her rescuer. Accompanied by her entire family, she travelled from Canada to Poland to thank Sister Klara for saving her life and learned more about her wartime experiences.

Sister Klara validated many of my memories and corrected others. She told me that when news reached her that the Nazis were nearby, if time allowed, I had indeed been hidden in a hole, but one that had been excavated beneath the earthen floor of the cellar. A board and a mat covered the hole, and a small table was placed on top. If time did not allow, she would put me into bed together with her little niece who, along with her mother and two other siblings, had taken refuge in the convent to escape the bombardment of Warsaw.

<sup>810</sup> Eva Kuper, "A Beacon of Light" in Goldenberg, *Before All Memory Is Lost*, 49–51, 56–57.



Sister Klara's sister had three children, two of whom had blond hair, but one had darker hair more like mine. The two of us would hide under her covers and pretend to be sleeping until the danger passed.<sup>811</sup>

After her reunion with Sister Klara, Ewa wrote the following words of praise and gratitude: "I did not know that Sister Klara loved me so much! As a young woman, she had to take care of so many children and to take such responsibility in those difficult times. Her kindness, her warmth, love and beautiful smile, which I remember from my childhood, were something special for me."<sup>812</sup>

From 1942 to 1945, Sister Klara (Bronisława Jaroszyńska) took under her care Sister Miriam (née Bronisława Wajngold), a nun of Jewish origin of the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross from Laski. Sister Miriam assumed the identity of Maria Gołębiowska, based on an identity document procured by Antoni Jaroszyński, Sister Klara's brother. After leaving Laski in May 1942, these two nuns were taken in briefly by the Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus in Zakopane (Jaszczurówka), where they had been directed by Mother Pia (Helena) Leśniewska, the Mother General of the Grey Ursulines. However, the local authorities refused to allow them to register in Zakopane, as that town had been designated for German settlement. They then took up residence with the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Resurrectionist Sisters) in Bukowina Tatrzańska, near Zakopane, for the remainder of the German occupation.

Three other nuns of Jewish origin with the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross— Sister Bonifacja (Halina Goldman), Sister Teresa (Zofia Landy), and Sister Katarzyna (Zofia Steinberg)—also survived the war. Because their presence in Laski was widely known, they had to leave Laski and took refuge elsewhere. Mother Elżbieta (Róża) Czacka, the founder of the congregation, entrusted them to the care of Sisters Odylla (Anna) Czarlińska, Janina Borkowska, and Janina (Halina) Lossow. In the summer of 1940, Sister Bonifacja (Halina Goldman), who was blind, moved to the estate of the Zamoyski family in Kozłówka, near Lubartów, where some of the blind charges from Laski were housed, and later

<sup>811</sup> Goldenberg, *Before All Memory Is Lost*, 59–60.

<sup>812</sup> *Przywracanie pamięci Polakom ratującym Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Recalling Forgotten History For Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2007), 51; Ewa Kupferblum, Photograph no. 09348, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1039576>; Testimony of Eva Kuper, SFV, Interview codes 47111 and 54491; Maria Zawadzka, "Sister Klara Jaroszyńska Has Died," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/sister-klara-jaroszynska-has-died>; Patrycja Bukalska, "Jak Bóg dał zadanie, to i dał odwagę," *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Kraków], January 25, 2007.

to Żułów, near Krasnystaw, where a branch of the institution for the blind had been established for evacuees from Laski in September 1939.

Sister Teresa (Zofia Landy) left Laski in May 1942. After residing with two families near Miechów, she was taken in by the Carmelite Sisters of the Infant Jesus in Czerna, near Krzeszowice, where she was also helped by the Discalced Carmelite Friars, who had a monastery nearby. Later, she was transferred to the convent of the Discalced Carmelite Sisters in Lwów. Sister Katarzyna (Zofia Steinberg), a pediatric ophthalmologist who worked with blind children, also left Laski in May of 1942; she too found refuge with the Discalced Carmelite Sisters in Lwów.<sup>813</sup>

The Discalced Carmelite Sisters, a cloistered order, came to the assistance of many Jews in Lwów.<sup>814</sup> One of their first charges was Zofia Szyszko-Bardach (b. 1918 as Lucyna Kestelman), who took refuge in their convent in the fall of 1941 with her infant daughter, Anna. Afterwards, she relocated to Warsaw with her husband, a Catholic activist who previously hid near Lwów. In particular, Zofia remembered the helpfulness of Siostra Róża od Serca Chrystusa (Sister Rose of the Heart of Christ), who broke her contemplative vows by leaving the convent in order to acquire food for the charges.<sup>815</sup> The nuns' involvement in rescuing Jews eventually came to the attention of the Ukrainian police.<sup>816</sup>

Nuns of Jewish origin were protected in other convents as well. Róża Margulies, the daughter of a Warsaw rabbi, survived as Sister Rozariana in the Dominican Sisters' cloister in Święta Anna outside Przysrów, near Częstochowa. Her presence in the convent was widely known in the area.<sup>817</sup> Chaja (Helena) Kalb (1899–1986), who converted to Catholicism in 1919 and joined the Con-

<sup>813</sup> Alicja Gościńska and Ryszard Kamiński, *Laski w czasie okupacji: 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, 1987); (Sister) Maria Krystyna Rottenberg, *Aby byli jedno: Pasja życia siostry Joanny Lossow* (Warsaw: Adam, 2005), 133–35; Elżbieta Przybył-Sadowska, "Siostra Katarzyna Steinberg z Lasek (1898–1977)," in Elżbieta Przybył-Sadowska and Daria Szymańska-Kuta, eds., *Orbis Christianus: Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Janowi Drabinie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2010), 183–200, at pp. 189–90 (*Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, no. 1317; *Studia Religioznologiczne*, no. 43); Testimony of Sister Joanna (Halina) Lossow in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 74, 185–86, 188–91; Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 270.

<sup>814</sup> Account of Sister Maria Ancilla od Najświętszego Sakramentu (of the Blessed Sacrament), Discalced Carmelite, dated August 23, 1983.

<sup>815</sup> Testimony of Zofia Szyszko-Bardach, SFV, Interview code 43325.

<sup>816</sup> Michael Hanusiak, *Lest We Forget* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1976), 148–49, Exhibit: Report of the Ukrainian Police, dated August 11, 1942.

<sup>817</sup> Sławomir Sznurkowski, "Miejsce wybrane przez Boga—sanktuarium św. Anny k. Częstochowy," *Magazyn Familia*, July 19, 2012.

gregation of the Sisters Canonesses of the Holy Spirit de Saxia (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Kanoniczek Ducha Świętego de Saxia, commonly known as *duchaczki*) in 1927 as Sister Emanuela, resided throughout the war at the congregation's convent in Kraków, which also sheltered Jewish children. Sister Emanuela provided baptismal and birth certificates to a number of Jews. Her two youngest siblings, Rachel (Józefa) and Natan (Władysław), who also converted to Catholicism, survived the war. Józefa Kalb became a nun in the Congregation of Sisters Servants of Jesus.<sup>818</sup>

When the war broke out in September 1939, Stefan Wyszyński, at that time a priest—after the war he was made a cardinal and Primate of Poland—taught at a seminary in Włocławek. He had to leave Włocławek because he was wanted by the Germans for his pastoral duties on behalf of workers. He took refuge at the institution for the blind in Żułów, which was run by the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross, serving as chaplain. While in Żułów, Rev. Wyszyński joined in the task of helping Jews. Jewish fugitives would come around asking for food. The nuns also took in Jews, some of whom who survived the war. Later, Rev. Wyszyński relocated to Laski, near Warsaw, where he urged the faithful to help those in need.

During World War II, Fr. Stefan Wyszyński [Wyszyński] had to hide from the German occupants. Between October 1941 and June 1942, he was staying in Żułów (District of Krasnystaw) at the center for aid to the blind, which was run by the Franciscan Sisters convent from Laski. At that time he was already involved in his pastoral care for the people staying at the Center, and for inhabitants of the surrounding villages, teaching children in secrecy and supporting the Home Army (AK) soldiers. In his free time, he helped on the farm. Jadwiga Karwowska (née Zalewska), whose parents worked at the aid Center, was a witness to the help Father Wyszyński gave to the Jewish family of three: a father [Józef] and two of his children, named Gołda (born 1928) and Szmulek (born 1930).

Years later Karwowska recalls: “Fr. Wyszyński came to us constantly, literally each night, and we hid them [the Jewish family] at our attic. He helped my dad put a ladder and

<sup>818</sup> Jan Machniak, *Służebnica Boża Siostra Emanuela Kalb* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo św. Stanisława BM, 2013); Immaculata Kraska, *Miłość chodzi zawsze za mną: O życiu czcigodnej służebnicy Bożej, siostry Emanuela Kalb CSS*, 2nd rev. ed. (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Teologicznego Księży Misjonarzy, 2020); Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 127. At the request of Rev. Jan Mayer, Sister Emanuela Kalb prepared eleven Jews for baptism (they were baptized at St. Michael's church), and provided them with false baptismal certificates, some belonging to deceased nuns. Among those baptized were Bela Frejman; Janina Abrahamowicz and her daughter, Teresa; Czesława, Janina and Jerzy Steuer; Zofia Fenereisen and her mother, Krystyna; and Augustyna Jeschiwe. Only five of these persons survived the war. See Agata Mirek, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 144.

take it back to the garden so that there were no traces of anybody's presence at the attic." Franciscan Sisters, priests, and some workers at the aid center in Żułów knew that Gołda and Szmulek were Jewish, yet despite the danger they decided to help them.

Esther Grinberg (Morgenstern) reveals other, previously unknown, facts about Fr. Stefan Wyszyński. The interview with her has been kept at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (ref. O.3/VT/862).

In her testimony she mentions the tragic history of her family. Born in 1918 in Międzyrzec Podlaski, she lost her parents, brother, and sister in the Holocaust. She survived thanks to the help of many people in various places, including some from the capital city, where she arrived during the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943. She was concealed by Grażyna Winiarska, among others. In her memoirs she refers twice to the fact that Father Stefan Wyszyński, who at that time moved from Żułów to Łaski (near Warsaw), was well known as he encouraged the faithful at his church to help all those who were escaping from the fire of war.

As Esther Grinberg mentioned, he did not specify exactly whom to help, mainly for safety reasons, but everyone knew he meant Jews who were at that time massively fleeing the ghetto and seeking refuge on the "Aryan" side.<sup>819</sup>

The three-member family mentioned above was denounced by a Ukrainian and executed by the Germans in Kraśniczyn on October 31, 1942, notwithstanding the interventions of the nuns who attempted to rescue them. A Polish policeman who witnessed the execution described the tragic event to the nuns with tears in his eyes. According to Sister Joanna (Halina) Lossow, who headed the institution in Żułów, another Jewish family by the name of Braunstein, then passing as Burzanowski, consisting of a mother and her three sons, survived the war at the institution. A 12-year-old Jewish girl was also sheltered there temporarily.<sup>820</sup>

After being smuggled out of the Częstochowa ghetto by a former employee of their family business around September 1942, Bronisława (Bracha) Kozak and her two daughters, Dobra (Debora) Jenta (b. 1934) and Hadassa (b. 1937), assumed new identities as Stanisława, Maria and Jadwiga Kruszewska, respectively. They lived for a few months with a family of farmers in the village of Józefów before making their way to Warsaw. Cesia (Cecylia) Kozak, a relative of theirs who was passing as a Catholic Pole, found employment for Bronisława as a maid with a Polish family. She placed her nieces, Dobra and Hadassa, in a convent in or near Warsaw.

<sup>819</sup> Paweł Rytel-Andrianik, "The Unknown Side of Cardinal Wyszyński: Documents Reveal Polish Prelate Helped Jewish People During Holocaust," *Zenit*, January 20, 2015.

<sup>820</sup> Tomasz Pietrzak, "Nieznane oblicze kard. Wyszyńskiego," *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], February 16, 2016. See also the testimony of Sister Joanna (Halina) Lossow in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 184–98, at pp. 192–97.

Towards the end of 1943, Hadassa (Jadwiga or Wisia) was taken from the convent, in unclear circumstances, and went to live with Helena Sitkowska, a widow with a teenage son and a younger daughter. At some point, Dobra (Maria) was transferred to another convent where she remained until shortly before the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, at which time she was removed by her aunt so that both sisters could be together with their mother.

Is not clear what convents the girls stayed at, possibly with the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross in Laski. All three were then sheltered by the Sitkowski family, who also cared for them when they were all expelled from Warsaw after the insurgents capitulated in October 1944. Dobra (Debora) Kozak settled in England, where she became Marion Miliband, the mother of British Labour Party politicians David and Edward Miliband.<sup>821</sup>

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, the lives of the civilian population, including Jews passing as Poles and those in hiding, were in a state of turmoil as the Germans shelled the city relentlessly. After their hiding place was destroyed, Franciszka Grünberg and her husband, Stefan, took refuge on the grounds of St. Casimir Church and residence of the Resurrectionist Fathers on Chełmska Street. In her memoir, Franciszka describes how attentively the priests, in particular a priest she identified as Fr. Romańczyk (or Galderczyk), but probably Fr. Julian Kalbarczyk, cared for the needs of the hundreds of people who took shelter there. The priests showed great compassion toward the Jewish refugees. After the uprising was suppressed, the Germans expelled all of the inhabitants of Warsaw, and then systematically destroyed what was left of the city. The Grünbergs survived in the countryside near Warsaw, moving from village to village with their son.<sup>822</sup>

Many residents of Warsaw, who were displaced from their homes in the aftermath of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, were forced to seek assistance from and refuge in other parts of Poland. Among them were a large number of Jews who had previously hidden or passed as Poles. Their helpers included priests and nuns. Bronisława Rechtszafen and her son, Edward Karol (later Edward Haven, b. 1933), left the Warsaw ghetto with false papers, as Anna and

<sup>821</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 712; The Sitkowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-sitkowski-family-0> and <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-sitkowski-family>; Helena Sitkowska and Andrzej Sitkowski, RD. The claim that the first convents where the girls stayed refused to keep them when it was discovered they were Jewish is not true.

<sup>822</sup> Jacek Leociak, *Ratowanie: Opowieści Polaków i Żydów* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010), 168–69, 176–78, based on the memoir of Franciszka Grünberg, JHI, record group 302, no. 97.

Edward Łuniewski. They found a shelter in the Okęcie district of Warsaw with the help of Edward's former nanny. In an effort to save her son, Bronisława unsuccessfully tried to reverse his circumcision. Unfortunately, she was caught by the Gestapo while walking on the street, and Edward never saw her again.

Edward then stayed with another woman and her son until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, when he was separated from them and found himself alone. After the Germans suppressed the uprising, Edward and his new friend found themselves in Pruszków, where they made the acquaintance of two Polish women, who claimed to be their respective mothers. This ploy enabled them to leave the transit camp in Pruszków and travel to Kraków.

A priest took Edward under his wing and arranged for a foster family to take care of him. Wincenty and Józefa Machaczek lived in Bieżanów, a district of Kraków, where they owned a bakery. Edward became a stepbrother to Janina and Józef, and attended the local school. Immediately after the liberation, Edward's father, Ludwik, who had left Poland in September 1939, initiated an intensive search for his son. In the spring of 1946, representatives of the Polish Red Cross located Edward in Bieżanów. That fall, he travelled to the United States and was finally reunited with his father.<sup>823</sup>

Helena Diamand (b. 1899), a native of Lwów, moved to Warsaw in 1942 with her mother and sister. She assumed the name of Dobek. After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, they were evacuated from Warsaw. Posing as Christians, Helena, her mother and her sister were settled temporarily in the village of Rzędowice, in Niegardów parish, near Proszowice, where the villagers suspected them of being Jewish. They received help and protection from Rev. Edward (?) Zemełka, a local priest.<sup>824</sup>

After the Warsaw Uprising, Regina Rozenblum and her son Aleksander (b. 1935) were evacuated from Warsaw, where they were in hiding, to Ojrzanów (?), a village near Kraków. Regina approached a priest in a nearby village who was aware that she was Jewish and was given much needed clothes and shoes for her young son. The priest kept her identity a secret.<sup>825</sup>

After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Janina Stupnicka and her daughter, Anna, were driven from their home in Warsaw to the transit camp in Pruszków,

<sup>823</sup> Edward Haven Collection, USHMM, Accession no. 2002.156.1; Testimony of Edward Haven, SFV, Interview code 29712.

<sup>824</sup> Testimony of Helena Diamand (Dobek), June 2, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 2561, reproduced in Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 4, 244–48, at p. 247.

<sup>825</sup> Testimony of Aleksander Żuławski-Rozenblum in Marian Skwara, *Pruszkowscy Żydzi: Sześć dekad zamkniętych Zagładą* (Pruszków: Powiatowa i Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna Henryka Sienkiewicza w Pruszkowie, 2007), 204.



together with their Jewish teenage charge, Liliana Alter, whom they had been sheltering since 1941. Since Liliana had a Jewish appearance, Janina told the camp officials that the girls had tuberculosis in order to avoid being sent to Germany as labourers. Instead, they were evacuated to southern Poland and, with the help of a priest, were settled on an estate in Kraszewo, near Miechów.<sup>826</sup>

Jewish underground activists Adolf and Basia Berman evacuated Warsaw after the uprising of 1944 and made their way to Zaborów, not far from the city. There, they were registered as workers of the local branch of the Central Relief Committee, which was headed by Rev. Stanisław Pancer, the local pastor. The records were antedated to indicate they had been registered before the outbreak of the uprising.<sup>827</sup>

Zofia Haas Roze, born in Przemyśl in 1906, was evacuated from Warsaw after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. She arrived in the village of Gidle, northeast of Częstochowa, with the Zyskowskis, her Polish protectors. On the recommendation of a priest from Siedlce who knew the Zyskowskis, Zofia, then going by the name of Panekiewicz and pretending to be a Catholic, was employed as a housekeeper at the parish rectory. When she asked the vicar, Rev. Maciej Lewiński, to visit her friends in Kraków to inquire about her mother and daughter, who were hiding there, he discovered that Zofia was Jewish. The vicar brought Zofia's mother, Regina Roze, to Gidle and housed her with the church warden. Eventually, Rev. Zygmunt Lipa, the pastor, also learned that Zofia was Jewish. When someone recognized her in Gidle, Zofia decided to move with her mother to a different town. Zofia, her mother, and her daughter, Maria Alina, all survived the war.<sup>828</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Maurycy (Moshe) Kestenberg, an industrialist (b. 1882), and his daughter, Irene Duell, were sheltered by Bolesław Kruze, a Home Army member, until the population was expelled from the city after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. The expellees were sent to a transit camp in Pruszków and then transported to various places. After jumping from a train and spraining his leg, Kestenberg was found by a guard who took him to a nearby parish rectory. A priest took Kestenberg in and cared for him until

<sup>826</sup> The Stupnicki Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-stupnicki-family> (see Anna Bando's audio account "Rescue from Deportation to Germany").

<sup>827</sup> Temkin-Bermananowa, *Dziennik z podziemia*, 140, translated as Temkin-Berman, *City Within a City*.

<sup>828</sup> Testimony of Zofia (Haas) Roze, YVA, file O.3/2885 (Item 3559899).

the arrival of the Soviet army the following year. Kestenberg and the priest remained friends for life.<sup>829</sup>

Pola Sternlicht Tur was able to remain outside the ghetto in her hometown of Łwów with the help of Kazimierz Koszutski, who arranged a place for her to stay and provided her with his sister's birth certificate. In 1943, she relocated to Warsaw with the help of her friend, Andrzej Wydrzyński. The latter's friend, Józef Krasicki, arranged a position for Pola in the township office of Jabłeczna. Afterwards, she was employed as a housekeeper for the local pastor. When the front was approaching, Pola was entrusted to the care of the Kaliski family in the village of Wyczółki, where she remained until the end of the war. She enjoyed the protection of the local priest, Rev. Jan Zaręba.<sup>830</sup>

The Benedictine Sisters provided help to Jews in various convents throughout occupied Poland. Zenobia Krzyżanowska (b. 1939) recalled the assistance she and her family received from the Benedictine Sisters in the village of Staniątki, outside Kraków (Cracow). The prioress of the monastery, Mother Salezja (Irena) Terlikiewicz, made the decisions concerning rescue activities.

I was born in Krakow [Kraków] to a Jewish working-class family. ... I am the youngest of eight siblings. During the period of occupation, Father worked as a carpenter in the Benedictine Cloister in Staniątki near Krakow. Mother was a seamstress, and in return for it, the cloister rented us an apartment and extended protection to our entire family.

One of my brothers, Jozef [Józef] Adamowski, was shot to death in 1943 (both my father and my remaining brothers belonged to the Home Army). ... My parents and my sisters survived the war. We lived in the building of the cloister until the end of the war.

After the war, my father built a house in this community, and I live here to this day.<sup>831</sup>

Janina Ecker (née Leiman), another Jewish girl hidden at the Benedictine monastery in Staniątki as a ward of the Felician Sisters, whose orphanage had been relocated there from Kraków, recalled that the Benedictine Sisters also sheltered another Jewish woman.

The convent in Staniatki [Staniątki] was a Benedictine convent. The Felician nuns who had been thrown out of their home in Cracow by the Germans were taken in by the Benedictine

<sup>829</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 407–8; Bolesław Kruze, RD; Ewa Kurek, *Polish-Jewish Relations 1939–1945: Beyond the Limits of Solidarity* (New York: iUniverse, 2012), 357–58 (as related by Maurycy Kestenberg's son, Milton (Mieczysław)); Ewa Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1939–1945* (Kielce: Wyższa Szkoła Umiejętności, 2006), 216.

<sup>830</sup> Testimony of Pola (Sternlicht) Tur, YVA, file O.3/1282 (Item 3739477).

<sup>831</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 284.

sisters. And it was there, in the Benedictine convent, that the Felician nuns ran the boarding school, where I found myself. The Benedictine sisters also had children, but no Jewish ones. There was only an adult Jewish woman, who was hidden behind a wardrobe. One had to take out her refuse, and nobody wanted to do this. Therefore I did it, for I apparently have it in my genes—I like to help.<sup>832</sup>

After the Germans evacuated the population of Warsaw in the fall of 1944, some 200 children, many of them Jewish, were relocated to the Benedictine monastery in Staniątki.<sup>833</sup>

Ten-year-old Michael Kutz managed to escape from a death pit outside his hometown of Nieśwież, near Baranowicze, following the mass execution of the Jewish population in October 1941. He recalled the help he received from nuns at the nearby Benedictine monastery, in particular that extended by the prioress, Idelfonsa Jaroń, and the Polish villagers with whom he stayed until April 1942, when he was taken in by a group of Soviet-Jewish partisans.

Kutz was a young Jew of 10 in June 1941 when the German army invaded his town of Neswizh [Nieśwież] near the [former] Polish-Soviet border. ...

Then came Oct. 29. The German commandant ordered all Jews to assemble at the town square. ...

... Jews were then marched to different areas around the city where, the night before, Jews had been forced to dig pits that would be used as mass graves. ...

There, the prisoners were made to undress, to jump into the pits one-by-one, and to lie down. ... The Germans threw grenades into the pits and shot at the people in them with machine-guns. Then more people were put through the same treatment.

"Many people were buried in these graves alive, wounded and unable to escape," Kutz says. "I happened to be one of the lucky ones."

Kutz wasn't seriously wounded, although he figures he must have been hit over the head with a rifle butt. He regained consciousness at the onset of dusk. ...

As small as he was, he pushed a few bodies on top of each other, stood on them and looked out. Seeing no one, he climbed out of the grave and ran some two kilometres to a convent. ...

At the convent, he rang the hand bell outside the building's gates. The mother superior [Idelfonsa Jaroń] answered.

"She immediately took off her robe and threw it over me because I was naked," Kutz says. Inside the convent, he was washed and dressed in the oversized clothes of the janitor.

But he couldn't stay. The religious told him that would be too dangerous. If he were caught, he would be killed. So, Kutz says, the nuns packed him a bag of food and directed him to a neighboring village. ...

<sup>832</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 184.

<sup>833</sup> Jarosław Sellin, "Arcybiskup Adam Stefan Sapieha a Holokaust," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (2014): 774–85, at p. 784.

There, Kutz went to the home of a gentile farmer, a friend of his father, who kept him through the winter. ...

The farmer, however, collaborated with the underground resistance movement. In the spring of 1942, he made contact with Jews in that movement who took Kutz to live in the forest.<sup>834</sup>

Michael Kutz's story is related elsewhere as follows:

As he ran, he looked for shelter ... In the distance, he made out the outline of a large building and recognized it as a convent. Michael ran towards it, remembering that the women in black clothes were the ones who took care of the poor and sick people on the streets of Nieswicz. Desperate for the warmth of a room, he pushed himself to the front gate, hoping they would help him escape from the Germans.

... When the door opened, with his last ounce of strength, Michael lunged inside and around the person blocking the door.

He turned to face a woman dressed in black. She appeared ageless, small, slightly bent in posture from the years of homage and she looked fragile. Surprise swept across her face, seeing a naked boy appear out of the night. She removed her cape and covered Michael with it. With quiet dignity, her voice soft and filled with kindness, she asked, "Who are you, my child? Where did you come from?"

Michael could not speak.

"Why are you here?"

Michael cried.

"I am the Mother Superior of this convent. How can I help you?"

With his tears flooding down his cheeks, Michael explained what had happened in Nieswicz and begged the Mother Superior for her help. Listening intently, she nodded her head a few times as Michael related what his tired and confused mind could remember. She led him into the inner recesses of the convent, along darkened, cold and forbidding corridors into the kitchen. In a locker by the door, she found clothes belonging to the janitor and gave them to Michael. Though much too big, he put them on, and cleaned himself by the sink, while the Mother Superior prepared hot food and administered to his cuts and bruises and doctored his head wound. After he had eaten, she sat across from him.

"You cannot stay."

"Why?"

"It is not safe for you here nor is it safe for those who cannot leave."

"Hide me. I will not be in anyone's way."

"It is not that. The risk is too great. If they find you, we will all suffer. Our lives are in danger if you stay."

"I have nowhere to go."

"I can direct you to those who may help you. I can do no more."

The fear of returning to the darkness overwhelmed him, but he was given no choice. The Mother Superior prepared a bag of food, and gave him directions to a neighbouring

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<sup>834</sup> Debbie Parkes, "Life must go on—it's for the living says man who survived Holocaust," *The Gazette* [Montreal], September 25, 1988.

village. Quickly the Mother Superior ushered him out the convent gate, wishing him God's protection and locked the door after him. ...

... When he had almost reached his destination, Michael remembered the gentile farmer who showed his kindness when the family was in need of food. Aware he was near his farm, he decided to change directions, and seek out his help.

Upon reaching the farmer's home, Michael knocked on the door. When the surprised farmer saw Michael, he swept him into his arms crying with joy, that he had survived the massacre and was safe. He was ushered into the house ... Michael related his story, and when he was finished the farmer recounted to Michael what he knew.

"The Germans ordered several local farmers to the two sites days ago, he among them and had them dig the pits," he said. "They would return each day, and make the hole bigger until finally ordered to stop and leave the site. Before they left, Ukrainian and Lithuanian soldiers arrived in trucks filled with gypsies and cripples and killed them all. Their bodies were thrown into the pit as one would dispose of a worthless carcass. The farmers were unprepared for what they saw and some screamed hysterically. Others went into shock, their minds unable to accept the barbarism of what they had witnessed. One went mad. The Ukrainian and Lithuanian soldiers had blood on their uniforms, and appeared indifferent to their act. It was a horrible sight that will haunt him for the rest of his life." ...

The farmer offered to hide Michael in the stable until Spring. Since it was obvious he was not part of the family, it was imperative he not be discovered or all were doomed. Michael stayed hidden from October 1941 until April 1942, coming outside only at night when no one was around.<sup>835</sup>

In his memoir, Kutz recalled:

I ran about two kilometres to a Catholic convent, approached the gate and pulled the bell cord. It didn't take long before a small window in the gate opened and a nun's face appeared. It was the Mother Ksieni [i.e., abbess], the convent's mother superior. She immediately opened the door and pulled me in; seeing that I was stark naked, she put her black robe around me and led me into a small, windowless room furnished with only a table, a chair and a picture of the Madonna hanging on the wall. She left me alone there for a few minutes, then returned with two nuns and told me to go with them to a bathroom, where they gave me a long towel, hot water and soap to wash the dried blood off my body. Mother Ksieni brought me underwear as well as a large pair of trousers, a pair of slippers and a peasant's coat and hat. All the clothes belonged to the convent's caretaker and were much too big for me, but I put them on. The nuns then offered me something to eat. Although I refused the food, I asked them for a glass of milk.

Mother Ksieni looked sad as she explained that I could not stay for very long because both the German and the Belorussian police were searching the area for escaped Jews. If they were to catch me there, everyone would be shot. I told them that my father was friends with a Polish-Catholic family who lived near the village of Rudawka and that if I could get there, the family would surely hide me. The nuns gave me directions for the

<sup>835</sup> Alvin Abram, *The Light After the Dark* (Scarborough, Ontario: Abbeyfield Publishers, 1997), 57–60.

five-kilometre trek through forest and fields. As I said goodbye, the nuns and the mother superior knelt down to give me a blessing to help me reach the Polish peasant safely.<sup>836</sup>

After leaving the Chełm ghetto in the fall of 1943, Rywka Mastbojm (b. 1928) was sheltered by Helena Babiarz for about a month. She then found work on a farm for two weeks. Some Poles took her to the Polish Welfare Committee in Chełm, where she claimed to be a Polish orphan by the name of Maria Wiśniewska. She was placed in the convent of the Felician Sisters in Chełm, where she remained for seven months. Afterwards, she was transferred to an educational institution in Kraków also run by the Felician Sisters. It was probably after the war when she arrived at an educational institution in Romanów, near Łódź, where she was located by the Jewish Committee in September 1946.<sup>837</sup>

Esther Fairbloom was born in the Tarnopol ghetto in 1941. Her mother entrusted her to the care of nuns in her hometown of Zbaraż when Esther was just two months old. The Felician Sisters operated a shelter for children there in the monastery of the Bernardine Fathers. Esther's parents, the owners of a slaughterhouse, had provided meat to the orphanage before the war. Esther's mother turned to the head sister, who agreed to accept her newborn daughter, while placing her older daughter with farmers nearby.

Although the nuns did their best to provide for the children, and they treated Esther well, there was little food or clean water, and many orphans suffered from poor health. Since Esther was the only redhead at the orphanage, and it was rare for ethnic Poles to have red hair, she had to be hidden in the basement of the church during routine searches by German soldiers. The Germans killed Esther's parents.

After the war, Esther's aunt and uncle adopted her and brought her to Canada. Her older sister, who also survived, was taken to Israel by a different uncle. Other Jewish children also found shelter at the orphanage, and a priest assisted the nuns in the rescue of the children. A Jewish girl several years older than Esther, also at the orphanage, was reclaimed by her mother after the war.<sup>838</sup>

<sup>836</sup> Michael Kutz, *If, By Miracle* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2013), 31–32.

<sup>837</sup> Testimony of Rywka Mastbojm, October 8, 1946, Ghetto Fighters House Archives, Internet: <http://www.infocenters.co.il/gfh/multimedia/Files/Idea/איס%20003694ב.pdf>. Although she claims the nuns were not aware that she was Jewish, this is highly unlikely since she had grown up in a Jewish milieu until the age of fifteen and could not have acquired, in a few short weeks, the religious knowledge necessary to pass as a Catholic.

<sup>838</sup> Esther Fairbloom, March of the Living Canada, February 28, 2014, Internet: <https://www.marchofthelivingcanada.org/esther-fairbloom>; Esther Fairbloom, Interview, Crestwood, Internet: <http://www.crestwood.on.ca/ohp/fairbloom-esther/>.



The aforementioned girl may have been Sidia Cowen (b. 1940), who was placed in a convent in Zbaraż, where she survived the war.

... the Nazis entered Zbarazh [Zbaraż] in 1941, ultimately herding its Jewish citizens into a ghetto. Sidia's parents hid from the Nazis in the attic of a barn belonging to a Polish family. Others also seeking shelter there feared the infant would betray their location. So Sidia was left at a local convent where she would remain for years frightened and alone.<sup>839</sup>

When the convent was bombed, the children were moved to safety. In 1944, Sidia's mother returned for her daughter. In 1945, both ended up in Bytom, Poland. A year later, Sidia's mother remarried (after her husband's death), and the family moved to Munich. They arrived in Canada in 1951 and settled in Toronto.<sup>840</sup> The following account appears to pertain to the foregoing rescue and the Felician Sisters in Zbaraż.

Franciszek and Tekla Zalwowski lived with their sons, Jozef [Józef], Michal [Michał], Władysław [Władysław], and Stanisław [Stanisław], in the village of Krytowce [Kretowce], near Zbaraz [Zbaraż], in the Tarnopol district (Eastern Galicia). They were a poor family, barely earning enough money to maintain their household. In June 1943, Ester Krystal and her daughters, Maria and Zosia, escapees from the Zbaraz ghetto, hid in a potato field belonging to the Zalwowskis. When the Zalwowskis found them there, they fed them with whatever they had available and the sons built a bunker for the fugitives to hide in. The Zalwowskis brought their wards food every day and when the need arose they also brought them medicine—all without receiving any payment. At the end of June 1943, Michal [Michał] Zamojre, a prewar friend of the Zalwowskis, came to their house after escaping from a camp in Tarnopol with his friend Izio Kornberg. They were both accepted into the Zalwowskis' home and were hidden in the barn loft where Mendel Altscher [Altschuler], his wife, Regina, and their young daughter Halinka were already hiding. During the war, the Zalwowskis also hid two other girls in their loft—Luisa and Rosa Sonensztajn. In time, Izio Hindes, Ira Edelman, and Nachum Kornberg joined Ester and her daughters in the bunker. All in all, the Zalwowskis sheltered 13 Jews.<sup>841</sup>

Since Halinka Altscher (Altschuler) was only six months old and her crying could have betrayed the others, she was placed in a convent by the Zalwowskis, as a foundling. After the liberation, she was returned to her parents. The number of Jews sheltered in Kretowce by the extended Zalwowski family was actually

<sup>839</sup> Brenda Cowen, "Hunted by War, Sidia Cowen Taught Her Family to Always Be Kind," *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], May 12, 2021.

<sup>840</sup> Biographies of Holocaust Survivors, Ontario, April 25, 2007, Internet: <http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2007/04/biographies-of-holocaust-survivors-2.htm>; Brenda Cowen, "Hunted by War, Sidia Cowen Taught Her Family to Always Be Kind," *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], May 12, 2021.

<sup>841</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 923.

about twenty.<sup>842</sup> According to historians Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski “several dozen Jews were able to move about almost freely because the whole village shielded them from the Nazis.”<sup>843</sup>

The Germans deported the Berkowicz family to the ghetto in Kleck, east of Baranowicze, from their village of Urwiedź. In the spring of 1942, Sonia Berkowicz (later Liberman), then 9 years old, and her two siblings knocked on the door of Christian friends of her parents in the village of Jakszyce, begging for food. The Polish couple, Aleksandra and Kazimierz Cybulski, fed the Jewish children and allowed them to stay in their home. After a few days, Sonia’s siblings returned to the ghetto. For about a month, Sonia stayed at an orphanage in Kleck under the care of nuns, who treated her and the other Jewish children well. (These were probably tertiaries rather than nuns, as there is no record of a convent in Kleck.) Afterwards, Sonia returned to the Cybulskis. They treated her as a family member; she called them uncle and aunt.

Since the villagers knew that she was not their child, Sonia remained in semi-hiding. Fearful of German retaliation, Kazimierz Cybulski’s mother-in-law suggested that Sonia should return to the ghetto. The Cybuskis approached Rev. Tadeusz Grzesiak, the pastor of Kleck, who admonished her. Instead, he baptized Sonia and provided her with a false birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Zofia Palejow. Meanwhile, by the end of August 1942, the remaining Jews were deported from the Kleck ghetto. There were also mass arrests of Poles. Rev. Grzesiak was arrested on June 28, 1942, and executed in Baranowicze on July 13, 1942. According to Israeli historian Leonid Smilovitskii (Smilovitsky), he was killed for helping Jews.<sup>844</sup> According to Polish sources, he perished in the Polenaktion, which targeted members of the Polish intelligentsia.<sup>845</sup>

<sup>842</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 631; Zalwowski Family, RD. Two of the charges were sheltered by Maria Kozak, Franciszek Zalwowski’s sister. See Franciszek and Tekla Zalwowsky, *Memory and Identity*, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/franciszek-and-tekla-zalwowsky-their-sons-jozef-michal-stanislaw-wladyslaw-maria-kozak>.

<sup>843</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 27, based on the testimony of Marek Szmajuk, JHI, record group 301, no. 2571, reproduced in Janusz Roszkowski, ed., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 3 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatanów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2011), 268–69. The following Poles from Kretowce have been recognized as “Righteous” by Yad Vashem: Agnieszka Mazurkiewicz, Helena Sokalska and her daughter, Janina Szkilnik (who rescued Marek Markus Szmajuk and his family), and six members of the Zalwowski family.

<sup>844</sup> Leonid Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.* (Tel Aviv: Biblioteka Matveia Chernogo, 2000), 132.

<sup>845</sup> “Ks. Tadeusz Grzesiak—rycerz Chrystusa,” May 12, 2017, Internet: [http://www.minsk.msz.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/ks\\_tadeusz\\_grzesiak\\_\\_rycerz\\_chrystusa](http://www.minsk.msz.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/ks_tadeusz_grzesiak__rycerz_chrystusa).

Sonia remained with the Cybulskis until the winter of 1943, when she was transferred to relatives of theirs in a village near Pińsk. The Cybulskis stayed in touch with Sonia, and she later returned to them. She remained with them until 1946, when she was handed over to a Jewish organization for war orphans.<sup>846</sup>

**T**eresa Dołęga-Wrzosek, a native of Warsaw, lived in Stołowicze, near Baranowicze, during the war. She was entrusted with the care of a Jewish boy, Ryszard Węgier (later Richard Wanger, b. 1932), by his father before the liquidation of the local ghetto. She also took in Gittl, the daughter of the local rabbi, who was hidden in a barn. Gittl's presence was detected and she was executed by an SS officer, who was accompanied by two Belorussian policemen. Miraculously, Dołęga-Wrzosek was spared when her young daughter threw herself on her mother to protect her from being shot.

Young Henryk Żdaniuk, as the boy was known, moved from house to house, staying with friends of Dołęga-Wrzosek and passing as Catholic. For about a month, he lived with the Szpakowski family, in the village of Zaosie. They taught him catechism and urged him to be baptized. The priest from Stołowicze did not comply with their request, telling the boy he should make that decision on his own when he attained the age of 18. Dołęga-Wrzosek was recognized posthumously by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile.<sup>847</sup>

**D**espite their own dire condition, the Catholic clergy of Wilno provided considerable assistance to Jews. After the German takeover of this area in June 1941, Rev. Romuald Jałbrzykowski, the archbishop of Wilno, issued an appeal to monasteries, convents and priests, urging them to hide fugitives from the ghettos.<sup>848</sup>

<sup>846</sup> Testimony of Sonia Liberman, SFV, Interview code 2530; Testimony of Sonia Liberman, Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, Internet: <https://www.ojmche.org/oral-history-people/sonia-liberman/>; Ofer Aderet, "Polish Woman, 100, Who Saved Jewish Girl During Holocaust Named Righteous Among the Nations," *Haaretz*, October 22, 2017; Patryk Szczerba, "100-letnia gdynianka otrzymała najwyższe odznaczenie Izraela," October 19, 2017, Internet: <https://www.trojmiasto.pl/wiadomosci/100-letnia-gdynianka-otrzymala-najwyzsze-odznaczenie-Izraela-n117623.html>.

<sup>847</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 182 (Dolenga-Wrzoszek); Oral history interview with Richard Vanger, USHMM, Accession no. 1995.A.1272.388, RG-50.120.0388; Testimony of Elżbieta Wrzosek, Archiwum Historii Mówionej, Internet: [https://audiohistoria.pl/nagranie/1056-AHM\\_PnW\\_0887](https://audiohistoria.pl/nagranie/1056-AHM_PnW_0887); Testimony of Elżbieta Dolega-Wrzosek, SFV, Interview code 39086.

<sup>848</sup> Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski's interventions on behalf of Jews are acknowledged in numerous sources. See Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 111–13; Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews*, 209. See also Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, 2nd ed., 499.

At the instigation of the Lithuanian authorities, scores of Polish priests, nuns and seminarians were subsequently imprisoned including those who had come to the assistance of Jews, among them Bolesław Sperski, Romuald Świrkowski, Leopold Chomski, Stanisław Miłkowski, Anna Borkowska, and Julia Rodzińska. Archbishop Jałbrzykowski was himself arrested on March 29, 1942 and interned until August 1944.<sup>849</sup>

One of the religious orders that responded to Archbishop Jałbrzykowski's plea was the Dominican Sisters, a contemplative (cloistered) order. During the German round-ups of Jews in Wilno in July 1941, sixteen or seventeen members of the Socialist-Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatzair—Abba Kovner, Abraham Sutzkever, Edek Boraks, and Arie (Israel) Wilner (who had arrived from Warsaw) among them—took shelter at the Dominican convent in Kolonia Wileńska, on the outskirts of Wilno. Contact with the convent's superior, Mother Bertranda (born Janina Siestrzewitowska, later Anna Borkowska), was made by Jadwiga Dudziec and Irena Adamowicz, who belonged to a Polish scouting organization that had established ties with the Hashomer Hatzair before the war. These young women placed Jews in convents and secured identity documents for them. Dressed as nuns, the young Jews worked side by side with the nuns cultivating the fields near the convent.

After nearly six months, at the end of 1941 or the beginning of 1942, when the Aktions had ceased, the Jewish charges decided to return to the Wilno ghetto in order to form the nucleus of an underground known as the United Partisan Organization. The Germans arrested Anna Borkowska in September 1943, closed the convent, and dispersed the nuns. She was interned in the Pravieniškės labour camp near Kaunas for the duration of the German occupation. Yad Vashem awarded Anna Borkowska (Sister Bertranda) and six other Dominican Sisters—Maria Ostreyko (Sister Jordana), Maria Janina Roszak (Sister Cecylia), Maria Neugebauer (Sister Imelda), Stanisława Bednarska (Sister Stefania), Irena Adamek (Sister Małgorzata), and Helena Frąckiewicz (Sister Diana)—for their part in the rescue mission. For some unknown reason, Julia Michrowska (Sister Bernadetta) was overlooked by Yad Vashem. The account below is based on the testimony of ghetto fighter and poet Abraham Sutzkever (Suckewer), one of those sheltered by the nuns.

The small nunnery was located not far from the Vilna Colony [Kolonia Wileńska] railroad station. During the German occupation there were only seven sisters in this Benedictine [actually, Dominican] convent, all from Cracow [Kraków]. The Mother Superior, a graduate of Cracow University, was a comparatively young woman of thirty-five at the time when the

<sup>849</sup> On the persecution of the Polish Catholic clergy in Wilno, see Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 223–26.

Jews were driven from their homes. Although the convent was too far removed from the ghetto for her to hear the cries of a tortured people, the Mother Superior seemed always to be gazing in that direction, as though she were waiting for a summons. She found it hard to keep her mind on the work which had previously claimed all her time and love, the ministering to the poor and the miserable.

One day she decided that the time had come to act. She summoned the other nuns and, after prayer, they discussed the subject of the ghetto. Not long afterward, as a result of this conversation, a few of the sisters appeared before the gate of the ghetto. The guards did not suspect the nuns of any conspiratorial designs. Eventually contact was established between the convent and the Vilna [Wilno] ghetto, and an underground railroad was formed. The seven nuns became experts in getting Jews out of the ghetto and hiding them at the convent and in other places. At one period it seemed as if the small nunnery were bulging with nuns, some with features unmistakably masculine.

Among those hidden in the convent were several Jewish writers and leaders of the ghetto Underground: Abraham Sutzkever, Abba Kovner, Edek Boraks, and Arie Wilner. Some stayed a long time, others returned to the ghetto to fight and die. When, in the winter of 1941, the Jewish Fighters' Organization [ŻOB] was formed, the Mother Superior became an indispensable ally. The Fighters needed arms, and the Mother Superior undertook to supply them. Assisted by the other nuns, she roamed the countryside in search of knives, daggers, bayonets, pistols, guns, grenades. The hands accustomed to the touch of rosary beads became expert with explosives. The first four grenades received gratefully by the Fighters were the gift of the Mother Superior, who instructed Abba Kovner in their proper use, as they were of a special brand unfamiliar to him. She later supplied other weapons. Although she worked selflessly, tirelessly, she felt not enough was being done. "I wish to come to the ghetto," she said to Abba Kovner, "to fight by your side, to die, if necessary. Your fight is a holy one. You are a noble people. Despite the fact that you are a Marxist [Kovner was a member of the Hashomer Hatsair, a leftist Zionist faction with pro-Communist leanings] and have no religion, you are closer to God than I."

Her ardent wish to enter the ghetto to fight and, in the end, to die the martyred death of the Jews was not realized. She was too valuable an ally, and was prevailed upon to remain on the Aryan side. In addition to supplying arms, she also acted as a liaison between the Jewish Fighters' Organization inside the ghetto and the Polish Underground ...<sup>850</sup>

Mordecai Paldiel, a historian at the Yad Vashem Institute, describes these same rescue activities.

The story unfolds in Kolonia Wilenska [Wileńska], near Vilnius (or Vilna [Wilno], its former name under Polish rule, presently the capital of Lithuania), where Sister Anna Borkowska served as Mother Superior in a small group of Dominican nuns. Shocked by the horrible massacres of thousands of Jews [and Poles] in the Ponar [Ponary] forest, not far from her convent, in the summer months of 1941, she invited a group of 17 members of an illegal

<sup>850</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 16–17. See also Abraham Sutzkever, *From the Vilna Ghetto to Nuremberg: Memoir and Testimony* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), 143–44.

Jewish [Zionist] pioneering group to hide in the convent for brief spells of time. Soon thereafter, the convent of nine nuns was bustling with activity, for the youthful Jewish men and women were plotting, behind the secure walls of the Dominican convent, an eventual uprising in the Vilna Ghetto [which did not, however, take place].

“They called me Ima [mother],” Anna Borkowska fondly remembered. “I felt as if I were indeed their mother. I was pleased with the arrival of each new member, and was sorry that I could not shelter more of them.” Recalling those who passed through the convent walls, Anna mentioned Arie Wilner: “I gave him the name ‘Jurek’”—the code-name under which he was to be known for his exploits in Warsaw, where he eventually perished during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of April 1943. ... “In spirit ‘Jurek’ was the closest to me.” Then, there was Abba Kovner, the moving spirit of the Vilna underground—“my right hand.”

Kovner presided over the conclaves in the convent where plans were hatched for an uprising in the Vilna Ghetto. Until these plans could mature, Kovner and his 16 colleagues worked side by side with the convent nuns in the fields. There was also Tauba [Gelbaum] ... Margalit ... Mrs. K. [Abba Kovner’s mother, Rosa] ... Michas [Michaś or Michael Kovner] ...

To conceal the group’s activities ... all protégés were given nun habits and thus they cultivated the nearby fields. In this departure from monastic rules, it is reported that Mother Anna had the support of her superior in the Vilna archdiocese. ...

In the convent cells, Kovner issued his famous clarion call of rebellion, the first of its kind in Nazi-occupied Europe, which opened with the ringing words: “Let us not be led like sheep to the slaughter!” This manifesto, secretly printed in the convent and distributed inside the ghetto on January 1, 1942, served as inspiration to many ghetto and partisan fighters.

When the time came for Abba Kovner and his comrades to return to the ghetto (they told her, “If we are to die, let us die the death of free people, with arms in our hands”), Anna Borkowska rushed to join them. “I want to go with you to the ghetto,” she pleaded with Abba; “to fight and fall with you.” ... Kovner told her she could be of greater help by smuggling in weapons. The noted Yiddish poet Abraham Sutzkever relates: “the first four grenades ... were the gift of the Mother Superior, who instructed Abba Kovner in their proper use ... She later supplied other weapons.” [According to the *Path of the Righteous*: Concealing the weapons inside her habit, she brought them to the ghetto gates and stealthily transferred them to Kovner’s waiting and trembling hands. “I have come to join you,” she repeated on this occasion, “for God is with you.” With great difficulty, Kovner succeeded in dissuading her from that course. She returned to her convent and continued to aid those inside the ghetto from the outside.—Ed.]

As suspicions mounted, the Germans eventually had Anna Borkowska arrested in September 1943, the convent closed, and the Sisters dispersed. One nun was dispatched to a labor camp. ... [Anna Borkowska was released only after the Soviet army arrived.—Ed.]

During the [1984] ceremony in her honor ... [Kovner] turned to the audience gathered in her honor, and said: “In the days when the angels hid their faces from us, this woman was to us Anna of the Angels—not the angels that we invent for ourselves, but angels which help us build our lives for an eternity.” He had dedicated a poem to her, which begins with



the words: "My Little Sister! Nine Sisters look at you with anxiety, as one looks at the sands in the desert." A year later, Abba Kovner planted a tree in her honor at Yad Vashem.<sup>851</sup>

In her account, Israeli historian Dina Porat mentions a chaplain, Rev. Józef Zawadzki,<sup>852</sup> who assisted the Dominican Sisters in Kolonia Wileńska.

... the mother superior and her nine nuns warmly accepted Kovner, Arie Wilner (who had arrived from Warsaw), and others. In all, between fifteen and twenty individuals hid in wooden structures on the convent grounds. ... On occasion the nuns managed to find hiding places on neighboring farms and estates and took in other Jews, so that sometimes their number reached thirty. The convent grounds were surrounded by a high wall with but one iron gate, which was opened from the inside when the bell was rung. ... a priest named Zawecki [Rev. Józef Zawadzki], whose vows enabled him to come and go at will, aided the mother superior in running the convent and served as father confessor to the nuns.

In October [1941], at the height of one of the *Aktionen*, Kovner's mother and brother Michael fled to this convent as well, taking with them Sala (Shulamit), Genia and Neuta's 4-year-old daughter; Genia and Neuta remained in the city and came for visits. In a short summary of her memoirs, the mother superior recounted how she herself brought the child to the convent on a sled and how, after long weeks in a *melina*, they could not convince her that she was finally allowed to speak. ... Rosa, Kovner's mother, and the mother superior spent long hours in deep conversation, especially discussing the question of a merciful God who permitted such events to take place. ... Kovner walked around dressed in a monk's habit or in an apron and kerchief, because his obviously Semitic features endangered them all. ... Those in hiding did their best to repay their hostesses by working in the convent fields and kitchen, taking care of the cows and pigs, and drawing water from the well. They ate little, sharing the nuns' simple meals, which consisted mainly of potatoes and milk ...

The nuns were young women in their 30s; the mother superior was a few years older. They were all educated, and some of them held academic degrees. None of them, including the priest, tried to convert those in hiding. Quite the opposite, Kovner taught the nuns Hebrew, and they regarded him as a man of letters. The mother superior conversed with him and the other Jews at length in an attempt to understand what a kibbutz and Eretz Israel were. ... In addition to taking care of Jews in hiding, the nuns exploited the mother superior's connections to obtain documents and money for them and to secure information and hiding places for their relatives in the city.

The handful of Jews stayed in the convent for nearly six months ... their presence increasingly endangered the nuns. Rumors swirled that the convent would be closed because the Germans had instituted an anti-Catholic campaign, especially against the Polish clergy and its influence, and because the nuns were known to hide Jews and to coordinate their actions with the various underground organizations. ...

<sup>851</sup> Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous*, 216–17; Mordecai Paldiel, *Saving The Jews: Amazing Stories of Men and Women Who Defied the "Final Solution"* (Rockville, Maryland: Schreiber Publishing, 2000), 208–10.

<sup>852</sup> See also Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 117–18.

Kovner left the convent primarily because of the decision to organize a resistance movement in the ghettos. In December [1941] Kovner and Wilner told the mother superior that they had decided to return, Kovner to the Vilna [Wilno] ghetto and Wilner to the Warsaw ghetto ... In retrospect Kovner viewed the convent as the place where the idea for the ghetto uprising matured. Initially, the mother superior refused to permit them to leave, promising to hide them and all their friends either in the convent itself or in the neighborhood and to save them all. ...

Zawecki [Zawadzki], the priest who frequently, visited the convent, told Kovner that masses of Jews were being taken out of the ghetto to be killed. In simple language and sure of his facts, he described how they went and he made Kovner realize it was a matter of mass murder.<sup>853</sup>

The following accounts are based on testimonies gathered at Yad Vashem.

In 1941, during the German occupation, Anna Borkowska (Sister Bertranda), mother superior of a Dominican convent in Kolonia Wilenska [Kolonia Wileńska], about 15 kilometers from Vilna [Wilno], together with six other nuns helped save a group of *Hashomer Hatzair* members looking for a hiding place in the area. Through the mediation of Jadwiga Dudziec, a representative of the Polish scouts, Borkowska offered them temporary shelter in the convent. Among the 15 Jews taken into the convent by the nuns were many who later became members of the underground in the Bialystok [Białystok], Warsaw, and Vilna ghettos, such as Arie Wilner, Abba Kovner, Israel Nagel, Chuma Godot, Haika Grosman, and Edek Boraks. Borkowska (who was affectionately known as “Mother”) did all she could to ensure the safety of the Jews in her care. In the winter of 1942, a group of young activists left the convent and returned to the ghetto in order to organize an underground Resistance cell. During their stay, the young activists had turned the place into a hive of activity for the Jewish underground with the knowledge and agreement of Borkowska and six other nuns. Abba Kovner was subsequently to relate that the first manifesto calling for a ghetto revolt was drawn up in the convent. After leaving the convent, the members of the underground maintained close ties with Borkowska, their “mother,” who visited them in the ghetto, helped them obtain weapons, and brought them their first hand grenades. After rumors reached the ears of the Gestapo, that Jews were hiding in the convent, Borkowska was interrogated and the convent was shut down. The ties between the surviving members of the underground and Borkowska continued after the war, until her death.<sup>854</sup>

Anna Borkowska was the mother superior of a Dominican convent in Kolonia Wilenska [Wileńska], in [near] Vilna [Wilno], during the war. Emissaries of the Catholic Scouts in Warsaw, who before the war had contacts with some members of the Hashomer Zionist youth movement, asked Sister Bertranda to take a group of Vilna Jews into her convent. Among those who found shelter for some time in the convent were Aba Kovner, Abraham Sutzkover, Rozka Korczak, Arie Wilner, and others. In her memoirs, Borkowska wrote: The German terror enveloped the entire country. They made a ghetto. “We have to save people,” Dudziec told me, “I’ll bring you several guards, you have good conditions for

<sup>853</sup> Dina Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow: The Life and Times of Abba Kovner* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 46–50, 62.

<sup>854</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 108.

hiding people.” They came...helped us work in the garden and on the farm, several girls came too—the walls of our small house expanded, we felt safe inside it. They were quiet and sad, and after an *Aktion (maskowa)* began in the ghetto, more people came, a four-year-old with a grandmother. Some had lost their dearest ones, and they were even more closed and silent. Only their eyes showed the pain. In fact, inside the convent, discussions were held and ideas put forth about opposition and the need to organize for this purpose. The Jewish group in the convent called the mother superior “mother,” *Ima* in Hebrew. Many years later, Aba Kovner published a brief article entitled “Ima,” in which he wrote about the day he left the convent. When they took leave of the mother superior and the nuns who had given them shelter, Borkowska said she would like to be with them in the ghetto. Kovner answered impatiently, isn’t it enough that we have to go to the ghetto and to what awaits us there, does she too have to pay with her life? Borkowska replied that she believed that in those times, God himself is in the ghetto too. If she wants to help, Kovner told her, perhaps she could help by obtaining weapons, because that is what they need. Sutzkover wrote after the war, and Kovner also wrote in his article, that it was through Borkowska that the first hand grenades came to the ghetto. In the 1980s, Kovner and his friends in Israel learned that Anna Borkowska was living in Warsaw and was no longer the mother superior of a convent. They found her, a small woman, old and lonely, living in a small, unfurnished room, a large cross hanging on one wall. When an Israeli visited her on behalf of the survivors and asked if she needed anything, she replied that she would like to see one of the Jews she had hidden in the convent, and needed nothing else. Aba Kovner traveled to Warsaw and, in the presence of many people, bestowed on her the award of the Righteous Among the Nations.<sup>855</sup>

The Dominican nuns from Kolonia Wileńska also extended help to other Jews as well.

Jozef [Józef] and Maria Kmieciński [Kmieciński] lived in Vilna [Wilno], where their daughter, Sabina, studied at the local high school. One day a Jewish student joined her class—a Jewish boy called Ludwik Kupferblum (later Miedzinski [Miedziński]). He had come to Vilna from Warsaw in 1939 with his parents, Josef and Felicia, and his brother, Viktor, after the Germans invaded the city. When the Nazis entered Vilna [in June 1941], persecution of the Jews began. ... Together with the other young Jews, Ludwik and Viktor worked outside the ghetto, where they lived with their parents. Sabina would meet Ludwik and bring him food and she and her parents formulated a plan for getting his parents out. They obtained papers in the name of Miedzinski, and on the appointed evening at a specific time on their way to work Viktor and Ludwik led their parents outside and took them to the Kmiecińskis. That night, the whole family was taken by cart to Maria’s mother’s estate in the district of Swiecziany [Świeciany]. The family hid there until strangers turned up in the vicinity, at which point it was considered too dangerous and they were taken to friends of the Kmiecińskis, Wanda and Waclaw [Wacław] Kanczanin, who had an estate called Malinowka [Malinówka] near Kiemieliszki. ... The Kmiecińskis decided that it was too dangerous for Viktor, Ludwik, and Felicia to stay at Malinowka and took them to Maria’s sister, Helena Frackiewicz [Frąckiewicz], in Vilna. Helena arranged for Viktor to work as a janitor at the

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<sup>855</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, xliii–xliv.

Dominican [Sisters'] monastery near Vilna. Ludwik joined the Polish army and managed to meet his brother in Lodz [Łódź].<sup>856</sup>

The non-cloistered Dominican Sisters in Wilno also extended help to Jews. Their superior, Sister Julia (Stanisława) Rodzińska, was arrested in July 1943 and imprisoned in the Stutthof concentration camp, where she perished.

When Germany occupied Poland in 1939, Josef and Faiga Riter fled to Vilna [Wilno]. In 1941, when Vilna too was occupied by the Germans, Josef found shelter in a Dominican convent in the city. The Mother Superior of the convent, wishing to help Josef's wife, Faiga, too, urged her acquaintance Anna Koscialkowska [Kościalkowska] to hide Faiga on her estate in the village of Kolonia Wilenska [Wileńska], near Vilna. Koscialkowska, a patriotic Pole who was known for her humanitarian views, sheltered Faiga in her home without expecting anything in return. Koscialkowska's children, Maria and Witold, were let into the secret and together with their mother looked after Faiga and protected her ... In due course, Koscialkowska provided Faiga with Aryan papers, which enabled her to leave the house and meet her husband at the convent. One day the Germans decided to close the convent and ordered all its inhabitants out. Josef made his way to the Koscialkowskis, who, at great personal risk, took him in too, employing him as a night watchman. When the Germans began recruiting youngsters for work in Germany and submitted them to a medical examination, Koscialkowska and her children, fearing for Josef's safety, again came to the rescue by arranging for the Ritters to work in the local peat mine, which released them from the obligation to work in Germany. The Ritters were liberated in July 1944. After the war, they immigrated to Israel.<sup>857</sup>

The Benedictine Sisters of Wilno are remembered for their courageous devotion to their Jewish charges. A number of Jews took refuge at various times in their monastery adjacent to St. Catherine's Church. The rescue activity had two distinct phases. The first chapter was initiated in September 1941, when the aged prioress, Mother Julia Milicz, agreed to take in a group of Jews. Since the convent was cloistered, she turned to Archbishop Jałbrzykowski for permission to house the Jews. At first, Jadwiga Milicz, Julia's sister and a nun at the monastery, assisted her. However, since this large group of Jews occupied a room in one of the wings of the boarding school, their presence soon became known, and all of the nuns took part in the rescue operation. Among them was Sister Benedykta, or Maria Mikulska, who became prominent in the second chapter of this story.

Mikulska refers to the Milicz sisters in her testimony as "saintly beings." The first group of nine Jews included Jonasz (Jonas) Bak, his wife Mitia (Mita or Mitzia, later Markowska), and their son, Samuel (b. 1933); Mitia Bak's sister, Jetta (Yetta), and her husband, Jasza (Yasha); and two other Jewish women. Mitia Bak's aunt, Janina Ruszkiewicz, a convert to Catholicism, was instrumental in

<sup>856</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 355.

<sup>857</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 377.

arranging for the Baks' reception at the monastery. Tragedy struck at the end of March 1942, when all of the convents and monasteries in Wilno were shut down and scores of Polish clergy were arrested. On March 23, 1942, the Gestapo and the Lithuanian police raided the Benedictine monastery, arrested the nuns, and imprisoned them in Łukiszki prison. Unlike the clergymen, who were sent to internment camps, the nuns were released two months later, ordered to remove their habits and disperse. Luckily, the Germans did not detect the Jewish charges at that time, and they returned safely to the Wilno ghetto.

In the meantime, the building which had housed the Benedictine monastery became the storehouse for municipal archives. Rev. Juozas Stakauskas, a Lithuanian priest who recently moved to Wilno, was appointed director of the archives, and Vladas Žemaitis, another Lithuanian, became his assistant. The monastery now housed a vast assemblage of documents and items looted by the Germans from the city and surrounding areas. After her release from prison, Mikulska returned to the former monastery in September 1942, and began to work in the archives. Among the labourers dispatched to the archives was a group of Jews from the ghetto, whom Rev. Stakauskas and Mikulska befriended. A hiding place was constructed for them in the building. It eventually held thirteen Jews: Zofia (Sara) and Yakov Jaffe, and their daughter, Anna (Monika); Yakov Jaffe's mother, who died while in hiding; Yakov Jaffe's sister, Esther Kantarovich; Dr. Alexander (Samuel) Libo, his wife, Vera, and their daughter, Luba (later Gilon); Grigori (Grisha) Jaszunski and his wife, Irena; and Miriam (Mira) Rolnik. Mitia Bak (Markowska), and her son, Samuel, joined the others later on, through the intercession of Mikulska.

Mikulska cared for the needs of the hidden Jews. Two other nuns, Świeżawska and Sister Łucja (Joasia), who had also returned and worked in the archives, assisted Mikulska in caring for the Jews and bringing food to them. Sister Łucja helped Mikulska smuggle Samuel Bak into the building. Franciszek Rychłowski, an actor and theatre director, also helped with food. Both he and Amelia Zgajewska, the Jaffes' former employee, gradually sold off the belongings the Jaffes had entrusted to them, and the proceeds were used for the Jaffes' upkeep. The Jews remained hidden in the building until the liberation of Wilno in July 1944. A Pole by the name of Łucznik happened to come across one of the Jews near the end of their stay, but he did not betray them. (He was killed during the bombing of the city.)

Mikulska (Sister Benedykta) was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile, as were Rev. Stakauskas and Žemaitis.<sup>858</sup> The Jaffes' daughter, Anna

<sup>858</sup> Testimony of Maria Mikulska, January 13, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 2511; Maria Mikulska, RD; Testimony of Sara Zofia Jaffe, JHI, record group 301, no. 3026; Felicjan Paluszkiewicz, *Benedyktynki wileńskie* (Vilnius: Oja Druk, 2002); Leociak, *Ratowanie*,

(b. 1939), had been hidden in several places before being brought to the monastery: with Amelia Zgajewska, the Jaffes' former employee; and with their friend Wanda's parents (in Wilno) and in-laws (outside Wilno). When Anna was brought to the monastery building, she lived in the separate lodging of two Polish women, Wanda and Antonina, who were employed there. Of the fourteen Poles identified as part of this rescue effort, only one was officially recognized by Yad Vashem.

Samuel Bak was only eight years old when the German army entered Vilna [Wilno]. A child prodigy, he had the first exhibition of his drawings a year later, inside the ghetto. After his father was sent to a labour camp, he and his mother were taken in by Sister Maria [Mikulska], the Mother Superior of the Benedictine convent just outside the ghetto. "In time we became very good friends, Sister Maria and I," he later wrote. "I always waited impatiently for her daily visit. She supplied me with paper, coloured pencils, and old and worn children's books, gave me lessons from the Old and New Testament, and taught me the essential Christian prayers. After several days Mother's sister, Aunt Yetta, joined us; later her husband, Uncle Yasha, and Father, after they managed to escape the camp in which they had been long interned, were granted the same asylum."

Only the Mother Superior and one other nun knew that there were men hiding in the convent. Eventually, as so often, the threat of discovery or denunciation loomed, and a new hiding place had to be found. [This information is inaccurate. The entire convent became aware of the presence of the Jewish charges. They had to leave when the nuns were expelled during the massive raids on Catholic convents and monasteries carried out by the Germans and Lithuanian police in March 1942.—Ed.] This was a former convent in which the Germans had housed the looted archives of a dozen museums and institutions in Vilna and the surrounding towns: "Trucks loaded with confiscated riches arrived daily to be unloaded in the ancient building's courtyard," Samuel Bak recalled. "There the nuns, dressed now in civilian poverty, met a number of Jews who were sent every day from the ghetto to carry and pile the thousands of volumes, documents, and rare books that filled its rooms and corridors. One small group of them created a hiding place for the days that they foresaw would follow the final liquidation of the ghetto. The evening Mother and I arrived was a few months after the liquidation. Three families were now living buried under the books."

Sister Maria and Father Stakauskas, a Catholic priest and former professor of history who was employed to supervise and sort the looted material, provided the hidden Jews with food and other necessities. "Had the authorities discovered their selfless acts, they would have been tortured and executed," Bak wrote. "Their courage and devotion went beyond anything I have ever encountered. It was Maria who convinced the group in hiding to take in a woman and a child. She exclaimed to them our state of total despair. Sending

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167, 171–72, 220–54; Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 320 (account of Dr. Alexander Libo); Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous*, 241–44; Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 79–81; Samuel Bak, *Painted in Words: A Memoir* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; Boston: Pucker Art Publications, 2001), 335–46, 353–60; Hans-Jürgen Schultz, ed., *Mein Judentum* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1978), 125–26 (account of Samuel Bak); Samuel B. [Bak] *Holocaust Testimony*, (HVT-618), FVA.



us back would have meant our death. The nine people had a hard choice to make, and they vacillated, as clearly we would take up a part of their space as well as some of the very limited portions of available food. Moreover, a few of them were afraid our presence could increase their chance of being detected. But Maria made it clear how much she cared about us. The group could not afford to alienate her. All this came to our knowledge only later, but it provides one more link in our chain of miracles.”

Sister Maria visited every night. “She would knock lightly on a wooden beam, three knocks that were the sign for us to dismantle the bundles of books inserted into our tunnel. She always came with some food, some necessary medications, and, most important, with good news that the German armies were losing on all fronts and that the days of our ordeal were numbered. Her optimism and her courage nourished the energies that were vital for our survival.”

Father Stakauskas visited once or twice a week. “In his old black leather case that was stuffed with papers, he brought some hidden carrots, a few dried fruits, or a piece of cheese. But his main contribution to the boosting of our morale was his summary of the BBC news. A village friend allowed him to listen to a clandestine radio in the basement of his barn.”<sup>859</sup>

The following account is from *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*:

In 1942, Dr. Jozas [Juozas] Stakauskas and Vladas Zemaitis [Žemaitis] were employed sorting books, including some in Hebrew that had been brought to the Vilna [Wilno] archive. A group of 12 Jewish workers was brought from the Vilna ghetto to help sort the books in the archive and their employers treated them with kindness and respect. The Germans eventually expanded the archive, adding a building to it that had once been a monastery. Stakauskas and Zemaitis exploited the abundance of space in the building to create a hiding place for their Jewish employees, whom they had decided to save. They prepared a well-concealed room on one of the building's floors and in September 1943 hid the 12 Jews who worked in the archive along with a four-year-old girl smuggled out of the ghetto. Maria Mikulska, a nun, was included in the secret and, disguised as an archive employee, she took responsibility for the fugitives' care. Because Germans and Lithuanians also worked in the building, there was constant danger that the hiding place would be discovered, but this did not prevent Mikulska from continuing to care for the Jews hiding there, ignoring the very real danger to her life. Mikulska was motivated by the firm belief that she was doing the right thing and all the 13 Jews she cared for were liberated in July 1944. After the war Mikulska moved to Warsaw and most of the survivors eventually immigrated to Israel.<sup>860</sup>

Spontaneous assistance for Jews was frequent in Wilno. Beginning in 1941, Sister Helena Zienowicz, from the Congregation of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the help of her sister Janina (not a nun), cared for three Jewish children: Wilinke Fink (b. 1938), Renana Gabaj (5 years old), and her

<sup>859</sup> Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 79–81. Martin Gilbert's account is based largely on Samuel Bak's memoir.

<sup>860</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 516.

10-month-old brother, Benjamin. The Zienowicz sisters were assisted by other nuns from that congregation and by several priests: Rev. Władysław Kisiel, a vicar at the cathedral church, who provided material and moral assistance; Rev. Romuald Świrkowski, the chaplain of the Sisters of the Visitation, who provided false birth and baptismal certificates for these children and helped many other Jews;<sup>861</sup> and Rev. Antoni Jagodziński and Rev. Antoni Lewosz (Leosz) of St. Teresa's Church. (A gate to the old town, known as Ostra Brama, housing a revered icon of Our Lad, was adjacent to St. Teresa's Church.) Rev. Jagodziński and Rev. Leosz assisted the two older children to pass as Catholics by teaching them catechism. The Zienowicz sisters helped other Jews as well.<sup>862</sup> Sister Helena Zienowicz and a couple, Jan and Zofia Kukolewski, were awarded by Yad Vashem.

Following Helena Zienowicz's graduation from the Nazareth Nuns' [Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth] high school in Vilna [Wilno], she chose to live in the closed convent of the Wizytek [wizytki—Sisters of the Visitation] order and work as a teacher in Rabka (near Cracow [Kraków]). She left the convent when her mother became ill and returned to Vilna. In September 1941, Helena came upon three Jewish children: five-year-old Renana Gabaj, ten-month-old Benjamin Gabaj, and four-year-old Wilinke Fink (later Josef [Józef] Zienowicz), who had problems with his eyesight. Abel Gabaj, a doctor from Butrimoniai [Butrymańce] in Lithuania, was the father of Renana and Benjamin. Jakub Fink, Wilinke's father, was a friend of Dr. Gabaj's. One day in September 1941, Dr. Gabaj learned from a friend who worked as a policeman that a pogrom against the Jews of Butrimoniai was about to be carried out, and so the doctor decided to leave for Vilna. On the way out, the entire group of two adults and three children stopped for a rest in Angleniki, at Jan and Zofia Kukolewski's house. There they learned that the ghetto was closed, which ruled out the possibility of hiding in Vilna. The Kukolewskis agreed to let the adults stay with them and the children found shelter a few days later with Helena Zienowicz. Initially, they were only supposed to stay with her for a few days. But because no other solution could be found the children stayed under Helena's care until the war ended, and Wilinke, stayed under her care even after the war. The older children did not speak Polish; they only spoke Yiddish and Lithuanian, thus complicating the situation further. Hiding three young children was not an easy task under the difficult conditions of the war. Helena lived in a small apartment without hot water or a toilet. She constantly had to obtain food and fuel for heat, not to

<sup>861</sup> Rev. Romuald Świrkowski, the pastor of Holy Spirit parish located near the Wilno ghetto, was arrested by the Germans in January 1942 in a mass reprisal against the Polish Catholic clergy. He was executed in Ponary in May 1942. He assisted Jews who escaped from the ghetto and found shelters for them. According to one source, he was betrayed by one of the Jews whom he had helped. See Tadeusz Krahel, "Ks. Romuald Świrkowski (1986–1942)," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 2 (February 2000); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 116, 225; Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 651.

<sup>862</sup> Their story is recorded at length in Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 307–22. See also Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 391–97.

mention the constant threat of discovery. Moreover, the children were often sick and they missed their parents. Helena represented the fugitives as her brother's children, obtained Aryan papers for them, and taught them to speak and sing in Polish. She took care of their every need and brought them up as if they were her own children. Renana and Benjamin's father, Abel Gabaj, survived the war and emigrated with his children to Israel.<sup>863</sup>

Another woman from Wilno, Aleksandra Drzewiecka (Drzewecka), described as a nun, but perhaps a tertiary (that is, a lay person who leads a religious life outside an organized religious community), lived in one room in the basement of a building. Although very poor, she took in a number of orphans, among them Getele Gitelman (b. 1942) and Grigory Shershnevsky (b. 1941). Drzewiecka registered Grigory as a foundling and obtained a birth certificate for him in the name of Stanisław Marian Kostka. She brought him up as her own child and had him baptized. Drzewiecka was awarded by Yad Vashem together with a certain couple name the Burlingis, who assisted in the rescue of the Gitelman family.<sup>864</sup>

Lea Gittelman gave birth to a girl in the Vilnius [Wilno] ghetto, and aptly named the child Getele ("of the ghetto"). In November, Lea's husband was transferred to a labor camp outside the ghetto, together with his wife and little girl. This momentarily saved them. In the course of his work, David met Viktoria Burlingis [Wiktoria was a Polish woman, her husband Paweł was Lithuanian]. After surviving another killing raid in the labor camp, David contacted Burlingis, who agreed to take the child with her. Lea stayed with the child for a few days, until she became sufficiently accustomed to Burlingis. One day, while visitors were in the house, Getele, at the other end of the house, suddenly began to sing a song in Yiddish ... "Viktoria and her husband came immediately to me; I started to weep, but they reassured me that no one had heard a word. Since the child spoke [only] Yiddish, however, they said they could no longer keep her. The next day, they told me they had found another hiding place for her." It turned out to be a Polish nun by the name of Aleksandra Drzewiecka [Drzewiecka].

In 1944, when Vilnius was still contested between the Germans and the Russians, with shells exploding everywhere, Lea and David managed to flee from the labor camp and reach Sister Drzewiecka's home to find Getele safe and sound. ... In the postwar years, Lea lost track of the Burlingis family. But she maintained contact with Sister Drzewiecka for many years, and the Gittelmans supported the kindhearted nun (who also sheltered another Jewish child) with packages, medicine, and money.<sup>865</sup>

Shulamit Bastacky was born in Wilno shortly after the Germans entered the city in June 1941. She does not have any personal recollection of her rescuer, a Catholic nun into whose care she had been entrusted by her parents. Shulamit

<sup>863</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 939–40.

<sup>864</sup> See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 124–25; Testimony of Grigory Shershnevsky, Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo, Internet: <http://www.hrcbuffalo.org/grigory-shershnevsky>.

<sup>865</sup> Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews*, 117–18.

was hidden in a cellar for almost three years. Her courageous rescuer is not identified by name. Shulamit's parents also survived the war and reclaimed their daughter, who had been placed in an orphanage.

On Yom Hashoah each year I kindle the memorial candles. I kindle them in memory not only of my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins who did not survive the Holocaust. I kindle them also for a Roman Catholic nun, a righteous gentile who risked her life to save mine.

These memorials stir in me the image of a little girl who huddled by herself for more than three long years in a small, dim cellar. While my family and the nun are blessedly recalled now at middle age, they do not lead to any real recollection of the quiet, frightened, curly-headed little girl. She is the figure that won't come to mind, won't allow herself to be a part of me now. She crouches forever in the recesses of a deeper cellar, the cellar of my mind.

I was born in August 1941, in Vilna [Wilno] ..., four weeks after the Germans entered the city. Our deadly game of hide and seek began that year and lasted until 1945. My mother and father who also survived the war, have had to tell me the story of my survival. They did so in the barest of terms, for any detailed narrative was too painful for them. We rarely mention the past at home, even now in America in 1996.

I don't remember the nun, either. I know that she came as often as she could and brought me enough food to survive until she came the next time. I must have been overjoyed each time she appeared to interrupt the dark flow of hours. Now, I do not see her face; I cannot hear her voice; nor do I feel the touch of her hands. But somehow, even without memory, I know that she gave me more than food—she shared herself through a kind word, a show of affection.

I emerged from the cellar malnourished and sick when the Russian Army liberated Vilna [in July 1944]. The nun had placed me on the bank of a river, where I was found by a Lithuanian man who then placed me in a Catholic orphanage where I was given a Lithuanian name. My family found me in the orphanage by recognizing a birthmark on my body. After our reunion, we traveled by train to central Poland where I went to a rehabilitation center sponsored by the Joint Distribution Organization, a facility for Jewish children. There I was physically and emotionally rehabilitated. They gave me quartzlight treatments for sun deprivation and more importantly, a safe place where I could be a normal child.

I often wonder why I don't remember. The answer I give myself is that my memory is blocked as a result of being deprived of family, of nurturing, and of the most basic human needs.

The feelings of a lost early childhood will remain with me the rest of my life. But my feelings of respect and gratitude for that nameless nun will remain with me, too.<sup>866</sup>

The Salesian Sisters (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians) had their main convent in Wilno, under the direction of Mother Laura Meozzi from Italy, and an orphanage known as Laurów in Sakiszki, outside the city, under the direction

<sup>866</sup> Anita Brostoff and Sheila Chamowitz, eds., *Flares of Memory: Stories of Childhood During the Holocaust* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 121–22.

of Sister Zofia Sowińska. After the Wilno area was given over to Lithuania in 1939, Rev. Jonas Žemaitis, a Lithuanian Salesian priest, was put in charge of the Laurów children's home. A number of Jewish children from the Wilno ghetto were brought there by the nuns.

When the Vilnius [Wilno] region was ruled by Poland, a large orphanage was built in the village of Sakiškes [Sakiszk], in the centre of the Byrai estate, not far from Vilnius. The orphanage was named Laurow [Laurów] (Laurų [Laurai], in Lithuanian) after its founder, the Italian nun Laura Meozzi, who was declared blessed by the Church. In [October] 1939, when Lithuania regained the Vilnius region, many offices were short of Lithuanian managers. As members of the Salesian congregation, Laura Meozzi and 64 other nuns appointed J. [Jonas] Žemaitis, a Salesian priest, director of the Laurai orphanage in 1940. About 300 children lived in the orphanage at the time.

When the Nazis occupied Lithuania [in June 1941], Jews were facing grave danger. At the request of Doctor Giršovičius [Meyer Girszowicz], J. Žemaitis set out to organize the rescue of the children from the Vilnius Ghetto. "As a Jew I am aware of my fate. I will die. Save the children if you can," J. Žemaitis recalls the doctor's request. The nuns, dressed like ordinary women, would smuggle the children from the ghetto. With three or four children in a long horse-drawn carriage, the nuns would go to Vilnius under the pretext of checking the children's health. While they were passing the Vilnius Ghetto, three or four Jewish children would join the ones already in the carriage. They would be brought to the Laurai orphanage. Initially J. Žemaitis counted the children so that he would know how many little mouths to add to the permanent residents of the orphanage. The number gradually reached forty-seven. Later the nun Zofija Sowinska [Zofia Sowińska] was in charge of counting. About a hundred Jewish children between the ages of four and twelve were saved from the ghetto under J. Žemaitis' name and responsibility. These children escaped death, the fate of many Jews during the war. Their rescuers were taking grave risks, however. When somebody informed the authorities that the director of the orphanage was hiding Jewish children, the Germans decided to verify it. German army nurses were sent to the orphanage to find Jewish children by checking for circumcision. The orphanage staff hid the children in the forest and sent others for the check-up. This time the Jewish children, J. Žemaitis, and the nuns escaped death ... To provide food for a hundred additional children salvaged from death was hard due to the shortage. According to priest J. Žemaitis, the parsons of Nemenčinė [Niemenczyn], Naujoji Vilnia [Nowa Wilejka], Saldutiškis [Sylgudyszki], and especially the Lithuanian islands of Byelorussia were very helpful in supplying food. Stefanija Ladygienė managed to get trucks to reach them.

When the war ended, Laura Meozzi, the Polish nuns, and the majority of the children of the Laurai orphanage, which included about a hundred rescued Jews, left for Poland.<sup>867</sup>

<sup>867</sup> Dalija Epšteinaitė and Viktorija Sakaitė, eds., *Gyvybę ir duoną nešančios rankos / Hands Bringing Life and Bread*, vol. 2 (Vilnius: Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, 1999), 114–17. See also Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust*, 229. The records of the Polish Salesian Sisters do not confirm the extent of these rescue activities. The children (approximately 100) taken to Poland after the war were Polish boys. By then, any Jewish children at the orphanage would have been removed by Jewish individuals or organizations. See "Laurów

When the Jews were forced to live in the Wilno ghetto, Abraham Foxman (Fuksman), then thirteen months old, was given over to be cared for by his nanny, Bronisława Kurpi. She took the child into her own home, changed his name to Henryk Stanisław Kurpi and, with the collusion of an unidentified Polish priest, had him baptized as her own child. As a result, he survived the war under her care.<sup>868</sup>

Mojśze Kaufman (later Michał Bobrowski, b. 1935) and his father escaped with a group of Jews during the Wilno ghetto's liquidation in 1943. With the permission of a priest, the Jewish fugitives entered a small church near the ghetto. They remained there until the streets became crowded and it was safer for them to go on their way. The boy was separated from his father near the railway station. Several hours later, he was found by a complete stranger, Mrs. Bobrowska, who worked as a cleaner at the railway station.

Mrs. Bobrowska took the boy to a small room in an attic where she lived with her teenage daughter near St. John's church. The boy did not speak or understand Polish. He was passed off as Mrs. Bobrowska's cousin from the countryside. Mrs. Bobrowska also helped a young Jewish couple, whom she sent to the countryside. She did not disclose to them the presence of the boy, who was hidden in times of danger.

When the Germans set fire to the houses in the area, they found shelter in the crypt of a church. Disguised as a girl and pretending to be ill, he avoided the fate of many others in the cellar who were apprehended by the Germans and executed. He survived the war and was placed in a children's home because Mrs. Bobrowska was too poor to care for him.<sup>869</sup>

Fania Feldman (b. 1896) and her sister, Rebecca Feldman, were rescued by various persons in Wilno, among them the Tyryłło family (recognized by Yad Vashem for sheltering about 50 Jews), Aleksander Kreise, Tekla Dąbrowska, as well as her husband, daughter and son-in-law, Jerzy Pławiński, the Lithuanian author Jonas Ruzgys and his wife, Stanislava (who sheltered other Jews as well and were awarded by Yad Vashem), and Aniela Bajewska.

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w czasie II wojny światowej," Internet: <https://100lat.cmw.osw.pl/ii-wojna-swiatowa/laurow-w-czasie-ii-wojny-swiatowej/>.

<sup>868</sup> André Stein, *Hidden Children: Forgotten Survivors of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Viking/Penguin, 1993), 207; Jennifer Marlow, "Life in Hiding and Beyond," in Joanna Beata Michlic, ed., *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939–Present: History, Representation, and Memory* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 119–22.

<sup>869</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 257–61 (identified as Marian Bobrzyk); Testimony of Michał Bobrowski, SFV, Interview code 20515.



While staying with Bajewska, a devout Polish Catholic widow (whose only surviving son, Jan Antonin Bajewski, a Franciscan priest, perished in Auschwitz in May 1941), Feldman fell gravely ill and was near death. She was treated by Dr. Grabowiecka (who came to the assistance of Jewish doctors) and Professor Aleksander Januszkiewicz. Concerned about how she would dispose of the body, Bajewska turned to Rev. Leopold Chomski, the pastor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny) Parish in the Zwierzyniec district of Wilno. Rev. Chomski comforted Bajewska and praised her for her good deeds. He assured her that he would pray for the recovery of Feldman and that, if she were to die, he would provide a death certificate attesting to her Catholic faith.

Since Rev. Chomski was looking for hiding places for Jews, he asked Bajewska to take in a 13-year-old boy he was sheltering in the parish rectory. Bajewska, however, was unable to oblige because she was already sheltering several Jews in addition to the Feldman sisters. The 13-year-old boy survived under Rev. Chomski's care, as did several other Jewish charges.<sup>870</sup>

In her Yad Vashem testimony, Czesława Czertok (later Czereśnia, b. 1924) describes how she escaped from the Wilno ghetto and made her way to Wilejka, where she turned to a priest for help. This priest kept Czertok for a few weeks and found a shelter for her with the Szwałkajzer family, who lived in Zimodry, in the parish of Kurzeniec.

It was there that Czertok encountered Rev. Rajmund Butrymowicz, the pastor of Kurzeniec, the local parish, in whom she also confided. Rev. Butrymowicz secured the cooperation of the German-appointed mayor of Kurzeniec, Maksymilian Matros, in providing Czesława false identity documents. He also became her protector in her guise as a Catholic Pole.<sup>871</sup>

<sup>870</sup> Testimony of Fania Feldman, JHI, record group 301, no. 1872. See also Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 40; Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 124–25; Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 116. Regarding Aniela Byszewska and her son, see “Wielki nieznan wilnianin,” *Tygodnik Wileńszczyzny*, October 15–21, 2015, Internet: <http://www.tygodnik.lt/201542/bliska2.html>. According to the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, Rev. Leopold Chomski sheltered Esther Kantarovich and her mother before they took refuge in the municipal archives in the Benedictine monastery. See Viktorija Sakaitė, “Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai,” *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32.

<sup>871</sup> Testimony of Czesława Czereśnia, YVA, files O.3/2565 (Item 10405864) and O.93/18946 (Item 7400407). See also Szwałkajzer Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-szwalkajzer-family>; Tadeusz Krahel, “Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell’arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944,” in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 657.

Before the war and until 1942, Teofila and Stefan Sz wajkajzer, along with their nine children, lived in the village of Zymodry [Zimodry], near Kurzeniec, in the Vilna [Wilno] district. One day in 1941, the priest of Stara Wilejka asked Teofila to shelter a young Jewish girl named Czesława [Czesława] Czertok (later Czerenia [Czereśnia]) from Vilna. Czesława, aged 17, had remained alone in occupied Vilna. All of her family had been murdered in Ponary. Czesława had escaped from Vilna and after numerous experiences had found herself in Stara Wilejka and was completely at a loss as to where she could turn for help. Thus she turned to the local priest, who kept her for a couple of weeks until he found shelter for her at the home of a large and devoutly Catholic family—the Sz wajkajzers of Zymodry. Three of the children, Wanda, Zbigniew, and Ewa, knew about Czesława's true identity. Together with their parents, they cared for her needs and safety. The head of the family obtained a document from the local municipality of Kurzeniec "proving" that Czesława was their relative. ... In the fall of 1942, when the Sz wajkajzers moved to Kurzeniec, Czesława was detained because of an informer. In an attempt to release her, Zbigniew went to the police. Before he arrived, Czesława was lucky to flee and reach the home of Zbigniew's sister, Wanda. Wanda [later Wyrzykowska] was a teacher and rented a room with a peasant family. Through Wanda, Czesława contacted the partisans and joined their ranks, fighting until the liberation of the area in 1944.<sup>872</sup>

After escaping from the Wilno ghetto, Sonya Silber Stizel (b. 1933) and her family hid in forests near Podborze, moving from place to place. Sonya survived with the help of Poles. She came across a Catholic priest who urged his parishioners to come to the assistance of Jews. He taught Jews about Catholic practices in the event that they were caught and questioned.<sup>873</sup> After escaping from the Wilno ghetto, Pesia Chayat obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from a priest in Wilno.<sup>874</sup>

After escaping from the Wilno ghetto with her sister Ruth Becker (Bekier) and nephew Alex, Blanca Grosman Pinsker went to the town of Miadzioł, where she lived under a false identity. A policeman apprehended her in March 1943 and took her to the local German authorities. She managed to escape

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According to Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer, "the Polish teacher Matoros [sic] ... was both the mayor appointed by the Germans and a friend of the Jews. ... Matoros not only helped youngsters from the underground group [to whom he issued bogus labour certificates] but also personally saved Nahum Alperovicz," and assisted his family. Matros "also aided Jewish refugees, exposing himself to considerable danger." Maksymilian Matros, a Pole from Karwiná (Karwina) in Trans-Olza (Czechoslovakia), was executed in the summer of 1942, together with his wife and son, apparently because of his contacts with the Polish underground. See Yehuda Bauer, "Kurzeniec—A Jewish Shtetl in the Holocaust," *Yalkut Moreshet: Holocaust Documentation and Research* [Tel Aviv], no. 1 (Winter 2003): 143, 147, 151–52; Jerzy Kłistała, *Martyrologium mieszkańców Zaolzia w latach 1939–1945: Słownik biograficzny*, vol. 2 (Cieszyn: Stowarzyszenie "Wszechnica," 2013), 282.

<sup>872</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 799.

<sup>873</sup> Testimony of Sonya Silber Stizel, YVA, file O.3 (Item 8084669).

<sup>874</sup> Testimony of Pesia Chayat, YVA, file O.33/3046 (Item 3556705).

while being transported by train and hid in a shed. While walking through the fields toward Wilno, she came across a priest's home in the village of Wojstom. The priest—probably Rev. Marceli Słupiński—allowed her to stay overnight, fed her, and provided her with a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Maria Górka. Following the priest's directions, Blanca managed to get back to the Wilno ghetto, where she was reunited with her brother, Marek. She left the ghetto again and managed to obtain employment on a farm as Maria Górka.<sup>875</sup> Ruth and her son Alex also survived with the help of several Poles.<sup>876</sup>

Rev. Wojciech Stanisław Tyszkowski, vicar at the parish of Nowe Troki, near Wilno, came to the assistance of Jewish prisoners in the Zatoń concentration camp, near Landwarów. Later, in mid-1943, he was wanted by the Germans and had to hide for the duration of the war.<sup>877</sup>

During the years 1941 and 1942, Lerer [Moshe Lerer was a librarian at the YIVO Institute in Wilno] and I worked together in the Zatoń concentration camp near Landwarów [Landwarów]. Here, I clearly sensed that inwardly he had made up his mind about everything and ultimately had made peace with death. Barely fifty and some years old, he looked like an old man who was already critically ill, with his bent body, extinguished eyes and deep, sunken cheeks. His resignation, it seems, was noticed by the rowdy element in the camp and they bullied him. Tears got stuck in my throat when I remember the heavy work that was intentionally placed on his bent shoulders. We all tried to make it easier for him and to take upon ourselves some of his duties; if this work was with peat or in unloading goods—the younger ones among us tried to make it easier for him everywhere and to take his place. He appreciated this very much and a sort of tender feeling to all of us was planted in him along with his resignation and he wanted to comfort and cheer us up.

This love for us caused a series of changes in him and his character and ideology. A communist according to belief, he became tolerant of belief and took part in all religious meetings in the camp. As if by a magic wand, his former nervousness vanished and there appeared in him instead distinct signs of understanding, of fatherly devotion to his camp comrades and even hope. I still remember his enthusiasm when, due to my endeavors, Tyszkowski [Rev. Stanisław Tyszkowski], the Troker [Troki] priest, (later shot by the Germans) became a friend of the camp workers, warned about the dangers that threatened us and came to us in his free moments to study Hebrew. At first he [Lerer] was afraid that here the priest was somewhat of an outsider. Later, when everyone became convinced of Tyszkowski's pure, humanitarian intentions, Lerer seemed to have been revived. "There

<sup>875</sup> Jacket of Blanca Pinsker, Montreal Holocaust Museum, Internet: <https://museeholocauste.ca/en/objects/blanca-pinsker-jacket/>; <https://www.cjhn.ca/en/list?mlt=cjhn60072&q=>.

<sup>876</sup> Testimony of Alex Becker, SFV, Interview code 41498; Jan Tarasewicz, RD.

<sup>877</sup> Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 118; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 436.

are still, it seems,” he said, “virtuous non-Jews here in the land. If this is so, everything is not yet lost!!.”<sup>878</sup>

Dwora Winokur (later Rozencwaig) was born in Widze, north of Wilno, in August 1941. After the Germans invaded the area in June 1941, the Winokur family was moved from one ghetto to another. The Germans shot Dwora’s father and older brother. Dwora’s mother, Bela, managed to escape with her daughter. After wandering with her daughter and begging for food, Bela made her way back to Widze. She placed Dwora with an acquaintance, Anna Trapsza, who together with her husband took good care of her. They called her Danusia. Anna Trapsza took a priest into her confidence, but he advised against baptizing the child in case her family returned for her after the war. Dwora’s mother was taken in by another Polish woman, Leontyna Matejko, a widow.

After the war front passed through, Bela came to collect her daughter. Danusia no longer recognized her biological mother and was reluctant to leave with her. Dwora and her mother eventually settled in Israel.<sup>879</sup> Dwora recalled:

I became a member of the villager family. They loved me very much, and dedicated themselves to my care with their heartfelt good attitude. My clothes were always clean and nice. I prayed every morning to Holy Mary, kneeling on my knees toward the icon that hung over the bed. Of course, I completely forgot my entire past. ...

I went to church services with the family, and sang in the church choir. The priest would chat with me privately on occasion, and teach me Christian doctrine and morality. He comforted me, saying that a day would come when it would still be good for me. He knew that I was the daughter of Jews, and he never said anything that might crush me.

When I was four years old, my “mother” took me to the house of the priest, asking him to baptize me with the holy water. The priest spoke to her softly and nicely, explaining and promising to forgive her for this sin in particular. When he saw that the woman was stubborn, and did not understand his innuendo, he said to her openly: “I will not baptize this little girl as long as the war has not ended, and we do not know who her parents are.”<sup>880</sup>

Dawid Mogilnik and his three children took refuge on the farm of Paweł and Józefa Wojczys in the village of Mieleniszki, near Widze. When Paweł Wojczys became concerned that their presence on his farm had been compromised, the

<sup>878</sup> Testimony of A. Ajzen, “Moshe Lerer,” in Meilech Bakalczyk-Felin, ed., *Yizker-bukh Khelm* (Johannesburg: Khelemer Landmanschaft, 1954), 313–14, translated as *Commemoration Book Chelm*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/chelm/Chelm.html>.

<sup>879</sup> “Dwora Winokur-Rozencwaig and Her Mother Bela Winokur-Kantorowicz-Shechter—The Survivors,” PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/dwora-winokur-rozencwaig-and-her-mother-bela-winokur-kantorowicz-shechter-survivors>.

<sup>880</sup> Arie Anat (son of Zeev Popiski), as told by Dvora Rosenzweig-Vinokur, “My Mother Commanded Me to Live,” in Kanc, *Svinzian Region*, cols. 1818–29, at col. 1826.

Mogilniks asked him to turn to the local priest, Rev. Stanisław Szczemirski, the pastor of Widze, for guidance as to what he should do. The priest gave Wojczys a sum of money and urged them to continue sheltering their Jewish charges.

Early in April 1943, Dawid Mogilnik and his three big children, Jakob, Sara, and Gira, fled from the Świąciany ghetto (Wilno District), which was soon to be liquidated, after his wife, Asna, his son, Boris, and other members of the family had been murdered. They wandered from village to village and hid in the forests throughout that spring and during the summer seeking a permanent hiding place. Finally, they came to the village of Mieleniszki, near the town of Widze in the same district, and found a haven in a bathhouse that belonged to one of the acquaintances, Paweł Wojczys. When they came to his place, the seasons had already changed and the fall had set in, with the days getting colder. In the evenings, the Mogilniks would go into the Wojczys' home to warm up a bit and to eat supper with them. However, when the Mogilniks asked for permission to dig a shelter in the yard before winter, the Wojczys refused at first, because they were afraid of endangering their family—Paweł and Józefa Wojczys had four children between the ages of 7 to 14. Poor, but compassionate and devout Catholics, they were moved to pity one evening when the Mogilniks came into their home. Józefa turned to her husband and said, "I cannot bear to see the Mogilniks suffering any more. Let them dig a shelter in the barn and God will help us." Paweł agreed and allowed the Mogilniks to dig a camouflaged shelter inside the barn. His son, Kazimierz, who was 12 years old at the time, was put in charge of bringing them food, and he carried out this task faithfully. During that entire period, the Wojczys' neighbors suspected them of hiding Jews, and it made Paweł very anxious that they might inform on him. When spring came and the weather improved, he asked the Mogilniks to vacate the shelter, but they tarried. As a last resort, the Mogilniks gave Paweł a letter addressed to the community priest in Widze describing their plight and asked him to be the judge. The priest gave Paweł a sum of money and some flowers and instructed him to leave the Jews in the hideout and said he would pray for all of them, and that in the meantime the war would end. Paweł followed the priest's instructions and left the Mogilniks in the hideout until the liberation in July 1944.<sup>881</sup>

A Jewish woman from Świąciany recalled her chance encounter with an unidentified Polish priest who saved her life when she was seized by Lithuanian partisans.

I barely crossed the threshold into our house when the Lithuanian partisans arrived and forced us to leave. They took us to the fields not far from the church and kept us there all day. When it began to rain heavily, the Polish priest came and allowed us to go inside his barn. This is where we spent the night.

Among us was Ben-Zion Avtchinsky, who had a strange, comic face. The Lithuanian guards did not like him. They took him aside, and shot him.

At daybreak, we escaped from the barn and returned to town.<sup>882</sup>

<sup>881</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 632.

<sup>882</sup> Esther Feyge Furman Khayt (Chajt), "How I Was Saved from the Valley of Tears and Anxiety," in Kanc, *Svinzian Region*, col. 956.

Rev. Nikodemai Vaišutis (Nikodem Wojszutis), the pastor of Połusze, near Świeściany, sheltered two Jews from Ignalino.<sup>883</sup> The following account, by Shmuel Gilinsky, describes his stay in Połusze, where he was helped by the local pastor and several Polish villagers with ties to the local parish.

Once again I had to resume my wandering. At night I sailed back to the village and from there, back to the forest.

I wandered until I arrived in the town where I was born, Paliush (Palūšė) [Połusze]. There were no Jews there. I went to a neighbour who had served the priest in the local church.

He took me to the priest's barn. It was too cold there to sleep. All the gates were open and the wind blew into every corner. My teeth were chattering.

One night, I was so cold I thought I would freeze to death. Realizing I had nothing to lose I knocked on a door not knowing who lived there.

I did well. It was the house of the organist from the church, a good friend of mine. I had gone to school with his wife and we were good friends. When they saw how cold I was they gave me tea with raspberry juice. I was delighted.

My joy was short lived. They told me they had no place to hide me. Everyone passed their house to go to church and I will be seen.

When it was light I left their home. I went to the priest's garden and sat under an apple tree to try and decide what to do.

A strong wind blew in my face and snow began to fall. I decide to be at God's mercy. I arrived at a Christian cemetery. I sat down beside a grave, took out the food they gave me and began to eat. I then decided to go to the bell ringer. He worked for us in the forest and was a good person. What did I have to lose? He would certainly not turn me in.

I went to him. When I knocked in the window, he himself asked what I wanted. When I told him who I was I immediately told his wife that I was standing outside.

Obviously, they were very surprised. I noticed through the window they both crossed themselves. When they opened the door I saw how happy they were that I was alive. I quickly recounted my experiences and asked for a place to sleep. They prepared a place for me on top the oven and I slept until 4:00 that afternoon.

When I awoke, I put on my torn coat and wanted to say goodbye. His wife came to me and really begged for mercy:

"Where do you want to go? The weather is terrible. We will not let you go. Don't be afraid. No one will notice that you are here."

So I took off my coat and climbed back up to my spot above the oven. I spent over 3 months with them.

During this time I had to withstand difficult days. For weeks I lay in a ditch of manure in their barn. They placed a pig on top of me. They did this because the Germans were

<sup>883</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 657. Krahel subsequently clarified that his article mistakenly referred to Rev. Piotr Pruński (Petras Prunskis), the previous pastor, who was exiled to the Gulag in June 1941.



searching everywhere for partisans. If the searches subsided I moved to the attic of the barn and the bell ringer's wife brought me food.

It is important to remember that the priest at the church in Paliush was a great friend to the Jews. The bell ringer's wife was a devout Christian and in confession told the priest they were hiding a Jew. He told her they should hide me as long as they can. He said it was a great deed and God would help them.

She returned very happy and told me the whole story. From that day on, the priest would send me newspapers. I thought that Christians like them belonged to the righteous people of the world.

Even after those searches I experienced a few difficult days. One fine morning, 500 Ukrainians and Germans came to town. When heard about it, I wanted to run away. I took food, said goodbye to the good people and was prepared to leave.

When I opened the door I noticed a rider was heading straight toward us, into the house. I immediately climbed back on top of the oven. Four more joined him in our house.

I lay on that spot as if in a fever. I told myself, this was going to be my end. If they searched the house, they would surely find me. That is exactly what occurred. But as if a miracle happened, they thought I was a Pole who was hiding from deportation. Together with other Christians, they sent me to Germany and then to Stutthof [concentration camp].<sup>884</sup>

Fr. Adam Sztark, a Jesuit, was the administrator of the parish in Żyrowice, near Słonim. He also served as the chaplain of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and at the hospital in Słonim. Fr. Sztark raised money among parishioners to help pay the tax imposed by the Germans on the Jewish community; he brought food to Jews in the ghetto; he issued false baptismal certificates to Jews; and he urged his parishioners to extend help to Jews. Fr. Sztark brought abandoned Jewish children to the presbytery and then transferred them to the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with whom he worked closely, and found hiding places for them with parishioners. Józef Mikuczyn, a gardener, sheltered Jerzy Glikson (later Jerry Glickson), a Jewish boy entrusted to him by Fr. Sztark.<sup>885</sup>

Sister Bogumiła Noiszewska (Sister Maria Ewa of Providence), a medical doctor in charge of the local hospital, sheltered the young son of her colleague, Dr. Henryk Kagan. She permitted Dr. Czesława Orlińska (Czeslava Orlinski) to remove medicines and medical instruments from the hospital; they were then

<sup>884</sup> Shmuel Gilinski, "Human Animals and Human Angels," in *Kanc, Svinzian Region*, cols. 1157–60.

<sup>885</sup> See Jerry Glickson, *The Hill at Petrolowicze: Memoirs of a Child Hidden During the Holocaust* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: SkillBites, 2017), with a dedication to Rev. Adam Sztark and Sisters Ewa Noiszewska and Marta Wołowska.

given to her husband, Abraham Orlński, who had joined the Soviet partisans.<sup>886</sup> These activities eventually cost them their lives.

Fr. Sztark, Sister Bogumiła Noiszewska, and Sister Kazimiera Wołowska (Sister Maria Marta of Jesus), the superior of the convent, died in the mass execution of prisoners on December 19, 1942, in Pietralewicz (Góra Pietralewicka, Petrołowicz), outside Słonim. Fr. Michał Michniak, a Franciscan who resided in Słonim and assisted Fr. Sztark in issuing false baptismal certificates, managed to flee and avoid arrest.<sup>887</sup> In 2001, Fr. Sztark—alone—was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile.

Adam Sztark was 32 years old when, on the eve of the outbreak of the war, he was appointed as priest of the Catholic community in Żyrowice near Słonim (Nowogródek County, today Belarus) and rector of the Jesuit Church in Słonim. When the region was occupied by the Germans in the summer of 1941, and they began the murder of the Jews, he came out unequivocally in support of the Jews not only in his sermons from the pulpit but also in his personal activity. When the Germans demanded a “contribution” from the Jewish community of Słonim, he collected valuables and money from his congregation in order to participate in this tax and he demonstrated openly his and his flocks’ [sic] solidarity with their persecuted Jewish neighbors. He appealed to his congregation to help the Jews in their distress. He provided “Aryan” papers to Jews in hiding and sent Jewish children to hide with Christian families and in the orphanage. He personally took care to arrange for a Jewish orphan named Jerzy [Glikson] to hide in the home of a Polish gardener, one Józef Mikuczyn, and thanks to Adam’s efforts, the boy survived. Adam was an exemplary man who worked fearlessly out of his deep religious conviction that it was his duty to help the weak and the persecuted and to rescue people regardless of what ethnicity they were or what beliefs they adhered to. He did not differentiate between Christians and Jews, and for his attitude and work he paid with his life. In December 1942, when the last of the Jews of the Słonim ghetto were exterminated, the Germans also murdered Adam Sztark.<sup>888</sup>

The assistance provided by the clergy in the town of Słonim has been documented as follows.

Rafał Charlap recalls: A priest named Stark [actually, Adam Sztark], still a young man of about thirty, was doing his utmost to provide the Jews with free forged “Aryan” documents.

<sup>886</sup> Sarah Shner-Nishmit, *The 51st Brigade: The History of the Jewish Partisan Group from the Słonim Ghetto* (New York: JewishGen, 2015), 104–5.

<sup>887</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 217–18; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 814–15; Felicjan Paluszkiewicz, “Chasidei Ummot ha-Olam,” *Przegląd Powszechny*, no. 9 (September 2001): 266–71; Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 124–26; Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysło, eds., *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2019), 247–49, 311–12; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 601–602.

<sup>888</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 623–24.

He called upon his parishioners to extend help to the Jews, and persuaded the Poles he trusted to shelter Jewish fugitives. One of the Jews he saved was a young boy, Jureczek [now Jerry David Glickson, whom he had first hidden in the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary], for whom Stark found a hiding place with a gardener, Josef [Józef] Mikuczyn. The orphaned boy survived the war there, and was later picked up by his uncle. In the summer of 1941, the Germans exacted from the Jews of Slonim [Słonim] ghetto a “contribution” of gold. As the deadline approached, the Jews were still 1/2 kilogram short of the quota which the Germans demanded. In order to enable the Jews to fill the quota, Father Stark organized the collection of golden crosses from his parishioners. When the Germans learned of Stark’s activities, they arrested and shot him together with the Slonim Jews, in their mass execution in Petrołowicze [Petrołowicz or Pietralewicz].

In the same town of Slonim, the Jews received much help from Dr. Nojszewska [actually, Bogumiła Noiszewska—Sister Maria Ewa of Providence from the above-mentioned order, who is incorrectly described as a “former nun”], the director of the municipal hospital. She sheltered the small son of her Jewish colleague, Dr. Kagan. The Germans were notified and shot her together with the child.<sup>889</sup>

The following account of the last days of Fr. Sztark’s like was authored by the Jesuit priest Vincent A. Lapomarda.

It was in the final phase of their “final solution” that the Gestapo broke into the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on December 19, 1942. The convent was in the [prewar Polish] provincial area of Nowogrodek [Nowogródek], in Slonim [Słonim]. The religious community was under Mother Superior Kazimiera Wołowska [Wołowska] (1879–1942) whose religious name was Sister Maria Marta. She was assisted by Bogumiła [Bogumiła] Noiszewska (1885–1942) who was known in religious life as Sister Maria Ewa. Both had been hiding and caring for orphaned Jewish children, whom Father Sztark had been rescuing and bringing to them. The children had been hidden in the attic of the convent of the nuns.

Though the sisters lived in fear of a Nazi search, they were completely surprised when armed men broke into their convent. A thorough search soon located the Jewish children in the attic. Since hiding Jews was a crime punishable by death, the Gestapo tortured the sisters to extract any information they could use to continue their campaign against the Jews. When the sisters refused to betray any of those helping them in their clandestine activities, the Nazis, that very day, took both sisters out to a nearby execution site, a place called Gorki Pantalowickie [Góra Pietrówicka]. There they forced the nuns into a pit and shot them.

Within ten days of the execution of Blessed Maria Marta and Blessed Maria Ewa, the Gestapo caught up with Father Sztark. The priest’s life had been in danger for years. First during the hostile occupation by the Soviets and then by the Nazis. He never hesitated to serve as a shepherd for the defenseless, first as the pastor for parishioners in Zyrowice [Żyrowice], then for Jewish children who had managed to survive the round up and slaughter of their parents. The priest repeatedly risked his life by collecting the children

<sup>889</sup> Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 236–37.

and concealing them in his rectory until he was able to secretly take them to the relative safety of the Immaculate Conception Convent. He fully knew that keeping these Jewish children out of the hands of the Nazis would cost him his life if he should be discovered. It is clear that he began this work and continued to carry it out in respect to the Gospel command to “love your neighbor.”

Just as the Gestapo came in suddenly on the sisters in the convent on December 19th, so on December 27th their command car appeared without warning in front of the priest's house in Zyrowice. The startled priest was immediately ordered to leave without taking anything with him. He asked if he could take bread in order to say Mass. The Gestapo agent leading the Jesuit away sardonically said: “Where you are going, there's plenty of bread!” This merciless tone of the SS man told Father Sztark that his end was near. He submitted, simply saying: “It is my martyrdom.”

Father Sztark still had one more night to live, however. It was not until the following day that he was packed into a truck filled with others who had defied the laws of the Nazi occupation. They were taken to the same place, Gorki Pantalowickie, where the two Sisters of the Immaculate Conception had been killed just a few days previously, the same site which the Nazis used for their executions of the Jews in that area. When they arrived there, Father Sztark, like his fellow victims, was ordered to undress himself. He was prepared to meet his Maker, but he wanted to do so in the black robe of the Jesuit Order of which he was such a faithful member. So he told his executioners he would not undress, saying he wanted to die in his robe. For some reason his killers granted him his last wish.

The Nazis forced him along with all their victims into a pit, and began riddling them with bullets. The priest, though mortally wounded, was not immediately killed. In one last great display of will and in excruciating pain he managed to stand and gasp out these final, glorious words: “All for Christ the King! Long Live Poland!”<sup>890</sup>

Another account of the rescue activities of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Fr. Sztark was prepared by researchers at Warsaw's POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

From the moment the war broke out, Sister Marta [Kazimiera Wołowska] opened the Słonim convent to fugitives. She organised secret education classes and help for the hungry, especially for the families of those who had been imprisoned or murdered. She worked in the town's gardens and in the digging up of potatoes.

In April 1940, the Soviet authorities removed Sister Ewa [Bogumiła Noiszewska] from the hospital, suspecting her of illegal activities. Fearing deportation to Siberia or Kazakhstan, she left Słonim. She returned in 1941, after the city was occupied by the Germans. She treated patients privately and, in September, she became the director of the Słonim polyclinic. With the help of Sister Marta, she hid Jewish children and, sometimes, entire families in the convent. She provided medicines and wrote prescriptions for the Jews. With her knowledge, one of the doctors, Dr [Czesława] Orlińska smuggled polyclinic medicines to the partisans, after her husband had joined them.

<sup>890</sup> *Inside the Vatican*, May 2000, 52–53. According to another version, Fr. Sztark was arrested along with the two nuns and murdered the following day, December 19, 1942.

The nuns worked together with a priest, Adam Sztark, a Jesuit from a parish in Albertyna [Albertyn], 6 kms from Słonim. He was the Congregation's chaplain. Father Sztark hid Jews in private homes within his parish. Together with his parishioners, he gave up a gold cross in order to help the Jews pay a tax demanded by the Germans.

The nuns continued to provide help despite the warnings of a German priest. He said that the convent was under observation and that denunciations had been made. Sister Marta, who was being investigated, was interrogated by the Gestapo. Even this did not stop her activities. Jews were being hidden in the attic, in the orangery and in the cowshed.

Jakub and Helena Glikson found work in the Słonim polyclinic after fleeing from the Germans in Warsaw. He was a bacteriologist and she a pharmacologist, both having studied at Warsaw University. Jakub brought his brother Józef east. He was an actor in the Yiddish theatre. Józef and his wife Cypora, also an actor, became active in the Yiddish theatre in Vilnius [Wilno].

In June 1941, Helena Glikson was seven months pregnant. Józef and Cypora fled the Germans and headed to Uzbekistan. In mid-August, Helena gave birth to a son, Jerzy. Dr Henryk Kagan delivered the baby in the polyclinic. The parents did not circumsize the boy.

The Gliksons joined the partisans. In all probability, they perished in 1942, during a German raid. Through the polyclinic, their son went into the convent, where he spent a year. Father Sztark then placed him with a family who ran a plant nursery on the outskirts of Słonim. According to the records of the Congregation's sisters, in the winter, he went to the Mikuczyn family. From under his cloak, he took out the child, handed him to Mrs Mikuczyn, saying, "I looked after his spirit, you look after his body."

Also, Dr Henryk Kagan, who had delivered Helena Glikson's baby, gave his own son into the care of the nuns and then he also joined the partisans. Another family, with the surname of Kagan, also found itself in the convent—two dentists with their nine-year-old daughter, for whom Father Sztark prepared a false baptism certificate.

On 18th December 1942, the Gestapo arrested Father Sztark in his parish in Albertyn. They took him to Słonim. At around 11:00 pm, the prisoner was taken to the convent where they demanded to see Sister Marta. One of the nuns delayed the officer, pretending that she did not understand German. However, he entered Sister Marta's cell and forced her to get dressed. Sister Ewa had just returned from the polyclinic. She told the Germans that she wanted to accompany Sister Marta. They checked her identity and discovered that the arrest warrant also included her. The nuns' activities came to light when, during the capture of a Jew, the Germans found her signature on a prescription.

Both nuns and Father Sztark were taken to the Gestapo station. At around 2:00 am, the German police searched them, demanding that they hand over any valuables. According to the convent's records, Sister Marta asked that she be allowed to retain a cross. A policeman ripped it from her hand, threw it on the ground and then kicked the nun.

At around 5:00 am, they were loaded onto a truck and taken to Góra Pietralewicka, 2 kms from Słonim. Years later, Zofia Poczebyt, a resident of Słonim, said, "Before the execution, the victims were ordered to undress. Father Sztark obeyed the order. However, the nuns waited, embarrassed. When the priest said, 'The Lord Jesus was also exposed', the nuns also undressed. People were told about this by eye-witnesses to the event—local

policemen, assisting in the execution.” Altogether, there were eighty-four people. Among them were the two Kagan dentists and their daughter.<sup>891</sup>

An eight-year-old Jewish boy by the name of Marat Zaltsman was taken in by the Ciechanowicz family, who lived in Wojciechowo, near the village of Pietryłowicze, in the area of Naliboki forest. A priest from the parish in nearby Kamień agreed to baptize the boy and give him a Christian identity as the Ciechanowicz's son. Rev. Leopold Aulich, the pastor of Kamień, and his vicar, Rev. Kazimierz Rybałowski, a Belorussian priest, were executed by the Germans on July 24, 1943, on suspicion of aiding Jews and partisans.<sup>892</sup>

The Polish couple Wincenty and Anna Ciechanowicz lived with their three children, 18-year-old Stanisława, 15-year-old Aleksandr [Aleksander], and Maria, the youngest, in the village of Pietryłowicze, Nowogródek District (today Pyatrovichy, Minsk District), where they owned a small plot of land. One day in 1941, when Aleksandr was wandering in the forest, he met eight-year-old Marat Zaltsman, who had escaped from the Minsk ghetto. Aleksandr brought the child, who was lightly wounded in the head, back to his parents' home, where he was hidden on their farm. Although Zaltsman did not reveal his identity, the Ciechanowicz's soon realized that he was Jewish. In order to conceal this, they baptized him in a Catholic church in the nearby village, adopted him, and gave him their family name. Zaltsman became an integral part of their family and he worked with them on their land for the following 18 months. In spring 1943, when the Germans began to suspect the Ciechanowicz family of being involved with the partisans, their property was razed and they were sent to forced labor. Wincenty, Anna and Maria were sent to a labor camp in Minsk, and Aleksandr, Stanisława and Zaltsman were sent to Germany. Their time in Germany was fraught with danger, particularly because Zaltsman looked Jewish and the Germans suspected that he was not Aleksandr and Stanisława's brother. However, the siblings never revealed the truth and the three of them became very close. After the war, they parted ways: Zaltsman returned to Belarus, Aleksandr and Stanisława stayed in Germany and later immigrated to Canada. Their parents and sister did not survive the war. After the war, Zaltsman was reunited with his parents who had fled east prior to the occupation of Minsk. He established a family and settled in L'viv [Lwów], Ukraine. His contact with the Ciechanowicz's was renewed in the 1980s. On November 21, 1993, Yad Vashem recognized Wincenty and Anna Ciechanowicz and their children, Aleksandr Ciechanowicz and Stanisława Weryk, as Righteous Among the Nations.<sup>893</sup>

<sup>891</sup> Karolina Dzieciołowska, “I Looked After His Spirit, You Look After His Body,” May 25, 2018, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/i-looked-after-his-spirit-you-look-after-his-body>; replaced by Karolina Dzieciołowska, “The Crime in Słonim: The Story of Fr. Adam Sztarek [sic] and Sisters Ewa (Bogumiła Noiszewska) and Marta (Kazimiera Wołowska),” PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-sztark-adam>.

<sup>892</sup> Waław Jąączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity: Christian and Jewish Response to the Holocaust*, Part 1 (Washington: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987), 202 (Entry 379).

<sup>893</sup> Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, vol. 8: Europe, Part 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011), 102. (Hereinafter cited as *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 8.)



Rev. Franciszek Smorczewski of Stolin, in Polesie (Polesia), has been recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile.

On Rosh Hashanah 5703 (September 11, 1942), during the *Aktion* in the Stolin ghetto in the Polesie district, the Germans left a number of Jews and their families behind to run the local hospital. The Jews—Dr. Hersch Rotter (later Henry Reed), his wife, Ewa, and their three-year-old son, Aleksander, Dr. Marian Poznanski and his wife, Gina [Henia], Dr. Ernberg, a veterinarian, and his wife, Erna, and two Jewish nurses—were housed in the service quarters inside the hospital precinct. Since it was clear that sooner or later they would share the fate of the Jews in the ghetto, they began to plan their escape. Dr. Rotter turned to his friend Franciszek Smorczewski, the local priest, who encouraged him to escape, supplied his wife with a Christian birth certificate, and began enlisting the aid of local Poles to help the Jews in the hospital escape. The escape was planned for November 26, 1942. On the morning of that fateful day, a Polish girl warned the group that an SS detachment had arrived in Stolin. Toward evening, the Rotters escaped from the hospital to the home of a local Polish doctor, where Maria Kijowska, the wife of Władysław [Władysław] Kijowski, the forester, was waiting for them in a horse-drawn wagon. Kijowska took them to her home in the forest, where they hid for a few days until her husband accompanied them to [the home of Baptists] Stiepan and Agap Mozol, where the Jewish refugees stayed until February 1943, at which time they joined the [Soviet] partisans. The other Jews who were left in the hospital were smuggled out in a similar fashion and found their way to partisan units in the forest.<sup>894</sup>

Even before the liquidation of the ghetto in Stolin, Rev. Smorczewski was known for his protective attitude toward Jews. When Fela Berliner ventured outside the ghetto without her armband, together with her young daughter Mirka, she was recognized as a Jew. The two quickly took refuge in the Catholic church, where the priest concealed them. Rev. Smorczewski also petitioned the local German authorities to allow some Jews to work on repairs to the church, using this as an opportunity to provide them with food to take back to the ghetto.<sup>895</sup>

Two poor, elderly and illiterate Polish women, Zofia Fiodorczenko and Elżbieta Baranowska, sheltered six Jews from two families—Kuper and Ratnowski—for 21 months in the cellar of their small cottage on the outskirts of Pińsk, in Polesie (Polesia). The women were devout Catholics. Zofia, the former housekeeper of one of her charges, in particular, wanted their charges to become Catholics. She approached a priest and asked him to come to her home to baptize the Jews. He declined to do so saying that, under the circumstances, they would not be doing so of their own free will. Instead, he provided some literature for them to read, and said he would baptize them after the war, if they

<sup>894</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 728–29.

<sup>895</sup> Testimony of Mirka-Miki Berliner-Pear, SFV, Interview code 48408.

still wished to do so. After the arrival of the Soviet army, the Jews thanked the priest for his supportive and understanding attitude.<sup>896</sup>

During the liquidation of the ghetto in Janów Poleski, in Polesie (Polesia), in September 1942, Fanya Gonsky (née Nowoszycka, b. 1928) and her sister, Paula, both teenagers at the time, escaped and hid in the woods. They approached a small convent, where they were welcomed and given food and shelter by kindly nuns. The Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus had a convent in that town. Several days later, the girls' mother arrived in the forest. They moved to a larger forest where they joined a group of some thirty Jews who had built bunkers.<sup>897</sup>

According to Jewish sources, during the liquidation of the ghetto in Kobryń, in Polesie (Polesia), in October 1942,

About 100 Jews managed to escape from the Kobryn [Kobryń] ghetto. Many of them joined partisan units. During the liquidation of the ghetto, a group of children managed to escape too; they found refuge in a church. Two priests, Jan Wolski and Władysław Grobelny, harboured 8 Jewish children in the church, but they were denounced and shot next to the church, together with the children.<sup>898</sup>

According to Polish sources, Rev. Jan Wolski, the pastor of Kobryń, and Rev. Władysław Grobelny, the vicar, were arrested on charges of helping Jews and held in the local prison for six weeks. They were executed in a forest near Kobryń on October 15, 1942, together with a group of Jews.<sup>899</sup>

<sup>896</sup> Testimony of Sonia Ger, SFV, Interview code 8061 and 54116; Testimony of Halina Blankfeld, SFV, Interview code 55025. In addition to the two women rescuers and the priest, Baranowska's son, a policeman, also became aware of the rescue. The neighbours in the adjoining cottage were probably also aware of the presence of the Jews, who later moved to a shed. The accounts of these two survivors (cousins), who were teenagers at the time, differ in some respects and must be read in tandem to fill in gaps and arrive at a proper assessment of the rescue. Sonia Ger attributes a mercenary motive to the rescuers, whereas Halina Blankfeld points out that the charges' money was used to purchase food and the women continued to shelter them even after their money ran out. Both women were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles in 2019.

<sup>897</sup> Testimony of Fanya Gonsky, SFV, Interview code 41837.

<sup>898</sup> Emil Majuk, ed., *Shtetl Routes: Travels Through the Forgotten Continent* (Lublin: Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka-Teatr NN," 2018), 424. See also Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.*, 132.

<sup>899</sup> "Priests from Kobrin—murdered for helping Jews," Memory and Identity, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/priests-from-kobrin-murdered-for-helping-jews>.

Rev. Wincenty Kuras was the director of a hostel for orphans and impoverished children run by the Michaelite Fathers in Działkowicze near Kobryń, where six Jews—three children (two boys and a girl), a tailor and his wife, and a cobbler—and three escaped Soviet prisoners of war were hidden. The hostel was raided in June 1942, and Rev. Kuras was arrested. The three adult Jews found there were murdered on the spot. On the intervention of Countess Helena Jelska, the institution's benefactor, the Jewish children were given over to Jewish families in Połonka. However, the Jews of Połonka were executed later that month.<sup>900</sup>

Rev. Kuras was one of some 400 Poles, among them 17 Catholic priests, arrested in the Polenaktion at the end of June 1942 and imprisoned in Baranowicze. The Polish prisoners, including Rev. Kuras, were executed on July 13, 1942 by the SS and Belorussian police. Four other priests accused of helping Jews—whose activities are described elsewhere—were also put to death at that time: Leon Bujnowski, Tadeusz Grzesiak, Władysław Klimczak, and Mieczysław Kubik. Rev. Kubik's arrest for helping Jews is confirmed by Józef Halperin, who was imprisoned with him in Baranowicze.<sup>901</sup>

Leopold Braines (later Fred Branes, b. 1940) was living in Proszowice, just outside Kraków, with his mother. When he broke his leg, he was taken to St. Lazarus Hospital (Szpital św. Łazarza) in Kraków. There his mother Regina (later Rena Mingel) met with Dr. Ksawery Lewkowicz. Since the boy was circumcised, the doctors and hospital staff became aware of his Jewish origin. Fearing for his safety, they transferred him to a convent in Miechów run by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś). After the war, the boy was located at the convent by his aunt and reunited with his mother, who was then in Sweden.<sup>902</sup>

<sup>900</sup> Marcin A. Różański, "Ks. Wincenty Kuras zapomniany bohater," *Niedziela* [Sosnowiec], August 11, 2015; Dymitr Zagacki, "Szlachetne serce księdza Wincentego Kurasa," *Echa Polesia*, August 28, 2016; "Rev. Wincenty Kuras—murdered for helping Jews," Memory and Identity, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/rev-wincenty-kuras-murdered-for-helping-jews>.

<sup>901</sup> Józef Halperin, *Ludzie są wszędzie* (Warsaw: ASPRA-JR, 2002), 173.

<sup>902</sup> According to the testimony of Helena Lindzinowa, the boy's aunt, the Gestapo came looking for him at the convent. But when they took him to the Gestapo headquarters in Kraków accompanied by a nun, a Gestapo officer released him after accepting the nun's story that the boy's circumcision had been performed for medical reasons. The boy returned to the convent, where he survived the war. He was claimed by his aunt after the war. See the testimony of Rena Mingel, SFV, Interview code 41837; Testimony of Helena Lindzinowa, July 11, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 2293.

There are known cases of hospital personnel hiding Jewish women. On occasion, even a Jewish male desperate for shelter was accommodated in a hospital bed, although the presence of a circumcised patient imperiled the whole staff. During the Nazi reign of terror in Cracow [Kraków], a Jewish mother brought her small boy to St. Lazarus Hospital. The boy had a broken leg. Both mother and child had “Aryan” documents, but Dr. Lachowicz [Ksawery Lewkowicz<sup>903</sup>], the chief physician, and the admitting nurse both took note of the fact that the prospective patient was circumcised. His presence at the hospital would be deemed by the Germans as a crime punishable by death. However, the doctor and nurse admitted the boy but sent the mother away. The boy’s leg was treated, and his belly bandaged as a precaution against Gestapo visits. During one such raid, Dr. Lachowicz refused to remove his young patient’s bandages, pleading with the Gestapo that the boy was a Christian, assuring the Germans that on their next visit he would show them proof. Two weeks later the Gestapo returned, but the boy was no longer on the premises. The staff had removed him to a convent in the neighborhood of Miechów [Miechów]. The Germans, who did not neglect making periodic searches among the nuns also, found the boy and threatened to execute him. The nuns insisted the boy was a Christian. They presented an official statement, signed by Dr. Lachowicz, explaining that a bad fall had so injured the boy’s foreskin and his leg that an operation was later performed to save his life.<sup>904</sup>

An undisclosed orphanage near Kraków became the home of Mike (Mieczysław) Ryczke from Konin. A Catholic uncle placed him there with the knowledge of the chaplain at the institution.

Mike Ryczke from Toronto ... was born in Poland in 1939, a few months before the outbreak of World War II. His father, Aaron Ryczke, was a wealthy lumber merchant in Konin and owner of a sawmill. Both he and Mike’s mother, Janka, were quite assimilated. In 1941 Aaron Ryczke was killed by the Nazis. Mike (Mietek as he was called) was placed by a Polish uncle (not Jewish) in a Catholic orphanage near Kraków. Only the priest in the orphanage knew of Mike’s Jewish origin, but he never disclosed the secret. Until the war ended Mike did not know that he was Jewish. His mother, Janka, was hiding during the war years with Aryan papers. After the war, she and Mike left for Israel, where one of her sisters lived.<sup>905</sup>

<sup>903</sup> During the German occupation, Professor Ksawery Lewkowicz was stripped of his position as head of the Children’s Diseases Clinic at the Jagiellonian University, but continued to care for children at St. Lazars Hospital after his release from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in February 1940. See “Ksawery Lewkowicz,” *Archiwum Ofiar Terroru Nazistowskiego i Komunistycznego w Krakowie 1939–1956*, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, Internet: <http://www.krakowianie1939-56.mhk.pl/pl/archiwum,1,lewkowicz,2020.htm>; Józef Kostrzewski, “Państwowy szpital św. Łazarza w Krakowie i Kliniki UJ. w czasie okupacji i na przełomie,” *Przegląd Lekarski*, no. 1–3 (January 1–February 15, 1946): 26–39, at p. 35.

<sup>904</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers*, 16–17.

<sup>905</sup> Mira Ryczke Kimmelman, *Life Beyond the Holocaust: Memories and Realities* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 225–26.

Jerzy (George) Topas was taken from the Warsaw ghetto and assigned to a work camp in Bielany, on the outskirts of Warsaw. While working outside the camp, he came across nuns who took pity on him and brought him food.

Once, assigned to a work detail in the surrounding wooded area, I helped load liquid containers aboard trucks. During the lunch break, I wandered within sight of a Catholic cloister, which was apparently still allowed to function. Two nuns were outside the building, washing kitchenware. When they saw me, one of them motioned for me to come closer; the other disappeared hastily behind the door and in a moment emerged with a pot of soup.

“Please sit down and eat.”

I took the pot from her hand and ate the best meal I had had in many months. I heard one say, “Lord, they starve you.”

I thanked them for their kindness and quickly retreated to my work.<sup>906</sup>

Clemens Loew was born in 1937 as Klemak Neustein. He came to Warsaw in early 1943 with his mother, Carol Weissglas Neustein, and his uncle, Andrew Loew, bearing false identity documents they had obtained with the assistance of an unidentified priest in their hometown of Stanisławów, in Eastern Galicia. His mother turned to an unidentified bishop (perhaps Rev. Marcelli Godlewski) to shelter her six-year-old son, who had a Jewish appearance. He was placed with nuns in an orphanage on the outskirts of Warsaw, said to be in Otwock, where he remained hidden for two years. In his memoir, Loew identifies the nuns as the Sisters of the Family of Mary.<sup>907</sup> However, the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary did not have an orphanage in Otwock, but did maintain two orphanages in nearby Anin, closer to Warsaw. (There were three religious orders that sheltered Jewish children in Otwock: the Sisters of St. Elizabeth, the Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Felician Sisters.)

Some 40 to 50 children—about half of the children were Jewish—resided at each of the two orphanages run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Anin. The director of the home for boys, located in a house that belonged to Rev. Marcelli Godlewski, was Sister Apolonia Sawicka; the director of the home for young children, known as Żłóbek, was Sister Anna Skotnicka. Rev. Godlewski took a dozen Jewish children out of the Warsaw ghetto and took them to his home in Anin, which had been turned into an orphanage. Rev. Godlewski resided there from 1942, after he left All Saints Church, in the Warsaw ghetto, until

<sup>906</sup> George Topas, *The Iron Furnace: A Holocaust Survivor's Story* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 85–86.

<sup>907</sup> Clemens Loew, *When the Birds Stopped Singing: Living with the Wounds of War: Personal Essays* (U.S.A.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2014); Testimony of Clemens Loew, SFV, Interview code 22594; Clemens L. [Loew] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1315), FVA; Carol W. [Weissglass] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1316), FVA; Testimony of Andrew Loew, SFV, Interview code 51315.

his death at the age of 80 in December 1945. (Rev. Godlewski's exploits in the Warsaw ghetto have already been described.) The Jewish children housed in Anin included Adam Feller, Jerzy (Jerzyk) Szczeciński, Grinberg, Tadzio Łuszczyk (Tadeusz Rosentreter) and his sister Teresa, Julian (Julek) Brzeziński, 16-year-old Hanka Sokołowska, Zygmunt Zdzisław Kulas (known as Zygmuś), and a small boy, Andrzejek (or Jędrus), whose last name is not known.<sup>908</sup>

Clemens Loew identifies Sister Leonia as the nun who was directly responsible for his care. In fact, there was a young nun, Maria Graczyk (b. 1922), who went by the name of Sister Leonia, at the home for boys in Anin. Clemens also vividly recalled some close encounters during surprise German raids on the convent. In one case, an unidentified elderly priest, probably Rev. Godlewski, put his life on the line to save him and, by some miracle, succeeded in doing so. Clemens was reunited with his mother after the Soviets "liberated" the city that they had idly watched the Germans destroy.

I had several close calls. One time I was outside playing in the sandbox when a nun rushed over to me, grabbed me, and dragged me inside. She slid me under a bed, whispering, "The Gestapo are coming to search for Jews." I lay there terrified until the coast was clear. Another time the Gestapo did find me. The officers were actually dragging me away! One was yanking me out the door when a retired bishop [actually, an elderly priest] living in the convent hobbled down the wide steps and yelled, "If you take him, then you have to take me too." He put his life on the line for me! The Nazis could easily have taken both of us, but for whatever reason they left me alone.<sup>909</sup>

<sup>908</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at pp. 179–80, 188; Frącek, *Siostry Rodziny Maryi z pomocą dzieciom polskim i żydowskim w Międzyzlesiu i Aninie*, 66–79; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Part 2, *Nasz Dziennik*, March 12, 2008. One of the children at the orphanage was a girl going by the name of Hanka Sokołowska, who was provided with false documents from a priest (misidentified as Rev. Zygmunt Kaczyński, who was outside Poland at the time). The priest was sheltering Hanka's sister, Janina, in Warsaw. The Anin home for young children issued baptismal certificates but did not actually baptize their Jewish wards. Zygmunt Zdzisław Kulas, one of the children protected at the orphanage, kept the identity he was given there after the war, even when he settled in Israel. When a Jewish woman was asked to remove her son, who had pronounced Jewish features, temporarily from the home for boys because of the risk he posed to the other children, she threatened to denounce the nuns. One testimony refers to six children brought to Anin, all of whom survived. The mother of one of those children threatened to denounce Rev. Godlewski when the fur coat she had left in the waiting room while visiting her child was stolen. See the testimony of NN, JHI, record group 301, no. 5688.

<sup>909</sup> Jane Marks, ed., *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), 142–43. In this account, the location of the orphanage is misidentified as Olsztyn.



Clemens' memoir itself provides abundant detail.

... it was my father's ingenuity that got me, my mother, and my grandmother the Catholic papers that would enable us to escape the ghetto. To insure authenticity, he asked a sympathetic priest for the name of a boy in his parish who had recently emigrated out of our town. My father then gave that name to the forger to make up the papers. The name on my new birth certificate said "Klemak Nowicki."

...

My mother had heard about a bishop there [i.e., in Warsaw] who was sympathetic to Jews. She went to his church, asked to see him in his study, revealed her true identity, and pleaded for him to find a place for me in a monastery. Much later, she explained it to me. "The bishop was a very kind man. I was lucky to have met him. He found a place for you in Otwock, and he didn't ask for any money."

When I asked her why she took such a risk, she said, "I was desperate. I had no place to go and didn't know anybody. I was alone and only twenty-six years old. Where could we hide?" To me, Mother's warm eyes, small nose, and sweet mouth were so perfectly placed on her face that she looked very appealing and friendly. She wouldn't admit this to me, but I thought that since she had been pretty, spoke fluent Polish, and looked Christian, she could have easily blended into the Polish society without a Jewish-looking son by her side. I had been "unfavorable" for both of us.

...

The nun introduced herself as Sister Leonia. "All the sisters here belong to the Order of Sisters of Maria's Family," she said, looking into my mother's eyes. Sister Leonia was eighteen years old. She had soft blue eyes and a warm smile, with pinkish cheeks. Her head was covered by a white cornette that hid her ears and exposed a pretty and gentle face. A dark blue habit covered the rest of her.

In the spring of 1943, as the young nun was showing us around the convent, I clutched my mother's hand as we stood in the doorway of a large, immaculate hall. The floor glistened from the light shining through the small windows, high on the walls, and ten bunk beds were on each side, evenly arranged about three feet apart, lined up against the walls. Each bed was covered with white sheets, so that from my height, standing at the entrance of the hall, I saw white carpets floating in the air. My mother turned toward me as if to say something, but all I could see were her watery eyes. The Nazi war had been raging in our eastern Poland for two years.

Sister Leonia turned to my silent mother. "What's the matter? Don't you like it here?" "Oh, yes," my mother answered quickly. Her voice stammered. "It's so clean here. It looks so safe. It's more than ... than I expected."

The orphanage, a two-storey, white stucco building, was located in Otwock, a small town on the eastern side of Warsaw. Green grass surrounded the building, which was framed by a white stone fence. The five-foot wall, with a wrought-iron gate, gave the illusion of safety from the outside world.

My mother wiped her tears with a handkerchief. And after a long pause, she asked, "Will you take my son?" Her voice sounded tired and scared, not like the mother I knew.

Sister Leonia reassured her. "You have come highly recommended by our bishop in Warsaw. He asked us to take care of your boy. And we will."

“Did the bishop tell you about us?” my mother asked. I knew that “us” meant that we were Jewish.

“We know about you, and I understand your situation,” the nun responded. “We take care of thirty boys. There are two others like your son, also about six years old. We will do whatever we can to keep him safe.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you. I am forever indebted to you. God bless you and the bishop.”

The sister patted her on her shoulder and asked, “Do you have any baggage for him or anything?”

My mother explained that she had no baggage because she didn’t want to look suspicious to the Germans. The sister looked at me with curiosity. She saw what I had already seen in the mirror: a skinny, six-year-old boy with dark hair and eyes, long neck, and a big nose. It was the nose that always gave me away, and I wish I didn’t have it. I had, what one Polish lady had called, an “unfavorable look,” meaning I didn’t look Aryan.

I also felt embarrassed about the sister looking at my bulky clothes. Instead of packing my clothes, my mother had made me wear two of everything—two underpants, two pairs of pants, and two shirts. I also wore two pairs of socks, and they were making my feet sweat inside my brown, ankle-high shoes. I looked down at my shoes to avoid the nun’s eyes, hoping she wouldn’t find me strange.

The nun’s soft voice comforted me. “Don’t worry, we will find things for him to wear. As you can imagine, we have limited food and resources, but rest assured that we will treat your son like any other boy here. Now, how can we get in touch with you, and will you be coming to visit?”

“It will be impossible to reach me. It’s best that I contact you,” I heard my mother say. “But I will visit on Sunday, my day off, as often as I can. Is that all right with you?”

“Yes. Of course. I understand,” the nun said, nodding. ...

My mother kissed me on the head, said goodbye, and went out the door. I didn’t hear the front door close. I focused on the other children coming in from playing outside. Sister Leonia took my hand and showed me my bed ...

I learned the way of the convent of the Order of Maria’s Family. Before each meal, I took my turn at blessing all the children and adults. Sometimes I was asked to make the blessing out of turn. Sister Leonia would give me the signal with a warm smile, and I would stand up and recite, “Thank you God for this daily bread, and please forgive us for our sins.”

The sisters made it clear that the man I saw on the cross when I first entered the convent was Jesus, the son of God, and that all their prayers were devoted equally to him and to his father. I attended chapel every morning. In the aisle, before I went to my seat, I made the sign of the cross ...

The chapel felt like the safest and most secure place in the convent. Here, the man hung on a dark wood cross on a white wall overlooking the entire chapel. Mary, his mother, stood under him and to the right on a pedestal. I sensed in her a sweetness and kindness that were enchanting. I felt happy because I had someone to say things to, and I felt that they would listen. Jesus and his mother were always waiting for me. ...

The blow to my routine life came out of the blue. I was playing in back of the convent. Sister Leonia charged out of the building toward me and whispered, “The Gestapo is here.” She grabbed me by my arm, and we swiftly ran into the nuns’ sleeping section. She raised

the cover of a bed against the wall and told me to get under it. I slid back toward the wall as far as I could, my pulse pounding in my head. The mattress was so low that I had to lie on my stomach. I turned my head toward the open end and waited. With my right ear resting on the cool wooden floor, I could feel and hear the vibration of heavy boots becoming louder and moving closer. The thuds of Gestapo boots dazed my mind and stiffened my body. Strange voices echoed outside the room. I was afraid to move, except for my fingers: on both hands, counting one, two, three, four. The hurried beat of boots stopped by my bed. A hand lifted the bedcover and an upside-down face, framed by the white cover, riveted its blue eyes on me and commanded, "*Raus da!*" [Get out of there!] Before I could move, his arm reached in and slid me out. My head hit the bed. He dragged me behind him, pulling me on the floor, as if I were a dead animal. All the nuns and boys watched.

The two agents were about to open the front door when a voice from somewhere above me echoed, "Wait!" The Gestapo agent who held me lightened his grip around my wrist and turned to see whose voice he heard. Standing on top of the stairs and bracing himself on the railing was the tall, balding resident priest, dressed in a black soutane. His face looked pale, as if he'd been hiding from the sun. Small, round glasses were sitting on his nose and thin, white patches of hair grew above his ears. With his mellow voice, he said with authority, "Don't take him. Please leave him here. If you arrest him, you'll have to take me, too." I heard a long silence while the Gestapo agents scrutinized the priest. Then the two Nazis looked at each other, and for reasons I still don't understand to this day, the one who had me let go of my wrist. I fell to the floor. They left without me. The sisters and boys stood frozen, watching me slowly get up.

Sister Leonia was the first to come over. She placed both hands on my head and pulled me toward her, saying, "Thank the Lord and our priest. Thank God." We walked up the stairs to the priest, and I kissed the back of his hand and repeatedly said, "Thank you, thank you, Father."

...

I was in my dormitory when I heard a voice in the distance ... My mother rushed toward me and embraced me ... Sister Leonia stood nearby, smiling. I saw tears in her eyes for the first time.

That afternoon, I said goodbye to the boys who were still waiting. I felt bad for them, for they still didn't know the fate of their parents. I said goodbye to all the nuns and kissed the priest's hand for the second time. My mother thanked the nuns profoundly and promised to stay in contact and to help them. Before we left, Sister Leonia asked if she could see me alone. She took my hand and led me to the chapel.

As always, Mary and her son on the wall waited inside. Sister Leonia knelt and prayed out loud, thanking the Lord for my mother's arrival and blessing me to have a good life. Her eyes watered again. I, too, knelt and prayed. Deep sadness overcame me. I didn't want to leave.

Sister Leonia stood up, wiped her eyes with a handkerchief she pulled from inside her sleeve, took my hand, and led me out of the chapel. She asked me if I would visit her sometime. "Yes, yes," I said, not knowing where I was going or where I would live. ...

Maria's Family did not ask my mother for any remuneration. ... the nuns and priests who resided in these convents risked their lives by hiding Jewish children. The mortal risk to the sisters for protecting a Jew transcended their vows.<sup>910</sup>

Another Jewish child sheltered at one of the Anin orphanages was Miriam Dudaszek (later Miriam Skurnik, b. 1938), who was smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto and left at a designated location, ostensibly as a foundling. Her admission into the orphanage was facilitated by an unidentified priest. Miriam became Marysia Kowalska. The nuns who cared for her and the other five to seven Jewish charges treated them well. The priest, in particular, made an effort to hide the Jewish children when the Germans came to inspect the institution. After the war, Miriam was handed over to her aunt, as her parents had perished.<sup>911</sup> At least one Jewish adult, Malwina Frajberger, was temporarily sheltered in Anin by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary.<sup>912</sup>

Rev. Teodor Kubina, the bishop of Częstochowa, instructed his priests to issue false birth and baptismal certificates to Jews and to find them hiding places. On his instructions, Rev. Wojciech Mondry, the pastor of St. James Parish, transported Jewish children to shelters in Kraków.<sup>913</sup>

June [16], 1943. Early in the morning German Schutzpolizei (security police), under the command of a Gestapo officer, Wilhelm Laubner, surrounded the rectory of St. Barbara's parish. Its leader, accompanied by two gunmen and a Jew who was previously caught with an identification card forged in that parish, entered the building and, with a burst of bullets, killed Rev. Teodor Popczyk, 33, who was pointed out by the Jewish informer as the person guilty of providing him with false papers.

[August] 1943. Bolesław Grzeliński [Grzewiński], an organist at the parish of St. Zygmunt [Sigismund], was engaged in the preparation of false identification papers for the Jews. It involved searching for an appropriate name of a deceased parishioner, marking the entry in the parochial books to prevent more than one ID for the same name and distributing the papers among the Jewish refugees. The organist was promptly arrested after several

<sup>910</sup> Loew, *When the Birds Stopped Singing*, 5, 21–22, 15–18, 22–25, 34–36. Characteristically, Clemens Loew considered himself to be Jewish, not Polish; notwithstanding the extensive help he received from Poles, he confided in a German woman he met long after the war; "It may seem strange to you, but I have more hostility toward Poles than Germans." Ibid., 128, 135.

<sup>911</sup> Testimony of Miriam Skurnik, SFV, Interview code 26551.

<sup>912</sup> Testimony of Malwina Frajberger, JHI, record group 301, no. 2491.

<sup>913</sup> Jan Pietrzykowski, *Walka i męczeństwo: Z wojennych dziejów duchowieństwa diecezji częstochowskiej (1939–1945)* (Warsaw: Pax, 1981), 90–91, 99–100; Jan Związek, "Niezapomniany biskup częstochowski Teodor Kubina," *Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne*, vol. 25 (1997): 249–52; Aleksandra Klich, "Teodor Kubina: Czerwony biskup od Żydów," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 1, 2008.

such documents were discovered in the ghetto. He was tortured to disclose the names of his beneficiaries.

1944. Since the formation of the ghetto on April 19, 1941, the rector of the cathedral parish, Rev. Bolesław Wróblewski, took care of more than 60 Jewish children by placing them in various Catholic institutions [among them the home for abandoned children and orphans on Piotrowska Street operated by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś)]. Finally, sometime in 1944, the Germans became suspicious of his activities and of his entire household. After the intensive search disclosed no children present at the rectory, the 74-year-old priest [actually, 77] was pistol-whipped [but survived] and his sister, Miss Wróblewska, was struck by the Gestapo officer Hintze with a rifle butt on the head and died a few days later. Their maid who had a broken arm was pushed into a cellar and the bed-ridden aunt of the priest, Mrs. Wielowieyska, was severely beaten.<sup>914</sup>

Accounts of the Albertine Sisters (*infra*) include confirmation that Rev. Tadeusz Wiśniewski of St. Sigismund (Zygmunt) Parish in Częstochowa gave assistance. Jewish charges of the Albertine Sisters' hostel at 14 Wesoła Street in Częstochowa received baptismal certificates from that parish. The Parish of St. Joseph also furnished false identity documents to Jews in Częstochowa.<sup>915</sup>

A number of Jewish testimonies confirm the assistance provided by Rev. Bolesław Wróblewski. Miriam Rubin (later Rothschild, b. 1942) was taken out of the Częstochowa ghetto in early 1943 by a Polish woman named Kwiatkowska. With the assistance of Rev. Wróblewski, she obtained identity documents in the name of Jolanta Maria Dobosz. Her mother perished during the liquidation of the ghetto, but her father hid in a bunker and survived. After the war, he reclaimed his daughter.<sup>916</sup>

Celina Alter (later Kristine Magidsohn) was initially sheltered by the Bednarek family, who then entrusted her to Rev. Wróblewski. Rev. Wróblewski provided her with false identity documents in the name of Krystyna Maliniak

<sup>914</sup> Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 143–45 (Entries 124, 129 and 131). See also Jan Pietrzykowski, “Księża diecezji częstochowskiej w walce z okupantem,” *Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolików*, May 10, 1970; Pietrzykowski, *Walka i męczeństwo*, 90–91, 105–6. Bolesław Grzeński perished in Auschwitz on August 9, 1943. Among the Jews he supplied with false documents were the wife and daughter of Dr. Ajzyk Adam Wolberg, namely, Margarita Wolberg and Jadwiga Wolberg (b. 1929, later Galewska). They survived the German occupation in Warsaw, where Jadwiga (Wisla) was placed in a convent school. See Lech Mastalski, “Bohaterowie Częstochowy: Porucznik Bolesław Grzeński,” *Gazeta Częstochowska*, February 15, 2018; About Margarita Wolberg, Internet: <https://www.geni.com/people/Margarita-Wolberg/6000000017229347456>.

<sup>915</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 106.

<sup>916</sup> Miriam Rubin, Ghetto Fighters House Archives (Israel), catalog no. 3155, registry no. 11505.

and placed her in an unidentified Catholic orphanage. After the war, she was taken by her aunt and uncle, and they settled in Toronto.<sup>917</sup>

Anna Helman (later Załuska, b. 1926) and her cousin, Piotr Helman (b. 1928), were baptized by Rev. Wróblewski in January 1940, at the request of their parents. Later, Anna obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from St. Zygmunt parish in Częstochowa under the name of Anna Górską.<sup>918</sup>

Maria Widawska's five-year-old son and four-year-old niece were placed by Rev. Bolesław Wróblewski in Catholic children's institutions in Częstochowa. Previously, after leaving the ghetto in Częstochowa in September 1942, Maria Widawska and her son had received assistance from a number of Poles, including priests and nuns, as they moved from village to village, passing as Christians. Living near the Dominican Sisters' cloister in Święta Anna near Przysów, they received food from the sisters through the intervention of their confessor, identified as Rev. Księżyk, but probably Rev. Józef Krzyżanowski, the pastor of Przysów. The local vicar, who was also aware of their true identity, was very helpful. Widawska had stored some of her belongings with a priest, likely the pastor, Rev. Marian Kubowicz, in her native village of Kłomnice. She retrieved them as necessary and sometimes spent the night in the priest's barn. Mrs. Borczyk obtained a birth and baptismal certificate for her from the local organist and vicar.

After returning to Częstochowa, a priest at the Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra directed her to a nursery on St. Barbara Street. After she spoke with the head sister, the lay director advised her to leave her son at the doorstep as a foundling, since they could not officially accept him from a parent. Since a woman whom Widawska knew started to blackmail that institution, the child was transferred to another, which was run by the Albertine Sisters. The superior, Sister Vita (Józefa Pawłowska), accepted him as a foundling, and he was treated very well. When his Jewish origin became known, he had to be sent to still another institution, one for boys this time, again as a foundling. Unfortunately, he was denounced, seized by the Germans and shot. Widawska continued to roam

<sup>917</sup> Jon Magidsohn "Mom's Eulogy," Internet: <http://www.jonmagidsohn.com/home/moms-eulogy/>.

<sup>918</sup> Oral history interview with Anna Załuska, USHMM, Accession no. 1995.A.1280.11, RG-50.225.0011; Anna Z. [Załuska] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-3162), FVA; Testimony of Hanna Załuska, SFV, Interview code 22020. After moving to Warsaw, for a brief period, Anna lived in Karczew, near Warsaw, with nuns who did not wear habits, learning to sew. Afterwards, she resided in the rectory of Our Lady of the Rosary Church in the Bródno district of Warsaw, where the organist Roch Kowalski took in a number of Jews. Piotr Helman and his mother were helped in Częstochowa by Rev. Rzeszewski (?). Afterwards, they moved to Warsaw. Piotr, passing as Piotr Surmacki, perished in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.



the surrounding countryside. She stayed with nuns for some time, possibly at a convent in Kielce run by the Albertine Sisters.<sup>919</sup>

Aleksandra Dargiel, who ran the children's section of the Central Relief Council (Rada Główna Opiekuńcza—RGO) in Warsaw, turned to her cousin, an unidentified priest in Częstochowa, for a statement attesting that Adela Bugajer, a Częstochowa native then passing as a Christian in Warsaw, was his parishioner (which she was not). Bugajer was thus able to maintain her cover as a Christian working as a housekeeper.<sup>920</sup> Dargiel extended help to a number of Jewish children. She placed Roman Becher (b. 1929) in an orphanage in Miedzeszyn, a suburb of Warsaw, staffed by the Sisters of the Gratification of the Most Holy Face (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Wynagrodzicielek Najświętszego Oblicza, commonly known as *obliczanki*). After the war, Roman was reunited with his mother, who also survived in Warsaw.<sup>921</sup>

Before the liquidation of the ghetto in Częstochowa, Roma Frydman placed her six-year-old daughter, Ilona, in the care of Kazimiera Berczyńska, an elderly teacher who lived together with her son, Waclaw, and his wife, Zofia. Ilona was passed off by Kazimiera as her granddaughter. She became Irena Gawrońska, after a local priest gave her an authentic birth and baptismal certificate of a deceased child. Since Ilona's Semitic features attracted attention, the family moved to Opoczno. After the war, Ilona was reunited with her mother.<sup>922</sup>

Paula and Hannah Kornblum, sisters from Kałuszyn, were employed by Mieczysław Ryłski, the owner of a glass factory in Częstochowa, under false Christian identities. Paula Kornblum (later Popowski, b. 1923) went by the name of Apolonia Borkowska; her younger sister became Anna Borkowska. These two sisters were just two of many Jews whom the Albertine Sisters sheltered. The superior, Sister Vita (Józefa Pawłowska), was described as being “like an angel” to them. Yad Vashem recognized Sister Vita and Ryłski in 2014. The Yad Vashem records describe their rescue as follows:

<sup>919</sup> Testimony of Maria Widawska (assumed name), JHI, record group 301, no. 1698. See also the account of the Albertine Sisters, found later on, regarding a five-year-old boy named Jędrus who was sheltered by the nuns in Częstochowa.

<sup>920</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 173.

<sup>921</sup> Testimony of Roman Becher, JHI, record group 301, no. 131. Other Jewish children were also sheltered at this orphanage, known as the Institute of Physical Hygiene.

<sup>922</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 84; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 2nd ed., 120; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota*, 3rd ed., 129.

Paula (b. 1923) and Hanna (b. 1922) Kornblum were sisters born to a respected family in Kałuszyn, a small town near Warsaw, Poland. Theirs was a family of millers. The had some means, and at the beginning of the war their father was able to hide a fair amount of money in the yard of his house and sew some into the girls' clothes as well. However, no money could help the deteriorating position of the Jews in Poland, and it was suggested that the girls obtain Aryan identification and move to Warsaw to find work. With the help of a Polish family friend, they managed to do that, and they spent some time in Warsaw until the uprising in the ghetto broke out on April 19, 1943.

While in Warsaw they met Mieczysław Ryłski, a glass manufacturer from Częstochowa. Finding themselves out of a job and in danger because of the uprising, the girls approached him for help. They told him honestly that they were Jewish, but Ryłski said that if they could get fake work permits, he would employ them. Not only that but they would also be able to stay in the factory. When the factory received a rationing of clothes, they could have first pick (winter was approaching, and their garments were quite inadequate for the upcoming cold). Indeed, that is what happened for the next several months, until their presence in Ryłski's factory began to arouse suspicion.

At this juncture Ryłski reached out to the Albertine convent in the city, where he had some connections. He explained the situation to the mother superior, Sister Vita (née Józefa Pawłowska), and she permitted the girls to move into the nuns' house. It was a forty-five-minute walk away from the factory, and they made the trek every morning at seven o'clock and back every afternoon at four, when the factory closed.

All of the nuns lived together in one room with ten beds, and all treated the girls very fairly. Sister Vita was particularly angelic to them, and she was the only one who knew they were Jewish. [Even if they did not know, surely the other nuns must have inferred as much because it would have been highly unusual to simply allow two young women to stay in the nuns' dormitory.—Ed.] They kept up appearances by going to church every Sunday and learning their catechisms. They crafted a back story for themselves, posing as Polish orphans who had no relatives remaining. Once, in 1944, a Polish SS collaborator came looking for them at the convent, but they managed to convince him of the truth of their story.

In January 1945, when Częstochowa was liberated, Paula and Hanna, uncertain what to do next, remained at the convent for several additional weeks, after which they decided to leave Poland and go to the United States.<sup>923</sup>

Here is another account of the rescue:

Paula stayed in Warsaw from November 1942 to April 1943. In April 1943, Paula heard the first shot of the Warsaw uprising. From the Polish side, she saw Jews being taken away from the ghetto. She saw trucks and shootings going on day and night, and the situation became dangerous for Paula and Hannah. The sisters discussed the situation with their boarder, who suggested they move to Częstochowa [Częstochowa]. ...

In Częstochowa, they met a man [Mieczysław Ryłski] who owned a glass factory. They had to tell him they were Jewish, but he told them that if they found work permission

<sup>923</sup> Mieczysław Ryłski, RD.

[i.e., permits] they could stay with him. After a couple of months, they had to leave because there were suspicions about why the girls were staying there. Their boss had a connection with a convent in the city, so they talked to the Mother Superior, and explained that they were Jewish. They stayed at the convent until the end of the war, but continued to work at the glass factory. Work began at 7 am, and it was a 45-minute walk. The factory had to close every day at 4 pm so that the workers would have time to get home before martial law [i.e., curfew], which took effect at 8 pm. Nobody was allowed to go out past 8 o'clock, but sometimes during the winter Paula and Hannah would sneak out to see some Jewish people that they had contact with in hiding.

The nuns lived in a house together on 14 Wesola Street. They all shared a room. There were ten single beds; the nuns each had their own and Paula and Hannah shared one. The nuns were very fair, in particular the Mother Superior, Sister Vita, who was "like an angel." She was the only one that knew they were Jewish. Every Sunday, Paula and Hannah went to church and learned the catechism. Paula's neighbors in Kaluszyń [Kałuszyn] were all Catholics, along with the workers in her family's flourmill, but they did not socialize with them often, and were not familiar with the religion. Everything was new.

Paula and Hannah could not maintain any sense of their Jewish identity during this time; they were extremely afraid of any "slip of the tongue." They went to great lengths to disguise themselves, writing fictional letters to fictional relatives, to "keep in touch" with their family. They concocted stories, that they were orphans, and their parents had been killed during a bombardment, and they only had distant relatives left. They knew very little about what was happening to Jews outside of Cześćochowa. ...

In the beginning of 1944, some sisters visited Paula and Hannah at the glass factory to inform them that SS soldiers had been looking for them at the convent, and would return later when they came home from work. It turned out that the officer was not an SS man, but a Pole who was serving the Germans. After debating about what to do, the girls decided to tell him the same story they had told everyone else. There was nowhere to run, and if they could convince him that they were not Jewish, it would confirm their Polish identity. For some reason he believed them, and the Germans never bothered them again.

In January 1945, the Russians liberated Cześćochowa ... Paula and her sister stayed at the convent for a few weeks after liberation, because they were uncertain what to do next.<sup>924</sup>

Other religious orders also assisted Jews in Cześćochowa. The Pauline Fathers of the Jasna Góra ("Bright Hill") Monastery, which housed the revered icon of the Black Madonna, smuggled food to Jews confined in the ghetto and helped them in other ways, despite the constant surveillance of the monastery by the German authorities. Their activities are mentioned in several Jewish accounts, including the rescue of Jewish children by nuns referred to earlier on. Abraham

<sup>924</sup> The Holocaust Quilt: Commemorating Charleston's Survivors: Paula Popowski, Internet: <http://holocaustarchives.cofc.edu/panels/popowski/fulltext.html>. See also the testimony of Paula Popowski Kornblum, Esther and Herbert Taylor Oral History Collection, William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum (Atlanta), Internet: [https://archivesspace.thebreman.org/repositories/2/archival\\_objects/28374](https://archivesspace.thebreman.org/repositories/2/archival_objects/28374).

Jabłoński served as an altar boy at the monastery in 1943–1944 under the assumed identity of Bogdan Bloch. He survived the war with the assistance of Fr. Polikarp Sawicki and Brother Benedykt Karp. Decades later, he expressed his gratitude to the Pauline Fathers in the following words: “I felt safe here and believed in the Divine Providence that watched over me. I survived the Shoah thanks to that...”

At the behest of Brother Kazimierz Paśnik, who resided in Budapest, Fr. Pius Przeździecki, the order’s general, directed Fr. Marian Paszkiewicz, the Pauline prior in Leśniów, near Żarki, to procure a birth and baptismal certificate for Salomon Bleier, who was then residing in Hungary. The Pauline Fathers also secretly cared for an ancient banner entrusted to them by the elders at the local synagogue.<sup>925</sup> A Jew by the name of Proskurowski, who had converted to Catholicism, took refuge in the Pauline monastery. Against their instructions, he ventured out into the city peddling goods. He was caught by the Germans and shot. After the war, the monks reported the person who had denounced Proskurowski to the authorities. He was tried and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.<sup>926</sup>

**E**lżbieta Fiszhaut (later Górka) was twelve years old when the war broke out. She and her mother, Helena Fiszhaut, escaped from the Warsaw ghetto in August 1942. Elżbieta, who went by the name Stanisława Matusik, was placed in a convent in Częstochowa. She left the convent after about a year, when the Germans arrested the person who had placed her there. Elżbieta returned to the convent after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and remained there until the end of the war. Elżbieta was also helped by a priest while in Częstochowa.

In August 1942, Helena obtained false documents for herself and her daughter. Ela became Stanisława Matusik and Helena became Józefa Kalińska. They managed to escape from the ghetto and headed to Bielany (a suburb of Warsaw), to the home of Aldona Lipszyc, Helena’s friend from high school. Aldona took them in. After a few weeks, Ela was placed into a convent orphanage in Częstochowa. Helena remained with Aldona until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising.

Ela had been in Częstochowa for about a year, when her mother received news that the person in Częstochowa, who had been looking after Ela and who had placed her into the convent, had been arrested and accused of helping Jews. She was worried that, under torture, the woman (known to Ela only as Jadzia) would reveal details of whom she had helped and where they were. Helena immediately went to Częstochowa and brought her

<sup>925</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 373–76.

<sup>926</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 687; Bolesława Proskurowska, “Memories,” in Jerzy Mizgalski and Jerzy Sielski, eds., *The Jews of Częstochowa: The Fate of Częstochowa Jews 1945–2009* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2012), 356–57.

daughter back to Aldona's home. Later, it turned out that Jadzia had been executed without betraying anyone.

Over the following months, Ela remained in Warsaw, repeatedly changing where she lived. In August 1944, when the uprising broke out ... Ela remained in the Lipszyc home over the first weeks of the Uprising, after which she again set off looking for her mother. Along the way, she was caught and thrown into a truck. The truck driver, an Austrian in the German army, stopped the truck in a forest and told Ela to run away. She was caught a second time and ended up in the camp in Pruszków. There, she met her aunt, Dr Anna Margolis who, pretending to be a nurse, could move freely amongst the prisoners. Her aunt managed to extract Ela from the camp and place her into a crowded apartment in Grodzisk. ...

Counting on the fact that danger to the orphanage had passed, Ela headed to Częstochowa. After many troubles and adventures, she arrived there after a few days. Within the convent, she waited for the German army to retreat. On foot, she went to Warsaw, but found no family or friends. Her pre-war family home had been requisitioned by the Polish army. So she went to Łódź, to the home of her aunt Margolis. A few weeks later, Helena also arrived there. Following the Uprising, she had been transported to a work camp in Goerlitz [Görlitz]. ...

For many years, Elisabeth Gorski (almost 90 years old), together with many others of the Rescued, visits schools in the state of Victoria, Australia. Their visits include a presentation about the Holocaust, prepared by the Courage to Care educational program, aimed at younger high school students. ... During meetings with the young people, Elżbieta talks about the heroic people, thanks to whom she survived. She recalls Aldona Lipszyc, a priest in Częstochowa, the Austrian soldier in the German army, as well as Jadzia from Częstochowa, murdered by the Gestapo for helping Jews. ...

Among those who had saved Elżbieta and her mother, only Aldona Lipszyc was posthumously awarded the medal of the Righteous Among the Nations in 1996. Elżbieta could never manage to establish details of the others who also deserved to be awarded that title.<sup>927</sup>

**A**fter escaping from the ghetto in Częstochowa, Ignacy Jakobson and his colleagues from the Jewish underground formed a partisan group which had its base near Koniecpol. Among those who came to their assistance was a priest whose identity has not been established.

I, Władek Chajutin, an actor by profession, and his [my] brother Jurek went on a scouting patrol. We reached the village of Kościelna near Koniecpol, but the German gendarmes were stationed there. At night I approached the village church with the utmost care. In the presbytery I found a young priest, whose name I do not know. He offered us assistance, gave us three bags of food, showed us the way across the Pilica River and gave us his blessing;

<sup>927</sup> "Elżbieta Fiszhaut (Stanisława Matusik), Elżbieta Górka, Elisabeth Gorski and her mother Helena Fiszhaut (Józefa Kalińska)," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/elzbieta-fiszhaut-stanislaw-matusik-elzbieta-gorska-elisabeth-gorski-i-jej-matka-helena-fiszhaut>.

a farmer then led us across the river (the farmers in that village were most favourably disposed to us).<sup>928</sup>

In 1942 Ruth Schwarz (later Pardess, b. 1940) was entrusted by her parents, then in the Sambor ghetto, to Alojzy Plewa, a prewar acquaintance, while they hid separately. Being a single man, Alojzy took the little girl to his parents' home in the village of Kliny, near Kępno, in western Poland. His parents, Antoni and Anna Plewa, told the local residents that this was their son's illegitimate child and that her name was Antośka. In order to maintain her cover, she was baptized and attended church services with the Plewas. In spite of her young age, Ruth remembers the local priest, who called her a "holy daughter." After the war, when her mother came for her, Ruth did not recognize her. The Plewas "were very good, good-natured, and gave the child back."<sup>929</sup>

For some time after leaving her home in Lwów, Henryka Trauber lived in Rudki, near Sambor. She stayed with Mrs. Szubert, the wife of a dentist, who was also sheltering Mrs. Berkowicz. Then she stayed with her own sister, who was a convert. A local priest used to visit Henryka when she was at her sister's house, thus helping to maintain her cover as a Christian. (Her sister survived the war.) Henryka later stayed for several months in Dębica with her son, who had obtained Aryan papers. Then she relocated to Kraków, where she too survived the war.<sup>930</sup>

Artur Dreifinger, originally from Lwów, moved to Warsaw with his mother during the German occupation. In Warsaw, he went by the name of Tadeusz (Tadzik) Stenawka. He and his mother became separated during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Young Tadzik was taken in and assisted by many Poles, despite their fear of keeping him for long because of his Jewish appearance. He was eventually taken to Częstochowa, where Rev. Antoni Marchewka cared for him, and perhaps also Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, who resided in Częstochowa at that time. Later, he was placed in an orphanage in Kraków. After the war he was reunited with his mother and moved to Argentina.

<sup>928</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 588–89.

<sup>929</sup> The Plewa Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-plewa-family>; "Rescued Ruth Pardess Visits Her Former Hiding Place," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/rescued-ruth-pardess-visits-her-former-hiding-place>.

<sup>930</sup> Testimony of Henryka Trauber, JHI, record group 301, no. 1385. Henryka states that, while in Rudki, she approached the episcopal office in Przemyśl for permission to be baptized but was informed that she needed permission from the German authorities to do so.



When I was seven the Warsaw Uprising broke out. After its fall and the bombardment of Warsaw my mother and I found shelter in a basement for twenty days. Suddenly, the Germans appeared and made us all leave our shelter. Children under 10 were to stand facing the street and those over 10 were to face the walls of the buildings. So were their fathers. After a second all those men and boys were shot.

I was only with my mother and I was separated from her. On that day I was left alone in the world. From the place of the shooting some people took me to the Red Cross, which was just two hundred meters away. There somebody put me in a car and took me to Włochy near Warsaw. I was alone there. I did not know where to go and did not have anything to eat. It was dark. I was sitting in the street and crying. One person passed by, and another one, asking why I was crying. I did not know what to answer. I said I did not have a mother, I lost her, and I was by myself and had nowhere to go. Some people took me to their house. I had a chubby face and it was providential because people often were afraid of taking emaciated kids thinking they were ill. I was perhaps one day in that house and the next day I was taken to another. They simply said, "Tadzik, you must go." I asked why, not understanding anything.

"You know why," they said. They were afraid of speaking straight, "Because you are Jewish." And then I went from home to home. I heard various things, "If you do not leave they will kill me, my wife, children and you. You must go. And do not tell anyone that you were here. Have some underwear, food and go." And that was every day. One day someone took me to Pruszków. I felt very well there, they treated me as their son. From there I was taken to Częstochowa.

When I arrived there some people waited for me: some 30-year-old man, a woman and a girl who could be of my age. The woman who had brought me there gave me to that man and left without saying anything. And we went home. There I met a boy who was my age. The next day a priest came and it turned out that it was Fr. Antoni Marchewka. He asked, "Are you Tadzik?"

During the occupation my mother decided that I would be called Tadeusz Stenawka. The priest took me to a small room. There were a bed, a toilet, a ladder and a table in the room. The priest told me not to go out and approached the balcony. So I stayed all day inside the room and waited for him. The priest left in the morning and came back in the evening. One day he took me to the church [St. Barbara's]. From that day I went to the church with him every day. Some days he gave me a white robe, a surplice, which was needed to bring the incense. ...

The day came when the priest said, "Tadzik, we must go." I still remember that morning. It was dark, raining and no people [were] in the street. We went to Kraków. The priest took me to a large house, where there were little ladders and numerous children, at the age of 4 to 15. I was given some food, but older kids came and took the food from me. I was scared ... In the gate the priest told me to pray to [the] Lord God every day. I know that it was God that saved me. The priest took my hand and kissed it. He was weeping. He left me with those children and went away. I did not see him afterwards.<sup>931</sup>

<sup>931</sup> Arturo Dreifinger, interviewed by Ireneusz Skubiś, "Wiem, że to Bóg mnie uratował" / "I Know That It Was God Who Saved Me," *Niedziela* [Częstochowa], no. 46 (November 12, 2006), Internet: <https://www.niedziela.pl/artukul/8C0602/nd/Wiem-ze-to-Bog-mnie->

Assistance was provided to Sonia Games (then Zofia Róża Sieradzka) of Praszka, near Wieluń, by Rev. Mieczysław Krzemiński, a Vincentian Missionary. The Sieradzki and Krzemiński families were acquaintances. Rev. Krzemiński was a Home Army chaplain.<sup>932</sup> After leaving the ghetto in Częstochowa, Sonia turned to Rev. Krzemiński to seek his help in getting Aryan documents. He was then staying in the suburb of Grosz, where he lived under Gestapo surveillance.

The housekeeper opened the door ...

I told her... that I was looking for a priest from Praszka. She immediately ushered me in and asked my name. I told her and her hand flew to her mouth “Zofia Sieradzki!” she exclaimed in alarm and hurried off to get the priest. He came in looking very grim.

“My God, child, you could not have come here at a worse time! We are under surveillance at this very moment. We are being watched by the Gestapo!”

My heart sank. The priest introduced himself as Father Krzeminski [Mieczysław Krzemiński] and anxiously asked about my parents and what had happened. ...

There was a furtive knock on the door and the housekeeper answered it, then came running back to us.

“They are coming,” she stuttered frantically. “Gestapo!”

They both grabbed me by my arms and opened a floor trap door leading into the basement. The housekeeper and I descended down the ladder into the musty interior. ...

The housekeeper pulled me toward an empty barrel and made me crawl in. It smelled of pickles. Then she poured cucumbers over me until my head was covered and loosely placed a round wooden top cover over it. We could already hear the pounding at the door upstairs. Then the housekeeper ran up the ladder and I vaguely heard the trap door being shut. ...

From above came the sound of boots stamping and loud voices. I heard the trap door being lifted and someone coming down the ladder. I held my very breath. Footsteps again very near to me, noises of movement, banging ... Then I heard the trap door again. Were they leaving? Again stomping upstairs reverberated dimly in my ears. Voices I could not make out and after a considerable while silence again.

They came and left! I felt a powerful surge of relief and waited. The cucumbers were lifted from my head and the housekeeper whispered loudly “It’s alright Zosia” I wiggled out of the barrel and wearily followed her upstairs again. Father Krzeminski was sitting at a wooden table by a kerosene lamp.

“This was close ...” he said, “very close. You see we were tipped off that they were coming. We knew it.” Now he needed to decide what to do with me and immediately told me that I could not stay the night, it was too dangerous. They could always come back.

... I was to stay with Aunt Hela for two weeks and then I was to return to Father Krzeminski’s.

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uratował; [http://sunday.niedziela.pl/arttykul.php?dz=polska&id\\_art=00062](http://sunday.niedziela.pl/arttykul.php?dz=polska&id_art=00062). See also Mercedes Fernández, *El niño roto* (Mendoza: Zeta, 2009).

<sup>932</sup> Zbigniew Szczerbik and Zdzisław Włodarczyk, eds., *Wieluński słownik biograficzny*, vol. 1 (Wieluń: Wieluńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2012), 70–71.

He had no way of providing me with the proper papers but would make out a false christening and birth certificate which would be better than having nothing at all. But I must not come back sooner because Father Krzeminski was having problems with the Gestapo. They had nothing on him but suspicions thus far but if they found me here it would be the end for all of us. The housekeeper gave me a piece of bread but I could not even stay long enough to eat it. I had to leave immediately regardless of the curfew. The country road should be empty and I should sleep in the fields. ...

Today he is not nearly as nervous, and true to his word, he has a typed out certificate of Birth and Christening waiting for me. It is made out on yellowing, aged paper to give it a genuine appearance. He has made me three years older than I really am. People would be less suspicious if I am a little older, especially if I need to find work. ... Fortunately I am developed enough to appear older.

... I am given a small prayer book and Father Krzeminski instructs me to learn everything in it by heart. It is well worn but has a lovely mother of pearl binding. He also gives me a silver crucifix on a chain.

I explain that I have attended catechism classes as a child, but he actually knows this part of my history. Father Krzeminski seems to know my family well. I am extremely touched by this and ask him if he would wish to christen me. But even there he surprises me. He remembers my mother's wishes. It is to be done when I am sixteen, and he will give it due respect. I am under stress now, and this is a very serious decision to make. ...

"If you are ever caught," he tells me, "the Gestapo will trace these papers to me, you know. You will not be able to withhold the information from them ... They have a way ... They torture people. They will get it out of you. If ever this happens and you should suffer guilt,—do not on account of me. I have done for others what I am doing for you. Those are the chances I have to take. Zosia, I want to give you absolution now in advance and my full forgiveness. Save yourself from torture with my blessing. Nobody can withstand it anyway ..." <sup>933</sup>

Afterwards, a priest known to her only as Fr. Jan was Sonia's contact in a Home Army cell for which she worked as a courier. <sup>934</sup>

Władysław and Anna Jaguścik sheltered four-year-old Anna Borys, her uncle Henryk Borys, and her grandmother on their farm in the village of Łęg, near Radomsko. During a raid on the village in July 1943, the Germans discovered and executed about 20 Jews, including Anna Borys's uncle and grandmother, all of whom were being hidden by Poles. Earlier, Anna Jaguścik had obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate for the Jewish girl from Rev. Aleksander Bielawski, the pastor of Radziechowice, under the name of Maria Jaguścik, and claimed that the child was hers. Anna Borys was thus spared. However, Władysław Jaguścik

<sup>933</sup> Sonia Games, *Escape Into Darkness: The True Story of a Young Woman's Extraordinary Survival During World War II* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1991), 102–4, 120–21.

<sup>934</sup> Games, *Escape Into Darkness*, 141–67.

and several other farmers were beaten and sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Władysław was later transferred to Buchenwald and survived the war. Anna Borys was reclaimed by her parents after the war. She settled in Israel under her married name, Maria Goland.<sup>935</sup>

**P**riests from Zawiercie, southeast of Częstochowa, provided false birth and baptismal certificates to Jews. Mariusz Opalko (Lederman), who was rescued as a Jewish boy, recalls:

Opalko's parents both grew up in Zawiercie, a small Polish city in the south of the country near Silesia. When the Germans invaded, two local priests took enormous risks by writing their names into the books of official baptisms. "We weren't actually baptized," Opalko stresses. One of the priests also doctored Opalko's mother's birth certificate to use the more German sounding "Leder" instead of her birth name of "Lederman," which Opalko says "was recognizably Jewish." These brave acts allowed Opalko's parents to pass as non-Jews.

Opalko's grandfather also had a personal connection with one of the priests—the two had known each other when the grandfather had been imprisoned a number of times for being a communist, Opalko explains. The priest came to visit him and the two became friends.

Although Opalko's parents knew each other growing up, there was a 7-year difference between them. Near the end of the war, though, when Opalko's mother had turned 18, they decided to get married. They had a Jewish ceremony but were written down as "Catholic" in the official marriage registry by the priests who had already done so much to save them.<sup>936</sup>

**P**riwa Grinkraut also obtained false documents, with the help of a priest and a Polish clerk at the labour bureau in Zawiercie, that helped her pass as a Catholic Pole and survive the war.<sup>937</sup> Her principal benefactors, Antoni and Leokadia Jastrzab, have been recognized by Yad Vashem.

Antoni Jastrzab [Jastrzab] and Joel Grinkraut knew each other well before the war. They both were tailors and lived in Zawiercie. When a ghetto was established in their home town, and all the Jewish population of Zawiercie was resettled into the ghetto, Leokadia and Antoni Jastrzab convinced Priwa Grinkraut, their friend's wife, to get out to the Aryan side. They were hiding her in their house for six weeks. At that time, they arranged forged documents for her, issued for the name Zofia Jabłońska, whereas Leokadia and

<sup>935</sup> Testimony of Alojzy Jaguścik, JHI, record group 301, no. 7043.

<sup>936</sup> Shavei Israel Profile: Mariusz Opalko, Internet: <https://www.shavei.org/blog/2013/07/08/shavei-israel-profile-mariusz-opalko-64-year-old-bar-mitzvah-boy-shares-his-amazing-jewish-discoveries/>. See also Cnaan Liphshiz, "When Elders Reveal They Are Jewish on Their Deathbeds, Their Children Often Return to Judaism," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 27, 2019, Internet: <https://www.jta.org/2019/06/27/global/when-elders-reveal-they-are-jewish-on-their-deathbeds-their-children-often-return-to-judaism>.

<sup>937</sup> In her testimony, Priwa mentions the help rendered by a priest. See the testimony of Priwa (Konieczkowski) Grinkraut, YVA, file O.3/3283 (Item 3557142).

Antoni's children taught Priwa some Catholic prayers. Then, thanks to some contacts in the employment office, Antoni Jastrzab fixed Priwa up with a job for a German farmer in the Sudetes. The whole time he remained in contact with her, and helped to deliver the correspondence between Priwa and Joel.<sup>938</sup>

In her wanderings in the vicinity of her native village of Bolesławiec, near Wieluń, in the summer of 1942, Mala Brandsdorfer (then Goldrat) encountered many friendly Polish villagers who were prepared to help her. But they never allowed her to stay in one place for long, not out of malice but due to their dread of German reprisals. On occasion, the villagers would turn to their parish priest for guidance.

I remember growing up in Boleslawiec [Bolesławiec] very happy. The town had about 500 families, with about 2500 people. Jews made up about a quarter of the population. ... We lived and traded together in peace. There were some Poles in our town who were openly anti-Semitic, but very few. ...

One of the farmers who dealt with my uncle was a Christian named Pannek. He was a very nice man, and he liked my sister because of how honest she was. ... After the war started he said to her that if she or her family ever had to hide from the Germans they should come to him, and he'd hide them at his farm.

Pannek's farm was about one kilometer from our town. My daughter and I went there to hide. Pannek let us in and made a place for us in the attic of the stall. ... Living with him were his wife and his wife's sister. He also had two children, a son 14 or 15 years old, and a daughter about 20. They were both living at home.

The next day a woman came to Pannek's and told us that the Germans had surrounded the town. They were ordering all the Jews to assemble in the market square. She had met my sister Eudel in a field outside of town. She told my sister to run and hide, but my sister said her parents were home all alone and that she must go back to them. And so my sister returned to the town.

The following day Pannek's sister-in-law went into the town to find out what had happened. She returned and told me that all the Jews were being held in the church, and the Germans were ordering all those Jews still in hiding to come out. My parents and one sister were with the other Jews, but one of my sisters was still hiding in the attic of my neighbor's house. It was my sister Fay. She was sick, and my father took her over to the neighbors. He didn't want her taken by the Germans while she was ill. There were rumors that the Germans were killing the sick right away.

The neighbor who was hiding my sister was very scared and wanted her to either go to the church with the other Jews or go into hiding with me. The next day I paid Pannek's sister-in-law 50 marks to smuggle my sister out of the town and bring her to me.

Pannek's sister-in-law dressed Fay up as a field hand going to work in the fields outside of town. Fay was very sick when she brought her. She was running a fever. When she

<sup>938</sup> "Ceremony of Presenting the Righteous Among the Nations Awards, Warsaw, December 4, 2012," Embassy of Israel in Warsaw, Internet: [https://embassies.gov.il/warsaw/Departments/Sprawiedliwych/Documents/2012-12-04\\_ENG.pdf](https://embassies.gov.il/warsaw/Departments/Sprawiedliwych/Documents/2012-12-04_ENG.pdf).

saw me she started crying and banging her head against the wall. She kept saying that we should go with our parents. That we would not survive anyway. The Germans had put up notices that they would shoot any Jews they found, and they would also shoot any Poles that helped a Jew hide. But I said, "No, we would not walk voluntarily into their hands," and I dragged her up to the attic.

For the next few days the Germans kept the Jews in the church. A few of the Jews who were still in hiding were caught, some had given themselves up. Then all the Jews were taken to Wielun [Wieluń]. I had a terrible feeling that the three of us were the only Jews left in the entire district. ...

Fay's illness was getting worse. Late at night I took her into town to see the doctor. ... He was a very fine man. ... He gave her some medicine that made her better. He refused to take any money from us saying we would need it more than he would.

As we were leaving, Dr. Taren said, "Go hide in small villages. There you will find less anti-Semitism than in the cities." We thanked him and left. ...

Pannek was too scared to hide us near the house during the day. Since a lot of people came to his house he was afraid we would be seen. During the day, when it wasn't raining, he told us to hide in the nearby fields. ...

Once when we were hiding in the field we heard someone coming. We crawled into a stack of wheat. I looked out and saw 2 women walking towards us. It was Mrs. Jakobovich and her daughter, Estarka. Estarka was about 20 years old. They were neighbors of ours before the war. ... Estarka got out [of the ghetto] and got to village a few kilometers from our home. ... There she was able to hide out with a Christian family until the end of the war. ...

One day Pannek said that we would have to leave. He was too afraid to hide us any longer. ... Pannek's wife was truly a wonderful human being. She pleaded with her husband to let us stay. ... But still he said no. So after two weeks of hiding at Pannek's we were sent away.

We went to a village near Wojcin [Wójcin]. Wojcin was the town my mother was born in. We went to a family that had done business with my father. In the house lived an old woman with her daughter and son-in-law. The old woman had gone to school with my mother. She asked us why we didn't bring our mother with us. She would have helped her hide too.

We stayed there a short while hiding in their attic. One day two Germans came into their yard. Both the old woman's daughter and I saw them come in. We got very frightened. I was sure that someone had told on us until I saw they had bicycles and one was broken. They stopped to fix it and then went on their way.

We had such a bad fright that a few days later Fay noticed a patch of hair on my head had turned white. The young woman was pregnant then. She had been married for five years and this was going to be her first child. A few days after we had seen the Germans come into the yard she lost the child. It may have been because of the fright she had. The next day the husband came up to the attic and told us we would have to leave. He was very sorry about it, but they felt that they couldn't keep us anymore.

From there we went to another village called Drzdkowitz [Dzięrzkowice], to a Christian farmer named Urbonek [Urbanek?]. My husband knew him from doing business with him and felt he was a good man. My husband wrote that if I had to hide I should go to this man's house, tell him who I was, and he would surely let me hide there.



When I got there I found out that Urbonek was a leader in the village, appointed by the Germans. We came to his house at night. He let us in, gave us some food, and took us up to the attic.

Urbonek was in his middle 20s. He had a wife and some young children. His wife was very scared to have us in the house. We would sometimes hear them arguing about us being there. Since he was working for the Germans some of them would come to the house. Also they had a lot of enemies in the village because of the work they were doing. His wife was afraid of us being found there. It would have cost them their lives if we were.

Once I heard him say to his wife that if he was destined to die, he would, whether he was hiding Jews or not. But his wife prevailed and we were sent away. ...

Urbonek sent us to his brother in another village, but they were also afraid. As soon as we came to their door Urbonek's sister-in-law started yelling that the village was surrounded, and that the Germans were looking for us. None of this was true, but the woman was hysterical. We could not stay there. They sent us somewhere else.

For a time we were just sent from village to village. A Christian once said to me, "Why do you risk our lives? No Jews will survive anyway."

In one place we came to, as soon as we walked in, the man there said that he was sure we were spotted and made us leave right away. Another place we came to late at night. We were allowed to stay the night but no more. In the morning we had to leave. After a while there was no place for us to go, so we decided we had to go to the Jewish ghetto in Czeszochowa [Częstochowa].

We went to another village, named Toplin. It was the village in which Alter was born. Toplin was 28 kilometers from Bolesławiec. There we went to a Christian named Antos Krzyzós [Antoś Krzyżoś]. He was the same man who took the money to my cousin in Wielun when I tried to rescue my husband.

As soon as we came to his house we told him we only wanted to stay for a short while. We told him of our wanting to get into the ghetto. Antos' family tried talking him out of letting us stay. They were afraid. But he said he would help us and took us up to the attic.

We couldn't just walk into the ghetto. If we were caught outside we would be shot. We had to be smuggled into it. I had a cousin in the ghetto named Rachel Liss. Rachel ran away from Wielun when her husband was taken away to a labor camp. I knew that she had ended up in the Czeszochowa ghetto. Antos helped me get a letter to her. We were taking a chance writing a letter to someone in the ghetto. If the letter had been read by the Germans we would have been caught, but Antos agreed to take the chance.

In the letter I asked her to find out how we could get into the ghetto. This was in September 1942. It was on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, that we sent the letter. We spent the holiday up in the Krzyzós' attic. Two weeks later a letter came back from my cousin.

My cousin told us to go to the Ponow [Panów (?), i.e., the Lords'] woods. The Ponow woods were near Wielun. There we would find a man whose name I can't remember now. She said that this man could smuggle us into the ghetto.

The next day we said good-bye to Antos Krzyzós and headed for the Ponow woods. We walked all day until we got to the woods. I remember it was a beautiful day. A number of Poles spotted us for Jews as we traveled there. Some were kind to us; some were not; but none of them turned us in. One told us that just the day before we came there the Germans

had finished a large “operation.” For 2 weeks they searched the woods for Jews. Over 30 were caught hiding there. The Germans took them all to Wielun where they were all executed.

We came to the man my cousin told us see. He said that he could not get us into the ghetto anymore. Once he used to lead animals into the ghetto to be slaughtered for food. Then he was able to smuggle someone in by dressing them up as a helper. But the Germans stopped letting meat into the ghetto since they started taking Jews out of there. ...

In the morning we were able to see a village in the distance. We went there, and we looked for a house that was run down. We knew that the people living in poor houses were not Germans or collaborating with them.

We came into a house. We told the people the truth about who we were and what had happened to us. They said not to fear. They would talk to the village priest, and he would know what to do. The priest was a very fine man. He advised that we go to the city of Klobuck [Kłobuck] which was not far from there. There were still some Jews in Klobuck. One of them was the dentist. We were to go to the dentist, and he’d be able to help us get into a Jewish work camp nearby.<sup>939</sup>

During the round-up of Jews in a village near Olkusz, northwest of Kraków, an old woman became frightened by the sudden appearance of an unknown Jewish girl at her door and, without thinking it through, alerted a nearby German soldier nearby who shot the child on the spot. When she told the local priest about what had happened, he chastised her.

Not far from the little town of Olkush [Olkusz] the Germans rounded up all the Jews to have them sent away. One mother, desperately wanting to save her child, told her to run away, to go as far as she could and then ask some Polish family to take her in as their daughter. She was a clever little girl of eight, and she managed to steal away. She was wearing a nice summer dress. In a village she knocked on one of the doors. An old woman appeared. “Grandma,” the child appealed to her, “will you take me for your daughter?” The old woman did not think; automatically she called a Nazi soldier. ... she said to him, “Here’s a Jewish girl.” The German shot the child on the spot. The old woman did not expect that, she thought he would simply take the child away; and she could find no peace. She went to her priest for confession.

“You did a very bad thing,” he told her. “You should have given the child the refuge she was looking for, or at least you should have let her go to look for it elsewhere. You did a very wicked thing. Jesus will not forgive you and I cannot take your guilt on my conscience.” The old woman went home and, after a short time, she died.<sup>940</sup>

Throughout occupied Poland, Poles were encouraged to purchase Jewish property seized by the Germans after they had deported the Jews from their towns. Sabina Rachel Kałowska, a Jewish woman passing as a Pole, recalled how

<sup>939</sup> Mala Brandsdorfer, as told to Louis Brandsdorfer, *The Bleeding Sky: My Mothers's Journey Through the Fire*, Internet: <http://www.brandsdorfer.com/podcast/BleedingSky.pdf>.

<sup>940</sup> Chava [Gerszonowicz] Kwinta, *I'm Still Living* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre Publishing Company, 1974), 159–60.

Rev. Stanisław Marchewka, the pastor of the former Cistercian monastery church in Jędrzejów, near Kielce, implored the faithful in his sermons not to acquire property confiscated from the Jews: “People, do not go there. Don’t buy any of those things. Don’t take anything, because it is stained with blood.”<sup>941</sup> A priest in Głowno, near Łódź, implored impoverished Christians not to cut trees down in a Jewish cemetery during the cold winter months, even though they needed wood to heat their cottages.<sup>942</sup>

A Polish family sheltered Goldie Szachter, a Jewish girl, on their farm near Świątomarz, near Bodzentyn. They confided in the village priest, who joined in the pretence that the child was a member of the family—their niece—and a Catholic. This Jewish girl would later write, “I nevertheless recognized the beauty of the spirituality of the church services as well as its sanctifying influence on the Polish peasant household in general.”<sup>943</sup>

Miriam Krizel (b. 1928), a native of Chełm, moved around the countryside working for and hiding with farmers, passing as Marysia Krakowska. One farmer gave her a prayer book and a crucifix to help her with her guise. When Miriam was working on a farm in Leśniczówka, in the parish of Ruda-Huta, she confided in a priest, who reassured her that nothing would happen to her, blessed her, and told her to keep quiet.<sup>944</sup> Rev. Stanisław Grzegorzczak was the pastor at the time.

An unidentified priest from Koszyce, probably Rev. Bolesław Kastek, the local pastor, provided the sisters Dina Minberg (later Dina Drori, b. 1924) and Hanka Minberg (b. 1922) with the birth and baptismal certificates of two young Polish women who had left for Germany as labourers. These documents were the basis for the identity documents (Kennkarten) that the sisters obtained from their friend, Jan Młynarczyk, a member of the underground. They used these documents to pass as Poles after leaving their hometown of Koszyce, a village northeast of Kraków, in 1942, just before the expulsion of the Jewish

<sup>941</sup> Sabina Rachel Kałowska, *Uciekać, aby żyć* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2000), 93–94, translated as Sabina Rachel Kałowska, *No Place for Tears: From Jędrzejów to Denmark* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2012).

<sup>942</sup> Aleksandra Bańkowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego*, vol. 6: *Generalne Gubernatorstwo: Relacje i dokumenty* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012), 474.

<sup>943</sup> Goldie Szachter Kalib, with Sylvan Kalib and Ken Wachsberger, *The Last Selection: A Child's Journey Through the Holocaust* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 161, 163–64.

<sup>944</sup> Testimony of Miryam Krayzel, SFV, Interview code 40742.

population. The two sisters moved from place to place—Kraków, Stalowa Wola and Warsaw—and were eventually deported to Germany as slave labourers after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Throughout the war, they, their mother and another Jewish family from Koszyce were assisted by various Polish benefactors, two of whom—Młynarczyk and Zofia Stefko—were awarded by Yad Vashem.<sup>945</sup>

As I said earlier, the Jewish boys did not study in the gymnasium [i.e., high school; they went to the yeshiva]. And we girls, obviously would never date boys our age, so we were three to four girls who usually went with Polish boys, because they attended the gymnasium. So, our young male friends were Polish, and they held one line, which was anti-German and pro-Jewish. They were all members of the underground. They all prepared themselves for the moment they would need to act. And they did, and later they left and went into the forests.

I will tell you for example about a friend of mine. They wanted to save her, but her parents did not agree. The Polish boyfriend of my girlfriend wanted to save her, but her mother said, “No, you are leaving with us,” because she did not want to leave her in the hands of a Pole.

In 1942, when searches were carried out in the Jewish houses, we used to hide at times in Polish houses. ...

A young Polish man by the name of Janek Młynarczyk [Młynarczyk] lived in Koszyce. He provided the inhabitants with coal for the winter months. ... In the autumn of 1942, when Janek arrived to ask about the requested supplies for the coming winter ... Janek was very fond of [my sister Hanka]. ... [Hanka] asked him, “Do you have any possibility in the underground, to arrange Arian [sic] certificates for us?” “Yes. If I am to receive two genuine birth certificates. Based on them, I could arrange it,” he said.

That evening, my mother went to the town’s priest. ... He used to buy from us. There were times when he could afford to pay, and others when he would buy on credit. [The

<sup>945</sup> Testimony of Dina Drori, SFV, Interview code 27672; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 525, and vol. 5: *Poland*, Part 2, 752. After relocating to Warsaw, where their mother and aunt were hiding with the help of Zofia Stefko, Dina and her sister obtained new false identity documents from the Polish underground and again passed as Poles. After the collapse of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, Dina was rounded up together with other Poles and taken to a transit camp in Pruszków. The Germans took her green leather coat leaving her without a jacket. They also demanded her ring, but since her hand was swollen she could not remove it from her finger. She recalled, “The German was about to cut my finger off. At the very last moment, I put my finger inside my mouth and began to suck it powerfully, and finally managed to take it off.” Before transporting the prisoners onward, “They ordered us, the women, into a line; a German officer approached us and said, ‘You see, I only have nine fingers. One of my fingers was cut off by a woman, a member of the underground, and now I shoot every tenth woman because of this finger.’” He then proceeded to carry out this grisly deed. “We sat down, and he started counting. I was the eighth. Then came the ninth, and then the tenth, ‘traach.’ Each time, the tenth was shot down, just like that.” Dina and her sister survived as slave labourers in Germany. After the war, they were reunited with their mother, who had been in hiding in occupied Poland, and her father and older brother, who had escaped to the Soviet Union.

latter was a common practice to encourage customers to purchase.] He used to play chess with my father, and so he was like one of the family. She went to the priest and said to him: “I need to save my two daughters. If you can give me two birth certificates, you will rescue me.” He never asked a single question. He had two Polish girls who had gone willingly to work in Germany, and of course their birth certificates were in the church, and he gave her both. A few days later, Janek arranged two genuine certificates for my sister and me. In the certificates, Hanka was called Matilda [Matylda] Krzeczowska, and my name was Eugenia (Genia) Krzeczowska.

We could now travel across Poland with our new identities; two young girls without parents. Janek arranged for my mother a forged, and not genuine, certificate that had no background; that had no foundation. He also organized documents for my cousin, her two children and my aunt. He organized Arian documents for seven people. When he arranged the certificates, I arranged one for a Jewish friend of mine. I gave him as well a forged certificate, and so, altogether there were eight. My sister went as well to my uncle, who was in the Judenrat, and told him that she could arrange forged certificates for his children, but he said he would not send his children to a forced conversion from Judaism. They were fourteen and sixteen years old. “I have experienced war, The First World War; you did not,” he said to her. “It was difficult, but we survived. We will survive this time as well. The worst that can happen is that they will send us to forced labor camps. After the war we will return, and I will have Jewish children rather than goyim.” My sister said to him, “But we will not return; we will not survive, because these forced labor camps are concentration camps.” But he said he did not believe that anything bad would happen.<sup>946</sup>

Several unidentified priests took part in the rescue of Irene Bau (née Irena Landesdorfer) and her mother, Regina Landesdorfer, who hailed from Kraków. They were able to pass as Christians with the help of Poles. After relocating to Koszyce, a village northeast of Kraków, they went into hiding in November 1942, when the Germans began deporting Jews from that area. With the assistance of Zbigniew Bolt, Regina obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate from a priest in Koszyce—probably the pastor, Rev. Bolesław Kastek. They then relocated to the village of Kalembyna, near Strzyżów, where they stayed in a lodging rented by Stanisław Kwieciński, Bolt’s uncle. Aware of her situation, a priest furnished Irene with a false birth and baptismal certificate, which Kwieciński then used to procure a Kennkarte for her.

Regina decided to leave for Germany to work as a labourer, while Irene remained behind with Kwieciński. Suspecting that she was Jewish, the local police detained Irene and seized her identity card. Irene turned to the local priest for help, confiding in him that she was Jewish. The priest vouched for her as a Catholic, claiming that he was acquainted with her parents. The police chief returned her documents. With her papers back, Irene was able to find a job in

<sup>946</sup> Dina Drori and Erez Grinboim, *Dina, Surviving Undercover: From the Darkness of the Holocaust to the Light of the Future* (Lexington, Kentucky: CreateSpace, 2018), chapter 1.

a store and continued working there until the Soviet army took control of the area. After the war, she was reunited with her mother. Two of their benefactors, Kwieciński and Bolt, were awarded by Yad Vashem.<sup>947</sup> Here is part of their story.

Stanislaw [Stanisław Kwieciński] located another house for them to rent in a village west of Kalemбина, [near] Wiśniowa. The people from whom they eventually rented had no idea they were Jewish. That was a secret that Stanislaw kept as he helped them in various ways.

In their new rental situation, their disguise was aided by the fact that they spoke fluent Polish. In addition, they had false identity papers. Regina's, which a priest in Koszyce helped her get, said she was Zofia Glowacz [Głowacz]. Irene's, which Stanislaw obtained for her, said she was Irene Glowacz [Irena Głowacz].

In reality Irene was, originally, Irena Landesdorfer, born November 9, 1929, in Kraków, the only child of Regina and Samuel Landesdorfer. ...

Irene and Regina Landesdorfer not only pretended to be Irene and Zofia Glowacz, they also regularly went to church, pretending not to be Jews. And they were helped with this by the fiancé of Zbigniew's [Bolt] cousin, with whom they hid for a time at Stanislaw's house. Although Jewish he knew a lot about Catholicism—indeed, he later married Zbigniew's cousin and became a Catholic. ...

And when she attended church, she regularly took Communion and went to confession. In fact, she said, she came to be a believer, at least for a time ...

But one day when they came home from church, the people at whose house they lived told Regina that “people are saying that you don't know how to pray and you don't know how to use the rosary.” But Regina credibly [?] dismissed the complaints, saying that in the big city of Kraków, where she came from, they did things differently. Regina had other explaining to do, too, such as why they had left Kraków. She told people who asked that her family was active in the Polish underground and that several family members had been arrested, so they left to find a safer place to live. ...

After a time in their new place, Regina was deported to Germany and employed as a Polish forced laborer. Left alone, Irene would make more regular visits to Stanislaw's house [in the nearby village of Kalemбина]. ...

Once in the middle of the night, while Irene was sleeping at Stanislaw's, two Polish policemen came and took her away to the police station on suspicion of being Jewish. Stanislaw came running after them, yelling, “What do you want? She's just a little girl. She's not Jewish.”

But the police hit him in the head with a rifle and said, “Go back home if you don't want your house to be burned and you end up in a concentration camp.”

One of the arresting officers then left to look for Polish people the Germans wanted for forced laborers. The other officer stayed with Irene and prepared to take her to the police station. But he offered her a way out.

“Look, little girl,” he said. “I will look this way and if you want to go I won't see you.”

<sup>947</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 536; The Bolt Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-bolt-family>.



Irene, however, refused. This girl, now fourteen, already understood clearly what she would be required to do if she hoped to survive.

"I'm not going," she told him. "I have nothing to hide."

She knew that if she ran away, he would know for sure she was Jewish and not only would her life be in even more danger but authorities would come after Stanislaw, too. So Irene and the officer went to the police station, which was little more than a chicken coop, with live chickens and with bars on the windows. There they began to interrogate her at length.

... Next, however, a German soldier was brought in to question her. Because he was a Volksdeutsch, he spoke to her in Polish, but he finally concluded that Irene was not Jewish.

... after being in jail for two days, she said to [the police chief], "I cannot just sit here. Either you do something or let me go."

"You can go," he replied. "I have all your papers. You can go, but come every morning at 10 o'clock and report to me and I'll see if those papers are real."

They were not real, of course, and all the man had to do to discover that was to pick up a phone and trace them, but he never did. Something kept him from deciding to end Irene's life, and she attributed it to her own spunkiness and her lack of fear in his presence. In fact, one day she came to the police station as ordered and found it full of Germans.

When the police chief saw her, he quickly and quietly said to her, "What are you doing here? Get out." ...

However, without her mother and without her papers, she was stuck. She had no way to buy food or to compensate the people from whom they rented the room for feeding her—to say nothing of not being able to pay the rent. Those people, however, had grown fond of Irene and even called her their baby. But she did not want to live there without money, completely beholden to them. Unsure what else to do, Irene went to confession at church and told the priest that she was a Jew in hiding.

... the priest went to the police station. There he said to this police chief, "Give the girl back her papers. I knew her parents. The girl is not Jewish."

After that, Irene returned to see the police chief, who said to her, "I don't know what it is with you and that priest. But he came here and he told me that he knew your parents and that you are not Jewish. So here are your papers. Go." ...

With her papers back, Irene found a job in a grocery store stocking shelves. She continued working there until the area was liberated by the Soviet Union in the fall of 1944. And although she lost her rented room because others needed it more, the family from whom she rented simply took her in and let her continue living in the same house.<sup>948</sup>

The rescue of Rozalia (Róża) Allerhand (b. 1930) also involved the assistance of priests. Rozalia had to leave her hiding place in Monasterzyska, near Buczacz, where she had been placed by the Kowalczyk family. She travelled by train to Kraków, her hometown, accompanied by Rev. Alfons Walkiewicz, a vicar from

<sup>948</sup> Bill Tammeus and Jacques Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People: Stories of Rescue in Poland During the Holocaust* (Columbia, Missouri and London: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 28–31.

the town of Barysz, near Buczacz. She was able to pass a German inspection without documents with the assistance of Rev. Walkiewicz, who pretended to be her brother. Rev. Walkiewicz placed Rozalia with the Kłosowski family in Kocmyrzów, a village near Kraków, where she survived the war, going by the name of Kasia. She enjoyed the protection of Rev. Ignacy Czabański, a seminary colleague of Rev. Walkiewicz's and a vicar at the local parish in nearby Luborzyca.

There, Rozalia met Mina Malz, or Maltz (later Schwinger, b. 1924), a Jewish girl from Bukowsko, near Sanok. Having obtained a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Czesława Sokołowska, from a Ukrainian priest in her village, Mina set out for Tarnów, and then Kraków. In Kraków, she happened to meet a Jew, passing as a Pole, who was sheltering four Jewish girls. One of those girls directed Mina to a baker in Kocmyrzów. The baker, in turn, directed Mina to the Kłosowski family, who ran a snack bar at the railway station.<sup>949</sup> The Jewish girls' true identities were not known to each other at the time. Rozalia's brother, Aleksander Allerhand,<sup>950</sup> relates their story:

Meanwhile, there was no news about my other sister. We thought she had perished. But after some time Mr [Franciszek] and Mrs [Maria] Kwiatek let me know in the camp that she had come back, and that she was at Kocmyrzów, near Kraków. What had happened? Those people she used to stay with—a Polish woman and a Ukrainian—after a year, more or less, told her, "You may go to Kraków."

She was going by train. In the compartment with her, there was a priest wearing a cassock, whom she knew from Monasterzyska [where she had been sheltered] and who escorted her to Kraków. She had no papers, and all of a sudden the Germans were there to check documents.

"Documents, papers," they demanded.

The priest said, "This is my sister." And they left.

My sister had already told the priest that her daddy was a Polish officer in captivity, and Mummy was at Auschwitz for selling pork fat. She said she was now going to Kraków where she did not know anyone, as she came from Bydgoszcz. And the priest took her to his friends from Bydgoszcz (Bydgoszcz had been incorporated into the Third Reich as soon as the war had started), who were moving to a small town—Kocmyrzów.

The priest's name was Alfons Walkiewicz.

The priest's friends had a buffet in Kocmyrzów. They were Genowefa Kunegunda and Roman Kłosowski. They immediately treated my sister as if she were one of the family. She even began to go to school. She shared a bed with the family servant, Czesia. At one point Czesia started doubting my sister's history, as some of the facts did not fit. Anyway, they deduced that they were both Jewish, but they did not give it away to one another. They were both ready to deny it, because you couldn't be sure who was a spy and who

<sup>949</sup> Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 71–72; Testimony of Mina Malz, JHI, record group 301, no. 1950.

<sup>950</sup> See also Aleksander and Krystyna Allerhand, *Polsko-izraelskie losy jednej rodziny* (Kraków: Aleksander B. Skotnicki, 2010).

wasn't. They did not tell each other the truth until after the war. Nowadays, Czesia, then some twenty years old, lives in Jerusalem. She comes from Sanok. ...

My sister stayed in touch with Father Walkiewicz till he died, which was in the 1980s.<sup>951</sup>

Rozalia Allerhand's twin sister, Anna (Szosana) Allerhand, also relocated from Monasterzyska to her hometown of Kraków, where Helena Przebindowska, a widow, gave her refuge. She turned to Rev. Faustyn Żelski, who provided Anna with a false birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Maria Malinowska, to help her pass as a Catholic Pole.

In October 1942, during the first deportation from the Cracow [Kraków] ghetto, 12-year-old Anna Allerhand fled after her mother was taken to a death camp. ... Anna had no choice but to return to Cracow where she turned to Salomea Kowalczyk, a seamstress who before the war had had business ties with her parents, who owned a fabric store. Salomea, her husband, Stanisław [Stanisław], and their sons, Czesław [Czesław], Jerzy, and Bronisław [Bronisław], agreed to hide Anna in their home and did all they could to make her feel welcome. When the neighbors became suspicious, the Kowalczyks transferred Anna to a vegetable plot they owned outside the city, where she masqueraded as gardener and custodian. Meanwhile, the Kowalczyks continued looking for a safer place for Anna and finally arranged for her to stay with Helena Przebindowska, Salomea's sister-in-law, who knew Anna's parents. Przebindowska, a poor widow who lived with her three children in a one-room apartment, welcomed Anna, and she and her two daughters, Urszula and Mirosława [Mirosława], who were let into the secret, treated Anna like one of the family. Przebindowska enlisted the help of the local priest [Rev. Faustyn Żelski<sup>952</sup>] to obtain Aryan papers for Anna and enrolled her in the local school [under the name of Marysia Malinowska]. Meanwhile, a Polish friend of Anna's parents paid Przebindowska for Anna's upkeep from assets Anna's mother had entrusted to her. ... After the war, Anna's father, an officer in the Polish army, returned from captivity, reclaimed his daughter, and took her with him to Israel.<sup>953</sup>

Henryk Erenreich (later Henry Briggs, b. 1939) survived in his hometown of Kraków with the help of two families, while his mother passed as a Christian. First, he stayed with the Leginowicz family. Jan Leginowicz, a trusted former employee of the family, and his wife passed the boy off as a relative from the

<sup>951</sup> Isakiewicz, *Harmonica*, 76–77, 81.

<sup>952</sup> *Polscy Bohaterowie: Ci, którzy ratowali Żydów: Wystawa w hołdzie Sprawiedliwych Wśród Narodów Świata, prezentuje sylwetki osób odznaczonych, mieszkających w Krakowie i okolicach / Polish Heroes: Those Who Rescued Jews: A Tribute to the Righteous Among the Nations, Featuring Those Who Live in the Kraków Region Today* (Kraków: Muzeum Galicja / Galicia Jewish Museum, 2006), 22; *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady: Przywracanie pamięci / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust: Recalling Forgotten History* (Warsaw: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and Institute of National Remembrance, 2016), 97.

<sup>953</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 386–87.

countryside. When his mother visited him, she was his “Aunt Zosia.” Because of rumours that there was a Jewish child in the building, the Leginowiczkes turned to their friends, Jadwiga Gebauer and her mother, for help. These women were deeply religious and sought reassurance from a young priest as to the life-threatening course of action they were contemplating.

These ladies were extremely worried about the idea of caring for a Jewish child but as very devout Catholics they knew how important it was to help. First though, they needed to ask their priest whether they should take on this responsibility.

The Gebauers regularly attended services at the church in the famous Wawel Castle, and they asked the priest whether or not they should save a Jewish child. After some deliberation the priest said it was their duty as good Catholics to save an innocent child despite [the fact] that they may lose their lives should they be discovered. They agreed to take me in. I was very blonde and it was decided I would be their long lost cousin from the country come to stay after my parents had been killed in the war. ...

I soon became my carers’ loved and very pampered child and life, as I recalled it, was relatively good. ... The Gebauers were very good to me and for their own survival they had to integrate me into their lives. Like other Poles that sheltered Jewish children during the Holocaust they felt it safer to raise me Catholic and took me to church daily to attend services. I took part in the full Catholic religion, just as they did, becoming a very devout Catholic for a youngster. I enjoyed the routine of walking to and from church and I remember there were lots of other children going to church. I loved the church atmosphere and carol singing and I knew all the routines and details of church life. ... It all seemed quite natural and I was very accepting of the situation, not knowing anything different. ...

Poland [Kraków] was liberated in January 1945 and by the time it came for me to safely return to my mother I had spent about three years with Mamcia and Jadwiga. They were very attached to me, as I was to them, and were resistant for me to go.<sup>954</sup>

Rev. Aleksander Osiecki was instrumental in rescuing Oscar (Oskar) and Frieda (Fryda) Haber from Brzeźnica, a village near Dębica, where he was the pastor, together with a network of Poles consisting of three families. Rev. Osiecki was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile in 1990, as were some of the rescuers.

In 1940, Oscar and Frieda Haber were sent to a forced-labor camp in Pustków [Pustków], near Brzeźnica [Brzeźnica], the village where they were born in Dębica [Dębica] county, Rzeszów [Rzeszów] district. Oscar, a dentist, had treated many of the people in his village and he and Father Aleksander Osiecki, the local priest and one of his patients, had become fast friends. To help them, Osiecki issued Haber and his wife Christian birth and marriage certificates, which they used to obtain Aryan papers. In August 1942, when the

<sup>954</sup> Henry Briggs, *To Life L'Chaim: A Story of Courage, Commitment and Continuity* (U.S.A.: CreateSpace, 2017), 12–13. See also the testimony of Henry Briggs, SFV, Interview code 14025.

Germans were about to liquidate the camp, the Habers decided to flee. The priest directed them to the home of relatives of his [Michał and Stanisława Osiecki<sup>955</sup>] who lived in the nearby village of Jurkow [Jurków], and they remained there, working on the farm, until May 1943. Following information provided by informers, the Gestapo raided the village, but the Habers spotted them in time and managed to escape to the forest. At this point, Haber and his wife realized that they could no longer hide out in the village and in their distress returned to Franciszek Musiał [Musiał], a Polish laborer who had worked alongside them on the farm and with whom they had become friendly. Musiał empathized with the Jewish fugitives' suffering and [after residing in the home of Franciszek and Bronisława Musiał for a while<sup>956</sup>] took the Habers to the home of Jan and Anna Stalmach, his sister and brother-in-law, who lived with their son, Adam [a future priest<sup>957</sup>], in Tworkowa, a remote village in Brzesko county, in the Cracow [Kraków] district. Motivated by pure altruism, the Stalmach family received the Habers warmly and hid them in their home for a year and a half, providing them with all their needs until their liberation, without asking for or receiving anything in return.<sup>958</sup>

Rev. Florian Moryl, the pastor and dean of Pilzno, near Dębica, provided a false birth and baptismal certificate to Jozek (Józef) Wurzel, the son of an estate owner in nearby Pilźnionek. Wurzel was thus able to survive the German occupation by passing as a Catholic Pole. The priest was offended when Wurzel asked him how much he should pay for the document, and he wished him luck. Wurzel survived the war with the help of the Jabłonowski family from Przyborów and the Rudzki family from Skałbia.<sup>959</sup>

Józefa Rysińska, a native of Pilzno who served as a liaison officer for the Żegota underground organization, spirited Jews to safety. Just before the deportation of Jews from Pilzno, in July 1942, Helena Reich entrusted her nine-year-old daughter, Hania (Anna), to Rysińska. Hania was hidden in the attic of Rysińska's home and cared for by her mother, Zofia Skaza, until Rysińska was able to transport the child to Kraków, where she was given over to the child's aunt, Miriam Peleg-Mariańska. Peleg-Mariańska placed her niece with several Polish families, among them Jadwiga Kruczkowska, before she was taken in by the Albertine Sisters in Rząska the following year. She remained with the nuns until the Ger-

<sup>955</sup> Emilia Chmura, et al., eds., *Jurków: Historia i Współczesność* (Czchów: Urząd Miejski, 2015), 43–44.

<sup>956</sup> Chmura, *Jurków*, 43–44.

<sup>957</sup> The Stelmach Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-stelmach-family>.

<sup>958</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 567.

<sup>959</sup> Testimony of Jakob Jehoszua Herzig, YVA, file O.3/193 (Item 3546047); "Names of Jews of Pilzno Who Survived the Occupation Thanks to the Help of Poles," Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/node/134/107-1ists-of-names/84864-nazwiska-pilznienskich-zydow-ktorzy-przetrawili-lata-okupacji-dzieki-pomocy-polakow>.

man army retreated from the area in January 1945.<sup>960</sup> Another of Rysińska's missions was to take a three-year-old Jewish girl to Tarnów.

The Poles of Pilzno showed empathy for the plight of the Jews. Fr. Mateusz Holewa, the former prior of the Carmelite monastery, then an elderly man, offered to harbour Jews in the monastery church.

In the morning, the news spread in the town that something was going to happen judging by the number of carts gathered in the market place. When the mother came back from church, we went to the market place where our Jews from the ghetto were gathered. I can remember the place full of carts, some of the Jews already sitting in them. Many of the Pilzno inhabitants came out, I can remember Marcelli Drobiński, they came up and said goodbye. The Jews were crying and the Poles were wiping their tears. I went to my friends, Hela Abraham, Ilonka, Hania Baum, Chilowiczówna, Hajcia Nord and consoled them that that was not the end. Some fathers and mothers turned to me asking, Dziuniu, help her, she is young, just like you, and many other words and spells ...

Mateusz Holewa, the prior of the Carmelite Fathers monastery was walking down the pavement, I greeted him, and he said that we needed to save the poor people, that the church and the choir were open, and that, later on, we would hide them somewhere. And again, I came and spread the words of the hope for an instant escape. But nobody decided to do it. Some had second thoughts, but the reaction was unanimous. If anybody were going to die, they would die together.<sup>961</sup>

At the request of Józef Laska, the Polish police commander in Bobowa, near Gorlice, Rev. Stanisław Warchałowski, the local pastor, forged seven birth and baptismal certificates for Jews from Bobowa who were confined in the ghetto in Bochnia. As a result, several members of the family of Rabbi Ben Zion Halberstam survived the German occupation with these documents.<sup>962</sup>

Rev. Jan Patrzyk, the pastor of Medenice, near Drohobycz, rescued the teenage daughter of his acquaintance, Dr. Meir Eisenberg, by taking her to his native village of Lipinki, near Gorlice, where she survived the war. Rev. Patrzyk's brother, Władysław, escorted Judyta Eisenberg from Drohobycz to Lipinki, despite a Ger-

<sup>960</sup> Miriam Peleg-Mariańska and Mordecai Peleg, *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Kraków* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 54–56, 165–66; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 404–5, and vol. 5, 688.

<sup>961</sup> "Account of Józefa Rysińska, pseudonym "Ziuta," a messenger working for the Rada Pomocy Żydom (Committee for the Assistance of Jews) who, in 1979, was awarded the Righteous among the Nations medal," Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/pilzno/16,accounts-memories/15908,relacja-jozefy-rysinskiej-pseudonim-ziuta-laczniczki-pracujacej-dla-rady-pomocy-zydom-odznaczonej-medalem-sprawiedliwych-wsrod-narodow-swiata-w-1979-r-/>.

<sup>962</sup> Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 101, 110; *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2016), 79.



man inspection that could have easily cost both of them their lives. Rev. Patrzyk obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate for Judyta from Rev. Franciszek Zmarzły, the pastor of Raclawice, under the name of Anna Maziarz.

Judyta lived with the Patrzyk family openly, passing as a cousin. Rev. Patrzyk's sister, Barbara, cared for her solicitously. A local landowner, Wacław Byszewski, employed Judyta as a maid so as to prevent her from being sent to Germany as a labourer. Rev. Patrzyk made plans for Dr. Eisenberg to come to Lipinki, but he was executed in Drohobycz, where he had been working for the Germans as a specialist.<sup>963</sup> Rev. Patrzyk and his sister, Barbara, were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles.

Dr. Meir Eisenberg, a Jewish doctor, and Jan Patrzyk, a priest, had become friends before the war when they both served in Medenice, near Drohobycz, in Eastern Galicia. During the occupation, Patrzyk was transferred to the village of Lipinki in Gorlice country, Cracow [Kraków] district, and Eisenberg was deported with his family to the Drohobycz ghetto. In 1942, after losing his wife in an Aktion, Eisenberg decided to try to save at least his 15-year-old daughter, Judit. He turned to his friend Father Patrzyk and smuggled the girl into his home. Patrzyk took the Jewish girl under his wing and obtained Aryan papers for her [from Rev. Franciszek Zmarzły of Raclawice, under the name of Anna Maziarz]. She became a part of his family, and his sister, Barbara Patrzyk, cared for her as if she were her own sister. After the war, when Patrzyk discovered that his friend Meir Eisenberg, the girl's father, had perished, Judit remained under his care and continued her studies in the local high school. Only after a year, when an aunt of the girl's was found, was she handed over to her, all without asking for or receiving anything in return. Judit eventually immigrated to Israel ...<sup>964</sup>

Rev. Andrzej Osikowicz (sometimes given as Osikiewicz), the pastor of Drohobycz, in southeastern Poland, exhorted his parishioners to help Jews, provided many Jews with false documents, looked for shelters for them, and intervened on their behalf with the German authorities. Rev. Osikowicz destroyed the parish records to prevent the Germans from identifying false documents he had issued to Jews.

He was arrested by the Germans in January 1943. A month later, he was deported to the Majdanek concentration camp. He perished there on December 29, 1943, having been infected with typhus, which he contracted while attending to sick prisoners.<sup>965</sup> Rev. Osikowicz was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile, together with Stanisława Fedorcio, for the rescue of Dani Rozner.

<sup>963</sup> Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 110–11.

<sup>964</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 590.

<sup>965</sup> Aleksandra Namysło and Grzegorz Berendt, eds., *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2014),

On August 2, 1942, on the eve of the Aktion in the city of Boryslaw [Borysław], in Eastern Galicia, Berta [Bella] Brawer gave birth to her son, Dani [Rozner], and decided to do everything in her power to save his life. She heard that a Catholic priest, Father Osikiewicz [Andrzej Osikowicz], was hiding Jewish children, and Brawer appealed to him for help. After he explained that he had no place for infants, the priest suggested that she look for a Christian woman willing to hide the baby and take care of him. He also promised to provide the baby with a Christian birth certificate. In her distress, Brawer appealed to Stanisława [Stanisława] Fedorcio, with whom she had become acquainted before the war when she had done housework for Brawer's neighbors. At first, Fedorcio hesitated, fearing for her life, but after the priest found out that she had been approached he invited Fedorcio to be the baby's godmother at his baptism ceremony. After the ceremony, he convinced her that as the baby's Catholic godmother she was required to safeguard the baby's life, otherwise God would not forgive her. Convinced, Fedorcio took the baby home and for three years raised him as her own, taking care of all his needs. Brawer survived and after the war Fedorcio returned the baby to her safe and sound.<sup>966</sup>

Dr. Bella Brawer-Teppe writes: "I also have definite proof that some of her (i.e., Fedorcio's) neighbors knew about this but did not tell the police." She also mentions another "worthy Polish lady who entered the ghetto during a pogrom. She came to warn us and smuggle a Jewish child out of a ghetto surrounded by police. I don't know her surname and am therefore unable to ensure that she receives the deserved title of Righteous of the Nations from Yad Vashem."<sup>967</sup>

At least three other survivors—Blima Hamerman, Anna Wilf (née Thau) and Aleksander Szwarc—state that Rev. Osikowicz helped them and many other Jews, among them Lusja and Dora Schneider (whom the priest hid in his home), by providing them with Christian documents and shelter.<sup>968</sup> At the behest of the boy's guardians, Maria Leszczyńska and Aniela Christ, Rev. Osikowicz baptized Marcin Monis (b. 1924), the son of Dr. Juliusz Monis. He was provided with two birth baptismal certificates: one in his own name, the other as Marcin Leszczyński.<sup>969</sup>

409; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 254–55; Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 110–11; Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 111–12.

<sup>966</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 568.

<sup>967</sup> Dr. Bella Brawer-Teppe, *Shedding Light on Dark Times*, Internet: <http://landsmen1.org/menuengmemoirs/Brawer-02-Eng.html>. See also the testimony of Bela Brawer, YVA, file O.3/4415 (Item 3554974).

<sup>968</sup> Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 227; Testimony of Anna (Thau) Wilf, YVA, file O.3/2567 (Item 3556150); Testimony of Aleksander Szwarc in Sebastian Piątkowski, ed., *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 5: *Dystrykt Galicja Generalnego Gubernatorstwa i Wołyń* (Lublin and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2021), 56–58.

<sup>969</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 172, 288, 343; Martin Monis, *Nigdy się nie poddaj* (Warsaw: Agawa, 2012), 40–42. Monis had already decided to convert to Catholicism before the

Before placing his daughter Serafina (b. 1930), later Charlotte Hacker Elmowitz, with a Polish couple named Sobkowicz, her father, Max Strasser, a native of Borysław, obtained a birth and baptismal certificate for her under the name of Janina Kozłowska from a priest he knew. The Sobkowiczes treated Serafina very well, and she became friendly with their two children. While attending mass with them, Serafina was recognized as a Jew and had to flee. Her father gave the Sobkowiczes money to build an underground hiding place, and she remained with them, now totally hidden from view.

However, rumours spread that Jews were hidden in the neighbourhood, and during a German search, Serafina was found and arrested. She was released after her father, who was working for the Germans, pleaded for her. Serafina then moved from place to place, at times living in the woods. She would forage from sympathetic farmers, including the Sobkowicz family, who were always willing to give her food. After the arrival of the Soviet army, Serafina was placed in an orphanage. She escaped and went to Kraków to look for any surviving family members and found only some uncles. She eventually settled in the United States.<sup>970</sup>

Krystyna Libera (b. 1915) was a school teacher in Borysław. During the various German operations directed against the Jews in Borysław, she, her husband, her young daughter, and her sister were sheltered by Polish neighbours. After her husband's death, Krystyna turned to her husband's former Polish work colleague for help. She decided to convert, as a measure to save herself and her daughter. The Polish colleague took her to a priest who provided them with false birth and baptismal certificates. Krystyna and her daughter were then sent to the home of a friend of her husband's colleague who lived in a village near Sambor. She lived there openly, posing as a sister of the unnamed Polish stranger. His family treated them well, even though Krystyna had no money to pay for their upkeep.<sup>971</sup>

Izabela (Zula) Hass (b. 1929), a native of Białystok, took refuge with her aunt in Borysław. A Polish couple named Sophie and Emil Kowicki agreed to take her in, pretending she was their niece. Before sending her to live with their relatives in Sanok, Hass was secretly baptized and given another identity, as the

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outbreak of the war, and had taken religious instruction of his own accord. He survived the war as a Catholic with the help of a number of persons.

<sup>970</sup> Portrait of Serafina Strasser, Photograph no. 44847, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1130543>; Testimony of Charlotte Hacker Elmowitz, SFV, Interview code 3296.

<sup>971</sup> Testimony of Krystyna Libera, April 2, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 2285.

daughter of Poles exiled to Siberia. Although recognized by an acquaintance, she was not betrayed. She survived the war in Sanok, and she remained a Catholic.<sup>972</sup>

According to Jewish testimonies, Jews received a great deal of assistance from priests and nuns in Drohobycz.

In a letter from a Drohobyczian Mrs. Lola Getlinger received from Brazil in 1959 ... she refers to cases where the Polish Roman Catholic and also the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic clergy issued literally hundreds of false birth certificates to Jewish people, so as to enable them to be regarded as Aryans. Among others, Mrs. Getlinger's whole family was issued with such papers.

Extremely helpful in this task were Fathers Dr. Kazimierz Kotula and Banaszak [actually, Rev. Stanisław Banaś, who provided false baptismal certificates and shelter to Jews]. The monasteries of the Capuchin and Bazylian [Basilian] Brothers gave refuge to a large number of Jewish children.<sup>973</sup>

Professor Juliusz Kleiner, a renowned scholar of Polish literature, whose family had converted to Catholicism when he was 12 years old, survived the war as Jan Żalutyński with the help of a number of Poles, including clergy. For a time, he and his wife, Maria, resided at the Conventual Franciscan monastery in Sanok. Later, he was sheltered by Kazimierz Fudakowski, an interwar Polish senator, in Podzamek, near Krasnobród, and by Fudakowski's estate manager, Tadeusz Teleżyński, in Leśniczówka, near Wilkołaz and Kraśnik. Colonel Henryk Eile, a high-ranking public servant of Jewish origin, also hid there under a false name. Both he and Kleiner had pronounced Semitic features, and their presence was known to others. Afterwards, Kleiner relocated to the estate of the Żółtowski family in Milejów, near Łęczna, also in the Lublin region.<sup>974</sup>

A number of Polish Jesuits came to the aid of Jews and other endangered persons.<sup>975</sup> Fr. Tomasz Rostworowski's personal history is rich, dramatic and volatile.

<sup>972</sup> Taitz, *Holocaust Survivors*, vol. 1, 214–15.

<sup>973</sup> Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 48.

<sup>974</sup> Zdzisław Gogola, "Franciszkanie pomagali ludności żydowskiej," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 162–171, at p. 170; Testimony of Józef Rodak, January 27, 2002, *Chronicles of Terror*, Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Valor, Internet: <https://www.zapisyterroru.pl>; "Marian Małowist on History and Historians," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13: *Focusing on the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000), 338.

<sup>975</sup> The following Jesuits are mentioned by name: Stanisław Bajko, Czesław Białek (seminarian), Jan Charytański, Alojzy Chrobak, Edward Czermiński (seminarian), Stefan Dzierżek, Czesław Fabisiak, Antoni Grzybowski, Julian Haniszewski (seminarian), Waław Jaziewicz, Stanisław Karuga, Stanisław Kiałka (seminarian), Kazimierz Kucharski, Stanisław Leśniak

Father [Tomasz] Rostworowski entered the Jesuit Order at the age of nineteen and was ordained a priest on 23 June 1935. Engaged in the fight for Warsaw under the title of Ojciec Tomasz (Father Tomasz), he served as chaplain in the main command. With the setback of the revolt, he was originally believed to have perished until he was found very heroically helping the wounded in the underground. Tragically, his sorrow at the failure of the uprising was compounded by helplessly witnessing the slaughter by the Nazis of the wounded prisoners shortly after he had distributed Holy Communion to them. At the same time, his heroic activities included that of providing secret shelter for Jews hunted by the Gestapo.<sup>976</sup>

Using his aristocratic connections, Fr. Rostworowski secured a position for Bronisława Teichthal (later Bronia Schoenmann, b. 1919) as a nanny for the three young children of Kazimierz and Anna Bagrowski, on the estate of Janów, near Mińsk Mazowiecki, that belonged to the Cegliński family. Bronisława had moved from Kraków to Warsaw in 1940 with her mother, Mina, and sister, Irena, with false identities. They were introduced to Fr. Rostworowski by nuns who were willing to shelter Bronisława and her sister, but the young women preferred to live openly. Fr. Rostworowski instructed Bronisława on religious practices before she took up her position as a nanny, in which she remained for some two years. Just before the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Bronisława reunited with her sister and mother. All three of them survived the war with the help of Poles.<sup>977</sup>

Fr. Rostworowski directed four Jewish women to the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szymanów, according to Sister Amata (Zofia Mineyko), a nun at that convent.<sup>978</sup> Fr. Rostworowski found a shelter for Zofia Ołomucka, who was being blackmailed, and provided her with false

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(seminarian), Władysław Markucki, Józef Marsänger, Ambroży Miosga (seminarian), Stanisław Mirek, Jerzy Mirewicz, Marian Morawski, Bernard Mrozek (brother, stationed in Rome), Ildefons Nowakowski, Józef Obacz, Jan Przygoda, Jan Rostworowski, Tomasz Roztworowski, Stanisław Skudrzyk, Henryk Sokołowski, Adam Sztark, Bogusław Waczyński, Józef Warszawski, Stefan Weidel, Marian Wierzbowski (seminarian), Bogusław Wilczyński, and Jan Wojciechowski. See Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekwrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55; Kamil Hewelt, "Salvare gli indifesi a tutti i costi: Adam Sztark SJ, un Giusto tra la nazioni del mondo, e altri al servizio della salvaguarda degli ebrei," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 701–16; Stanisław Cieślak, "Polscy jezuici zaangażowani w pomoc Żydom w latach II wojny światowej," in Wenklar, *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici*, 125–98; Artur Franczak, "Sąsiedzkie relacje w godzinie próby: Pomoc jezuitów udzielana Żydom w czasie Zagłady na terenie Nowego Sącza," in Wenklar, *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici*, 199–216. Fr. Józef Warszawski mentions the assistance extended by Fr. Ildefons Nowakowski to Jews held in Catholic churches in Lublin before the ghetto was constructed. See Vincent A. Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich* (Lewiston/Queenston and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 151.

<sup>976</sup> Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich*, 124–25, also at p. 145, based on Felicjan Paluszkiwicz, *Przyszli służyć* (Rome: Papieski Instytut Studiów Kościelnych, 1985).

<sup>977</sup> Testimony of Bronia Schoenmann, SFV, Interview code 41033.

<sup>978</sup> Account of Sister Zofia Mineyko, February 15, 1984.

documents that helped her survive the war. After the war, Ołomucka converted to Catholicism and resided in Łódź. She was arrested by the security police in connection with the false charges brought against Fr. Rostworowski for alleged anti-state activity. Fr. Rostworowski was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment in 1950; he was released in 1956. Ołomucka later settled in Israel.<sup>979</sup>

The personal histories of Jesuit Fathers Józef Warszawski and Jerzy Mirewicz are equally compelling.

As for Father [Józef] Warszawski, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1924 and was ordained a priest on 18 June 1933. He was known as Ojciec Paweł (Father Paul) in the underground which he joined in October of 1941 where he served under the command of Colonel Radosław (Jan Mazurkiewicz) in a unit that had at least fifty Jews engaged in the uprising [Warsaw, 1944]. Despite the Gestapo's constant surveillance of the two Jesuit houses in Warsaw, Father Warszawski was able to warn some Jews about the Nazis and to help those rescued from the Warsaw Ghetto find lodging and even escape death. ... After the capitulation of Warsaw, he escaped for a short time from the Gestapo with a number of others in the Polish underground. When he was caught, he was imprisoned first in the Gestapo Center (Aleje Szucha) in Warsaw and, then, taken to various places until he ended up in Germany where he was freed as a prisoner of war during the liberation, on 29 April 1945, of Stalag XB at Sandbötsel by the Canadians. ...

Father [Jerzy] Mirewicz was ordained a priest on 24 June 1938 and was caught up in the turmoil of events that overwhelmed Poland during the war. The Nazis had imprisoned Jews in the temporary camp on Lipowa Street in Lublin shortly after the invasion of Poland before Majdanek, the major concentration camp in the Lublin area, was built. It was in these circumstances that Father Mirewicz was instrumental in rescuing seventeen Jews in 1940.

The Jews had served in the Polish Army and were separated as captives from other Polish soldiers with the defeat of Poland. Since they were expected to be transported to the death camp [actually a gravel pit at the time, which was transformed into a hard labour camp for Poles; afterwards, a death camp for Jews was built nearby—Ed.] at Treblinka, northeast of Warsaw, Father Mirewicz risked his life in rescuing them. This involved hiding the Jews and obtaining fabricated documents for them as well as transportation. Through various means, the Jesuit was instrumental in having the seventeen Jews transported to the relative safety of the Russian front [actually Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland, the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 still being in effect—Ed.]

Moreover, in 1942 Father Mirewicz had occasion to escort a Jewish fugitive by train from Biłgoraj in the Lublin area to Milanówek in the Warsaw area where the fugitive could join the members of his family who were being hidden by a Christian family. Even though the Jesuit had permission to travel, officials were constantly checking the papers of passengers. When the train reached Dęblin, within the district of Warsaw, a policeman came into the car and demanded to know if Mirewicz's companion was a Jew. Fortunately

<sup>979</sup> Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at pp. 151–52.



for the priest and the fugitive, the whole compartment came to their rescue by insisting that Mirewicz was escorting a “lunatic” to a hospital asylum.

During the war, Father Mirewicz had cooperated with the Council for Aid to the Jews in Poland. Known as “ŻEGOTA,” its code name, it had originated among Catholics ... Despite these dangers, never did Mirewicz find any Christians who refused to cooperate with him in helping the Jews.

Father Mirewicz referred to the obstacles that were encountered in trying to rescue the Jews. At times not only did their appearance and their speech betray them, but there were cases of Jews who had lost their nerve in those trying circumstances and even revealed to the Nazis the identity of those Poles who had given them shelter. The Jesuit found that, in the case of rescuing those seventeen Jews from Lipowa Street, the Jews whom he had helped did not wish to risk their own lives even though they were happy to be liberated. In 1944, when at least three of them returned to Lublin with the liberation forces of the Russians, Mirewicz was disappointed to learn that two of those whom he had rescued wanted nothing to do with him lest they be exiled to Siberia by the Lublin Government on the suspicion of having collaborated with a sympathizer of the exiled Polish Government.<sup>980</sup>

Fr. Jan Kanty Rostworowski, the brother of Fr. Tomasz Rostworowski, was the superior of the Jesuit house of studies and novitiate in Otwock. He sheltered four-year-old Róża Grinberg for several weeks in Otwock, at the behest of her guardian, Tadeusz Pniewski. The young girl survived the war.<sup>981</sup>

After escaping from the Janowska Street concentration camp in Lwów, Karol Fürgang (later Antoni Adamowicz) travelled to Kraków. There, his friend purchased a train ticket for him to go to Warsaw, where his wife was in hiding. In Warsaw, the artist Jacek Żuławski took Karol to an empty dwelling for a night, and then entrusted him to Janina Stefańska, the wife of Professor Witold Stefański, who was living outside of Warsaw. Mrs. Stefańska took Karol in as a boarder. Two elderly Jewish women were already residing there, as well as Mrs. Stefańska's Jewish maid. Mrs. Stefańska was in contact with Fr. Jan Rostworowski, to whom she gave the small sums she collected from her boarders in order to help the poor. Fr. Rostworowski provided Karol with a birth and baptismal certificate from a church in Lwów in the name of Antoni Adamowicz.<sup>982</sup>

<sup>980</sup> Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich*, 129–31.

<sup>981</sup> Felicjan Paluszkiewicz, “Chasidei Ummot ha-Olam,” *Przegląd Powszechny*, no. 9 (September 2001): 266–71, based on the testimony of Tadeusz Pniewski. According to Fr. Józef Warszawski, the Jesuits of Otwock, Fr. Jan Rostworowski and Fr. Jan Wojciechowski, concealed a prominent Jewish woman for at least two years and, for a short time, the Steiners, a Jewish family. See Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich*, 145.

<sup>982</sup> Testimony of Antoni Adamowicz, SFV, Interview code 20750. See also Stanisław Cieślak, “Polscy jezuici zaangażowani w pomoc Żydom w latach II wojny światowej,” in Wenklar, *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici*, 125–98.

After the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Fr. Jan Rostworowski was expelled to the transit camp in Pruszków. From there, he was sent to Auschwitz and then to the Leitmeritz (Litoměřice) concentration camp in Bohemia. He survived incarceration.

There are many accounts of priests imparting guidance and encouragement to the faithful who came to the assistance of Jews. The reason that Polish rescuers turned to priests is not because they thought they were doing something sinful by helping a Jew, but rather they sought assurance from them: Should they persevere in this perilous task despite their fear and despite the grave danger they were exposing themselves and their own families to?

In his memoir, Michael Zylberberg describes how his Polish benefactors in the Czerniaków district of Warsaw (St. Anthony's Parish) turned to their parish priest for guidance.

Our poor family were keen to have us without rent at a time when people were taking enormous sums to hide Jews. They had no previous knowledge of us but felt they had a sacred duty to shelter anyone in need. Of course, our existence had to be a closely-guarded secret. ... Both the grandmother and her daughter prayed frequently that God would help them and us. When we were worried that something might happen, they always assured us that they would stand by us and protect us. Their compassion was outstanding.

Easter was getting closer and a new problem arose for us. Mrs. Klima said she had to go to confession and that she had to tell the whole truth. That included telling about us. She was afraid that the priest might not approve and regard this procedure as dangerous; she was at a loss what to do, and asked me for advice. I begged her to let us know what day she was going to confession, so that we could stay out of the house all day. Thus she would not need to mention us and would have a clear conscience. We kept out of the house that day, as promised, but Mrs. Klima confessed everything to the priest! Happily for us and for her, however, the priest assured her that she was performing a noble service on helping those in danger. She returned home overjoyed.<sup>983</sup>

Stefan Chaskielewicz, who was in hiding in Warsaw, recalled how a priest at the Church of the Holy Saviour (Najświętszego Zbawiciela) counselled a Polish woman who had broken down out of fear of announced German reprisals. He urged her to continue sheltering the Jewish family in her home.<sup>984</sup> Chaskielewicz's memoir also records how Poles in general reacted to the plight of the Jews and what a beneficial role their Catholic religion played in the courageous deeds that so many of them performed in support of their tormented Jewish countrymen.

<sup>983</sup> Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary*, 87–88.

<sup>984</sup> Stefan Chaskielewicz, *Ukrywałem się w Warszawie: Styczeń 1943–styczeń 1945* (Kraków: Znak, 1988), 34.

Many Poles helped Jews in a variety of ways, sheltering them or supporting them financially, risking a great deal in doing so and exposing themselves to various dangers. The majority of Poles undoubtedly felt great sympathy for the Jews and categorically condemned the humiliation of their Jewish fellow-citizens. But there were others who emphasized with pride that they were not Jews and that German treatment of the Jews was a matter of indifference to them. Some felt deep compassion for the Jews, but were subconsciously glad of the benefits their destruction brought. There were also Poles—but surely few in number—who actively collaborated with the Germans and it is difficult now to ascertain whether they did this out of conviction, because of direct material benefits, or whether they were forced to do so by German blackmail.

Can the Polish population of Warsaw therefore be categorically described as anti-semitic or philosemitic? Can the population as a whole be characterized through the actions of individuals? No, the people behaved in the same way as anyone would probably have behaved in similar circumstances, including the Jewish population. There were good people, there were evil people, there were indifferent people. Just as there always are all over the world.

I must make one observation here. In hiding, I realized how deeply humanitarian the role of religion was, how much the teachings of the Catholic Church influenced the development of what was most beautiful and noble among believers. Just as in critical moments the majority of people turn to God for help—even if their faith is not particularly strong—so the very thought of God dictates to them the need to help their neighbour who is in danger.<sup>985</sup>

Chaskielewicz also records that, after escaping from the Warsaw ghetto with her daughter, Dr. Orlikowska, the mother found employment as a housekeeper with a priest near Warsaw. The priest suspected that she was of Jewish origin all along.<sup>986</sup>

**B**lanca Rosenberg, who passed as a Christian in Warsaw, resided near St. Alexander's Church on Three Crosses Square (Plac Trzech Krzyży). Her curiosity about the true attitude of priests toward Jews led her to conduct the following experiment:

I wondered what Jews could expect in the privacy of the confessional, and one Sunday at mass, I decided to find out. As seemingly good Catholics, we went regularly, and at the end of mass that morning I impulsively entered the confessional. "Father I'm breaking the law. I'm hiding a Jew." It was as close as I dared get to the truth. The voice that answered was young. "It is no sin, my child. In the sight of God it is a good deed."<sup>987</sup>

<sup>985</sup> This excerpt from Chaskielewicz's memoir was translated in Władysław T. Bartoszewski, "Four Jewish Memoirs from Occupied Poland," *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 5 (1990): 391.

<sup>986</sup> Chaskielewicz, *Ukrywałem się w Warszawie*, 137.

<sup>987</sup> Rosenberg, *To Tell at Last*, 133.

Halina Neuberg (later Zylberman), a native of Kraków, moved to Warsaw with her parents during the occupation. They passed as Christians there under an assumed identity. At one point, Halina confided in an unknown priest at the Church of the Holy Saviour (Najświętszego Zbawiciela), where she and her mother would meet her father, who lived on his own for safety's sake.

One afternoon after meeting my father in the church, I had an overwhelming urge to talk to the priest. I entered the Confessional Box and in a few short sentences I told the priest how I felt. It all came tumbling out, that I was Jewish, that I felt inferior to the whole human race, that I couldn't bear it any longer. I had a naïve trust in priests because they were often Polish patriots. That didn't necessarily mean that they were sympathetic to Jews, but this time, I was in safe hands.

He listened to me patiently and seemed moved by my confession. He said: "I sympathise with you my child. You must never consider yourself an inferior being. You are not. It's just the times and this dreadful war that are responsible for the injustices and cruelties that are inflicted on people. Please believe that this will pass eventually, and you must have the patience and stamina to survive it. Our God is everywhere. He watches over his children and helps them. It doesn't matter what their skin colour is, or their religion. As long as you are a good human being then he will be with you, my child."

His words were so important to me that I remember them, word for word, to this day. They lifted my fear and depression and as I left the church, I became aware of the sunshine and the first signs of autumn approaching.<sup>988</sup>

During the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the Germans captured Halina and her mother and forced them to work as cooks at a German army base. Eventually, with the help of a priest, they were released and survived at a Red Cross camp in Pionki until the Germans withdrew.<sup>989</sup>

Esther Kimchi, a native of the town of Żłoczew, near Wieluń, was a little girl when the war broke out. The family moved to Warsaw. One day they escaped from the ghetto they had been forced to move into. Her parents turned to Polish acquaintances who agreed to take the child in. She survived the war protected by this pious Polish Catholic family, encouraged in their resolve by their parish priest. After the war, young Esther was reunited with some uncles who had also survived, though, sadly, her parents did not.

My parents also faced this decision and decided to use their connections. I was left outside the ghetto in a safe hidden place. To tell the truth, a hiding place was also found for my mother, but she preferred to stay in the ghetto in order to save me, for she feared that if she was discovered she might reveal my hideaway. Thus, she sacrificed herself for me.

<sup>988</sup> Zylberman, *Swimming Under Water*, 38–39.

<sup>989</sup> Zylberman, *Swimming Under Water*, 88–120.

My parents left and I remained with Polish acquaintances from before the war. They consented to keep and protect me in their house in order to avoid [my] being captured by the German killers ...

At first, I was not completely isolated from my family since my father took risky chances to see me. He would dress up as a sanitation worker and reach my hiding place or he would smuggle something to the "Aryan side" and use the opportunity to visit me. These activities were very dangerous. Once, I even heard his injured call when he encountered German guards that fired at him while crossing the ghetto passage.

Towards the end of 1941, the visits stopped and I stopped seeing him. Slowly, I began to realize what was happening there in the ghetto and what was happening to my protective family. I saw on the horizon the flames that were rising from the burning ghetto. This was a picture that I will never forget.

A new chapter began in my life. I erased my youth, so to speak, from my memory and all it stood for. I became an inseparable part of the adopted family, although I had certain reservations in my heart. I understood that I am not like everybody in the family for I had something to hide.

My adopted parents had families and when somebody asked the husband who I was, he pointed to his wife and said she belonged to them and vice-versa. My stay in the flat was also irregular since I had a hiding place in a box of straw near the fireplace. I did not attend school but received lessons from the oldest daughter of the family who had just turned 18. All the children in the family were warned to keep my presence a secret and to reveal nothing about me to friends or relatives.

My luck was that the children were older and could be trusted. But I was still a small girl and had to be drilled about the fact that I was no longer Jewish and not to say something that might reveal my identity or lead to insinuations ...

In order to provide me with an absolute hidden identity, the family decided to convert me to Christianity. Thus, when the family went to mass on Sunday I was part of the family and prayed with them. In retrospect, it appears that my conversion to Christianity was of great importance and would play an important role later on in my life. The days of the terrible rule seemed to prolong themselves. The Germans were victorious on the battlefields and seemed invincible, and there was not even a spark of hope for change. This situation depressed everybody, especially my savior family for they were in constant mortal danger. The lack of change and the constant fear of hiding a Jewish child in their home began to wear thin in the house. The husband especially began to show signs of despair, but the wife, who was a devout Catholic, went to consult the priest about the situation. He gave her spiritual strength to hold fast in her belief of saving a soul. From then on, not only was I protected by the lady of the house but also by the Catholic Church. Needless to say, the husband and wife squabbles on the subject ended with the husband's submission to the wife's decision to continue to hide the girl. ...

The family treated me very well. They liked me and spoiled me by providing me with everything that I needed in spite of the hardships due to the war situation and the shortages. They sometimes even treated me better than their own children so that I did not feel underprivileged. Following the Polish uprising in Warsaw, the city lacked food and

to a certain extent water, but I hardly felt it as I was provided by the savior family with the necessary needs.

Since I did not attend school for fear of being exposed, the daughters of the family taught me how to read and write. They also escorted me to church and instructed me how to pray. Sometimes I joined the church choir. I was always escorted by one of the girls when I visited the priest at the church and he always stressed the importance of religion and adherence to it. As for myself, I was still rather young to understand the importance of religion. The home atmosphere however was one of warmth and reception. I received and gave gifts, participated in family celebrations, and felt as though I belonged to the family.

Meanwhile, the war was nearing its end. The pressure on the Germans grew by the day and they prepared for the final battle in the city. They ordered the entire civilian population to abandon the city. There were no cars, so we started to walk in the direction of Lodz [Łódź]. We walked for about two weeks until we reached some abandoned camp that became our temporary abode.<sup>990</sup>

Esther Flaiszman (later Avruch, b. 1925), a native of Sochaczew, near Warsaw, was confined in the Warsaw ghetto together with her family. She and her sister would take turns sneaking out of the ghetto to get food and bring it back to the ghetto. Just before the Great Deportation in the summer of 1942, when most of the Jews were seized and shipped to Treblinka, Esther was outside the ghetto on a food expedition. She decided not to return when she observed what was happening. She took shelter in a random tenement building where an unknown Polish family protected her.

She then returned to Sochaczew for a number of months, where she was sheltered and fed by several friendly farmers. Meanwhile, her brother, who remained in Warsaw, struck up a friendship with a Pole at a factory outside the ghetto where he worked. The Pole agreed to shelter Esther. She was given the identity documents of their deceased niece, Marysia Rakowska. Passing as a Christian child, she had to learn Catholic prayers and religious practices. While living with this kindly Polish family whose name she can't recall, Esther became friendly with a Polish woman who lived in the same tenement building, and confided in her.

The woman, who was very pious, would take Esther to church with her and wanted her to convert. The priest did not agree to do so, saying that Esther should make that decision freely after the war, if she chose. Esther sang in the church choir. When the priest visited the woman, he made a point of greeting Esther tenderly, thus enhancing her cover as a Christian child. When the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, Esther was separated from her adoptive

<sup>990</sup> Esther Kimchi, "Due to the Merits of the Righteous of the World," in *Sefer Zloczew* (Tel Aviv: Committee of Former Residents of Zloczew, 1971), 272–75.



family. She joined up with the Szlosberg family from Sochaczew, who were also hiding in Warsaw with the Piekarski family.<sup>991</sup>

**M**aria Fernandez, a poor, devout woman who lived in the Praga district of Warsaw, agreed to shelter Juliusz Nacht, an elderly Jewish stranger, in exchange for modest remuneration. She kept him even after the payments for his upkeep ceased. When she confided to her priest confessor that she was sheltering a Jew, he praised her for her good deed and enquired about the charge's health. He also provided him with a pair of shoes.<sup>992</sup>

**A**fter her parents disappeared from the Warsaw ghetto, Hannah Devorah Fuchs (later Doris Greenberg, b. 1930) lived under a false identity—as Krystyna Kalinowska—in the Żoliborz suburb and in Michalin and Miedzeszyn, on the outskirts of Warsaw: At one point, she turned to a priest for succor.

I also went to see a priest. And the priest apparently was very smart, because he told me that—that religion— God is for all. I had gone to see him more than once and he was encouraging all the time. ... I thought that he probably knows who I was. Sometimes he would—he'd give me some nuts and candy to take with me in my pocket. And he was very encouraging and very nice. Kept me going.<sup>993</sup>

And this priest I mentioned before in that little town, as I said, I used to go Sunday to church and then in a little town you stop and talk and he talked to me, and I was not very convincing. I didn't try to be convincing. I was talking to a priest. I was more open than, than with anybody on the street except I didn't give myself away willingly. I didn't state who I was, but he figured out ...

And this is the same priest who one day sent word that I ought to go to another town for a while. And I knew that he, he knows that somebody must have said something or suspect and if there was a suspicion they would come and check it out.<sup>994</sup>

**S**zymon Licht, a medical doctor, and his wife, Estera (later Stephen and Elizabeth Lighton), who lived in Lwów, entrusted their daughter, Terry (later Theresa Cahn-Tober, b. 1936), who was known as Irena, as well Szymon's nephew, to the care of Szymon's former nursemaid's daughter, Maria. The Lichts moved to Warsaw under false Christian identities with documents they had obtained from the Armenian-rite Catholic Church. (This is referenced later on.) They

<sup>991</sup> Testimony of Esther Avruch, SFV, Interview code 7526. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 603.

<sup>992</sup> Testimony of Szarlota (Nacht) Waks, YVA, file O.3/2842 (Item 3556778).

<sup>993</sup> Oral history interview with Doris Greenberg, USHMM, Accession number 1998.A.0228, RG-50.549.02.0028.

<sup>994</sup> Oral history interview with Doris Greenberg, USHMM, RG-50.549.030.0086. See also the testimony of Doris Greenberg, SFV, Interview code 2513.

rented a room from a countess, the wife of one of Szymon's former patients. The indiscretion of the nephew, who had been placed by Maria with another family, led to his apprehension by the Germans.

Fearing for her safety and that of her charge, Maria brought Terry to Warsaw. Maria resided at the countess's home but she placed Terry, passing as a Polish orphan, in an unidentified convent. Maria would visit the child from time to time and even brought her to see her parents. When it was time for Terry to make her First Holy Communion, Maria, an ardent Catholic, became alarmed about the inherent sacrilege of an unbaptized person receiving that sacrament. She confided in a priest who told that she could baptize the child herself, which is a permitted practice. Towards the end of the occupation, when the Germans were retreating, Maria retrieved Terry from the convent. After the war, the Lichts left Poland with their daughter.

Elizabeth Lighton stated that she was not sure if she would risk the lives of her own family to save the child of another person. Upon further reflection, she stated that she would probably not do so.<sup>995</sup> These candid statements—and there are many such admissions (mentioned in the final appendix)—are instructive and important to bear in mind. Those who sought shelter and those who declined to offer shelter shared the same fundamental motivation: self-preservation. One cannot celebrate the survival efforts of the former and, at the same time, deprecate the survival instincts of the latter, when the mandated punishment for helping a Jew was death.

Janet Applefield (born Gittel or Gustawa Singer) was just four when the war broke out. She was cared for by a number of Poles, including members of the clergy, in her hometown of Nowy Targ and in Kraków. Her father acquired from a priest the birth and baptismal certificate of a deceased Polish girl, enabling his daughter to assume the identity of Krystyna Antoszkiewicz.

After being left by her cousin at a church in Kraków, the young Jewish girl was found roaming the streets by Alicja Gołąb, a member of the Polish underground. She brought little Janet to a farm belonging to the Catholic Church that was administered by Jan Gołąb, her brother-in-law. The latter's brother, Rev. Julian Gołąb, the pastor of St. Nicholas' Parish in the Wesoła district of Kraków and a professor of canon law at the Jagiellonian University, was sheltering Alfred Überall, an architect from Lwów, in his rectory.

Überall, with marked Semitic features, disguised as a priest, was protected there by Rev. Gołąb for the duration of the war. He converted to Catholicism when the war was over and went by the name of Wodzinowski. Alicja Gołąb's

<sup>995</sup> Oral history interview with Elizabeth Lighton, USHMM, Accession no. 2007.187.9, RG-50.582.0009; Theresa Cah-Tober Papers, USHMM, Accession no. 2002.45.1.

husband, Ludwik, a judge, collaborated with his brother, the priest, in providing more than two hundred baptismal certificates to Jews.

Here Janet Singer Applefield recalls her “Lost Childhood.”

While still in the ghetto, my father knew my stay with the Polish woman had to be temporary, and he had to figure out what to do with me. He was able to buy [likely through a voluntary offering to the church] the birth certificate of a deceased Polish girl from a Catholic priest, and I became that girl. I had a new identity, a new name: Krystyna Antoszkiewicz. He also contacted our cousin, a young woman, who also had falsified Polish papers with the name Halina Walkowska [Wąłowska]. She agreed to take me, and we went to live in Myslenice [Myślenice], a town close to Kraków.

One day she told me she was going to meet her Polish boyfriend in a Kraków cafe. She instructed me to wait for her in the church across the street. Though I waited for hours, she did not return. When I walked out to the street, I saw that the street was cordoned off. The Gestapo had arrested everyone in the cafe. It was May 21, 1943. There I was, seven years old, walking the streets and crying, completely bewildered and terrified, not knowing what to do. I was alone in the world. (I have learned that this cafe was a famous meeting place for the Polish resistance movement, and that my cousin and his friend belonged to the Armja [Armia] Krajowa. ...)

An older woman came to me and asked what was the matter. She looked around, making sure no one was looking, placed me under her large cape, and quickly whisked me into the building housing the cafe. She was the caretaker of the building and took me upstairs to a woman named Alicja Golob [Gołąb]. Alicja asked me, “Who are you, where do you come from?” I repeated a well-rehearsed phrase [likely with a non-Varsovian accent]: “I come from Warsaw, my parents were killed in a bombing raid, my father was an officer in the Polish army.” That night Alicja’s son, Stashek [Staszek] took me to the farm, a four-kilometre walk. It was too dangerous to remain in that apartment, for the Gestapo always returned to the scene.

Alicja’s mother was an active member of the Polish resistance. She housed ammunition and shortwave radios and maintained an in-house hospital for wounded men and women of the resistance. ... She was eventually arrested as a political prisoner. Because of the torture she endured, she died only a few days after her release from prison.

The farm was owned by the Catholic Church and administered by Jan Golob, Alicja’s brother-in-law. Another brother, Julius Golob [actually Julian Gołąb, the pastor of St. Nicholas’ Parish in Kraków], a priest, hid a Jewish engineer in his rectory for the duration of the war. The man survived and, after the war, converted to Catholicism. Alicja’s husband, Ludvig [Ludwik], was a judge. He and Julius saved two hundred Jews by giving them baptismal papers (I saw the records on a recent visit to Poland). They treated me like one of the family and asked me no more questions, since it was safer not to know my true identity. I could not go to school because people might get suspicious and ask too many questions. How could my presence be explained? I did not have my identification papers. ...

I remained with the Polish family until the end of the war, when my cousin's father came to take me. I was sad to leave, and the family wanted to keep me but felt that ethically and morally it was the wrong thing to do.<sup>996</sup>

In fact, the girl's relatives forbade her from having any further contact with her rescuers, based on their conviction that Poles are anti-Semites and could not be trusted. Later, she was reunited with her father, who survived several concentration camps.

In addition to providing many Jews with falsified documents and protecting the aforementioned architect, Rev. Gołąb also sheltered a Jewish surgeon in his rectory. Dr. Józef B. converted to Catholicism after the war and became a professor at the Medical Academy in Kraków.<sup>997</sup>

Rev. Jan Wójcik, the administrator of the parish in Grywałd, near Nowy Targ, issued false birth and baptismal certificates to Izaak Wild and his wife, Helena, thus greatly assisting them in their effort to pass as Christians. He also provided material assistance to Hersh Gelb, who testified that, after his escape from an execution site in September 1942, he often came from his forest hideout to the parish in Grywałd, where Rev. Wójcik provided him with food, clothes and money.<sup>998</sup>

It was an open secret that Ewa Rajec, the two-year-old child being cared for by Mieczysława Foryniak in the village of Dursztyn, near Nowy Targ, was the daughter of the local Jewish doctor. To assist her cover, the child was baptized by Fr. Marian Peczeko (Marián Pečko), a Reformed Franciscan from Slovakia stationed there during the war. Her parents were in hiding nearby.<sup>999</sup>

Under the direction of the pastor, Rev. Stanisław Czartoryski, who organized a soup kitchen for the needy in Maków Podhalański, south of Wadowice, parishioners provided food to Jews interned in the Marysin prison.<sup>1000</sup>

<sup>996</sup> Janet Singer Applefield, "Lost Childhood," in John J. Michalczyk, ed., *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees: Historical and Ethical Issues* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997), 204–5.

<sup>997</sup> Jan Żaryn, "The Catholic Church Hierarchy vis-à-vis Polish-Jewish Relations Between 1945 and 1947," in Kamiński and Żaryn, *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom*, 86; Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 66, 251–53.

<sup>998</sup> Filip Musiał, "Milsza mi śmierć niż współpraca," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 7 (July 2009): 45–48, at p. 46.

<sup>999</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 171–78; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 597.

<sup>1000</sup> Engelking and Grabowski, *Dalej jest noc*, vol. 2, 281, 335.

After his parents were killed, a young Jewish boy from Lwów known as Jurek (Jerzy) Górski was brought to Tarnów by his aunt, who entrusted him to a man. The man took the boy to a church and left him there. A priest found the boy and took him to a Catholic nursery. After the war, the boy was taken to a Jewish children's home in Kraków. The boy recalled his happy stay in the nursery: he played with other children and was well fed.<sup>1001</sup>

Upon being apprehended by the Germans, a Jewish woman named Jersawitz was found to have in her possession a birth and baptismal certificate issued by Rev. Władysław Świder, a vicar at the parish in Mościce on the outskirts of Tarnów. The woman was executed and Rev. Świder was arrested on March 5, 1943. He was transferred from the prison in Tarnów to Auschwitz concentration camp on May 26, 1943, and then to Dachau concentration camp on September 4, 1943. Fortunately, he survived and saw the liberation of Dachau on April 29, 1945.<sup>1002</sup>

After separating from her parents and brother (who did not survive the war), Elżbieta Zwick (b. 1931) and her aunt hid with a farmer named Orłowski. Later, she alone sought refuge with a school teacher in Izdebki, near Brzozów. The teacher directed Elżbieta to the parish rectory in Brzozowa, southeast of Tarnów, where she was told to introduce herself as the teacher's niece. Upon arrival, Elżbieta disclosed the entire story. Rev. Józef Boduch was the pastor. His sister, Mrs. Krzywonos, who lived with him and had three children of her own, took Elżbieta under her wing, treating her as a member of the family. Elżbieta lived at the rectory openly and went to school.

The Germans kept a close eye on the rectory, as there were partisans in the area. Rev. Boduch's brother, who lived in Brzozów, also directed Elżbieta's aunt to Brzozowa, where she stayed at the rectory for several weeks. After obtaining false documents, she went to live with the priest's mother. Some time later, the aunt registered for work in Germany, where she survived by posing as a Christian Pole. She would send letters to the rectory to enhance her cover. An uncle who resided in France wanted Elżbieta to join him there after the war, but she was too attached to her new family to leave Poland.<sup>1003</sup> According to Rev. Boduch's own testimony, he baptized and helped save two Jewish families.<sup>1004</sup>

<sup>1001</sup> Testimony of Jurek Górski, JHI, record group 301, no. 5326.

<sup>1002</sup> Stanisław Sojka, "Śp. Ks. Rektor Władysław Świder (1907–1995)," *Currenda: Pismo Urzędowe Diecezji Tarnowskiej*, no. 4 (1995).

<sup>1003</sup> Testimony of Elżbieta Zwick, JHI, record group 301, no. 2746.

<sup>1004</sup> Anna Kuczera, *Ks. Józef Boduch w świetle wspomnień i źródeł* (Tuchów: Mała Poligrafia Redemptorystów, 2011), 71–74.

A Jewish boy by the name of Izaak Wasserlauf was abandoned by his mother as they were led from the ghetto in Nowy Sącz to be shot. He was found half-dead in the forest by villagers who brought him to the parish rectory in Przydonica. Rev. Konstanty Cabaj nursed the boy back to health and sheltered him for about half a year. The boy was later given over to the chancery in Tarnów and housed in the diocesan country estate outside Tarnów, where he survived the war.<sup>1005</sup>

Fr. Stanisław Karuga, a Jesuit with a Jewish appearance, donned a Jewish armband and brought food to Jewish converts in the ghetto in Nowy Sącz. In August 1942, three Jesuit seminarians, Czesław Białek, Edward Czermiński, and Marian Wierzbowski, conspired with Fr. Karuga to smuggle two Jewish women converts (the wives of the dentist Mieczysław Semenowicz and engineer Junak) out of the ghetto and find hiding places for them. After the women escaped, the plan was exposed to the Gestapo by an informer. Mrs. Semenowicz killed herself by taking poison. Fr. Karuga had to hide for the duration of the war, from which he emerged deranged and had to be confined in an asylum. Czermiński was arrested and tortured but did not reveal anything. (The Home Army managed to secure his release with the assistance of Fr. Władysław Markucki.) Białek fled to Warsaw where he continued to help Jews, among them a woman named Irena, who was hidden by his sister, Krystyna. Irena survived the war.<sup>1006</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Nowy Sącz with her Jewish mother in 1942, Jadwiga Fiszbain-Tokarz (b. 1935), whose Polish father had gone missing as a soldier in the September 1939 campaign, found shelter with a number of Poles. Among their benefactors were the Sisters Servants of the Virgin Mother of God Immaculately Conceived (of Dębica) in Nowy Sącz and Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration in Stary Sącz.<sup>1007</sup>

We hid at many people's homes. First, we were given shelter by Mr. and Mrs. Antoni Ptaszowski at 20 Kunegunda Street [ul. Św. Kunegundy] (my uncle, Stan Fiszbain, had already been staying with them for some time). Then we moved to the home of the couple Joseph [Józef] and Janina Mazurek, at 25 Sikorski Street [then ulica Poprzeczna, now

<sup>1005</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 86–87; Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 349.

<sup>1006</sup> Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at pp. 148–49; Artur Franczak, "Sąsiedzkie relacje w godzinie próby: Pomoc jezuitów udzielana Żydom w czasie Zagłady na terenie Nowego Sącza," in Wenklar, *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici*, 199–216.

<sup>1007</sup> According to another source, an unidentified Jewish woman who wore a nun's habit was sheltered in the Poor Clares' convent in Stary Sącz. See Józef Bieniek, "Fakty z jednego powiatu," *Wieści*, no. 18 (May 5, 1968).



Sikorskiego] (in the Piekło area). Finally, a helping hand was extended to us by Professor Giesing [Gesing] of 29 Kollataj Street, at whose home we also spent a little time.

We had to frequently change where we were staying. I did not have “good looks”; Semitic features and black curly hair attracted attention. It made it more difficult to maintain safety. I was being hidden in a variety of the least expected places: in a beehive, in a bread-baking oven, in a made-up bed covered with a bedspread, in cellars, in small gardens, and in haystacks. I spent six weeks underground in a hideout, especially dug out for me in a little garden, on top of which was placed a beehive. For a certain time, Helena Mossoczy, a nun in a convent near Święty Duch Street [ul. Świętego Ducha], was hiding me and teaching me. Next, Mama placed me in Stary Sącz in a flour mill, next to the Klaryski Convent, at the Michalaks. During roundups, the nuns would hide me, along with other children, in a crypt in the chapel.

Toward the end of the war, Mama and I were both hiding (we already had false papers) in Chabówka [near Rabka] at the home of the Palarczyk family. It was there, in fact, that liberation found us.<sup>1008</sup>

The Sacré-Coeur Sisters of Lwów directed Lidia Parecka (b. 1922), a former student of theirs born into a family who had converted to Catholicism, to the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Nowy Sącz. After a brief stay at that convent, Lidia was taken in by Jadwiga and Stanisław Skarżyński, who had a small manor in Piaski, near Czchów, in the vicinity of Brzesko. She remained with them from May 1942 until January 1945. Because of her marked Semitic features, she was passed off as a cousin of Armenian origin. Despite the fact that she lived there openly and her Jewish origin was widely suspected, no one gave her away.<sup>1009</sup>

Dr. Helena Regina Stuchły (b. 1897) was born into a Jewish family by the name of Miszel (Mischel) in Lwów. She married Dr. Stanisław Stuchły (Stuchly), a Catholic Pole, in 1924. They had two sons, Stanisław Szczęsny and Janusz. The family relocated to Nowy Sącz before the war. For a short period, Helena worked as a doctor at a school run by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was located in the so-called Biały Klasztor (White Convent).

Owing to her Semitic appearance, she took shelter in that convent in 1941. She was assisted as well by Fr. Antoni Kuśmierz, a Jesuit. Later, she resided with her sister-in-law in Warsaw until the uprising broke out there in August 1944.

<sup>1008</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 46–47.

<sup>1009</sup> Testimony of Krystyna Skarżyńska Zabłocka and Lidia Bożena Parecka-Jaśkiewicz in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 371–72.

After the uprising, she was sheltered by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, near Wadowice.<sup>1010</sup>

Zofia Łuszczkiewicz—Sister Izabela (Izabella) of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul—was instrumental in rescuing a number of Jews in Zebrzydowice, near Cieszyn, and Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: Franciszek and Wiktoria Haas, for whom she found hiding places and provided false documents and medical care; Bronisława Frischer and her grandson Kazimierz, who were sheltered in a convent in Zebrzydowice; Adela Aftergut; and Sabina Janina Trześniower. She was assisted by other nuns, among them Sister Genowefa Faracik.

Sister Izabela was arrested in 1948 for her contacts with the anti-Communist underground, tortured, and sentenced to death. The court refused to hear three Jews, whose lives she had saved during the war, who wanted to testify on her behalf. Her sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. She was released from prison in 1956, in very poor health. Even under torture, Sister Izabela refused to sign a false confession accusing Pope Pius XII of instructing Archbishop Adam Sapieha to create a spy ring for Nazi Germany.<sup>1011</sup> The baseless and ugly myth that Pope Pius XII was Hitler's Pope—later embraced by leftist authors in the West—had already been hatched by the Soviets in the 1940s.

A number of Poles came to the assistance of Maria Kowalska, who was Jewish but had married a Catholic Pole, and her daughter, Stanisława (b. 1924). Under the German occupation, both mother and daughter were regarded as Jews. One of those who assisted them was Rev. Piotr Poręba, the vicar of Podegrodzie, near Nowy Sącz.

<sup>1010</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 349; Wiesława Chwedoruk and Magdalena Filipek, "Działalność Zgromadzenia Sióstr Niepokalanego Poczęcia NMP w okresie konspiracji 1939–1945," in Marszałec and Minczykowska, *I Kongres Historyków Konspiracji Niepodległościowej*, 219–48, at p. 241. Various references are provided in the Wikipedia entry for Helena Stuchłowa, Internet: [http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena\\_Stuch%C5%82owa](http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena_Stuch%C5%82owa).

<sup>1011</sup> "Pomoc Żydom w czasie wojny: Zgromadzenie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego à Paulo—szarytki," undated typescript (with a statement by Franciszka and Wiktor Haas); Jacek Żurek, "Siostra Izabela—z dziejów najnowszych szarytek małopolskich: Zofia Maria Łuszczkiewicz 1898–1957," in Piotr Chmielowiec et al., *Kościół w godzinie próby 1945–1989: Nieznane dokumenty i świadectwa* (Kraków: Rafael, 2003), 5–23, at pp. 10, 19–21. Her interrogation in Warsaw was overseen by Józef Różański (Goldberg), the head of the Investigation Department of the Ministry of Public Security. The Regional Military Court in Kraków that issued three death sentences against her in March 1950 was presided over by Edward Holler. The Supreme Military Court that commuted her death sentences to life imprisonment in May 1950 was presided over by Oskar Karliner, who later settled in Israel.

During the Nazi occupation Józefa Włodarz (née Kwarcinińska), in her forties, lived in the small village of Wojnarowa near Korzenna (Nowy Sącz County, Kraków District) with her two youngest children, Julian and Wiktoria, and her terminally ill husband who had lost an eye in World War I. The family was very poor, living in an isolated small wooden house near the forest in the mountains. She agreed to shelter Józef Kowalski and his daughter, Stanisława, whose mother Maria (Miriam, née Gross) was Jewish. Under the German occupation, Stanisława was in mortal danger as a proscribed Jew. ... [After June 1941] Maria with her daughter were briefly reunited with Józef in the area of Nowy Sącz [where he had grown up]. With the assistance of the priest, Piotr Poręba, they lived at first in the village of Podgrodzie [Podegrodzie], and later Maria was placed by Father Poręba with his own sister Helena and parents [Marcin and Katarzyna Poręba] in the village of Mystków, while Stanisława was placed with her father's sister Helena Kasprzyk in the village of Niecew near Korzenna (Nowy Sącz County). Missing her daughter, Maria visited Stanisława in September 1942, but they were both arrested after most probably having been betrayed by a neighbor. Maria and Stanisława were taken first to the police station in Korzenna and then to Gestapo headquarters in Nowy Sącz. While her mother was being taken away, Stanisława managed to escape to Father Poręba who then took her to Mystków. Józef Kowalski had business dealings with Józef Sus, who was a tailor in Wojnarowa near Nowy Sącz. They were also reportedly members of the Polish underground. Józef Sus' apprentice was Julian Włodarz, and he later visited Julian's mother Józefa Włodarz and asked her to accept Józef Kowalski and his daughter into her house. The Włodarz family agreed. Her husband unfortunately died a few days after that decision. Józefa's children were unaware of the danger involved during the war. Despite the relative safety of the location, Stanisława left the house only in the evenings. During the day, she helped around the house or played with the children. Father Poręba visited them and taught Stanisława the material of her grade in high school. In 1946, following the liberation, Stanisława left with her father, Józefa Włodarz, and her son for Western Poland and settled in the town of Gorce near Wałbrzych. In 1947, Józefa's other children joined them: Julian, Edward, and Wiktoria. Wiktoria Włodarz married Józef Kowalski with whom she had a son, Leszek.<sup>1012</sup>

Józefa Anna Bogusz (later Korzennik) enlisted the support of a priest—her brother (or uncle, according to another version)—to help her rescue her Jewish boyfriend, Józef Korzennik, and eight of his family members.

Ruth Lichtig was born in Kutno, Poland, in 1937. She lived with her parents (her mother, Bertha, was a teacher). In 1939 the Lichtigs moved to Mielec, where they had more relatives, among them Józef Korzennik, Bertha's brother. In 1941 Ruth's brother, Józef, was born in Mielec.

The situation was becoming more dangerous, and soon Józef Korzennik found it necessary to seek help from his Polish Catholic girlfriend, Ziuta (her full name was Józefa Anna Bogusz), who was 20 years old at the time. She set about obtaining Polish baptismal certificates for the entire family (Ruth, her brother and parents, her grandmother Anna Korzennik, uncle Józef, aunt Helen Korzennik, and her aunt Ester, uncle Szaja Altman, and their son Emmanuel). This was done with the aid of Ziuta's brother, a Catholic priest.

<sup>1012</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 631–32.

Unfortunately, when the papers were not yet ready, the Nazis occupied Mielec, took Ruth's father away to Auschwitz, and placed the rest of the family in a transit location to be taken to a death camp. Ziuta came to that location with the newly minted false papers and smuggled everyone out. For Ruth this involved a long bicycle ride with Ziuta, who sang to the child most of the way, trying to keep her awake.

The family rented a room in a remote village and began to live as Catholics. Luckily, Polish was already the language spoken in their home, but it was difficult to teach the elderly grandmother and the little girl how to behave in church so as not give away their secret. However, with Ziuta's help all dangers were avoided, and the family survived in the village between 1941 and 1945.<sup>1013</sup>

According to Szaje (Szaja) Altman, one of those rescued by Józefa Bogusz, it was their rescuer's uncle—a priest in Tarnów—who provided her with a number of birth and baptismal certificates.<sup>1014</sup> There was a vicar in Mielec, Rev. Józef Bogusz, with the same surname as the rescuer. Was he a relative? Perhaps it was he who turned to another priest in Tarnów in order to secure certificates from a large city, rather than from a small town.

Altman gives three examples of Polish policemen who came to his assistance, and to the assistance of his family members. When Altman was caught by the Germans illegally teaching Jewish children in the ghetto in Mielec, a Polish policeman intervened to sweep the matter under the rug. When Altman's mother-in-law and her daughters were arrested by the German police near Połaniec and handed over to the Polish police for investigation, the local police commander asked them to find witnesses to attest to their being Catholics. They turned to a Polish friend, who was a policeman in Dębica, and he agreed to vouch for them and thus secured their release.<sup>1015</sup> Afterwards, Altman worked in various German enterprises in Lwów, passing as a Christian Pole. At his last place of employment, there were two other Polish Jews passing as Poles, a man and a woman. The Jewish woman's behaviour often betrayed her identity, but her Polish co-workers disregarded this. All three of these Jews survived.<sup>1016</sup>

Several priests in the vicinity of Dąbrowa Tarnowska, near Tarnów, rendered assistance to Jews, among them Rev. Franciszek Okoński, the pastor of Luszwice, and Rev. Wojciech Dybiec, the pastor of Bolesław.

<sup>1013</sup> Korzennik Family, RD.

<sup>1014</sup> Andrzej Krempa, *Zagłada Żydów mieleckich*, 2nd rev. ed. (Mielec: Muzeum Regionalne w Mielcu, 2013), 184, based on the testimony of Szaje Altman, October 17, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 2973.

<sup>1015</sup> Krempa, *Zagłada Żydów mieleckich*, 177, 184.

<sup>1016</sup> Krempa, *Zagłada Żydów mieleckich*, 194.

A great deal was done for the Jews by the priests of various parishes, who in addition to finding shelters issued the necessary Aryan documents. ... Rev. Franciszek Okoński, (a chaplain of the Home Army whose *nom de guerre* was “Nawa”), the pastor of Luszowice, assisted both Poles and Jews. He sheltered, among others, a Jewish lawyer from Kraków. Word of this reached Tomasz Madura, a confidant of the Germans who was later executed by the underground. The German police raid on the rectory did not incriminate anyone as the Jew who was hiding there jumped out of the window and simply walked away while the “Blue” police stood around. ... The enraged Germans found two servants and, without verifying their identities, shot them. The two priests who were arrested at the time were released after a few days because nothing could be proved against them.

The pastor of the parish in Bolesław, Rev. Wojciech Dybiec ... saved the lives of two Jewish brothers from Bolesław—Dolek and Roman Kegl. He issued birth certificates in the names they had chosen—the surname assumed by the former was Bernat, and the latter Ciepiela. A third brother, Moniek, moved to Dubno [in Volhynia] where he was sheltered by a Polish school teacher. All three of them survived the war. ... Dolek Bernat, who lives in Brooklyn, in the United States, wrote in a letter dated December 19, 1965: “... one evening my brother and I went the rectory and asked to speak to Rev. Dybiec. He invited us in asking what we wanted. We requested that he issue us Aryan documents ... His reply was, ‘How can I issue such documents, but on the other hand how can I not?’ He looked through the register of births and asked us to choose names that more or less corresponded to our ages ... After providing us with the necessary documents he asked us not to disclose where we got them from should the Germans capture us and discover that the documents were not ours ... We thanked the priest with tears in our eyes and left. ... And indeed the documents did assist us, and to this day we bear the surnames given to us by Rev. Dybiec.”<sup>1017</sup>

Rev. Okoński engaged Lea Anmuth, then passing as Helena Podgórska, as a housekeeper. She was introduced to him by his friend Czesław Wojewoda, a school inspector, who, together with his wife, Maria, had sheltered Lea in the village of Lubcza, near Jasło, at the home of Czesław’s parents. As the frontline approached and more Germans were encountered daily, Lea’s continued presence there became too dangerous for everyone involved, so she was brought to Luszowice.<sup>1018</sup>

Before the war, Czesław and Maria Wojewoda lived in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. Maria was a teacher and Czesław was a school inspector. In 1940, Czesław was forced to run away from the Gestapo. He moved to his parents’ village of Lubcza, in the county of Jasło, with his eight-year-old son. Maria joined them soon afterward, leaving behind their apartment.

In 1942, Lea Anmuth, who introduced herself as Helena Podgórska, an evacuee from Stanisławów, turned to them with a request for help and for a place to stay. “Since she aroused trust, she stayed with us, and after some time she grew so much accustomed

<sup>1017</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 344–45.

<sup>1018</sup> Sebastian Piątkowski, ed., *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Lublin and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2020), account 86.

to us and felt so much at home that we treated her like a member of the family,” wrote Maria in her testimony. She added that “when Helena got to know us better and got our full trust, she confided, in great secrecy, to me and my husband (even our parents-in-law did not know) that she was Jewish. This did not change our attitude, we only surrounded her with even greater care.”

As the frontline was getting closer to Jasło and as more German soldiers were being encountered daily, it became dangerous for Helena and all people involved to stay together in Lubcza for any longer. Knowing that, Czesław talked to a friend of his, priest Franciszek Okoński, who lived in Luszowice (near Tarnów). Franciszek agreed to provide Helena (Lea) with a shelter. She started working as a maid in the parish house and awaited liberation there.

Lea Anmuth emphasized in her testimony that the Wojewodas gave her material as well as spiritual help during the war and afterwards. “They implanted in me a belief in the existence of noble, fair-minded people.”<sup>1019</sup>

Rozalia Polanecka, a Jewish woman from the village of Ujście Jezuickie, near Gręboszów, was hiding in the village of Wola Przemykowska when she was denounced. While in police custody in Wietrzychowice, she managed to smuggle a short note from her cell addressed to the pastor of Gręboszów, Rev. Zygmunt Jakus. The letter, dated September 18, 1942, survived the war. It reads:

This is written by Rozalia Polanecka née Berl from Ujście Jezuickie, parish Gremboszów [sic], who has been sentenced to death. I leave this world grateful to people who at any time performed good deeds. I thank you (*Bóg zapłać*), Reverend Pastor, for all the good you have done. Perhaps, by chance, one of the Polaneckis will survive? Please, let them have this last whisper of mine. ...<sup>1020</sup>

Rev. Jan Curyłło, the pastor of Radomyśl Wielki, near Tarnów, was on friendly terms with the local Jewish community. Jack (Yankel) Honig recalled that Rev. Curyłło supplied a large quantity of flour for Passover in 1940, and permitted his rectory to be used to bake matzah. The priest’s sister, who was his housekeeper, and his brother assisted in this endeavour.<sup>1021</sup> Rev. Curyłło provided birth and baptismal certificates for Jews,<sup>1022</sup> and sheltered a local Jewish family by the name of Schaji (Szmaji). Szymon Leibowicz provides the following testimony:

I was eleven-and-a-half years old when the war broke out. I remember Rev. Jan Curyłło very well, as he was a friend of my father’s. ... My father used to make contributions to help expand the church. In return, the priest promoted my father’s company among the

<sup>1019</sup> Wojewoda Family, RD.

<sup>1020</sup> Letter of Rozalia Polanecka, JHI, record group 301, no. 1365.

<sup>1021</sup> Testimony of Jack Honig, SFV, Interview code 18869.

<sup>1022</sup> Testimony of Antoni Balaryn, SFV, Interview code 48515.



inhabitants of the town. Rev. Curyłło sheltered a Jewish family named Szmaji, who owned a confectionary in the town square.<sup>1023</sup>

Miriam Winter (b. 1933) was snuck out of the Ożarów ghetto and taken in by a family friend named Cesia. Cesia, in turn, passed Miriam on to Maria (Maryla) Dudek (later Oracz), who at first was not aware that the child was Jewish. Dudek took Miriam to Lwów, where they resided for a time. Afterwards, Miriam moved to the town of Czudec and then to the village of Wola Rzędzińska, near Tarnów, where she lived with a Catholic family, passing as Marysia Kowalska. She attended a local school run by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś).

Miriam wanted to be baptized and receive Communion, but the pastor, Rev. Jan Węgrzyn, suspected her true background and would not comply. Nonetheless, he allowed her to make her First Holy Communion with the other children in order to maintain the ruse that she was a Catholic child. Miriam later stayed with other Polish families, among them Dudek's sister, Zofia Rumak, in Hucisko, until the end of the war. After immigrating to the United States in 1969 as Maria Orłowska,<sup>1024</sup> she raised her two sons, fathered by a Christian Pole, as Jews.

Although the priest promised to baptize me and I underwent the required preparation, my first communion didn't happen because the priest had religious scruples.

In November of 1941 Maryla brought me to stay with Masłowa in Wola Rzedzinska [Rzędzińska]. Masłowa, a widow, lived with her three children in a house in the middle of the village. ...

I went to the school run by the Catholic nuns. They were called Siostry Służebniczki [służebniczki] "Sisters of Service." ... One of them, Klara, had shining dark eyes and was often kind to me. ... Sister Klara had given me this book.

"This is a catechism; study it every day," she said. ...

The Christian children from the village didn't have to hide. Despite the war they still lived with their families. I wanted to become Christian and also feel safe. I didn't want to be Jewish anymore. I memorized the prayers from the catechism. ...

In the classroom I was praised for my quick memory. Sister Klara, the nun who was good to me, sometimes talked with me after class. ...

"The priest will baptize you soon. Then you'll go to the first communion with the rest of the children." ...

<sup>1023</sup> Jan Ziobroń, *Dzieje Gminy Żydowskiej w Radomyślu Wielkim* (Radomyśl Wielki: n.p., 2009), 177.

<sup>1024</sup> Testimony of Maria Orłowski, SFV, Interview code 42472; Maria O. [Orłowski] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2584), FVA. Maria Oracz was recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 563–64.

Two weeks before the scheduled first communion, the priest sent for me. I went to the church. ...

“Praised be Jesus Christ,” I said, curtsying in front of the priest when I entered the sacristy. He extended his hand for me to kiss. ...

“I will not baptize you,” he began looking at the ring on his finger, and I froze in place. “You may ask for it later, after the war...” His words caught me unaware. He talked in a solemn voice, clearly articulating his words, but I couldn’t understand them. I waited a long time.

“But prosze Ksiedza [proszę Księdza] ...” I tried politely to argue, but he raised his hand and I stopped. His voice was cold. I looked at him with panic, but his eyes were still on the ring as he explained his plan.

“After the war, any priest will do it for you,” he said slowly, as if he feared that I didn’t understand. “I will not baptize you now when you may think that I am forcing my religion on you. ... You have to wait for your baptism and for your first communion until after the war.”

I sat motionless while he explained:

“You must pretend that you are making the confession.”

My heart sank when I realized what he was saying. “I will be sitting in the confessional, so it should be easy for you. But you must be very careful.”

His large gray eyes were now looking straight into mine. ...

“On Sunday you will not take the communion, but you must pretend that you are doing it. You must be careful and do exactly as I say.”

His words bit deep into my memory: “All you need to do is to imitate the motions of other children. You shall come to me for the confession, and I shall pretend to give you absolution. Then I shall pass you over at the communion. The sexton is prepared and will go along.” ...

Saturday came, and I went to church to fake my confession. ...

On Sunday I went to the church early. ... I did everything exactly the way the priest told me to do ...

I saw the priest coming. The sexton followed him with a small round silver tray. I opened my mouth and relaxed my tongue. ... No one noticed that the priest had omitted one child. I pretended to swallow, bowed my head, walked back with my palms joined together, fingers unified in a praying gesture. ...

In a borrowed white dress I went with Maryla to Tarnow. ...

The photographer put a white silk lily into my hand and carefully arranged a picture of Saint Anthony [actually, it was a picture of Jesus—Ed.] on a small brown table. ...

The camera clicked; he removed the picture and the silk lily. ... Maryla paid, and we went back to Wola Rzedzinska.

The priest’s refusal had serious consequences. It put me and those around me in danger. I had to pretend to be a Christian girl. Now it was harder for me to pretend. I was bound to make mistakes.<sup>1025</sup>

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<sup>1025</sup> Miriam Winter, *Trains: A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood during and after World War II* (Jackson, Michigan: Kelton Press, 1997), 54–66.

In Kolbuszowa, near Rzeszów, the local pastor, Rev. Antoni Dunajecki, responded to a call for help by Naftali Saleschutz (later Norman Salsitz) by providing him and his brother, Leibush, with false birth and baptismal certificates.<sup>1026</sup> Rev. Dunajecki was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2019. Previously, Yad Vashem recognized three members of the Chodor family who had come to the brothers' assistance.

I now remembered [Helena] Kotulova [Kotulowa or Kotula], the Polish widow whom I had visited just before I left Kolbuszowa to be with my family in Rzeszow [Rzeszów], and with whom I had left some belongings and merchandise. Her house was right behind the fence that surrounded the ghetto. I resolved to see her at once. After nightfall I left the camp without telling anyone, not even my brother. I climbed the fence and knocked on Kotulova's door.

"Pani [Mrs.] Kotulova, I have to run away. I need forged papers, and I may need a place to hide."

"I will help you," she said.

"Where can I get papers?"

"I'll have to talk to the priest."

"Do I know him?"

"You should; Monsignor [Antoni] Dunajecki has been our parish priest for nearly twenty years."

"Yes, I know of the Monsignor."

"He has all the birth records of the parish, and he may be able to give you the birth record of someone who died during the war."

"I had a friend in grade school, about my age, who was killed at the front in 1939. His name is Tadeusz Jadach. Maybe I could use his birth certificate."

"I'll see what I can do. Come back tomorrow night."

... When I returned the next evening, Kotulova handed me something more precious than gold: the birth certificate of Tadeusz Jadach, a Roman Catholic Pole. With that paper I might survive the war. I put my arms around the ample frame of my saving angel, and hugged her until she protested she couldn't breathe.

"I will be indebted to you as long as I live," I told her.

"You would have done the same for me."

"Just one more thing, my brother Leibush; I need a certificate for him. Could you possibly get one for him, too?"

"I'll talk to the Monsignor."

The next day I had a birth certificate for Leibush: a Ludwig [Ludwik] Kunefal [b. 1904, a Capuchin who died in 1936]. As she handed it over, she mentioned that the Monsignor wanted to meet Leibush and me. A few days later we went to her house to meet the Monsignor. When we saw him, neither of us knew what to do or say; we had never in our lives spoken to a priest, and we were overwhelmed by the man's appearance. He was tall and

<sup>1026</sup> See also Norman Salsitz and Amalie Petranker Salsitz, *Against All Odds: A Tale of Two Survivors* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1990), 249–52; "You would have done the same for me," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/you-would-have-done-same-me>.

majestic-looking, with an inscrutable face. We stood there embarrassed, but he quickly realized our discomfort and extended his hand to us in greeting.

"I am Proboszcz [pastor] Dunajecki," he said in a warm, disarming voice. "I am pleased to meet both of you."

We shook his hand, after which our hostess invited us to share some food she had prepared for us. Soon we were immersed in lively conversation.

"I would like to suggest something," Father Dunajecki said after we had been chatting a while. "You, Tadeusz, you speak Polish like a Pole. But Leibush's Polish is a dead giveaway. I would suggest that Leibush not use the certificate that I have made available to him. You don't have to decide now, but think about it."

We told him we would reconsider. As it turned out, we realized that the Monsignor was correct; we never used that certificate.

With Leibush in the other room talking to Kotulova, the Monsignor and I began to talk. The priest grew pensive.

"You know, Tadeusz" he said, "I have been a priest here in Kolbuszowa for nearly twenty years, and I have never gotten to know a single Jew. I have never had any dealings with any Jewish organizations, and I have never had the slightest idea what was going on in the Jewish community. I have never even met your rabbi. Now, in view of what's happened to the Jews here, I deeply regret not having made the effort to know your people better. What's most upsetting to me is the thought that I could have saved scores of Jewish children by placing them among my parishioners; it would have been an easy thing to do. But no one said anything to me, and I myself have been remiss for neglecting what was going on under my very nose. I can't tell you how sorry I am."

I could tell he was really sincere. I didn't know how to respond. He was blaming himself, but who really was to blame? As we were about to leave, he shook our hands and wished us luck. Then he made the sign of the cross over us and bade us goodbye.<sup>1027</sup>

Rev. Dunajecki is mentioned in another rescue story, as is the bishop of Tarnów. In April 1942, seven-year-old Rachela Gross (b. 1934) was left near the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Trzęsówka, near Kolbuszowa, by a farmer who was afraid to keep the child any longer. The nuns used to run a shelter for children before the war, but the Germans had closed it. After taking Rachela in, Sister Roberta Sutkowska, the superior, went to consult with Rev. Dunajecki, who in turn directed her to the bishop of Tarnów. Sister Roberta identifies the bishop as Franciszek Lisowski; in actual fact, Bishop Lisowski had died in June 1939, and the administrator of the diocese of Tarnów was Edward Komar, the diocese's auxiliary bishop, who died in September 1943. The bishop encouraged the rescue effort and provided counsel. Rachela remained with the nuns even after the war, refusing repeatedly to go with representatives of the Jewish

<sup>1027</sup> Norman Salsitz, as told to Richard Skolnik, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland: Remembering Kolbuszowa* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 292–94. At p. 244, Salsitz states that his father, a merchant in Kolbuszowa, supplied Catholic churches in the area with candles and other items used in religious ceremonies.

Committee despite the urging of the nuns to do so. The nuns saw to Rachela's education and she became a physician; she married and adhered to the Catholic faith.<sup>1028</sup>

I was taken to Trzesowka [Trzęsówka]. The convent was visible from a distance, for it was the only two-storied building in the village. The farmer left me in the field, and said: "Go there; they will take you in."

It was Palm Sunday. Like an automaton I went to the convent. Sister Roberta [Sutkowska] was not there at the time. Sister Adolfina was the nun in charge. She was so fat and—well, strict—but she greeted me warmly and had me say a prayer. Of course, I knew how to pray. I rattled off a prayer, and then I heard:

"You can stay here."

This was an intelligent woman. She was aware of the truth, and the following day baptized me with water. People began to take an interest in who I was and how I came to be in the convent. But nobody ever suspected that I was Jewish. (After all, I had blonde hair and blue eyes). They thought I was the child of some acquaintance, or an orphan—and it was left at that.

In the convent I was treated like a normal village child. I worked at everything and even enjoyed it. After all I had gone through, my stay in the convent was stabilizing. I knew that I would remain there, that it was good for me there, that I was safe. I even knew that should the Germans come, nothing would happen to me because the nuns would be able to take care of everything.

None of the nuns ever tried to set me against Jews. God forbid. The nuns did not talk on this subject.

I liked the Christian religion because it is attractive to a child. The sisters sent me to First Communion, they dressed me in white—a child is influenced by these things. Besides, I was growing up among Polish children, I had a lot of friends—even before the war. I had Polish girlfriends. I came from an assimilated family. My parents were Polish in their sensibilities—that I remember. I always loved Christmas and Christmas trees. As a child, I used to visit families that celebrated Christmas. I also went to church with my girlfriends, though, of course, I went to the synagogue with my parents.

But all this was before the war.

When I found myself in the convent, among the nuns, in that Catholic environment, I liked it a lot. Besides, I considered it a miracle that I was alive. I was a very religious child. I observed Lent and fasted, I went through the Way of the Cross. I read the Old and New Testament, and cried at the suffering of Christ. By the way, I never had the feeling that the Jews were bad because they were responsible for His death. That attitude was not present in the convent.

The reason I chose to stay with the nuns was, above all, that I liked Christianity. ...

Also, I have to admit, I chose to stay because of fear. I thought it was a miracle that I knew how to pray, that my parents had taught me how to pray before we parted. So I thought that God had managed things in such a way to save me. That is, I thought, that it was a sign from God that I should remain among Christians, for they had saved me. I felt I owed it to the Christian religion to stay with it.

I did not want to return to something that had been so tragic for me.

<sup>1028</sup> See also Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 211–15, 232–34.

Being a part of Christianity, of Poland, gave me a sense of safety. ... In the convent I felt safe, although I also saw Poles die. ...

But to return to the convent—I felt at home there. I treated the nuns—particularly Sister Roberta—as my mothers.<sup>1029</sup>

There was more to her story than Rachela Gross was aware of. Indeed, one of the serious shortcomings in the literature on Holocaust survivors is its tendency to ignore the rescuers' perspective; what they have to say is often equally compelling. This is from Sister Roberta Sutkowska's account.

During the war I worked in [Trzęsówka], which is near Kolbuszow [Kolbuszowa]. On April 12, 1942, Palm Sunday, a girl came to us. The weather was horrible, the child was poorly dressed—shabby boots, a crumpled dress of shepherd's cloth, a coat made from a blanket. She said she came to work for us, and would do whatever we liked, if we would only keep her. ...

She came to us between ten and eleven in the morning—tired and dirty. We took pity on her. Before the war, we ran a nursery in the village. We couldn't do that during the war. Older sisters arrived from Lwow [Lwów] to be with us, so there was a good number of nuns, from ten to twelve. I went to seek the advice of Father Dunajewski [actually, Rev. Antoni Dunajecki] in Kolbuszow. The priest advised me to go to Bishop Lisowski [actually, Bishop Edward Komar] in Tarnow [Tarnów], who said: "You are not the first person to show up here on such a matter. It is good that you took this child in. God will take care of this, so that nothing will happen and no one will interfere. One has to gradually learn from this child her history, and then later we will have to deal with the issue—for it's possible that we will have to baptize the child. In the future the child has to go to school. But let's take things a step at a time. Somehow everything will work itself out. One just has to make certain that the girl does not contact anyone and talk. If someone takes an interest in the child, tell them she has been accepted into the convent, and that's that."

Three, four years went by. To the end of the war. The girl constantly demanded we give her some chores. I laughed—she helped us in all our chores.

After the war, Father Dunajewski went with Rachela to Bialystok [Białystok]. It turned out that the child had spoken the truth. The priest at the notary took out all the documents on the girl. Today I refer to her as Rachela, though we never called her by that name—she had a different first and last name, but I don't know if she'd want me to reveal it.<sup>1030</sup>

**B**ishop Edward Komar of Tarnów also provided material assistance to Countess Helena Jabłonowska, the head of the local branch of the Central Relief Council (RGO) in Dębica, which helped those in need. The council sent food and clothing to the inmates of the Pustków labour camp, where many Jews were held in ad-

<sup>1029</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 185–88.

<sup>1030</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 166–67.



dition to Poles and Soviet prisoners of war.<sup>1031</sup> Countess Jabłonowska ransomed a group of children, among them some Jews, who were being transported on a train from Lwów that stopped in Dębica. The children were housed temporarily at the orphanage of the Sisters Servants of the Virgin Mother of God Immaculately Conceived in Dębica before being transferred to the village of Siedliska Bogusz, where Rev. Karol Kawula distributed them among his parishioners.<sup>1032</sup>

After escaping from the Rzeszów ghetto in the summer of 1942, Salomea Krygier (b. 1909), later Gemrot, was helped by several Polish families she had been friends with before the war.

But my friends, who risked their life for me, helped me. So after Janka's family [Stachowicz] it was the Wisniowski family who kept me, also neighbors from Staroniwa. This Mr. Wisniowski [Wiśniowski] was a farmer, a very decent man. They carried me out in a basket at night to the barn and that's where I slept for two months, on these stacks of straw. But it was good for me there. Very good. They took care of me, they loved me. Well. They prayed for me. They went to holy places. Yes. They were such caring friends that they went to the presbytery and they found a birth certificate for me. ... After the Wisniowski family, an acquaintance of mine, Wiktoria [Szalacha], whose children I had minded at the beginning of the war, helped me. She took me to her family [Dybek]. It was quite a distance from Jasło [Jasło], in some village [Skołyszyn].<sup>1033</sup>

Salomea moved from place to place under her false identity. While working for the Gemrot family in Niepołomice, near Kraków, she met their son, Wilhelm, and they immediately took a liking to each other. Wilhelm suggested that they marry in order to help her avoid detection. Salomea recalled, "[T]hose friends of mine from my home village, the Wisniowski [Wiśniowski] family, changed my documents to say I was married and my last name was Gemrot. They managed to get an official stamp saying that I was a wife and they even went to the local priest for this." Salomea spent the duration of the war in Tarnów, posing as Wilhelm's wife. After the war, they married legally and remained a married couple until Wilhelm's death in 1985.<sup>1034</sup>

Rev. Dominik Litwiński, the pastor of Ostrowy Tuszowskie, near Kolbuszowa, provided false documents to a Jew, thus enabling him to pass as a Pole.

<sup>1031</sup> Jarosław Sellin, "Arcybiskup Adam Stefan Sapieha a Holokaust," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (2014): 774–85, at p. 783; Agnieszka Skrzypek, *Służebniczki Dębickie w diecezji tarnowskiej w latach 1891–1989* (Dębica: [Muzeum Regionalne w Dębicy], 2016), 361–62.

<sup>1032</sup> Skrzypek, *Służebniczki Dębickie w diecezji tarnowskiej w latach 1891–1989*, 362–63.

<sup>1033</sup> Testimony of Salomea Gemrot, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/salomea-gemrot>.

<sup>1034</sup> Testimony of Salomea Gemrot, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/salomea-gemrot>.

In the summer of 1941, after the Germans occupied the town of Lwow [Lwów], Samuel Blasenstein left Lwow and returned to Tuchow [Tuchów], his hometown, in the Cracow [Kraków] district, where he discovered, to his dismay, that all the Jews had been deported. Not knowing what to do, Blasenstein turned to Genowefa Koziol [Koziół], a former school friend of his, who, with the help of the local priest [Rev. Dominik Litwiński from Tuchów<sup>1035</sup>], provided him with a birth certificate in the name of a Catholic who had passed away. Equipped with this certificate, Blasenstein moved to the village of Dobiesławice [Dobiesławice], in the Kielce district, where no one knew him. After renting a room from a Polish family, Blasenstein found work as a secretary in the village council. Blasenstein stayed in the village until January 1945, when the area was liberated.<sup>1036</sup>

Several Redemptorist priests from Tuchów were active in helping Jews. Fr. Stanisław Wójcik placed Maria Rotwein, a young Jewish woman from Kraków, with Janina Jaskólska, a teacher. Maria Rotwein obtained an identity card in the name of Maria Rotnicka from an employee of the local authorities, Stefania Broda.

Maria's carelessness and outgoing behaviour upset her benefactors, so she decided to move to Tarnów, where she made the acquaintance of a Gestapo man. After divulging information about her benefactors, Maria was shot. Her benefactors were arrested in August 1941. Miraculously, Jaskólska and Fr. Wójcik were released following their interrogation, but Broda was imprisoned for a year.

Fr. Wójcik baptized 70-year-old Sara Beila Hirsch in January 1941. Fr. Kazimierz Smoroński and Fr. Józef Puchalik sheltered the daughters of Józef Jakubowicz, a Jewish convert from the nearby village of Siedliska. Fr. Smoroński was arrested by the Gestapo in February 1942 and sent to Auschwitz, where he perished in May 1942.<sup>1037</sup>

Rev. Jan Zwierz, a school prefect in Ropczyce, used various means and ruses to help Jews and intervened on their behalf with the German authorities. According to his own testimony,

The Nazis organized the annihilation of the Jews by sending them to the Postkow [Pustków] concentration camp. We tried to protect these Jews in the schools. We gave jobs to many of the Jews in order to save them, but they were sent to the camp in spite of that. I then went to the German regional commander, Schuter, and I tricked him by saying that they

<sup>1035</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 266.

<sup>1036</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 394.

<sup>1037</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 717; Stanisław Derus, *Tuchów: Miasto i gmina do roku 1945* (Tuchów: Urząd Gminy w Tuchowie, 1992), 134–35. According to one source, Jakub Jakubowicz was denounced by a rabbi, and he was arrested by the Gestapo. See Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, "Przykra prawda historyczna," *Nasz Dziennik*, February 3, 2005; Jarosław Sellin, "Arcybiskup Adam Stefan Sapieha a Holocaust," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (2014): 774–85, at p. 783.

we could not do without them. Unfortunately this only worked for a short time. The tragic day arrived when none of our efforts helped. I will never forget, however, the gratitude of those whom we were able to free, even for a short time, from the hell of the camp.

Once, a Jew named Eiden [Eisen] came to me in sorrow, telling me that he had a sick boy who must be sent to the hospital in Tarnow [Tarnów]. Again I went to the same commander and I tricked him into letting me use his car for an administrative purpose. Of course he didn't know that a German car would be used for a sick Jewish boy.

I also succeeded in obtaining the release of young Jews, whom the Germans were using for all kinds of degrading jobs, and gave them jobs in the agricultural gymnasia, although this was only for a short time.<sup>1038</sup>

Rev. Jan Kuźniar, the pastor of Chmielnik, near Rzeszów, provided Jews with false baptismal certificates, food and clothing. He enlisted the help of his sister and housekeeper, Maria Krzywonos, to care for Elżbieta (Ela) Zwick, a teenage girl who escaped from the ghetto in Brzozów. She assumed the identity of their niece, Zofia Koźniak, and survived the war in the parish rectory. The priest's mother sheltered the girl's aunt for a period of time.

In their wanderings some of the children encountered caring people who, even though they did not know them, took them in and saved them. This was how Zofia Kozniak [Koźniak] from the town of Brzozow [Brzozów] survived. Zofia was twelve when she was separated from her family during an Aktion and was left on her own. Lacking an alternative, she went to her Polish teacher, who lived in a nearby village, as she knew she liked her and would probably be prepared to help her. The teacher agreed to let her stay for the night. The next day the teacher took the girl to the home of her priest [Rev. Jan Kuźniar<sup>1039</sup>] and advised her to ask him for shelter. Zofia described to the priest the ordeals she had undergone. The priest's sister, Mrs. [Maria] Krzywonosowa, who was present, took pity on her and took her to her home. She had three children of her own, but found place for Zofia as well. But the girl longed for her parents and was desperate to know what had become of them. After learning that both her parents had perished, she decided to stay with the family that had taken her in and treated her like a daughter.<sup>1040</sup>

The following account by Sofia Kuzniew, written in August 1947, appears to pertain to the above rescue.

<sup>1038</sup> Reported in the weekly *Fołksztyme*, July 3, 1982. See Bogdan Novick, "The Attempts of the Priest Dr. Jan Zewiz to Save Jews," in Ita Rosenfeld, ed., *Hayo hayta Ayara Ropczyce* (Israel: n.p., 1985), 87, translated as *There Once Was a Shtetl Ropczyce*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Ropczyce/Ropczyce.html>.

<sup>1039</sup> Zbigniew K. Wójcik, *Rzeszów w latach drugiej wojny światowej: Okupacja i konspiracja 1939–1944–1945* (Rzeszów and Kraków: Instytut Europejskich Studiów Społecznych w Rzeszowie and Towarzystwo Sympatyków Historii w Krakowie, 1998), 163; Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 77, 315, 317.

<sup>1040</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 53–54.

Our family owned a grocery shop, and there were two of us: my brother who's 2 years older than me, and myself. I was 8 when war broke, and was already a second-grade student. My brother and I travelled to our grandmother's village for the summer vacation. The roads were then blocked and we had to stay at grandma's. My parents lost each other and most of their belongings during the bombing on Katowice. My father ended up on the Russian side, and my mother returned to Katowice. We resumed going to school in 1940, but had to stop 6 months later because Jewish children were no longer allowed to do that.

We missed our parents very much, and were depressed by the distance. In the meanwhile, we wrote to our mother and she wrote back. 8 months later she was informed that our father was alive on the Soviet side. Until 1941 our area was rather peaceful, and most definitely calmer than in Katowice. Mother tried hard to get to us, and finally she made it. Around that time our father had managed to cross the border, and our family was re-united. We all lived together until we were thrown out of our apartment in 1943.

We were banished to the next village with our little belongings bundled on our backs. For months, we lived in strange Jews' houses and then lived with my uncle in Bdzożow [Brzozów] for a week. One day, all of the Jews were ordered to gather in the stadium at 6 am. We didn't go. Something told us that death lay there. We hid in the house of villagers we knew, a day here and a day there. We had to split up—I remained with my aunt, and my brother was with my parents since no peasant was willing to hide such a big group of Jews. I spent two weeks with my aunt in the house of a peasant named Orlowsky [Orłowski]. He was a good man and gave us food, but he was too scared to keep us and we had to leave.

I missed my mother badly, so I left my aunt and went solely to look for my parents. An action took place that day. I couldn't find my parents who were hiding in the woods and didn't return to the peasant's house until nightfall. We slept in the attic together that night, but in the morning we were asked to leave. I returned to my aunt with my father and I said goodbye to my mother. She and my brother took off, and I haven't seen her again since.

I could no longer stay in the same place. We split up again: my father moved forward, and I went to my teacher's house. I stayed overnight, and the next day she sent me to the house of the priest in Bdzożow, where she advised me to request shelter as the priest's "niece." I had some 40 kilometers to walk. I got lost, but had no choice but to move on. The hope of finding shelter kept me going.

I reached the priest's house in the evening. I told them everything, and the priest's sister took me in. There were 3 more children staying in her house. It felt like heaven, being there after all the wandering. They treated me like their own child, taught me to speak Polish and sent me to school. I was also taught the principles of the Christian religion. When I wanted to know what had become of my parents, they sent a messenger to Bdzożow. That's how I heard that they were shot to death by the Germans.

I mourned their death greatly, but buried my grief inside me. The Gestapo paid frequent visits to the priest's house, because a few Germans were killed in the woods nearby at that time. I had to appear very calm, so as not to turn myself in through showing anxiety or excitement. I went through hell.

After a long time on the road, my aunt has also managed to get to the priest's house, and then she drove by wagon to where I stayed. She lived with us for a couple of weeks, but then my guardians gave her an Arian [Aryan] ID and sent her to the priest's mother.

They did all these things without second thoughts or calculations, but my aunt left after a while on her own and registered to work in Germany, hoping there she won't need to fear that someone will recognize her. She would write to me frequently from Germany.

This was my life until the arrival of the Soviet army. After we were released, I was registered for high school. My aunt left for Switzerland and managed to contact my uncle who was in Lyon, France. He wrote to me and sent me souvenirs. He even came to Poland to take me to him.

I can't leave the people who took care of me with all their might and were second parents to me, who risked their lives for me and shared with me everything they had. I love them a great deal, and has [sic] befriended their older daughter, 21 year old Janka. I don't wish to return to Judaism. I'm good the way I am now, and I am happy. My adopting [sic] family isn't anti-Semitic, and they'll never speak ill of Jews in my presence.

My soul is peaceful, after I've found support in my religion. I love the Christian religion. My name today is Sofia Kuzniew. I will not go to France with my uncle. I live in Chmjełnik [Chmielnik] and attend the fourth grade in high school.<sup>1041</sup>

In 1940, Rev. Eugeniusz Okoń of Radomyśl nad Sanem, near Stalowa Wola, organized a local committee consisting of nine people to help Jews. Three of its members were priests: himself; the local pastor, Rev. Canon Feliks Chudy; and Rev. Janusz Geneja. Rev. Okoń came to the assistance of a number of Jews deported from nearby villages. In particular, he cared for the elderly Dr. Reich from Rozwadow and his 75-year-old sister, who eventually committed suicide in despair.

Rev. Okoń also provided false baptismal certificates and identities to the family of American author Jerzy Kosinski, consisting of Jerzy (then a nine-year-old boy), his father Moishe (Mieczysław) Lewinkopf, his mother Elżbieta, and Henryk, an adopted brother. The Lewinkopf family, now the Kosińskis, hailed from Łódź. Rev. Okoń brought them from Sandomierz, where they first took refuge, to the village of Dąbrowa Rzeczycka. The Kosińskis survived the war in Dąbrowa Rzeczycka, posing as Catholics, living openly under the protection of the village headman and among villagers who were aware of their Jewish origin. The villagers were known to help other Jews as well. Rev. Tadeusz Sebastyański, the parish priest of the nearby village of Wola Rzeczycka, was aware of their ruse, as was the village headman there, and they assisted the Lewinkopf/Kosiński family in maintaining it. Even though he had never converted, Jerzy was allowed to make his Communion, and he served as an altar boy. Rev. Okoń continued to visit the Lewinkopfs until he too had to hide from the Gestapo. He urged his

<sup>1041</sup> Sofia Kuzniew, "My Polish Parents," in Yosef Chrust and Yosef Frankel, eds., *Katowits: Perihatah ve-shekiyatah shel ha-kehila ha-yehudit: sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: The Society to Commemorate the Jews of Katowice, 1996), pp. 317–18, translated as *Katowice: The Rise and Decline of the Jewish Community: Memorial Book*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Katowice/Katowice.html>.

parishioners not to betray the Jews who were hiding in their midst, as they were required to do by the Germans under penalty of death.

For many years, Kosinski passed off his scurrilous 1965 novel, *The Painted Bird*, which depicted a boy enduring unspeakable mistreatment at the hands of brutishly cruel and primitive peasants as autobiographical. Eventually, the book was exposed as a hoax by Polish investigative journalist Joanna Siedlecka.<sup>1042</sup> The true story of the Kosinski family's wartime experience was revealed to North American audiences in James Park Sloan's 1996 biography of Jerzy Kosinski.

One night in the fall of 1942, Waclaw [Waclaw] Skobel loaded the Lewinkopf family into his cart [in Sandomierz] and drove them across the Vistula ... to the smaller town of Radomysl-on-San [Radomyśl nad Sanem]. ...

At Radomysl, Skobel passed the Kosinski [Kosiński] group, now five in number, into the hands of the local priest, one Eugeniusz Okon [Okon]. ...

Father Okon had arranged for the Kosinskis—for that was now their name—to come to the small village of Dabrowa [Dąbrowa] Rzeczycka, located just west of the San River. Using his ecclesiastical authority, he had enlisted the help of Jozef Stepak [Józef Stepak], the administrator of Dabrowa and nearby Kepa [Kępa]; the two men acting together were then able to enlist the villagers in a conspiracy of silence. The home Okon found for the Kosinskis was in a semidetached apartment owned by a Polish Catholic farmer, Andrzej Warchol [Warchol]. ...

During the first months the Kosinski spent in Dabrowa, Father Okon periodically bicycled from Radomysl to inquire about them. ... But within a few months Okon stopped coming, having himself become a fugitive from the Gestapo. ...

The Kosinskis settled in cautiously. At first, Mieczyslaw [Mieczysław] Kosinski—the name by which Moses Lewinkopf would henceforth be known—ventured out in public only when absolutely necessary, and with his collar turned up. Never speaking to passersby, he made the short walk to nearby Kepa to buy food. Slowly he probed for the response of the villagers.

Gradually a way of life began to take shape. Elzbieta [Elżbieta] Kosinska, who had the “worst”—the most Jewish—looks, stayed inside the apartment. ... Young Jerzy/Jurek also played in the yard, his dark hair cropped short ...

<sup>1042</sup> Joanna Siedlecka, *Czarny ptasior* (Gdańsk: Marabut; Warsaw: CIS, 1994), translated as *The Ugly Black Bird* ([Washington, D.C.]: Leopolis Press, 2018). See also Tadeusz Rek, *Ksiądz Eugeniusz Okon 1881–1949* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1962), 182–83; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 534–37 (account of Janina Dembowa, a Jewish woman who exposed Jerzy Kosinski's allegedly autobiographical novel *The Painted Bird* as a slanderous hoax as early as June 1968); Stanisław Myszka, *Radomyśl nad Sanem: Dzieje miasta i parafii* (Stalowa Wola: Muzeum Regionalne, 2003), 184–88. Later in life (1988), Kosiński appeared to have had a change of heart. He decried rampant anti-Polish sentiment within the Jewish community, arguing that Poles—overwhelmed by fear for their own and their families' safety—had no obligation to protect Jews during the war, given the consequence of death for doing so. See Barbara Tępa Lupack and Kiki Kosinski, eds., *Oral Pleasure: Kosinski as Storyteller* (New York: Grove Press, 2012), 215–16.



Little by little, Mieczyslaw Kosinski began to go out among the villagers. ... The secret to survival, after all, was to blend in and become a part of things. He began giving lessons to children who wished to go beyond the level of the local four-year school; he was qualified to teach all the high-school subjects. The villagers took to calling him “professor” and referring to Elzbieta as “the professor’s wife.”

... [Mieczysław] was, to the simple villagers of Dabrowa, “the professor,” ... As he had with the Lipinskis [Lipiński] in Sandomierz, the elder Kosinski knew how to use his knowledge and manner to position himself among the villagers. The honorific encapsulated their sense of him as a man of refinement, but a man whose attainments they did not resent. They took pride in their role in saving such a man. At the market in Kepa, some of the vendors reduced their prices in deference to a man of standing. To the peasants, the Kosinskis offered a connection to the great world outside the village. ...

While the Battle of Stalingrad raged, the Kosinskis were invited to celebrate Christmas in Dabrowa—a celebration new to their experience and deeply ironic, but useful. Their hosts were the Migdaleks [Migdalek] ... Mr. Migdalek taught in the local elementary school. ...

Mrs. Migdalek’s invitation was a statement at several levels. More than a neighbourly gesture, it was a way of saying to the rest of the village that the Migdaleks—who would themselves later take in two Jewish children related by marriage—were unafraid of associating with a family known to be Jewish. And at another level, there was the matter of class; the Migdaleks thought of themselves as educated people like the Kosinskis, people who stood apart from the ordinary citizenry of places like Dabrowa.

It was a meagre Christmas Eve dinner when compared with normal times. There was only bread, and a sour soup with potatoes. The occupying Germans imposed steep levies on foodstuffs, and the soil of Dabrowa was sandier than that of surrounding villages. Daily fare during the war years included pigweed, of which a soup could be made, potatoes, and beetroot, which was used in soup and to make marmalade. ...

Part of the Kosinski/Lewinkopf strategy was camouflage, and simply living in the village was not enough. ... Their apartment was decorated with crucifixes and images of the Virgin—too many, some of the locals thought. ... And they attended church fairly regularly at nearby Wola Rzeczycka, or at least the father and son did, with the mother attending occasionally. ...

But one more step was necessary. During the winter of 1943 little Jurek began confirmation classes along with Andrzej Migdalek and other boys his age. The parish priest, Father Sebastianski [Sebastyański], had been briefed by Father Okon and was sympathetic. ...

Jurek and Andrzej did well in the confirmation classes, and as a result they were selected to serve as altar boys during evening masses. ...

The culmination of this religious training took place in May of 1943 when Jurek Kosinski, along with Andrzej Migdalek and the other local boys of his age, received Holy Communion for the first time. To celebrate the occasion the Kosinskis gave a party, not only for Jurek but for all the children taking First Communion. ...

The party was held in the churchyard at Wola Rzeczycka, and benches were set out for the children with cookies and cups of hot cocoa—an unheard-of luxury.<sup>1043</sup>

<sup>1043</sup> James Park Sloan, *Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography* (New York: Dutton/Penguin, 1996), 27–35.

Nearby, in the village of Domostawa, the three Graf sisters were sheltered by the Gorczyca family. Esther Graf (later Liber) recalled the protective attitude of the local priest, a friend of her uncle's, who urged his parishioners to help Jews.<sup>1044</sup>

Two rescue stories involve assistance from clergymen in Baranów Sandomierski, located near Sandomierz and Tarnobrzeg. It is not clear whether they pertain to the same child. The local pastor issued a baptismal certificate for a Jewish girl who Franciszka Surowiec adopted in 1942. The girl survived and was taken by relatives after the war.<sup>1045</sup>

The daughter of Mala Perlmutter, from Tarnobrzeg, was abandoned with a note stating she was the daughter of a Polish army officer killed by the Germans and that her mother could not look after her. Although widely suspected of being Jewish, the child was protected by Karol Wawrzycki, a local high school teacher. She was sheltered in the parish rectory, where the priest's housekeeper cared for her. An aunt claimed the child after the war.<sup>1046</sup>

Karolina Jus (née Frist) and her Gentile husband, Andrzej Jus, described the assistance they received from Rev. Eugeniusz Baziak, auxiliary bishop of Lwów, and various priests in southeastern Poland.

In June 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union and soon after Lwów was also occupied by the Nazis. The young couple had planned to marry but the occupation made their marriage a dangerous one. ...

"My husband is a hero, he saved me," she said. "People don't understand that Poles were risking their lives; he was not obliged to marry me, nor help me."

"If a Pole was found giving a glass of water to a Jew his penalty was death and that would also be Andrzej's penalty for loving me." ...

It was in their deep despair that they turned to the Catholic Church for help.

Mrs. Jus and her family were very faithful to their religion and she never considered converting to Catholicism. She knew, however, that by following the Jewish religion she placed not only herself but her future husband and his family in danger.

The distraught young woman thought and prayed all night before making a decision ...

The bishop of Lwów [Eugeniusz Baziak] began preparations not only for Mrs. Jus's baptism and marriage but also to conceal her Jewish identity. Changing her past was the only way to save her from death ...

<sup>1044</sup> Testimony of Esther Liber, YVA, file 0.33/10545 (Item 3565081). See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 247.

<sup>1045</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 117.

<sup>1046</sup> Testimony of Zelman Baum (Wacław Kozieniec), May 12, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 2425.

It was no easy task and Mr. Jus risked his life in making all the necessary arrangements and countless trips to give his future wife a new birth certificate and a recorded baptism.

He did this with the help of Father Alojzy Palus. During the day, the young priest studied the archdiocesan records looking for the proper spot to place Mrs. Jus's birth and baptismal dates.

Painstakingly, the two men entered the new dates and names using thinned ink, to make the writing seem worn.

Her place and date of birth and the names of her parents were changed. Her date of baptism and her godparents were created and the couple's marriage date was entered as December 1938 before the outbreak of the war. ...

Mrs. Jus's family did not accept the offer of the local Catholic church and bishop to hide in a nearby convent. The offer was made with no strings attached, the Church was not looking for conversions, said Mr. Jus, just to give them refuge.

But her father [who was murdered by the Gestapo, along with Mrs. Jus's mother and only sister, on April 22, 1942] believed that the danger was overdramatized ...<sup>1047</sup>

The memoirs of Andrzej and Karolina Jus are dedicated to the memory of "many ... Poles, among them many Catholic priests and nuns, who, risking their own lives, enabled Karolina, and others like her, to survive the times of contempt." They detail the couple's numerous encounters with Catholic clergy during the German occupation.<sup>1048</sup> An aunt of Karolina's husband was sheltering her in the village of Uherce, near Lesko, when the war ended. Karolina's efforts to have her benefactors recognized were rejected by Yad Vashem.

When Andrzej returned to Karolina ... he met [Sister] Filomena at Karolina's place ... She was dressed already in her traditional nun's habit with the medieval 'corner hat' of the Sisters of Charity. She brought food for Karolina and her family. Her convent was not far from Karolina's apartment. She intended from now on to pay frequent visits to Karolina, and had asked other nuns to be of assistance to them. Her organizing was already evident as nuns from the convent of Holy Sacrament [Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament] had brought fruit and vegetables from their garden to Zosia [Karolina's sister]. They, at once, took a great liking to her and promised to bring fresh fruit and vegetables every day. Before Andrzej's second visit on this day, Filomena had a chat with all the members of Karolina's family, and she fully understood their sufferings. She came to comfort them and diminish their isolation. ...

... In his most hopeful dreams, he could not imagine how open-minded, understanding, and helpful the bishop [Eugeniusz Baziak] was. ...

The bishop discussed with his secretary the choice of the priest who would be the best person to baptize Karolina, marry the couple, and, after the wedding, have them under his constant vigilance to advise them what to do in the case of imminent danger. After

<sup>1047</sup> Tonia Desiato, "Faith and love guided couple through 'valley of tears,'" *The Catholic Register* [Toronto], November 9, 1991.

<sup>1048</sup> Andrzej and Karolina Jus, *Our Journey in the Valley of Tears* (Toronto: Printed by the University of Toronto Press, 1991).

a while, they agreed on one of the priests from the Bernardine Monastery. His name was Father Aloisius (Alojzy), and the secretary promised to arrange an appointment with him for the couple next day at 10.00 a.m. in the office of the Bernardine Monastery in Lwów.

The bishop added: “Father Alojzy will take care of all the documents that will be needed. He is a very courageous and shrewd person. In the fight against Evil we have to use sophisticated methods and act quickly to save decent people. He knows how to fight and what methods are appropriate. He is under my jurisdiction, and I will personally watch over your situation and always be of assistance.”...

There was still the matter of protection for Karolina’s family. ... The bishop [Eugeniusz Baziak] thought for a while, and said: “Tell them that my advice is to hide all three of them: the father in one of our monasteries, the mother and Karolina’s sister in a convent with nuns. The sooner, the better. Any day something might happen to them. ... They will be protected by all the means available to the church. Of course, our means are not unlimited, and our greatest concern is that we cannot help all people who need protection. Our help is unfortunately a drop in the big ocean of human needs. This help must be kept in the strictest secrecy. One false step and everybody might be lost.”

He paused and then continued: “Do not forget to tell Karolina’s parents that we do not expect them to convert. Nor will we exercise any pressure in this direction. Although the mission of the church is to expand the Catholic faith, above all our mission is to help, in Jesus’s name, any needy human being. As I just told you, our greatest concern is that we can do it only for a limited number of people who, in this country, are in grave danger.”

At the end of the conversation, the bishop added: “We consider the Nazis’ anti-Semitism as racism and crime. The German nation was educated to feel superior to all the nations in the world. In general, any anti-Semitism, not only theirs, is considered by us to be against the teaching of Jesus.” His voice was very sad now: “Unfortunately, some of our priests before the war preached in a way that was not always consistent with the conception of love for all human beings, whatever their nationality and religion might be, not in a way that Jesus taught us.”...

Then, [Father Alojzy] explained to them that the certificates of baptism and marriage had to be written on old forms, that of baptism on a form used in or around the time of Karolina’s birth, the certificate of marriage on a form used before the Second World War. In the Lwów monastery [of the Bernardines], they had neither form. He knew that they still had the marriage forms in the village parish about 20 kilometres from Lwów. Andrzej would have to go there with a message from Father Alojzy, and bring the forms to him.

It was much more complicated to get the form for baptism. Each baptism was entered in the parochial books of baptism. In addition, at the end of the calendar year, the parson sent a register of all baptisms in his parish to the archdiocese, where each baptism was entered in the archdiocesan books. Both the parochial and the archdiocesan offices were, at the same time, offices of the civil state, providing data on the population to state registers. Therefore, even with the access to the archdiocesan books, it was dangerous to enter Karolina’s name into them because it could be easily discovered that her baptism had not been registered in the parochial books. To avoid this danger, it was necessary to find a church in which the parochial books of the period close to her birth had been destroyed, burnt during the First World War, between the two wars, or at the beginning of the Second World War. ...

After telling the bishop how grateful Karolina's family was for his generous offer, Ludwik [Andrzej's father] asked for a short delay before giving a definite answer. After a lapse of two weeks, he went to the diocese with a negative answer, carrying the message of immense gratitude of Karolina's family and trying to explain the attitude of Juliusz [Karolina's father]. The bishop was sad, but not surprised: "Unfortunately it is not the first time that we have seen such an attitude. We will pray for them with the hope that they will accept our offer and that when this happens it will not be too late. Sometimes just one hour, one minute, means life or death. As long as there exists such a possibility, our doors stay open for them."...

The parson [of a small village close to Glinna Nawaria, about 20 kilometres from Lwów] welcomed him [Andrzej] warmly when he mentioned that he had been sent by Father Alojzy. The parson was in his seventies but still in good shape and agile. He handed Andrzej baptism and marriage forms printed before the outbreak of war in 1939. He did not ask any questions, but, as he passed to Andrzej a bunch of forms, mentioned: "Father Alojzy might need more. God bless you, young man. Take care when travelling." ...

Juliusz and his family had the same problems [with food and heating materials]. Great help was given to them by [Sister] Filomena. She became their frequent guest, always bringing vegetables and fruit from the convent garden. Some other nuns, from the nearby Convent of Sisters of the Holy Sacrament, were also bringing food from their garden. Andrzej never learned who had told them about Juliusz's family, whether it was Filomena or Father Alojzy. ...

... They discussed with him [Juliusz] many times the proposal of Bishop Baziak. Ludwik went again to see Juliusz and told him that the proposal was still valid. But Juliusz did not revise his former decision ...

They [Andrzej and Karolina] went to see Father Alojzy before their departure. He was in a very depressed state, having been seriously affected by stories of Nazi atrocities. They discussed with him many problems, and they saw how open-minded this priest was. They discussed with him the problem of informers, those who betrayed because of their profound anti-Semitism. Father Alojzy blamed the situation not only on the Germans. "We have to admit," he said, "that we have bred our own kind of anti-Semitism in Poland a long time before the war. It was advocated by our own pre-war government—taught by some teachers in the schools and universities, by some physicians in the hospitals, by some lawyers in the courts, by some industrialists in factories, merchants in shops, and, we have to confess, by some of our priests in offering public or private advice, even in the church. This was not what Jesus taught us to do. We need a better society after the war. We have to recognize what mistakes we made and never repeat them again. Our true Polish patriotism has nothing in common with hatred of other nations. Our Catholic religion has nothing to do with the hatred of other religions. The free will given by God means a good will, full of love for other human beings, whatever their religion, whatever their race, colour of skin or social class. Our God does not want false patriots whose principal program is to hate people of other religions or other nations. For the actions of some informers, we have to take partial responsibility. It is our sin that we have not fought hard enough against the hatred in human hearts." He appeared to them to be inspired by God. He blessed them and promised to be in contact: "Do not forget to notify me if you feel in danger. Remember that I am praying for you and I will act for you in any capacity that could be helpful." ...

... Andrzej went to see Father Alojzy in the monastery. The terrible story of Karolina's family was an awful shock for him. He could not conceal his tears. He knelt and prayed for a long while. Then he told Andrzej about the terrible events that were taking place in the ghetto of Lwów. ...

Andrzej then went to the convent of Filomena. She was terribly moved by the story of the tragedy in Orelec.<sup>1049</sup>

When travelling home by train from a village parish about 150 kilometres from Lwów, Andrzej saw a young woman inform on a Jewish passenger, to which a priest reacted with vehemence.

After a short time the train stopped in a small railway station. The [German] policeman kicked the already unconscious old man out of the train and shot him.

There was silence, full of fear and terror, in the train. Even the informer did not say a word. After a while, when the train began to move, a peasant in the corridor between Andrzej and the informer asked: "Why did you do this? How could you be so cruel?" "Shut up," she shrieked. "I will ask the policeman to check you. Perhaps you are also a disguised Jew." The peasant did not say a word and moved towards the end of the corridor. The train was moving slowly, leaving on the platform the body of the massacred man.

The informer returned to her compartment. Opposite her sat a young priest. After a while, he said: "God will never forgive you. You, and not the policeman, you yourself killed this innocent, poor man. Even when, after confession, some priests might absolve you and forgive on this earth, I can assure you that God has condemned you already for ever. You will suffer for ever, because you are not a human being. You are an Evil. For Evil there is only one place—hell."

The young woman started at once to cry. The priest returned to his breviary.<sup>1050</sup>

The Weingrün and Lewkowicz families—consisting of Józef Weingrün, his wife, Gustawa, and their daughter, Felicja, as well as Leon Lewkowicz, his parents and sister—were able to survive with the assistance of Rev. Bolesław Grudzieński, a Lwów prelate with ties to the right-wing National Party (Stronictwo Narodowe).

Rev. Grudzieński also helped other Jews. After the war, in 1947, the Communist regime staged a show trial in Warsaw at which Rev. Grudzieński and other members of the Committee of the Eastern Lands (Komitet Ziemi Wschodnich) were prosecuted for crimes against the state. Two Jewish witnesses, Stefania Weingrün Westreich (Józef Weingrün's daughter) and Leon Lewkowicz, came forward in defence of Rev. Grudzieński, attesting to his compassion towards Jews and the assistance he provided them without any compensation.<sup>1051</sup>

<sup>1049</sup> Jus, *Our Journey in the Valley of Tears*, 74, 78–80, 84, 90, 93, 106, 108, 131–32, 169.

<sup>1050</sup> Jus, *Our Journey in the Valley of Tears*, 95–96.

<sup>1051</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 210. The sworn statements of Leon Lewkowicz and Stefania Weingrün Westreich, August 16, 1947, are found in the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej



Rev. Michał Banach, a vicar at St. Elizabeth Parish in Lwów, issued falsified birth and baptismal certificates for Jews helped by Tadeusz Kobylko and provided Kobylko with an antedated (prewar) marriage certificate which he used to pretend he was married to Fajga (Fani) Ginsberg, whom he was sheltering.<sup>1052</sup>

While serving in the Polish army, Tadeusz Kobylko [Kobyłko] from Lwow [Lwów] made friends with Jewish recruits who helped him when, in September 1939, Lwow was annexed to the Soviet Union. In 1941, when the Germans occupied Lwow, Kobylko decided to repay his Jewish friends, and in July arranged for a group of Jews from Lwow to stay with the Kellers, a Jewish family who lived in nearby Stary Sambor. Keller prepared a bunker for the refugees, fed them, and saw to all their needs. In the spring of 1942, during a German raid, most of the hiding places in the village were discovered and the Jews who were hiding were killed. Kobylko, fearing that the Kellers' bunker would be discovered, took Fajga (Fani) Ginsberg back to his apartment in Lwow, where he passed her off as his wife, Maria. Later, shortly before the liquidation of the Jews of Stary Sambor, Salka Keller, Fajga's sister, sent a note to Kobylko informing him that she had left her four-year-old daughter, Ita, behind in the bunker. At great personal risk, Kobylko made his way to the bunker and took little Ita back with him to Lwow. When the neighbors became suspicious, Kobylko moved to a new apartment, where Fani, whom he had meanwhile married, gave birth to a baby boy. After Lwow's liberation in the summer of 1944, Kobylko was suspected of collaborating with the Germans, and it was only thanks to his Jewish friends, who testified to his courage and altruism during the occupation, that he was released. After the war, Kobylko and Fani moved with their son and little Ita to an area within the new Polish borders. Later, Fani separated from her husband and immigrated to Israel with her son and niece.<sup>1053</sup>

Itta Keller (now Ben Haiem) is the daughter of Shlomo and Sara Ginsburg. She was born in Lvov [Lwów], the closest hospital to her shtetl, Stary Sambor, on July 2, 1939. Shlomo worked there in a hardware store owned by his father, Shimon Keller. The family lived with Sara's mother, Rivka Ginsburg, and had a home with a large cellar that they used to hide Jewish refugees who were fleeing to the Soviet Union in the fall of 1939. Sara's sister, Fanny, worked in a chocolate factory in Lvov before the war where she became friendly with a co-worker, Tadeusz Kobylko [Kobyłko]. After the Germans took control of the region in 1941, Fanny came home to visit her sister in Stary Sambor and got caught in an Aktion. Fanny ran away and by chance met Tadeusz in a field. He offered to shelter Fanny as his wife in his home in Lvov. Tadeusz and Fanny were married by a priest who gave her false papers, but the couple had to move on more than one occasion when neighbors suspected that she was Jewish. Tadeusz also promised to help Sara if conditions worsened. In August 1942, the Germans conducted a roundup of the Jews of Stary Sambor. Before the deportation, Sara sent a message to Tadeusz that "uncle is very sick." This was a prearranged code for him to come and rescue Itta. She was hidden in the cellar with food and drink. Sara and her mother Rivka Ginsburg were deported to Belzec [Bełżec] where they perished. Shlomo's fate remained unknown. Tadeusz came to Stary Sambor and retrieved the little girl. He wrapped her in blankets and carried her out as if she was a package. On the way back

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(Institute of National Remembrance) Archives, reference no. 1021/167, vol. 3, items 319, 322.

<sup>1052</sup> Testimony of Tadeusz Kobylko, JHI, record group 301, no. 6612.

<sup>1053</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 358.

to Lvov, Ukrainian guards with dogs chased him, and he had to jump into a lake, holding Itta aloft, so that the scent of the dogs would be thrown off. For the remainder of the war, Itta lived with her aunt, Tadeusz and their son Adam as their daughter under the name Irena Kobylko. During the war Tadeusz worked for the Polish railroads so that he could get information to help the underground. After the family was liberated on April 14, 1944, the Russians arrested Tadeusz and accused him of being a collaborator because of his work for the railroads. Only the testimony of Fanny secured his release. Tadeusz offered to convert to Judaism and attempted to leave for Palestine with Fanny and the two children, but he was not able to get a visa and permission to travel. Fanny and the children left Poland with Rabbi Herzog's children's transport and never saw Tadeusz again. They came to France and lived for a year in the village of Schirmeck before sailing to Palestine in October 1947 on board the *Providence*. Fanny settled in Tel Aviv but wasn't able to support the children and was forced to place Itta and Adam in boarding schools. Not receiving support from her family who was already in Israel, Fanny had to struggle until the end of her life in 1992. Itta and Adam married and live in Israel. Tadeusz Kobylko remarried and had three children. Yad Vashem recognized him as a Righteous Among the Nations. He died in 1975.<sup>1054</sup>

**A**lina Potok obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate from St. Casimir Parish in Lwów, with the assistance of Home Army contacts.<sup>1055</sup>

**F**r. Stanisław Mirek was one of several Jesuits who extended help to Jews at St. Peter and Paul Church in Lwów. He rescued the Amstisławski family—Janusz, Helena, and their son Jan (b. 1937)—by providing them with shelter in the Jesuit residence in Lwów and false identity documents under the name of Goślicki, with which they passed as Catholic Poles in Kraków.<sup>1056</sup>

**R**ev. Franciszek Jędrzkiewicz sheltered three Jewish women in the attic (*strych*) of the parish church in the Lwów suburb of Persenkówka, from December 1943 until the Soviet army entered the city in July 1944. He also provided birth and baptismal certificates to a number of Jews, among them Izraeler and the Szklarz family from Kraków.<sup>1057</sup>

**A**fter leaving their hiding place in Lwów, Adela Sygall (later Adele Milchman, b. 1924) and another young Jewish woman, holding themselves out to be Christians—a ruse that was not usually questioned—turned to a random priest encountered in a street, asking for overnight shelter. The priest directed them to the home of a trusted parishioner. Afterwards, the women approached a random

<sup>1054</sup> "Portrait of a Rescuer, Tadeusz Kobylko," Photograph no. 04947, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa31088>.

<sup>1055</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 151.

<sup>1056</sup> Stanisław Cieślak, "Polscy jezuici zaangażowani w pomoc Żydom w latach II wojny światowej," in Wenklar, *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici*, 125–98.

<sup>1057</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 830.

convent in Lwów. Once again, they were taken in by nuns for the night. Both of these women survived in hiding.<sup>1058</sup>

While still in Lwów, Józef Mützenmacher (b. 1921) received from a Polish acquaintance a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Jan Kot, who had enlisted in the Polish Army in September 1939 and went missing in action. Józef was informed that both the parents of the missing man and the priest who issued the certificate knew about the deception and, if needed, would testify that Kot had been found and was working for the Germans. After escaping from the Lwów ghetto, Józef and a friend, who also had Polish identity papers, obtained employment in German factories in Dnepropetrovsk, and then in Kharkov and Poltava.<sup>1059</sup>

Rachel Kupferberg had befriended some Catholic nuns while working in a hospital during the Soviet occupation of Lwów. After the Germans occupied Lwów in the summer of 1941, she placed her young daughter, Edna (Alma), who was then seven years old, in the care of those nuns. When the Germans threatened to expel the nuns from their convent, Kupferberg, who was passing as an Arab from Palestine and had secured employment at a German military hospital, intervened successfully with her superior to prevent this from happening.<sup>1060</sup>

Adele Fiszer found employment in the kitchen of a Catholic convent in Lwów thanks to the help of a priest, Rev. Jan Sokołowski, to whom she had been introduced by a Polish Catholic friend. She describes the nuns as Franciscans. (Rev. Sokołowski was the chaplain of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.) Fiszer lived in the convent for about one year.

In November 1943, she was arrested by the Gestapo and Ukrainian police after Bronia Dimand, a Jewish friend to whom she had confided her whereabouts, was herself arrested and, under torture, disclosed the hiding places of other Jews. The nuns insisted she was a Catholic, but to no avail. Fiszer was sent to a work camp in Austria, where she met a Pole who smuggled her out and took her to Hungary.

<sup>1058</sup> Testimony of Adele Milchman, SFV, Interview code 24495. Milchman was sheltered by Karolina Łaba and her mother, with whom the other woman, Manya, also stayed for a time. Later, Manya married a Pole with whom she had a child, only to leave him soon after the war.

<sup>1059</sup> Jan Kot, *Ruleta kasztanów: Wierna opowieść o młodości wzrosłej w burzliwą dojrzałość podczas światowego kataklizmu* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2003), 132, translated as *Chestnut Roulette: The Amazing Story of a Lvov Jewish Youth Who Triumphs Over Adversity, Outwitting the Nazis and Luftwaffe!* (Jerusalem: Mazo Publishers, 2008).

<sup>1060</sup> Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 184–85.

In Hungary, she met the brother of another Polish friend of hers from Lwów who provided her with his deceased sister's Soviet passport. Fiszer was then registered as a Pole. She survived the war and returned to Poland.<sup>1061</sup>

The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of Lwów sheltered some Jewish converts for several months, and a young Jewish woman for three years. Rev. Jan Nowicki, a chaplain at the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, tended to their charges' spiritual needs.<sup>1062</sup>

Wanda Mehr (née Ida Spiegler), whose husband was killed in German captivity at the beginning of the war, and her daughter, Frieda (b. 1939), were able to survive the war with the assistance of several Poles, including priests. While living in Lwów, Ida and her sisters were helped by the Polish caretakers of the buildings in which they resided. A Polish benefactor obtained birth and baptismal certificates from a Catholic parish for Ida (as Wanda Grabowieńska), for Frieda, and for Wanda's sister, Ela (as Krystyna Pawlik). With those documents, Ida and Ela allowed themselves to be rounded up on the street for forced labour in Germany.

Before they went to Germany in 1943, Ida and her daughter were taken in by Józefa Głębocka, a poor single mother of two young children who lived in a small, one-room hovel with her two young children. When Ida's daughter fell ill, nuns at the hospital allowed Frieda to stay there for some time despite the fact that they knew she was Jewish. Ida was arrested in a sweep of black marketers and held six months in the prison on Łąckiego Street. She was released after a priest, whom she did not know, convinced the German officials that she was his parishioner when he visited the prison.

After her release from prison, Ida was followed by plainclothes policemen who suspected she was Jewish. In order to shake them, Ida entered St. Anne's church. She was still there when the priest wanted to close the church for the night. Surmising her predicament, the priest allowed Ida to remain on the church premises until the following morning. Ida's daughter, Frieda, survived the war in Lwów with Głębocka, and later was reunited with her mother.<sup>1063</sup>

<sup>1061</sup> Testimony of Adela Fiszer, JHI, record group 301, no. 2525, noted in Michał Czajka, Maria Młodkowska, and Apolonia Umińska-Keff, eds., *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespół 301, Nr. 2001–3000 / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue: Jewish Historical Institute Archives, Record Group 301, No. 2001–3000*, vol. 3 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2001), 216.

<sup>1062</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 121.

<sup>1063</sup> Testimony of Wanda Mehr, SFV, Interview code 26609. Mehr's parents and youngest brother were offered sanctuary by a Ukrainian priest in Gródek Jagielloński. They stayed in the church cellar for about two months but were denounced by the priest's hired hand and seized by the Germans.

**K**lara Weintraub (later Lala Fishman, b. 1922) recalled the assistance that she and her Jewish friend, Mila, received from Polish friends in Lwów when they decided that they would attempt to pass as Christians. They needed to become acquainted with Catholic prayers and rituals. They secured birth and baptismal certificates through connections with the Catholic Church.

It was time to leave Lvov [Lwów]. ... Mila also felt as I did. When I broached the idea of leaving to her, she enthusiastically endorsed it. The success of the plan hinged on fulfilling two requirements obtaining “Aryan papers,” counterfeit documents that identified us as Poles; and learning how to pass ourselves off as Polish Catholics. We straightaway embarked upon a crash course in Catholic prayer and ritual. Our instructors were sympathetic Gentiles, boys and girls around my age. Several of them had been friends of Fima [her brother]; now they were my friends too. Occasionally, they dropped by the apartment to drink tea and talk about the war and finally to help transform us into believable if not believing Catholics.

... Our friends taught us how to genuflect and make the sign of the cross with a convincing display of piety. They provided us with copies of the catechism, and we memorized all the material therein. They also gave us silver crucifixes to wear on chains around our necks, just like the ones every Gentile in Poland seemed to wear. I secretly resolved, however, that although I would attend mass and kneel and appear to pray like a Catholic, I would not take Holy Communion, I would go through all the motions of being a Catholic save this one; and when I prayed, I would make up my own prayer, silently asking God for his aid and protection. I meant no disrespect to the Catholic Church and Christians by these actions. Rather, I felt that it would be both sacrilegious [sic] and blasphemous for me to do otherwise. I believed that for a Jew to willingly accept what Catholics believed was literally the body and blood of Christ would be a sin, an insult both to my Jewish heritage and to the Christians who were doing so much—and placing themselves in such danger—on my behalf.

At any rate, Mila and I engaged in our Christian studies with the diligence of nuns preparing to take their vows, and I daresay that before long we could have gone into any church in Poland and played the role of devout Catholics without arousing any suspicions whatsoever among the genuine Christians. Sadly, the same could not be said for my mother and sister. Rysia was just nine years old, and therefore too young to learn Catholic rites and prayers, much less comprehend the urgent necessity for doing so. And my mother, devastated by grief, had undergone what amounted to a nervous breakdown and was incapable of the intense effort that even a false conversion to Catholicism demanded from her.

Nevertheless, we pressed forward with the scheme. Getting Aryan papers would have to be our next step. But how? This problem was solved when some of Fima’s friends brought a Catholic boy named Staszek to the apartment for one of our evening get-togethers. Staszek had been told about our plans and wanted to help. He mentioned that he could get four blank birth certificates (*metrycas* [*metryka*]) from his parish priest. ...

Staszek got us the birth certificates. ... We filled out the certificates with false names but with our actual birthdays. I decided that my name would be Urszula Krzyzanowska [Krzyzanowska]. A very Christian name. My mother, Mila, and Rysia each took a different name. We did not want to appear in any way related—an important consideration if one of us was arrested. At the bottom of each document was a blank line where the parish

priest was supposed to sign his name. I thought up a likely name for the priest and then, wielding my pen with a flourish, signed it on all the documents in bold, sweeping letters.<sup>1064</sup>

After their parents were seized by the Ukrainian militia in Lwów on July 5, 1941, Blanka Reischstein (later Drexler, b. 1925) and her younger sister, Martha, were left to fend for themselves. Blanka recalled, “I had a lot of friends, gentile friends; and my parents had a lot of acquaintances and clients ... Most of them were very, very helpful ... They really risked their lives to help. ... I would say I was in contact with maybe ten people. ... Through four years I think always somebody came through and helped me when I thought all the bridges are burned.”

While residing in the Lwów ghetto, the sisters were helped by various Polish friends who would sell off the family’s belongings in order to purchase food. Martha’s former nursemaid, Józefa Kotowicz, who lived in Czortków, agreed to take Martha first. Blanka left the ghetto with the intention of volunteering for work in Germany. With the help of Poles, she obtained the identity documents of a deceased schoolmate. She spent two months in a monastery where a priest instructed her on the fundamentals of the Catholic faith. According to Blanka, the whole operation was geared to saving her life by teaching her how to pass as Christian Pole, not to convert her.

When the plan to register for work in Germany fell through, Blanka moved around, staying at various places. Eventually, she joined her sister in Czortków, where the Kotowicz family was sheltering ten Jews in a specially constructed hideout. “Most of the gentiles that hid Jews,” Blanka recalled, “their nerves were shattered. Everybody’s, you know. My sister was there for almost two years. I was there for nine months. ... They were all loving and so patient and so understanding. ... Those people worked day and night ... By the time you get ten people processed. She was cooking at night in a big pot. ... They were two people with two tiny kids. They didn’t need those big pots. She baked bread at night. Obviously she wouldn’t buy bread. ... She was so good to me, this woman. ... She was very religious ... She lived it.”<sup>1065</sup>

Armenian Catholics, comprised of a tiny community of several thousand based in Eastern Galicia, formed a separate rite of the Roman Catholic Church, with

<sup>1064</sup> Lala Fishman and Steven Weingartner, *Lala’s Story: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 173–75.

<sup>1065</sup> Oral history interview with Blanka Drexler, USHMM, Accession no. 1999.A.0122.1180, RG-50.477.1180; Testimony of Blanka Drexler, SFV, Interview code 18795; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 384.



their own archdiocesan seat in Lwów.<sup>1066</sup> Although they considered themselves to be Poles, the Germans did not repress their clergy in the systematic manner they repressed Polish clergy.

Several of Armenian Catholic priests are credited with helping Jews, especially by providing them with false documents: Rev. Dionizy Kajetanowicz, the administrator of the Armenian-rite archdiocese of Lwów; Rev. Kazimierz Romaszkan of Lwów; Rev. Samuel Manugiewicz, the pastor of Kutý; Rev. Leon Isakowicz, the pastor of Stanisławów; and Rev. Kazimierz Roszko, a vicar in Stanisławów and, from 1942, administrator of the parish in Horodenka.<sup>1067</sup>

Rev. Kajetanowicz, the administrator of the Armenian-rite archdiocese of Lwów, provided false baptismal certificates to a number of Jews, among them the family of Joachim Schoenfeld.<sup>1068</sup> Other beneficiaries included: Zdzisław Rotter, and several of his relatives; Dr. Emil Rosenberg (who became Emil Wartanowicz), and his wife; Roman Liebes; Ewa Feierbach (passing as Łaska); the Landes sisters, namely, Ludwika Leiner and Janina Schweitzer; Walter Auerbach and his wife, Salomea; Dr. Szymon Licht and his daughter, Irena Stefania (whose rescue is described earlier).

Rev. Kajetanowicz was arrested on April 13, 1943, following an investigation by German authorities into the use of Armenian Catholic documents by Jews. The examination of the records of the Armenian-rite archdiocese was prompted by the discovery of Dr. Artur Elmer, who was in possession of such a document, in the residence of Rev. Bolesław Twardowski, the Latin-rite Archbishop of Lwów (described earlier). Fortunately, Rev. Kajetanowicz was released through the intervention of Rev. Andrzej Szeptycki, the Uniate Archbishop of Lwów, with the payment of a hefty bribe.<sup>1069</sup>

According to Jewish sources, Rev. Manugiewicz, the pastor of Kutý near Kołomyja, sheltered Jews, among them the local rabbi, and implored his parishioners to help Jews.<sup>1070</sup>

<sup>1066</sup> Armenian Catholics were fully integrated into Polish society and identified with the Polish State. Archbishop Józef Teodorowicz, who died in December 1938, was a staunch Polish patriot and actively promoted Polish political causes.

<sup>1067</sup> Andrzej A. Zięba, "Ukraińcy, Polacy i niemiecka zagłada Żydów," in Andrzej A. Zięba, ed., *OUN, UPA i zagłada Żydów* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2016), xxx–xxxii.

<sup>1068</sup> Schoenfeld, *Holocaust Memoirs*, 58–59, 215.

<sup>1069</sup> Andrzej A. Zięba, "Ukraińcy, Polacy i niemiecka zagłada Żydów," in Zięba, *OUN, UPA i zagłada Żydów*, xxx–xxxii.

<sup>1070</sup> Entry for "Kutý," in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pol2\\_00460.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00460.html), translated from *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), 460–63; Andrzej A. Zięba, "Ukraińcy, Polacy i niemiecka zagłada Żydów," in Zięba, *OUN, UPA i zagłada Żydów*, xxxi.

Rev. Kazimierz Romaszkan, a priest of the Roman Catholic Armenian rite based in Lwów, Rev. Bronisław Jakubowski of Ryków near Złoczów, and another unidentified priest are mentioned in testimonies found at Yad Vashem.

Romashkian [Rev. Kazimierz Romaszkan] ... concealed [Rina] the fifteen-year-old daughter of Bertha Kahana [Berta Scharf-Kahane] and treated her devotedly as he did his niece, Krystyna, a fifteen-year-old in poor health. Additional Poles [among them Rev. Bronisław Jakubowski<sup>1071</sup>] and Ukrainians came to Kahana's assistance; they include the Litwak and Brodziński families, who furnished her with "Aryan" papers.

An anonymous priest assisted Zyla Menkes-Fast [Cyla Menkes-Fast], who had fled from the Janowska camp with an infant in her arms. Poles helped her obtain "Aryan" papers with which she could escape from Lvov [Lwów].<sup>1072</sup>

The aforementioned Cyla Menkes-Fast (b. 1907), was a teacher married to an engineer. Her husband was arrested with a number of other prominent Jews when the Germans occupied Lwów in June 1941. She never found out what happened to him. In the fall of 1941, she gave birth to a daughter. Cyla looked like a Pole and spoke Polish fluently. She escaped from the Lwów ghetto during a deportation, with her babe in arms. The two of them survived the war, helped by a number of Polish friends, acquaintances and even strangers, including a Catholic priest for whom Cyla expressed gratitude in her Yad Vashem testimony.<sup>1073</sup>

When the two reached the outskirts of the town with its high grass, they sat down to rest. She was at a loss as to what to do next. At that point, a woman came by and invited mother and child to her nearby cottage. Later on, thanking her for the hospitality, Cyla left to seek out some of her Polish friends for help. In fact, one of these friends helped her buy false papers. She stayed for two weeks in the homes of two other Polish friends. The yet another Polish friend located a young, unmarried Polish woman who was willing to adopt the six-month-old baby. This required a birth certificate, which the local priest supplied, together with other needed documents. Again, the unexpected happened. At the moment of parting, the baby clung to her mother, crying loudly. There was something so disheartening and sorrowful in the infant's crying that the Polish woman who came for her could not take her. The baby stayed with Cyla, who soon found a job as a cook on an estate.

<sup>1071</sup> Testimony of Berta (Szarf) Kahane, YVA, file O.3/2541 (Item 3556560).

<sup>1072</sup> Eliyahu Yones, *Smoke in the Sand: The Jews of Lvov in the War Years 1939–1944* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2004), 252. After leaving the Lwów ghetto, Rina Scharf (later Chelmska, b. 1928) went to stay with Mrs. Budzyńska, who taught her Catholic prayers and practices. Mrs. Budzyńska approached Rev. Kazimierz Romaszkan, who found accommodations for Rina together with his niece, Krystyna Romaszkan. Rina's mother also stayed there for a short time. After a police raid on the premises, Rina moved elsewhere. She lived openly as Janina Kwolek, a name she assumed based on a report card given to her by her former schoolmate. See the testimony of Rina Chelmska, SFV, Interview code 20694.

<sup>1073</sup> Testimony of Cyla Menkes-Fast, YVA, file O.33/634. See also Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, 254.

She welcomed the work and the peace that came with it. In her free time she befriended a teacher, a woman who was out of work, and a Polish woman who was helping Jews who lived in a nearby forest. Cyla supplied food to these new friends.

All ran smoothly until a new law was passed requiring Poles to get special working papers. As a result, the estate manager discovered that Cyla's birth certificate was fake, and he asked her to leave immediately. She was glad that he did not denounce her to the authorities. Several Christian friends helped by keeping her for a day or two. This sporadic aid, together with her strong will to protect her baby, kept her going. Her prospects improved dramatically when one of her friends found her a job with a German officer who was looking for a cook. There she worked practically until the 1944 takeover by the Red Army.<sup>1074</sup>

Irena Wilder (later Krystyna Winecka, or Christine Winecki, b. 1928), a teenage girl from Stanisławów, took refuge in Lwów with her aunt. Her aunt approached a Catholic priest, Rev. Józef Czapran, the pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Church, who provided the child with a false birth certificate. A nun taught her Catholic prayers, to assist her in passing as a Pole. These lessons proved to be invaluable when Wilder was later apprehended and interrogated in Warsaw. Rev. Czapran was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2022.

When the train slowly arrived at the railway station in Lwow [Lwów] I was 130 kilometres from home ...

By midnight I found myself in the caring arms of Aunt Lucja [Łucja]. ... At the sight of me she started to cry, and before long I too burst into tears. I was not aware at the time that Jews were also being killed in Lwow. ...

The Jews of Lwow were prepared for the worst. They knew their days were numbered and that those who could still save themselves had no time to lose. The following day Aunt Lucja took me to St Anthony's Church in the suburb of Lyczakow [Łyczaków], where the local vicar, Father Czapran, issued me with a birth certificate from the parish registry of births, marriages and deaths for the year 1930. Thus disappeared Irena Wilder, born in Stanislawow [Stanisławów], daughter of Oscar and Janina, of Jewish denomination, her place taken by Maria Wilska, female, aged 11, daughter of Katarzyna (father unknown), of Roman Catholic faith.

The same day Aunt Lucja placed me in the care of Uncle Ludwik and his wife Aunt Stefa who both lived in Grandmother Amalia's house on Mała [Mała] Street. Every morning now I would go to church, where the good Sister Benedykta taught me the words of the Catholic prayers. In the quiet, semi-dark atmosphere of the church permeated with the smell of incense, I felt safe there and I could cry uninterrupted.

Several days later, at the beginning of January 1942, I fled from Lwow together with Uncle Ludwik, Aunt Stefa and cousin Zbyszek, leaving Stanislawow even farther behind ...<sup>1075</sup>

<sup>1074</sup> Patricia Heberer, *Children during the Holocaust* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2011), xl–xli.

<sup>1075</sup> Winecki, *The Girl in the Check Coat*, 61–62.

Polish accounts confirm that Franciscans from St. Anthony's Church in Lwów assisted in rescuing Jewish children.<sup>1076</sup> Andrzej Tarasek, a blind organist at St. Anthony's, was recognized by Yad Vashem for rescuing five Jews.<sup>1077</sup>

The Dominican monastery in Lwów manufactured documents for Jews on a large scale.

Priests from the monastery were moved by the tragedy of the Jews, especially Father Sylwester Paluch and Father Anzelm Jezierski. Not heeding the danger that faced them they provided material assistance to Jewish families. Father Sylwester, with the assistance of a painter by the name of Rzepecki, fabricated some 500 certificates of baptism and distributed them to Jews. The Gestapo became aware of these activities and it was only by sheer luck that the priests escaped repercussions. Many Jews survived on these certificates and some of them attained high positions in postwar Poland. None of them, however, remembered about the humble priest from Lwów. Father Sylwester died in Warsaw on November 3, 1983. None of those rescued through his assistance attended his funeral. He was interned in the order's burial plot in Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw.<sup>1078</sup>

Other priests from Lwów and its environs also provided false documents to Jews. Andrzej Meller, who later moved to Warsaw for the duration of the war, received the birth and baptismal certificate of a deceased parishioner from a priest he was acquainted with.<sup>1079</sup>

The literary critic Oskar Katzenellenbogen, who used the pen name Ostap Ortwin, was not so fortunate. After obtaining a baptismal certificate from Rev. Michał Dobija of St. Mary Magdalene Church, he decided not to hide, remaining at his own home in Lwów. After his arrest by a Jewish policeman, the Germans executed him in the spring of 1942.<sup>1080</sup>

The Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration (Mniszki Klaryski od Wiecznej Adoracji), a cloistered order of nuns, had a history of helping the poor. The need for help increased during the war. From October 1941, with the approval of Church authorities, several Jewish adults took refuge at their convent in Lwów. All survived, among them Dr. and Mrs. Rapacki, who moved to London in 1945. There was also a young woman, an orphan, who asked to be baptized of her

<sup>1076</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 140.

<sup>1077</sup> Andrzej Tarasek, RD.

<sup>1078</sup> Zygmunt Mazur, "Dominikanie we Lwowie (1939–1946)," *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Kraków], September 23, 1990. See also Bizuń, *Historia krzyżem znaczonej*, 94.

<sup>1079</sup> Zila Rennert, *Trois wagons à bestiaux: D'une guerre à l'autre à travers l'Europe centrale, 1914–1946* (Paris: Phébus, 2007), 192; Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 174–78.

<sup>1080</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 184.

own free will. She entered a convent and died as a nun at a young age. In due time, the nuns received messages of gratitude from those they had saved.<sup>1081</sup>

The Sacré Coeur Sisters (Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, in Polish *siostry Sacré Coeur* or formally *Zgromadzenie Najświętszego Serca Jezusa Sacré-Coeur*) sheltered a number of Jews at their two convents in Lwów, located on Plac św. Jura and Łyżwiarska Street: the family of a doctor, several young women, and two children.<sup>1082</sup> Those included the two sisters and brother-in-law of Herman Flajszer, or Fleiszer, passing as Henryk Repa.

During the war, Janina Urbaniak-Nowicka lived in Warsaw. In February 1943, she married Henryk Repa. In May 1943, the Germans arrested Henryk in the street [betrayed by a Jew he had known in Lwów who was working with the Gestapo in Warsaw] and brought him home. It was only then that Janina realized that her husband was Jewish and that his real name was actually Herman Flajszer. However, using her knowledge of German, and by paying a hefty ransom, she was able to convince the Gestapo agent to leave Henryk at home. The following day she brought her husband over to her family; however, she did not reveal Henryk's true origin. Then she rented an apartment in Radosc [Radość], near Warsaw, and told the owners of the building that her husband was suffering from tuberculosis and that the local climate was not good for him. She had to commute to her office in Warsaw. In September 1943, at her husband's request, she went to Lwów to fetch Henryk's mother, Salomea Flajszer-Jablonska [she passed as Maria Jabłońska], as well as Henryk's niece, Anna Fil-Wroblewska [going as Wróblewska] (then aged four), whose parents had been murdered in the Lwów ghetto. All these fugitives were sheltered in Janina's Warsaw apartment. [At the beginning of 1944, Janina again went to Lwów to bring the remainder of Henryk's family to Warsaw, namely two sisters and a brother-in-law. However, they refused to leave their hiding place in the convent of the Sacré-Coeur Sisters.<sup>1083</sup>] In June 1944, she brought them over for "summer vacation" to Golkowo [Gołków], near Piaseczna [Piaseczno]. There, her mother-in-law was represented as her mother while Anna was passed off as Janina's daughter. A few days prior to the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, Janina took Henryk to Warsaw, since in Radosc the Germans were recruiting men to dig trenches. During the uprising, their house was bombed and both of them found themselves in Pruszków [Pruszków] camp. Henryk escaped from a transport to Germany and went to his mother in Golkowo; he then found Janina in Mogielnica. After the liberation of Mogielnica in January 1945, Henryk and Janina separated ...<sup>1084</sup>

<sup>1081</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 113–14.

<sup>1082</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1023; Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 129; Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 153.

<sup>1083</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 380.

<sup>1084</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 838.

Felicja Kohn, a native of Lwów, recalled the assistance provided to Jews, among them her own mother, by Sister Maria Homme of the Sacré-Coeur order in Lwów, the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union in Kraków, and various priests.

My mathematics teacher, godmother and great friend of mine, a Sacré-Coeur nun, Maria Homme, meeting my mother wearing an arm band in the street, took her by the arm and walked by her side down the street—a very dangerous thing to do. A friend of mine had been staying with the same Sister Homme for some time. Also in Cracow [Kraków] I was very warmly received by Myszka P., who got hold of a Kennkarte for me, from the Reverend [Edward] Lubowiecki. ...

In Cracow I was put up for the night by the mother superior of a convent (Mother Superior Łubieńska<sup>1085</sup> of the Ursuline Sisters [of the Roman Union]), despite continuous visitations by the Gestapo. Another sister from the same convent recommended me for suitable jobs, thus making it possible for me to survive. ...

At another place I came upon a girl of Jewish background who had been saved by a priest, the son of a farmer.<sup>1086</sup>

Rachel Kaplan and her daughter, Rita (later Lowenstein, b. 1932), relocated from their hometown of Warsaw to Lwów, where they passed as Catholic Poles. Rita was enrolled in an unidentified convent school as Krystyna Gronowska. The nuns treated her very well. After meeting with her mother, the chaplain let her know that he had surmised that they were Jewish. He provided them with new birth and baptismal certificates, and also visited them and brought them food. Rita participated in religious street processions, often carrying icons.<sup>1087</sup>

Anita Schneck (later Lanner, b. 1939), a resident of Lwów, was six years old when the war broke out. Her parents had divorced. She survived with the help of a number of Poles, including a priest and nuns whom she did not identify, under the identity of Anna Toczyska. Her mother, Helena Erber, and her maternal grandmother, Józefa Erber, survived separately with the help of Poles. After the war, Anita found herself in a state-run orphanage in Kraków, where she was reclaimed by her mother.<sup>1088</sup>

During the German Occupation, they were relocated to the Ghetto, along with tens of thousands of others. “I’d sneak in from where I was hiding to visit my father [Rudolf Schenk], who was in another area. I knew if they would catch me, it would be the end.” When she was 8 years old, her father decided to move. He ended up in the Warsaw Ghetto and par-

<sup>1085</sup> This information is incorrect; Sister Maria Cecylia (Zofia) Łubieńska died in 1937.

<sup>1086</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 259, 260, 262.

<sup>1087</sup> Rita L. [Lowenstein] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2256), FVA; Testimony of Rita Lowenstein, SFV, Interview code 46532.

<sup>1088</sup> Testimony of Anita Lanner, SFV, Interview code 43631.



icipated in the famous Uprising, where he lost his life. [It is not clear whether this refers to the April 1943 ghetto uprising or the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.—Ed.]

Meanwhile, back in Lvov [Lwów], a friend of her father's, an unmarried Polish physician [Tadeusz Toczyski], smuggled Anita out of the Ghetto and took her in as his out-of-wedlock daughter [Anna Toczyska].

"He was a very nice, good man. His mother took care of me. There were others hiding there, and one day, the Gestapo came and led us all out into the street, under guns. Suddenly, I heard this voice, I don't know where it came from, and it said, 'Run, now!' I hesitated, because I didn't know where to go. Then I felt a push on my shoulder and I ran. It was some kind of miracle. Maybe it was the survival voice. Maybe it was the 'pink glasses.' I always believed I would live.

I didn't know where to run. So I went back to the apartment they took me from. The doctor's mother took me to my mother, who was hiding with a Polish woman. I was placed with another family [Piątek]. Every time they had visitors, they'd hide me in a little hope-chest, with holes to breathe."

With them, I had to go to church. The priest baptized me and prepared me for my first communion. He took care of me; maybe he knew I was Jewish. He found a place for me in a Polish orphanage. ...

I was at the orphanage for about a year. Then, in 1944, when the Russians started moving west, the Germans told the orphanage to repatriate. So we went to Krakow [Kraków], where we were dumped in a nun's cloister. The nuns didn't have enough money to support us, so they gave us up for adoption. A wealthy couple [by the name of Grabowicz] adopted me. They had a lot of land, stables and orchards. I loved the country life. Then the Germans and Russians came and took everything. So I was given back—this time to a communist/government orphanage."<sup>1089</sup>

Janine Webber (later Galloway) was born in 1932 in Lwów as Berta Monat, and was known as Niunia. After unsuccessful attempts at sheltering with farmers, she joined a group of 15 Jews, among them her aunt and uncle, Rose (Róża) and Zelig Hochberg. They found refuge in the Lwów suburb of Persenkówka, on an estate (farm) that housed a convent of nuns. The Jewish fugitives were placed there by Franciszek Rzutky, a member of the Home Army known as "Edek," who worked on the estate as a watchman together with his brother Kazimierz (Kazik). Janine spent about a year hiding in cramped quarters in a barn.

Armed with false identity documents in the name of Janina Kapielska, the Polish Committee, a welfare agency in Lwów, dispatched her to a convent in Kraków as a Polish orphan. The nuns undoubtedly inferred that she was Jewish, due to her lack of familiarity with Catholic prayers or rituals. After some time, an elderly priest took Janine and three other girls into his home in order to relieve overcrowding at the convent.

<sup>1089</sup> Pat Launer, "The Girl With the Pink Glasses: Survivor Anita Lanner Found Healing Through Hatha," *San Diego Jewish Journal*, August 2007.

Subsequently, Janine went to work as domestic help for an elderly Polish couple. Her aunt claimed her after the war, as her parents and younger brother had perished. The convent in Lwów was that of the Albertine Sisters. The superior, Sister Floriana Rzuttky, allowed her brothers, Franciszek and Florian, who had escaped from German captivity and had to go into hiding, to manage the farm. After the war, Franciszek Rzuttky moved to Kraków and became a priest. He was recognized as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem.<sup>1090</sup>

Rev. Jan Bałys, the pastor of Siemianówka, a large Polish village some 20 kilometres south of Lwów, sheltered Jews in the parish rectory and protected those who took refuge in the village, among them a couple from Kraków by the name of Mogilnicki, Józef Gabel from Radwań, a Jewish woman named Bronia, and a girl around the age of 17 or 18. Rev. Bałys also provided false identity documents to 5 or 6 Jewish children that Polish villagers took in after they had escaped from a group of Jewish children being driven through Siemianówka en route to Lwów.

A number of other Jews found hiding places in this village. Józef and Aniela Spaliński sheltered Shimon (Szymon) Kahane and his young daughter, Shifra (later Ben Nun, b. 1935). The Spalińskis passed Shifra off as their adopted child, while Shimon hid in the hayloft of their barn. The couple were childless and treated Shifra like a daughter. Aniela Spalińska taught her prayers so the girl could attend church services, and Shifra started going to school. When Shifra's presence came to the attention of the Ukrainian militia, they interrogated Mrs. Spalińska. Rev. Bałys assured the police that the child was the daughter of his washerwoman and was not Jewish.

Rev. Bałys also found employment with villagers for a converted Jew named Józef Gabel, providing him with a false birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Józef Gablewski. He had his nephew take Gabel-Gablewski to Zaleszczyki, where he was employed in a distillery managed by the priest's friend.

<sup>1090</sup> "Edek," Internet: <https://www.edek.film/janine> (Janine) and <https://www.edek.film/finding-edek> (Finding Edek); Klara Jackl, "The Identity of the Title Character of the Film 'Edek' Is Established," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/identity-title-character-film-edek-established>; Testimony of Janine Galloway, SFV, Interview code 28452; Victoria Chandler, "Surviving the Holocaust: One Woman's Story of Courage, Loss and the Strength to Go On," September 8, 2018, Internet: <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/uk/news/a566906/holocaust-survivor-story-janine-weber-poland/>. See also the testimony of Rose Hochberg, SFV, Interview code 34421; Testimony of Róża Hochberg, October 13, 1945, JHI, record group 301, no. 4630. Franciszek Rzuttky was recognized by Yad Vashem along with Tadeusz and Janina Lewandowski, who provided their charges with material assistance. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 453. The Yad Vashem Righteous Among the Nations database identifies 15 rescued Jews. See Franciszek Rzuttky, RD.

Threatened with arrest by the Gestapo, Rev. Bałys left for Limanowa, where he died soon after the war.<sup>1091</sup>

**S**onia (Yudenberg) Rzczinski of Uhnów, near Rawa Ruska, passed as a Catholic Pole with the assistance of several Poles, thanks to the birth and baptismal certificates issued to her by a priest on two occasions and to a Polish woman who acted as intermediary.<sup>1092</sup> The pastor of the local parish at the time was Rev. Józef Tymoczko.

**M**oni Gauer, a native of Rawa Ruska, took refuge in the Reformed Franciscan monastery in Rawa Ruska with the permission of Fr. Jan Podczerwiński (Podczerwieński), the local pastor, who is described as a family friend. With the help of Zbigniew Koropiowski and Józef Szlak, Gauer was able to leave Rawa Ruska with Christian identity documents. He travelled by train to Kraków, where he volunteered for work in Germany. A Polish barber at the registration office protected him by not disclosing his Jewish identity. Gauer survived the war in Germany, passing as a Polish labourer.<sup>1093</sup>

**W**hile staying in Żółkiew, Malwina Wachs, the wife of Henryk Wachs, a physician from Łopatyn, and her daughter Rita (later Shenirer, b. 1930), received forged identity documents from an unidentified priest, as Maria and Krystyna Strzelecka, respectively. A Polish physician, Wacław Talikowski, found them a hiding place with his sister, Jadwiga Jacobson, in Skierniewice, near Warsaw. Jadwiga's husband, Władysław Jacobson, was a lawyer and Home Army member. After the war, the Wachs family was reunited and settled in Israel.<sup>1094</sup>

**R**ichard Kalinowicz, of Jewish origin, was a captain in the Polish army when the war began. During the German occupation, he became a Home Army unit commander in the Sambor region.

<sup>1091</sup> Account of Rozalia Makowiecka-Serafin of Wrocław, December 2, 1997 (in the author's possession); *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 742–43 (Józef Spaliński, Aniela Spalińska); Testimony of Szymon Kahane, JHI, record group 301, no. 1034; Testimony of Shifra (Kahana) Ben Nun, YVA, file 0.3/7897 (Item 3563567); Edward Zawada, "Siemianówka pomaga Żydom," August 1, 2003, Internet: [http://pl.sci.historia.free-usenet.eu/Siemianowka-pomaga-Zydom\\_T4153818\\_S1](http://pl.sci.historia.free-usenet.eu/Siemianowka-pomaga-Zydom_T4153818_S1).

<sup>1092</sup> Sonia (Yudenberg), Rzczinski, "How I Survived," in Natan Ortner, ed., *Uhnów Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: The Uhnów Organization of Israel, 1981), 68, 70 (English section).

<sup>1093</sup> Moni Gauer, "I Was Rescued from a Grave Pit," in Abraham Mordechai Ringel and Joseph Tzi-Hirsch Rubin, eds., *The Rawa-Ruska Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2017), 483–86.

<sup>1094</sup> Testimony of Rita (Vaks) Shnirer, YVA, file 0.3 DT/13142 (Item 10282336); Testimony of Ritah Shenirer, SFV, Interview code 12347.

He recalled that there was a prisoner in the Sambor jail who worked as a *pośmięciuch*, a cleaning man. He was a priest who had been arrested for helping Jews. On a whim, the Gestapo officer in charge did not have him shot but kept him there as a janitor. It seems he was amused by his praying, his “conversations with God” as he called them. This priest/janitor used to conceal food in his cleaning equipment and give it to the Jewish prisoners. ...

Procuring documents was a steady part of the [Home Army] unit’s work. Birth certificates were obtained regularly from a Father [Antoni] Żołnierczyk in Sambor, though Kalinowicz did not hesitate to forge some himself. He still had the official rubber stamp from St. Elizabeth Parish in Lwów. ...

The Dipel family of Sambor ran one of the largest shelters [for Jews]. The mother and her brother, Father Stojakowski, were famous for their help. The three sons, Tadeusz, Julian and Juliusz, all belonged to Kalinowicz’s unit and to Żegota.<sup>1095</sup>

Stanisław Burza-Karliński (nom de guerre “Burza”), a Home Army unit commander in the Piotrków Trybunalski region, oversaw the preparation of hundreds of false identity documents by a special cell in his underground organization. Involved in this operation were trusted workers in the county office as well as Catholic parishes that issued false birth and baptismal certificates, which were required in order to obtain a Kennkarte (German identity document). Some of those priests, identified fifty years later, were: Rev. Marian Skoczewski (nom de guerre “Ksawery”); Rev. Patora from Kamieński; Rev. Jan Golonka and Rev. Stanisław Musiał from Ręczno; Rev. Kazimierz Secomski from Bąkowa Góra; Rev. Ewaryst Gałązka from Lubień; unidentified priests from the parishes of Sulejów, Paradyż, Żarnów, Kazimierzów, Przedbórz, and Piotrków; and the Bernardine Fathers.<sup>1096</sup>

The risks involved in such exploits could be horrific. Rev. Jan Wiślak, the pastor of Miechów and a Home Army chaplain, worked closely with an underground cell of the Home Army that “legalized” documents for endangered persons. With his permission, Franciszek Grzebieluch, the church organist, issued hundreds of birth and baptismal certificates which were then used to obtain false German identity documents (Kennkarten), with the assistance of Marian Urbański, a county clerk, who fabricated the documents, and Bronisław Falencki, who distributed them. These men provided more than a dozen Jews with such documents. One of them, Maria Bochner from Miechów, was arrested in Przemyśl on March 12, 1943, and interrogated about the source of her falsified papers. As a result, Falencki was arrested and sent to Auschwitz. He was tortured cruelly; his genitals were crushed with pliers in order to extract from

<sup>1095</sup> Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Zegota*, 1st ed., 148–49; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Zegota*, 2nd ed., 137–38; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota*, 3rd ed., 148–49.

<sup>1096</sup> Statement of Stanisław Burza-Karliński, February 9, 1993 (in the author’s possession).

him the names of his accomplices. The Germans apprehended and executed some of them. The church organist went into hiding for the duration of the war.

Rev. Widłak also placed Jewish children in the county orphanage run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and in the private homes of his parishioners. In 1942, Rev. Widłak received a Jewish couple from Wieluń by the name of Walter. They were converts to Catholicism. He cared for them together with his vicar, Rev. Stefan Podsiedlik. Previously, the Walters had been sheltered by Rev. Szczepan Sobalkowski, vice-rector of the Senior Seminary in Kielce, who served as chaplain of the Kielce District of the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne). Rev. Sobalkowski took the Walters under his roof even though he resided next door to the German gendarmerie. He continued to provide assistance to them (food and the like) after they moved to Miechów, where they survived the war, passing as Poles. Rev. Sobalkowski's exploits came to light after the Communist security police arrested him in 1948. The Walters came forward in his defence during his show trial, and Rev. Sobalkowski drew a relatively lenient sentence of seven years. After his release from prison, he was appointed the auxiliary bishop of Kielce.<sup>1097</sup>

Together with his mother, siblings and grandfather, Zew Weinreb (b. 1928) left the city of Łódź and took up residence in Wolbrom, north of Kraków. During the liquidation of the Wolbrom ghetto in November 1942, the family escaped and was sheltered by an unidentified priest at his rectory in a nearby village. Since German manhunts in the vicinity made the presence of Jews in his home especially menacing, the priest supplied them with false identity documents, and they moved on.<sup>1098</sup>

Rev. Józef Jarża, the pastor of Bydlin, near Olkusz, sheltered a mixed Polish-Jewish family from Wolbrom until the end of the war.<sup>1099</sup> Alexander Bronowski and his family were passing as Poles in the village of Imbramowice, near Wolbrom.

<sup>1097</sup> Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs; New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 195; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 827–28, 858–59; Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 189–90 (Entry 317); Daniel Wojciechowski, “Ksiądz biskup Szczepan Sobalkowski (1901–1958)—charyzmatyczny kaznodzieja i wychowawca młodzieży,” *Nasz Dziennik*, July 28–29, 2007; Daniel Wojciechowski, “Zasłużony w ratowaniu Żydów skazanych na zagładę: Ksiądz infułat Jan Widłak (1892–1974),” *Nasz Dziennik*, September 27–28, 2008; Daniel Wojciechowski, *“Księża niezłomni”: Diecezja kielecka* (Włoszczowa–Kurzelów: Print, 2011).

<sup>1098</sup> Testimony of Zew Weinreb, JHL, record group 301, no. 1389.

<sup>1099</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 250.

Although their true identity became known to the priest and other villagers, no one interfered with or molested them.<sup>1100</sup>

Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek of Kielce was personally engaged in the rescue of Mieczysław Lubelski, a renowned sculptor of Jewish origin, who survived the war in hiding. To this end, he enlisted the support of nuns at his residence in Kielce; Fr. Karol Szrant, a Redemptorist from the monastery of St. Charles Borromeo in nearby Karczówka, where Lubelski was sheltered for a time; and Rev. Stanisław Wojas, who dispatched Lubelski to Warsaw, where he spent the remainder of the war.<sup>1101</sup>

Rev. Mieczysław Połoska, the pastor of Białogon, near Kielce, provided false birth and baptismal certificates to Jews, as well as food from the parish soup kitchen. After the war, the Communist authorities arrested Rev. Połoska, together with Bishop Kaczmarek and several other priests from Kielce, on trumped-up, politically motivated charges. A Jewish woman named Rachela Kłasztorna spoke out at his show trial, testifying to the assistance he provided for Jews and bearing witness to his righteous character.<sup>1102</sup>

Monsignor Witold Dziecioł, who served as pastor of the cathedral parish, was arrested by the Gestapo for helping a Jew on May 20, 1942, and was imprisoned in concentration camps for the duration of the war.<sup>1103</sup> He recalled, “Because I extended help to a sick Jew in Kielce, I was arrested by the Gestapo and spent three years in a jail and in concentration camps in Oświęcim (Auschwitz), Mauthausen, Gusen and Dachau.”<sup>1104</sup>

<sup>1100</sup> Bronowski, *They Were Few*, 38–39.

<sup>1101</sup> Jan Śledzianowski, *Ksiądz Czesław Kaczmarek, biskup kielecki 1895–1963*, 2nd ed. (Kielce: Jedność, 2008), 113–14. Mieczysław Lubelski, who settled in England, corresponded with Bishop Kaczmarek after the war.

<sup>1102</sup> Daniel Wojciechowski, “Dwukrotny więzień Mokotowa: Ks. Mieczysław Połoska (1896–1981),” *Nasz Dziennik*, January 5–6, 2008; Wojciechowski, “Księża niezłomni”.

<sup>1103</sup> Andrzej Kwaśniewski, “Polacy ratujący Żydów na terenie diecezji kieleckiej w latach 1939–1945: Nieznane przykłady heroizmu chrześcijańskiego,” in Jerzy Gapys and Agnieszka Dziarmaga, eds., *Pomoc świadczona ludności żydowskiej przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945 ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Kielecczyzny* (Kielce: n.p., 2016), 135–55, at p. 142.

<sup>1104</sup> Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 33.



Mirla and Moszek Buki from Skierniewice, as well as their four children, Fela, Sala, Bela and Szulim, survived the war with the assistance of Rev. Jan Michałowicz.<sup>1105</sup>

Despite his reputation of being an anti-Semite, Fr. Marian Pirożyński, a Redemptorist, was active in rescuing Jews—a fact confirmed by Jewish witnesses who came forward in his defence at his anti-clerical show trial in 1954. While residing in Mościska, near Przemyśl, Fr. Pirożyński assisted several Jews who escaped from the ghetto, among them Zofia Katz, the daughter of a dentist, to whom he provided false documents. The Redemptorist monastery in Mościska sheltered a number of Jews, among them the Metzger family, with the assistance of Brother Tarsycjusz (Franciszek Tomaszewski).

After moving to Warsaw, Fr. Pirożyński cared for a three-year-old girl, Teresa Kowalska, who was thrown out of a streetcar by her mother, and placed her with the sisters Leokadia and Maria Wochelski. He also found safe houses for Jewish children in Skierniewice. Fr. Pirożyński fell under suspicion and had to hide from the Germans, changing his place of residence several times.<sup>1106</sup> Fr. Pirożyński was not recognized as “Righteous” by Yad Vashem.

Leokadia Wochelska lived in Warsaw with her sister, Maria, and her niece Halina. She worked as a dressmaker for a living. In 1942, the priest Marian Pirożyński turned to her with a request: to hide a Jewish child. Leokadia agreed and accepted the three-year-old Teresa, whose mother, Stefania Kowalska, was hiding with the help of Aryan papers. Soon rumors began to spread among the neighbors that the two sisters were hiding a Jewish girl. The two sisters were forced to take Teresa to a convent, but Teresa cried terribly and did not wish to part with her guardians. Leokadia and Maria did not think much about it and finally said to each other: “With God’s help, what will be of the child will be of us,” and they took her back with them. “For all of these years they cared for her as their own child. For the life of my child, they put up the highest stake—their own safety, their lives and the life of their niece. It was noble and unselfish help,” wrote Stefania in her testimony. After the war, Stefania found Leokadia and Maria as well as her daughter, Teresa. “With heartache I had to part with the child. The child was also very attached to us and returned

<sup>1105</sup> Testimony of Mirla Buki in Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1019. See also Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 199–200; translated as *Such a Beautiful Sunny Day...: Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2016).

<sup>1106</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1022; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 717; Marian Brudzisz, “Piorżyński Marian,” in Ludwik Grzebień ed., *Słownik polskich teologów katolickich 1918–1981*, vol. 6 (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1983), 684–85; Ryszard Bender, “Piorżyński Marian,” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”*, vol. 14 (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2004), 150–53; Kazimierz Pelczarski, “O. Marian Piorżyński jako więzień komunistycznego reżimu,” *Studia Redemptorystowskie*, no. 5 (2007): 9–37, at pp. 23–24; Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 78–79.

to her mother crying,” wrote Leokadia Wochelska. Stefania and her daughter eventually immigrated to Israel.<sup>1107</sup>

Several Polish families, among them those of Róża Kopacz and Józef Wiącek, in the village of Lacka Wola, near Mościska, were engaged in sheltering at least a dozen Jews from the Nadel and Singer families. Rev. Zygmunt Dziedziak, the pastor of the parish in the nearby village of Trzcieniec, was aware of the rescue effort and encouraged his parishioners to help Jews.<sup>1108</sup>

Alicja Kleinberg, the wife of a dentist from Rabka, and her young daughters, Ewa and Hanka (Anna), took refuge in the countryside near Biecz, where they passed as Catholic Poles. In August 1942, a few days before the liquidation of the local ghetto, Mrs. Kleinberg appealed to her friend Marian Sikorski, headmaster of the elementary school in the village of Szerzyny, who helped the Kleinbergs escape from the ghetto.

After sheltering them for a few months and obtaining Aryan papers for them under the name of Janowski, the Kleinbergs moved to a nearby village where Sikorski had rented a house for them. He continued to look after the Kleinbergs until their liberation in January 1945. Their cover depended on the support of various persons, including Rev. Józef Wilk, a vicar in Święcany, near Jasło.

Not wanting to endanger the Sikorskis, Mother decided to move to the nearby village of Święcany. We moved in with a family of farmers named Szynal. Mama told the farmers that she was an officer's wife and that this was the reason why it was safer for her to live with the children in the countryside. We had instructions from Mama to bite our lips, because their natural fullness could give away our origins. Nonetheless, our black hair, which stayed curly despite constant brushing, still betrayed us. ...

The winters were cold and harsh back then. Toward the end of the war we didn't go out of the house, because we had no warm clothes or shoes. Luckily, there were various people who helped Mama in all this misery. In order to create the appearance that we did have a family, that we were not in hiding, Lola, who herself was hiding on Aryan papers, would come to visit us. Endangering her own life, she brought us money from Aunt Zosia, who by then was already in the Kraków ghetto. A priest from a nearby parish also visited us, bringing us food from time to time. I remember that his name was Józef Wilk. Maria Wnęk, a relative of Mr. Sikorski's, who was a teacher, would come through heavy snow to visit us. She walked on foot more than a dozen kilometres to instruct us in catechism and how to behave in church. ...

<sup>1107</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 878–79; Wochelska Sisters, RD.

<sup>1108</sup> Jeffrey Cymbler, interviewed by Piotr Falkowski, “Moją rodzinę uratowali Polacy,” *Nasz Dziennik*, March 16, 2018; Testimony of Tully (Naphtali) Nadel, Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York City, ID no. 1984.T.35; Testimony of Rose Singer, SFV, Interview code 2290; Testimony of Bertha Reich, SFV, Interview code 2284.

There were days when Mama would tell us to hide in the nearby woods, because she would get a tip that German gendarmes were coming into the village. At such times we were dying of fear, wondering whether we would still find Mama alive when we returned.

In this village, Mama met a man from Sieradz who had escaped from a train that was taking him to forced labor in Germany. His name was Władysław Nogala, an exceptionally good-hearted and noble man. He helped us, bringing us onions so that “the children wouldn’t get scurvy.” He also gave us chickens and whatever else he could obtain. Władysław Nogala was respected in the village and was involved with the partisans who were active in our area.

One day the village administrator, knowing that Władysław was friendly with Mama, told him that “people are talking that Mrs. Janowska is a Jew, and I will have to report this to the police.” [Village administrators were required to report the presence of Jews under penalty of death.—Ed.] Władysław Nogala replied, “If you do, your head will lie in this dunghill.” After this encounter the administrator was silent.<sup>1109</sup>

A priest from Gorzkowice, near Radomsko, who was involved in the underground—probably Rev. Jan Łabęda, the local pastor—came to the assistance of two Jews, Vovtche Raichbard and Shmuel Friedman, by providing them with false identity documents. Here is the testimony of a Jewish survivor from Łask.

We must remind [i.e., be mindful of] all those people, not Jews, who gave their hand to save many of our town when they escaped from the Nazi murderers. Also in Łask [Łask] there were good christians [sic] who suffered seeing how the Jews of their town suffered. In the hard days of distress and banishment, they endangered themselves by hiding Jews and giving them from their bread. Gabrionchik and his wife from Łask; he gave documents and food [to] two escapers: Vovtche Raichbard and Shmuel Friedman. A Christian woman emerged as a savior-angel, when they had to pass the boundary of the German protectorate [i.e., into the Generalgouvernement]. Heinzl, Skibinski’s [Skibiński’s] son-in-law, guided the two to the Polish secret organization in order to receive German documents, and hid them in his home some days. He gave them the address of Zvi Michalovitz in Grushkovitza [Gorzkowice], and did so that they would be accepted by a priest, who was the chief of the secret organization in this place. This priest, whose name is unknown, accepted them with bright face, and immediately gave them the necessary documents. The young Christian, who knew they were Jews, hid them in her parents’ house, telling them these two are Polish officers from Varsha [Warsaw], who escaped from the Gestapo.

The Polish policeman Krakovski, who saved Zvi Michalovitz from the death-waggon [sic], just in the last minute, and brought him to a refuge place. The family Banashchick, who hid him in the threshing-floor, and gave him all he needed for lessons he gave their children in the nights. ... The villagers who disperse pieces of bread and turnip on the ways, for the caravans of hungry people, who went under the watching of the S.S. The villagers who gave their shoes to [the] barefooted and weak. How can we forget the villagers who

<sup>1109</sup> Accounts of Ewa Janowska-Boisse, née Kleinberg and Anna Janowska-Ciońcka, née Kleinberg, “Father Never Returned from Exile,” in Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 100–2.

refused to give food [to] the watchers [guards] of the women-caravans who were transported from work-camp. Shraga Noiman tells about a Polish boy who worked as an electrician in Kolomna [?]. He offered to save the whole group of Jews that worked there, and to transfer them to a secure place near Varsha [Warsaw]. This electrician and his fellows, who acted a period of time to save Jews, were caught at last by the Nazis.

We must remind a little of those sparks in order that our sons and daughters will know, that even in the darkness of extermination and killing, there were also cases of deeds of kindness. I cannot tell everything, only a little.<sup>1110</sup>

After escaping from the Lwów ghetto in June 1943, Jakub Lang (b. 1928) moved from place to place before turning to Rev. Kazimierz Maślowski. Rev. Maślowski was a parish priest at the Church of Our Lady of Ostra Brama (Matki Boskiej Ostrobramskiej) in Lwów, which was under the care of the Salesian Society. He found a temporary job for Jakub as a farm worker. Afterwards, Rev. Maślowski took Jakub to the Polish Welfare Council and vouched for him.

After spending a few days in a hostel, where he came across several Jewish girls, Jakub was directed to Zimna Woda, a Polish village near Lwów. Passing as a Catholic, Jakub worked as a hired hand for several farmers. After the entry of the Soviet army, Jakub was reunited with his mother, younger brother and cousin. They too had survived in hiding in the forest near Hołosko, with the help of a number of Poles, among them Józef Dziedzic.<sup>1111</sup> As mentioned earlier, Ryszard Macharowski, another Jewish boy (b. 1930), was also employed on a farm in Zimna Woda, after his stay with the Albertine Sisters in Lwów.

Zofia Reichman (later Sophia Richman Orfanos) was born in Lwów in 1941. Thanks to the help of her friend Stanisława Drabicka, Zofia's mother, Dorota Reichman, was able to obtain birth and baptismal and marriage certificates for herself as Maria Oleszkiewicz from Drabicka's uncle, a priest at the Church of Our Lady of the Snows (Maryi Panny Śnieżnej) in Lwów. The pastor of this parish at the time was Rev. Jan Piwiński. She also had her young daughter baptized, in order to secure a birth and baptismal certificate for her. These documents were essential to survive as Catholic Poles in the village of Zimna Woda with the help of several other Poles: Ewa Donikowska and her parents; Jerzy Huppert, a convert; and Tadeusz Witwicki. Much later, Zofia's father, Leon, managed to escape from the Janowska Street camp. After staying briefly with Drabicka's parent in

<sup>1110</sup> Z. Ben-Moshe, "Respect for Jew-Savers," in Zev Tzurnamal, ed., *Lask: Sefer zikaron (Lask: Izcor-Book)* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Lask in Israel, 1968), 124–26.

<sup>1111</sup> Testimony of Jakub Lang, December 21, 1945, JHL, record group 301, no. 1340. Rev. Kazimierz Maślowski and Rev. Jan Synior also instructed several Jews on religious matters and prepared them to receive the sacraments. See Pietrzykowski, *Towarzystwo Salezjańskie w Polsce w warunkach okupacji 1939–1945*, 155.

Lwów, he joined his wife and daughter in Zimna Woda. Because of his Jewish appearance, he had to be hidden.

I was a blond, blue-eyed baby with fair skin and could easily pass for a Polish toddler, a perfect cover for my mother. With such a baby in her arms, my mother's authenticity as a Christian was not likely to be questioned. Her flawless Polish would help with the deception. So going into hiding as a gentile was a likely possibility. The problem was to find documents to substantiate our new identity.

My mother had a number of close gentile friends, among them Stasia [Stanisława] Drabicka. The two were linked by music. Stasia played the cello, and, before the war, they frequently enjoyed playing duets. Stasia was a Catholic, and she was related to a priest. As a member of the clergy, Stasia's uncle was in a position to provide papers that could help my mother with her escape plan. Asking gentiles for this kind of help was a very risky business. There were severe reprisals for those helping Jews. Gentiles helping Jews risked death or deportation for themselves and their families as well. Furthermore, for Jews seeking help, the question of trust was of paramount importance. ... My mother was confident that Stasia could be trusted. Mother was generally a good judge of character, but what about Stasia's uncle, a man she had never met? ...

The plan for going into hiding had to be carefully implemented. Stasia's uncle provided the birth, baptismal, and marriage certificates of a deceased Catholic parishioner, Maria Oleszkiewicz, born in 1908. My mother's 1903 date of birth was close enough. It was arranged that I would be baptized as Zofia Oleszkiewicz. We had our new identities. Now we had to find a place to live where no one knew us. It was generally believed that hiding in a small town was safer than remaining in the city, where police searches were a constant fact of life in early 1942 and where it was possible to run into an acquaintance who could betray you. The outskirts of Lwów seemed a good choice as a hiding place because it would allow us to remain relatively close to my father. There was always a distant hope that he might be freed or find a way out of Janowska [camp].<sup>1112</sup>

Rev. Stanisław Cichocki, the pastor of Zimna Woda, near Lwów, provided false birth and baptismal certificates to several Jews. One of them had done metal work at the rectory, a neighbour named Goldman. When the criminal police apprehended Goldman in Lwów, he disclosed the source of his identity document. Rev. Cichocki denied any knowledge of it, and the police did not believe Goldman's story that he had obtained the document without providing any

<sup>1112</sup> Sophia Richman, *A Wolf in the Attic: The Legacy of a Hidden Child of the Holocaust* (New York, London and Oxford: The Haworth Press, 2002), 15–16. The birth and baptismal certificate used by Dorota Reichman is reproduced between pages 106–107. See also "Identity photograph issued to Dorota Reichman," Photograph no. 44115, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1139856>; Testimony of Sophia Richman-Orfanos, SFV, Interview code 39433; Sophia R. [Richman] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1578), FVA.

payment, which was true. Amazingly, they let the priest go.<sup>1113</sup> The Ryziewiczzes of Zimna Woda were not so lucky. Three of their family members were shot to death for sheltering a Jewish acquaintance.<sup>1114</sup>

Poles in Zimna Woda sheltered a number of other Jews: the Ulanowski family hid eleven Jews in their home, and the Dutkiewicz family hid five.<sup>1115</sup> After escaping from the Kleparów ghetto outside Lwów, Fanny (Fradel Feige) Tennenbaum and her son, David (b. 1931), found a temporary hiding place with the help of a Ukrainian professor and family friend. The professor secured false papers for them, including birth and baptismal certificates from a Latin-rite parish, under the names Franciszka Wiczorkowska and Teresa Wiczorkowska, respectively. In December 1942, they moved to a long-term hiding place in Zimna Woda with an elderly, retired schoolteacher named Jadwiga Sokolińska. They lived there openly as Catholic Poles. David, who was circumcised, pretended to be a mentally disabled girl, having grown his hair long in order to avoid being discovered.<sup>1116</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Lwów during the Aktion of April 1942, Leokadja Bachner hid for two weeks in a garden belonging to Poles before moving to a village near Sokołówka, where she worked as a laundress using a false identity. Polish women who worked there helped to preserve her cover. After moving to another village, she obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate from a priest who lived near Busk, possibly in Adamy. While working as a cook in the Polish village of Adamy, she witnessed how villagers extended help to Jews that were hiding in the nearby forest.<sup>1117</sup>

<sup>1113</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 40; Testimony of Stanisław Cichocki, April 12, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 3392.

<sup>1114</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 156.

<sup>1115</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 195 (Dutkiewicz); *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 626–27 (Ulanowski). See also the testimony of Dawid Tennenbaum, JHI, record group 301, no. 806, who does not identify his Polish helpers by name, and the testimony of Sania Farber, JHI, record group 301, no. 1386, who was hidden by a woman named Zielińska. The Stefanicki family also sheltered a Jew. See Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 156.

<sup>1116</sup> David Tennenbaum Papers, USHMM, Accession no. 1997.A.0003, RG-50.120.0346; Testimony of David Tennenbaum, SFV, Interview code 22207.

<sup>1117</sup> Testimony of Leokadja Bachner, JHI, record group 301, no. 234, noted in Józwick, Ma-horowska, and Umińska, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespol 301, Nr. 1–900 / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue: Jewish Historical Institute Archives, Record Group 301, No. 1–900*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy, 1998), 93–94; Testimony of Leokadja Bachner, YVA, file O.62/53 (Item 3732692).



Rev. Edward Tabaczkowski, pastor of Tłumacz, near Stanisławów, provided false documents to many Jews, among them Berta Opoczyńska (who survived under the assumed identity of Zuzanna Sokołowska), Mina Bikels Rotenstreich, and Wilhelm Hartenstein (alias Roman Szelożyński, another survivor<sup>1118</sup>). The pastor helped in other ways, such as smuggling food into the ghetto and encouraging his parishioners to shelter Jews. According to Mina Bikels Rotenstreich,

A few Jews escaped when the Polish physician, Dr. Zeno [Zenon] Hoffman, hid them in the hospital where he was working. In 1942 the Gestapo arrested Dr. Hoffman and the Canon [Edward] Tabaczkowski, who risked his life by issuing baptism certificates to Jews so that they could escape to the Aryan side. We were given eight such certificates by Tabaczkowski, even though we had nothing to give him in return. The Polish pharmacist Shankowski [Marian Szankowski] also helped the Jews as much as he could. Much of the valuables which Jews placed in his keeping were returned to them, although this was dangerous to do.<sup>1119</sup>

Rev. Tabaczkowski made a place in his rectory for Leon Weiser, a Jewish student who converted to Catholicism. Unfortunately, when Weiser was caught by the Germans, Rev. Tabaczkowski did not heed the warnings of his own imminent arrest. The Gestapo imprisoned him in Stanisławów a few days after Weiser's execution. Rev. Tabaczkowski betrayed no one when the Germans tortured him, and he was put to death on October 20, 1942.<sup>1120</sup> Yad Vashem recognized Rev. Tabaczkowski as a Righteous Gentile in 2018 for helping Berta Opoczyńska, Ludwika Czechowicz, Leon Hartenstein, and Żanetta Knobloch.

Mania Majer (later Smith, b. 1928) worked for various farmers in her home area of Turka, in the Stanisławów voivodship, who were aware she was Jewish. Since they were fearful of keeping her on for long, Mania decided to go somewhere where she would not be recognized. Counting on her non-Jewish appearance, she boarded a train for the town of Dolina, where she knew no one.

<sup>1118</sup> Działoszyński Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-dzialoszynski-family-0>.

<sup>1119</sup> Shlomo Blond, et al., eds., *Memorial Book of Tłumacz: The Life and Destruction of a Jewish Community* (Tel Aviv: Tłumacz Societies in Israel and the U.S.A., 1976), cols. cxxviii–cxxix.

<sup>1120</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 154–55; Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 227; Barański, *Przeminęli zagończycy, chłiborobi, chasydzi...*, 417–18; Wacław Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce–Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 1987), Entry 741; Blond, *Memorial Book of Tłumacz*, cols. xxxiv, cxxix and clxxiii; Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 154–55. According to one source, Rev. Tabaczkowski was betrayed by a Jewish woman from Tłumacz. See Lesław Jeżowski, “Ks. Edward Tabaczkowski,” *Semper Fidelis* [Wrocław], no. 3 (16) (1993).

When she arrived in Dolina, she approached some priests she happened to spot in the street. She told them that she was Polish and that she could not remain in her hometown because she had escaped deportation to Germany as a labourer. The priests took her to the parish farm, where she worked with several other girls. Mania remained there for about two years, even after the entry of the Soviet army. She was treated very well and recalled the priests fondly—“They were very nice to me.” She even remembered their names more than 50 years later. The parish had three priests: Rev. Józef Garbicz, the pastor, and his vicars, Rev. Henryk Smoluk and Rev. Tadeusz Sorys.

While Mania did not reveal her true identity to the priests, it was likely that they suspected she was Jewish. Priests did not generally inquire into such matters; the less said and known, the better. Mania believes the priests would have been happy to have saved her as a Jew. They held the property of some Jews for safekeeping, and returned it to the owners when the war was over.<sup>1121</sup>

The friars from the Conventual Franciscan monastery in Święty Stanisław, near Halicz, in Stanisławów voivodship, actively encouraged the faithful of this small Polish village to extend help to Jewish fugitives. Among those who heeded their call was the Płaziński family. None of the villagers were betrayed.<sup>1122</sup>

In 1943, Anna Lubicz, 16, fled with her uncle Josef Renart from the Ottynia ghetto in Tłumacz [Tłumacz] county, Eastern Galicia. They hid in the surrounding forests and in their search for a safe hiding place arrived in the village of Święty Stanisław [Święty Stanisław], where they came to the home of the Plazinski [Płaziński] family. Although they were only poor farmers, Józef [Józef] and Maria Plazinski and their daughter Zuzanna immediately agreed to hide the Jewish fugitives and prepared a hiding place for them in the loft of their barn. Lubicz and her uncle remained in the hiding place for almost a year, until their liberation in the summer of 1944, and the Plazinski family cared for them with kindness and devotion throughout the entire period. Without asking for or receiving anything in return, and taking great risks, the Plazinski family invited Lubicz and her uncle to enter their home every evening. On Sundays, they invited them to join them at the table, while the mother, Maria, or the daughter, Zuzanna, stood guard outside the house in case anyone who could give them away approached. The Plazinski family saved the Jewish fugitives because they were motivated by humanitarian and religious principles, and with the encouragement of the local priest other Christian families in the village risked their lives to hide Jews as well. After the war, the survivors and their benefactors moved separately to areas within the new borders of Poland. In order to repay them after the war, Lubicz and Renart bought

<sup>1121</sup> Testimony of Mania Smith, SFV, Interview code 34141.

<sup>1122</sup> Paweł Knap, *Jak ci się uda uratować, pamiętaj! Relacje “Sprawiedliwych” i o “Sprawiedliwych” z województwa zachodniopomorskiego* (Szczecin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Szczecinie, 2010), 101–3.

the Plazinski family a house and wagon so that they could make a living and kept in touch with them for many years, even after both immigrated to Israel.<sup>1123</sup>

The fate of the Conventual Franciscans from Święty Stanisław was particularly tragic. Fr. Remigiusz (Antoni) Wójcik, the administrator of the parish; Fr. Peregryn (Jan) Haczela, the guardian of the Conventual Franciscan monastery; and Brother Szczepan (Franciszek) Kosiorek were arrested in July 1942, after Ukrainian nationalists fingered them for possession of illegal weapons (which had been planted on the premises) or, according to another version, for hiding a Jewish woman in the church bell tower. After their arrest by the Ukrainian police, they were taken to the Gestapo prison in Stanisławów. According to one eyewitness account, Fr. Wójcik was held by the Gestapo and beaten for three days. On the fourth day, he was ripped apart by dogs in the prison courtyard.<sup>1124</sup>

A Jewish family consisting of Leo and Rosa (Raisl) Krochmal, and their daughter, Genia (later Baker, b. 1934), who survived with the help of Polish villagers (perhaps in Panowice), returned to their hometown of Bołszowce, near Rohatyn, after the Germans were driven out in 1944. During attacks by Ukrainian nationalist partisans, the Krochmal family took refuge in the Carmelite monastery, together with Polish villagers. The prior of the Carmelite monastery was Fr. Wojciech Zajac. Genia recalled:

I returned to Bołszowce with my parents, but I was the only child survivor. ... I don't know how long we stayed there, because the Banderowce [Banderowcy] attacked us again—not only us, but they were killing Poles as well. We used to sleep in the church, the one where [the Germans] gathered us on the hill during the war. I remember in the middle there was a table and two beds, and I slept on the table. We suddenly heard shooting from the Banderowce and hid in the attic while they searched the downstairs. We had to leave Bołszowce. Nothing was there for us any more—no Jews, our house was gone, the Russians had taken over. Nothing, just me, my mother and father, and maybe a handful of others who hid with us in the forests.<sup>1125</sup>

<sup>1123</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 620.

<sup>1124</sup> Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 215, 238–39, 291–92; Barański, *Przeminęli zagończycy, chłiborobi, chasydzi...*, 84, 173; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 495. See also Szczepan Siekierka, Henryk Komański, and Eugeniusz Różański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946* (Wrocław: Stowarzyszenie Upamiętnienia Ofiar Zbrodni Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów we Wrocławiu, 2008), 503–4, based on the eyewitness account of Michał Przygrodzki. According to another version, the monks were murdered on the way to Stanisławów.

<sup>1125</sup> Mark Raphael Baker, *The Fiftieth Gate: A Journey Through Memory* (Pymble, New South Wales: HarperCollins; Sydney: Flamingo, 1997), 187.

Aniela Barylak of Nadwórna, in Stanisławów voivodship, sheltered an eight-year-old girl named Szejndl Einhorn, later Jafa Kurz. For reasons of safety, she had the child baptized by a priest who would have been well aware that she was Jewish. The priest provided her with false identity documents in the name of Stefania. Aniela taught Stefania Polish (which she did not speak before) and Catholic prayers, so that she could pass as a Polish child.<sup>1126</sup>

The Bodnar family from Nadwórna turned to Rev. Adolf Żółczyński, who lived in nearby Wołosów, for assistance in their time of need. Rev. Żółczyński provided them with false birth and baptismal certificates, which enabled them to pass as Catholic Poles. Their story is related by Dr. Wiktor Bodnar, who became a well-known clinical psychologist. The information below about Rev. Żółczyński's death at the hands of the Gestapo is incorrect; he survived the German occupation.

Dr. Bodnar's roots lie in the court of Nadvorna [Nadwórna] chassidus. He was born in that town ("Nadworna") in 1937, where his grandfather Moshe, an ardent chassid, owned ten farms and a large glass factory. Moshe Bodnar, head of the Nadvorna town council, was both smart and diplomatic. "He funded the Catholic church in the town so that the municipality would also fund the Nadvorna Rebbe's beis medrash," Dr. Bodnar relates. His grandfather had six sons and three daughters, but of the extended family, only three sons survived the war. ...

"My own family was saved by a righteous priest named Adolph Zoltinski [Adolf Żółczyński]," says Dr. Bodnar. The priest forged documents testifying that the family was Christian, and even "married" the elder Bodnars with a Catholic wedding ceremony. Those Christian credentials saved their lives.

"My father tried to pay the priest, but he refused. When my father asked him why he was helping us and putting himself in so much danger, the priest replied: 'There is so much evil around us, and G-d pursues justice. That is my only way to try and improve the situation. I'm happy to do it, and I'm proud that I am able to help the Chosen Nation survive.'" Zoltinski, who was wanted by the Gestapo, was eventually caught and murdered.

On October 6, 1941, the Germans came to Nadvorna. They had an exact list of all the wealthy Jews in town, and were assisted by the local villagers who were happy to identify them for the Nazis. Dr. Bodnar's parents were on the list, and they, together with another 41 relatives and the rest of the Jews, were taken to the Nadvorna town square to be shot—but not before Dr. Bodnar's father managed to stuff an envelope of money, together with his documents, into his coat.

"I was four years old, but I remember it all. The square was surrounded by SS guards and their dogs, but then a miracle happened to my parents. My father approached the commander and showed him the papers he had received from the priest. He spoke fluent German with a Bavarian accent, and the colonel was stunned by his excellent German

<sup>1126</sup> "The 'Righteous Among Nations' Have Been Awarded," October 21, 2008, Internet: <http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/en/news/news,287259,the-righteous-among-nations-have-been-awarded.html>; Aniela Barylak, RD.

and said, 'You speak German better than my people.' The colonel then took the envelope of money my father handed him and ordered, 'Run away from here!' But my father remained standing.

'What do you want?' the colonel barked.

'My wife is here,' my father replied.

'So take her with you,' the colonel said.

My father went over to where my mother was and motioned for her to come toward him. She indicated that she couldn't get up or she'd be beaten by the guards. He came over to her and screamed to her in German, 'The colonel is calling you!' The guard standing with his dog heard his screaming in German and allowed her to leave. My parents left the square and went up to the attic of an abandoned building, where they witnessed how 1,500 Jews of Nadvorna were gunned down.

My grandmother and I were not on the death list, and a young Ukrainian couple who rented one of our apartments hid us. We soon reunited with my parents, and from that moment on, our flight began, using Aryan documents and the story that 'we are Christians.' Soon I picked up the culture. I kept all the Christian holidays and could recite their prayers automatically. Later, when I learned Christian religion lessons in school and we had tests on the prayers, all my friends copied from me. I knew [the prayers] better than all of them."

The Bodnars passed the war years wandering from town to town, and afterward settled in Krakow [Kraków].<sup>1127</sup>

After escaping from the Janowska camp in Lwów, Dr. Samuel Drix and Icchak (Icek) Hoch made their way to the village of Biały Kamień, near Złoczów, where strangers gave them refuge. The Zawer family kept them in hiding for over a year. As the Soviet-German front moved back and forth in the spring and summer of 1944, and the Polish population came under attack by Ukrainian nationalist partisans, the Poles of Biały Kamień took shelter at a priest's farm until the Germans were driven out in July of that year. That Dr. Drix and Icchak Hoch were Jewish became evident, but the Polish villagers they had joined neither evicted nor betrayed them.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainians went after the Poles in the surrounding villages and were killing as many as they could. One day several Poles, who had escaped from the Ukrainians, arrived in our stable. The parish priest's farm had become the place of hiding for Poles. Among them was a Pole named Czesnykowski, whom Icek knew from before the war. He was a very honest and rich peasant whose wife was a Ukrainian. One day a Ukrainian squad stormed the house in which he and his brother lived with their families, in the village of Kawareczyna [Gawareczyna] Górna, and murdered his brother and his brother's wife. He managed to escape. His wife said she was a Ukrainian and, to save her life and her children's, renounced her husband. In this manner she survived, while Czesnykowski was now at the parish priest's farm with us. When he happened to come into the stable attic alone one time, Icek contacted him. He kept our presence secret, visited us in the

<sup>1127</sup> Heart of the Fathers, Shavei Israel, Internet: <http://www.israelreturns.org/heart-of-the-fathers/>.

stable when he could, and even brought us the leftovers from the parish lunches. He also brought us news of what was happening in the area. He said that the front was still quiet, but that a new Russian offensive was expected any time.

A day after Czesnykowski first came up to our attic another of the Poles who had sought refuge with the parish priest came upstairs and saw us there. We said we were also Polish refugees like him, but he suspected that we were Jews. Icek spoke Polish with a strong Jewish accent, which it made it harder to keep up the pretence. The Pole strongly advised us to leave and not endanger the priest like this. We said we would, but in fact we stayed, and luckily nothing ever came of it.<sup>1128</sup>

Helena Kitaj-Drobner mentions Rev. Jan Cieński, a vicar in Złoczów, as having provided assistance to Jews. She claims that the local Polish intelligentsia “was rather favourably disposed toward Jews.”<sup>1129</sup> Dr. Salomon (Salek) Altman of Złoczów obtained false birth and baptismal certificates for himself and his wife from a local priest.<sup>1130</sup> Dr. Altman states, “There were many priests who provided Jews they knew with original birth certificates in the names of persons long dead. ... I also know of a man, Kruth, who found refuge in the house of the Rev. Dzieduszycki and embraced the Catholic faith together with his whole family.”<sup>1131</sup> The latter priest was most likely Fr. Paweł Dzieduszycki, director of the Jesuit retreat house (Dom Rekolekcyjny pod wezwaniem św. Józefa) in Lwów.

Dr. Altman was one of at least 44 Jews rescued by several Polish families in the nearby village of Jelechowice.<sup>1132</sup> Sixteen of them—including Samuel Tennenbaum, his wife, their two daughters, and his mother-in-law—were sheltered in various places on the property of Helena Skrzyszewska, a member of the Polish underground. The house was also occupied by a Polish teacher, Maria (Michalina) Kureniuk, and a Greek Catholic handyman, Grzegorz (Hryc) Tyż, who practiced the Latin-rite. At one point, Hryc became alarmed at the arrival of yet another Jewish family. Out of fear and stress, not malice, he expressed displeasure.<sup>1133</sup>

<sup>1128</sup> Samuel Drix, *Witness to Annihilation: Surviving the Holocaust, a Memoir* (Washington: Brassey's, 1994), 209–10.

<sup>1129</sup> Testimony of Helena Kitaj-Drobnerowa, JHI, record group 301, no. 1564. She refers to the priest, on page 8, as a count (“z pochodzenia hrabia”).

<sup>1130</sup> Israel M. Lask, ed., *Sefer kehilat Zlotsov (The City of Zloczow)* (Tel Aviv: Zloczower Relief Verband of America, 1967), cols. 113, 152.

<sup>1131</sup> Lask, *Sefer kehilat Zlotsov (The City of Zloczow)*, cols. 113, 115–16.

<sup>1132</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 311 (Jędrzejko), 422 (Kulpa), and vol. 5, 833 (Tyż and Skrzyszewska); Lask, *Sefer kehilat Zlotsov (The City of Zloczow)*, cols. 142–43; Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir* (New York: Shengold, 1986), 228–78; Tyż (Tyż) Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-tyz-family>.

<sup>1133</sup> As Jewish testimonies disclose, some Jews were also hostile to the idea of accepting other Jews into their hiding places, as this would increase the risk of discovery, and Polish rescuers took in Jews over the protest of their existing Jewish charges. See, e.g., the testimony of Braha Bergman and that of David Efrati in Isakiewicz, *Harmonica*, 174, 219; Oral history



A priest counselled him to continue supporting the Jewish charges. The priest's intervention caused a dramatic change in Hryc's attitude.

Over several days, my wife began to notice that food was disappearing at twice the anticipated rate. Hela [Helena Skrzyszewska] at first denied any knowledge of it, but finally confessed to us that she had taken in another Jewish family, four people, who were sheltered in our former hiding place, the cellar under the barn. Their name was Parille; they had lived in Jelechowice before the war, had escaped the Germans and had been living in a hole in the ground in a nearby forest. Winter had made it impossible for them to try to survive there so one night, Mr. Parille came to Hela for help and she took them in.

They had nothing, so from then on we shared whatever we had with them. We never saw them. ...

A huge row ensued over this. Hryc [Grzegorz], in broad daylight, ran into the yard and started to yell at the top of his lungs, ... "She gathered a bunch of Jews and then disappeared for days at a time." I grabbed a rusty revolver, which Hela had hidden under the bed in our room, and ran after Hryc. I managed to get him back into the house, he calmed down quickly. Next day he went to confession. When he came back, he kissed my wife's hand and apologized for his behavior of the previous day. We were both happy and worried. Now the priest, too, knew about our presence. ... People often ask what was the main factor that motivated our hosts. I believe that it was their deep faith.<sup>1134</sup>

Another account from Złoczów tells of a priest who agreed to act as an intermediary for the receipt of mail from the relatives of Mariusz Jerzy Heszeles, then a young boy of nine living outside the ghetto.<sup>1135</sup> Irena Zimmerman (later Wodzisławska, b. 1936) was cared for by a Polish woman named Zofia, in a village near Złoczów. This woman obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from a priest stating that Irena was her daughter.<sup>1136</sup>

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interview with Sheila Percec [Peretz] Etons Bernard, USHMM, Accession no. 1990.376.1, RG-50.030.0069; David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Drohiczyn* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1969), 26 ff. (English section); Issur Wondolowicz, "Between the German Hammer and the Polish Anvil," in Shmuel Kalisher, ed., *Sokoly: B'maavak l'haim* (Tel Aviv: Organization of Sokoły Emigrés in Israel, 1975), 208 ff., translated as *Sokoly: In the Fight for Life*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokoly/sokoly.html>; Samuel Gruber, as told to Gertrude Hirschler, *I Chose Life* (New York: Shengold, 1978), 74; Paulsson, *Secret City*, 157–58; Nelli Rotbart, *A Long Journey: A Holocaust Memoir and After: Poland, Soviet Union, Canada* (Montreal: The Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies and The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, 2002), 56–57; Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 128; Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor*, 218; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 712; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 83; Marcus David Leuchter, "Reflections on the Holocaust," *The Sarmatian Review* [Houston, Texas], vol. 20, no. 3 (September 2000); Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 80.

<sup>1134</sup> Tennenbaum, *Zloczow Memoir*, 252–53.

<sup>1135</sup> Testimony of Janina Heszeles, JHI, record group 301, no. 1954.

<sup>1136</sup> Mikołaj Grynberg, *Ocaleni z XX wieku: Po nas nikt już nie opowie, najwyżej ktoś przeczyta...* (Warsaw: Świat Książki, 2012), 97–98.

In the spring of 1944, Rev. Jan Walter sheltered Yehoshua Shleyen (Schleyen), engaging him as the church warden in Wicyń, a village near Złoczów. Previously, Schleyen had stayed in nearby villages, passing himself off as an escaped Soviet prisoner of war.<sup>1137</sup>

Ethel Moskowicz (later Wahler) joined a large group of Jews living in forest bunkers after escaping from a labour camp in Zborów. Scouting for food, she would approach the rectory of the “good” priest in Wicyń. The priest’s housekeeper provided her with food which she took back to the Jewish fugitives.<sup>1138</sup>

St. Michael’s Parish, on Kopernik Street in Kraków, gained a reputation for helping Jews. Rev. Brunon Boguszewski, who served as vicar there from 1939 to 1942, provided Jews with false identity documents and sought out hiding places for endangered Jewish children. His rescue efforts brought him recognition from Yad Vashem. The account mentions St. Lazarus Church, which was part of St. Lazarus Hospital; the official name of this church, affiliated with St. Michael’s Parish, was the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Bruno [Brunon] Boguszewski, a priest, used his official position as birth registrar at Świętego Łazarza [Świętego Łazarza] (Saint Lazarus) Church, Cracow [Kraków], to save Jewish children by issuing them Aryan birth certificates. Boguszewski’s reputation as a savior of Jewish children spread far and wide. One woman whose child was saved thanks to Boguszewski was Anna Carter who, after escaping from the Cracow ghetto, obtained a birth certificate for her daughter, Alina, aged eight. A little while later, Boguszewski also provided four-year-old Zygmunt, Alina’s brother, with an Aryan birth certificate. He gave Carter another five birth certificates issued in the names of Catholic children for distribution to those in need. The priest found a hiding place for little Alina in the home of acquaintances in Chrzanów [Chrzanów], where she stayed until the area was liberated in January 1945. Her brother, Zygmunt, was not so lucky—he was shot dead by the Germans after they were alerted by an informer. After the war, Alina was reunited with her mother, who had survived Auschwitz. Mother and daughter emigrated to the United States, where they kept up contact with Boguszewski. Boguszewski knew full well the fate that awaited him if caught, since his predecessor, who had also supplied Jews with false certificates, had been imprisoned by the Gestapo and sent to Auschwitz. His actions were dictated by purely selfless, humanitarian and religious principles.<sup>1139</sup>

Rev. Władysław Kulczycki, the pastor of St. Michael’s Parish in Kraków, also supplied birth and baptismal certificates to Jews. Wanda Nelken-Załuska, whose parents had converted to Christianity, turned to Rev. Kulczycki, her former catechist at the Ursuline convent school in Kraków, with such a request. Rev. Kulczycki sought out records of deceased persons for this purpose. These

<sup>1137</sup> Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 113–14.

<sup>1138</sup> Testimony of Ethel Wahler, SFV, Interview code 54589.

<sup>1139</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 105.

certificates were used as the underlying documents for Kennkarten. Wanda also turned to her former Ursuline educators for help in sheltering Jewish children.<sup>1140</sup>

Rev. Edmund Nowak of the Missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul, a chaplain at St. Lazarus Hospital (Szpital św. Łazarza) in Kraków, also provided false birth and baptismal certificates to Jews.<sup>1141</sup>

Contrary to what some Holocaust historians maintain,<sup>1142</sup> documents (usually birth and baptismal certificates) obtained from Catholic sources were both plentiful and provided without charge. Virtually every parish in Warsaw participated in this endeavour, often working closely with the Polish underground. Simcha Rotem, a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa), describes how he obtained his false identity documents.

You couldn't be on the Aryan side without identity documents. ... the Polish underground had helped me get a *Kennkarte* (the identity card issued by the Germans in the Generalgouvernement which replaced the Polish identity documents). I was sent to the office of a church in one of the Warsaw suburbs. I went to the clerk and requested a birth certificate (which was required in order to receive the *Kennkarte*). They had coached me in what to say. This was a document whose real owner, someone my age, was no longer alive. The clerk looked at me sharply and spat out: "Funny world—one person dies and another walks around and impersonates him." I didn't say anything. He asked my address, the names of my parents, and the other details of questionnaires everywhere in the world. I answered briefly and finally got the birth certificate.

From there I went to the registration office where Poles worked with Germans and Poles, and submitted a proper request for a *Kennkarte*. My fingerprints were taken like any other Polish citizen's. At the end of this process I had a *Kennkarte* in the name of Antoni Julian Ksiezopolski [Książopolski]—a common name among the Polish aristocracy. At the same time I got a forged *Kennkarte* from the Polish Underground in another name. I kept the document with the name Ksiezopolski with me, while the other one was kept at "home" in case of trouble.<sup>1143</sup> They also gave me an *Arbeitskarte* (proof of employment). [This final sentence is found in the Polish translation of this book,<sup>1144</sup> but omitted in the English version.—Ed.]

<sup>1140</sup> Testimony of Wanda Zaluska, SFV, Interview code 25740.

<sup>1141</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 648.

<sup>1142</sup> For example, Israeli historian Nahum Bogner states: "Few of the parish priests were willing to take the risk of issuing false birth certificates to Jews." See Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 43.

<sup>1143</sup> "Kazik" Simcha Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 60–61.

<sup>1144</sup> Simcha Rotem "Kazik," *Wspomnienia bojowca ŻOB* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993), 73–75.

Vladka Meed, a member of the Jewish underground living in “Aryan” Warsaw, was able to obtain a German identity document with the help of a Polish friend and the complicity of a priest who facilitated the cover-up.

I managed to obtain a genuine *Kennkarte* from the German Municipal Bureau in the name of Stanisława Wochalska [Stanisława Wąchalska], our faithful Gentile co-worker. Anna [Wąchalska] had arranged with her priest not to report her daughter’s death, and assured me that if I would be detained as a Jewess, she would intercede on my behalf. At the same time, she told me the names of grandmothers, aunts and cousins. I was now a full-fledged Aryan with two generations of Gentile forebears.

In this manner a number of Jews acquired the names and birth certificates of deceased Poles, with which they obtained authentic Polish identification cards. Such documents afforded substantial protection, but they were not wholly dependable, for the Germans, if suspicious, could check documents against municipal and church records.<sup>1145</sup>

Leonora Rozen and her mother, Sarah Charlap Muller, survived the war passing as Christians in Warsaw. They obtained false identity documents issued by priests through their contacts in the Polish underground.

When the “cleansing” of the Ghetto began, Mother and I were living in Warsaw under the cover of false identities. We had “good” false papers which were certificates of birth and christening, delivered by priests who were close to the Polish Underground network. They were issued by obliging civil servants in some other city in Poland and certified that the holders had been living in that place for many years. They were not easy to get and one needed time to have them made and delivered by the network. The underground organization also provided a “Kennkarte,” a sort of identity card printed as a real document and bearing authentic German seals. I still have two of those cards, my Mum’s and My Aunt Rita’s. So with these false papers I was known as Barbara Policzkowska and my mother was Anna Domanska [Domańska], born [née] Stolarczyk.<sup>1146</sup>

The Lewin family—consisting of Artur, his wife, Eugenia, and their two children—moved from Łódź to Warsaw after the war broke out. Before the Germans began to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto in July 1942, shipping trainloads of Jews to Treblinka for extermination, the Lewins arranged a hiding place for their children, Elżbieta and Ryszard. Elżbieta was taken in by Kazimierz Woroszyło and his wife, Aleksandra. They obtained a birth and baptismal certificate for the child from a priest. Now known as Barbara, she presented herself as Kazimierz Woroszyło’s daughter from his first marriage.

Up until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, Elżbieta’s parents remained in contact with their daughter and sent money to support

<sup>1145</sup> Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, 213.

<sup>1146</sup> Leonora Rozen, “Survival in Warsaw,” *The Ser-Charlap Family Newsletter*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1999).

her. After the uprising was put down, Elżbieta and Aleksandra Woroszyło were sent to a transit camp in Pruszków. They escaped from a transport and hid in local villages. It was there that Elżbieta's father eventually found her. Elżbieta's mother perished during the Warsaw Uprising. After the war, Elżbieta (later Merel) and her father, along with her step-mother, moved to France.<sup>1147</sup>

Jan and Zofia Topiński, members of the Polish underground in Warsaw, are credited with rescuing at least twelve Jews. They procured false documents for Jews in hiding. Birth and baptismal certificates from Catholic parishes were indispensable. They turned for assistance to Fr. Zygmunt Trószczyński, a Marian priest and pastor of Our Lady Queen of Poland (Matki Bożej Królowej Polski) Parish on Gdańska Street in Warsaw's Marymont district.

These were Zofia and Jan Topiński's official jobs during the War. Both, however, were later involved with the underground. Jan worked in the Bureau of Information and Propaganda of the Home Army (his younger friend was Władysław Bartoszewski). From the beginning of the time when Jews needed to conceal their identity, Zofia helped in the manufacture of false papers. The Topiński couple produced fake papers on the basis of birth certificates obtained from the local parish. They set up an office in their home just for this purpose, equipped with blank "kennkarty" and the required fake rubber stamps.

At that time, Zofia Topińska received help from the priest Zygmunt Trószczyński, parish priest of the church on Gdańsk Street. (Father Trószczyński contributed to the rescue of many Jews. He was, however, never honoured for this). Today, little is known as to exactly which Jews were helped by the Topiński couple and specifically how they were helped. What is known is that they helped far more individuals than has been documented.<sup>1148</sup>

Herszek (Herszko) Fenigsztajn, a homeless Jewish child taken in by a Polish Catholic family before the war began, was christened by Fr. Trószczyński in 1940 and issued a falsified birth and baptismal certificate.<sup>1149</sup>

Janina Bogdańska lived with her husband Ludwik and son Tadeusz on ul. Potocka 4 (4 Potocka Street) in the Marymont neighborhood, Warsaw. In 1935, Ludwik Bogdański, the owner of a transport company, found in his stable a sleeping, ill and emaciated Jewish boy, twelve-year-old Herszek, the son of a homeless bagel seller from the Stare Miasto (Old Town). The Bogdańskis decided to keep the child and raise it. The boy's mother died in 1937.

<sup>1147</sup> Mateusz Szczepaniak, "Righteous Ceremony Held at Royal Castle in Warsaw," January 15, 2018, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/righteous-ceremony-held-royal-castle-warsaw>; Bartosz Boruciak, "Ocalała Ela, po chrzcie Basia," *Tygodnik Solidarność*, no. 16 (April 2018): 16–19. Elżbieta's mother left a memoir that was published as Eugenia Szajn Lewin, *W getcie warszawskim: Lipiec 1942–kwiecień 1943* (Poznań: a5, 1989).

<sup>1148</sup> The Topiński Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-topinski-family>.

<sup>1149</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 102–3.

Herszek was to some extent a member of the Bogdański family when World War II broke out and the Germans started persecuting Jews. “I was trying to do everything during the Nazi occupation so as not to let Herszek end up in the ghetto,” Janina Bogdańska recalls in her account deposited in the Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute. Mrs. Bogdańska spoke about her problems with priest Truszyński [Trószyński] from the Królowa Korony Polskiej (The Queen of Polish Crown) church on ul. Gdańska (Gdańska Street). In November 1940, the priest baptized the boy and issued him a certificate in the name Henryk Wichrowski.

In 1943, as a result of the denunciation made by a neighbor, the Germans came to search the Bogdańskis’ apartment. “Everybody in Marymont knew that I had been keeping and raising a Jewish child. Only one, the only person informed on us to the German authorities. (...) After the denunciation, the German gendarmerie came to us, but, after the intercession of Barbara Rutkowska, who accepted the Deutsche Volksliste (German People’s List) and was an activist of the ZNMS [Independent Socialist Youth Union—editor’s note], the gendarmerie gave up searching for the boy hidden in our place,” she recalls in the account deposited in the Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute.

Irena Bobińska-Skotnicka, a neighbor and a friend of Janina’s daughter—Jadwiga Maldis, an activist in the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) [was] involved in the underground movement; during the war [she] worked in the Arbeitsamt [job center]. Thanks to her help, in the fall of 1943, Herszek went to Germany, where—unrecognized—[he] worked on a farm until the end of the war. He returned to his foster family in 1947.

From May 1943 on, Janina Bogdańska helped Irena and Aleksander Skotnicki, a Jewish fighter, who found a shelter in her place after the collapse of the Ghetto Uprising. He came to stay in Irena’s place on ul. Potocka 6 (6 Potocka Street) thanks to his sister Hanna Skotnicka. Bogdańska would bring him food. Aleksander and Irena married after the war. They moved to Gdańsk where Aleksander testified against Jurgen [Jürgen] Stroop, the man responsible for the bloody suppression of the Ghetto Uprising. In the end, the married couple settled down in Australia.<sup>1150</sup>

Fr. Trószyński also provided a birth baptismal certificate for Barbara Birnbaum (Liliana Krajewska), who left the Warsaw ghetto at the age of nine. She was sheltered by Stefan Żbikowski, a policeman, and his wife, Zofia. Stefan Żbikowski’s brother, Zdzisław, another policeman, also sheltered a Jewish woman. She too obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from Fr. Trószyński.<sup>1151</sup>

Fr. Trószyński also provided food and temporary shelter and found safe houses and employment for many Jews. He placed at least two Jewish children in convents. He performed a marriage for a Jewish couple who were passing as Catholics. One of the Jews he helped was a woman named Karpalska.<sup>1152</sup>

<sup>1150</sup> Janina Bogdańska, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-bogdanska-janina>.

<sup>1151</sup> Testimony of Barbara Krajewska in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 225–26.

<sup>1152</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 634–35; Testimony of Feliks Jesionowski, April 4, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 6041.



Fr. Trószczyński was recognized as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem in 2020. He is credited with rescuing Małgorzata Lipszyc, Mr. Lipszyc, Rózia Lipszyc, Hersz Fenigstein (Henryk Wigrowski), Mrs. Korpalska (Karpalska), Stefan Korpalski, Barbara Birnbaum (Liliana Krajewska), Helena Hercberg Jungerman, Chaja Helena Hercberg Zybert, and four members of the Rozen family.<sup>1153</sup>

After leaving the Warsaw ghetto, Dunka (Devora) Fishman and her daughter, Stefanie Seltzer (b. 1938), passed as Christians in Warsaw with the help of false documents obtained from an unidentified priest. For a time, they lived with a relative of Dunka's husband's family. She had converted to Catholicism and was living openly with her Polish husband.<sup>1154</sup>

Shortly before her father's death, when Stefanie turned four, plans were made to get her out of the ghetto. Her mother bleached her already dark blond hair. She was tutored in Catholic prayers, and instructed that outside the ghetto she could "never talk about what goes on in the house [or] say the names of anybody," or reveal information that might betray her Jewish identity, such as her grandfather having a beard. ...

The two of them remained together at the home of Adela [Kałuszyńska], a relative from Stefanie's father's family. Adela was a Jewish woman who converted and married a Polish scientist. They lived in Żoliborz [Żoliborz], a suburb of Warsaw. Adela took very good care of Stefanie's mother, Dunka, who was confined to bed with a bleeding ulcer. When Dunka recovered she got a job as an operating room nurse even though she did not have nurse's training.

Stefanie and her mother had false documents that a priest had procured for them. These were the actual birth certificates of deceased people who were born at about the same time as Stefanie and her mother. As a result, they could not go by the same name. She remembers that her mother claimed Stefanie was her illegitimate child, named Maria. When Adela's eighteen-year-old daughter, Krysia, was caught working for the underground, Stefanie and her mother fled from Adela's home because they feared the Gestapo would search the house. ...

Upon returning to Warsaw, Stefanie hid in a villa with her mother, only three houses from Adela's home. The gentile woman who owned the villa was hiding seventeen illegal Jews (Jews without Christian papers). ...

Two secret hiding places were constructed in the house in order to conceal the seventeen Jews in the event of a search. One was a hole behind a water closet in the basement, which extended into a tunnel that went several houses down. The other was in a small bedroom on the second floor. There was a cabinet built into the wall with shelves that could be removed. From there, people could crawl into the eaves of the house.<sup>1155</sup>

<sup>1153</sup> Zygmunt Trószczyński, RD.

<sup>1154</sup> Testimony of Stefanie Seltzer, SFV, Interview code 29524; Testimony of Stephanie Seltzer, SFV, Interview code 55227.

<sup>1155</sup> Yehudi Lindeman, ed., *Shards of Memory: Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2007), 138–39.

This work of painstaking scholarship is a major contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century, to modern Polish history, and to Holocaust studies. It is also inspiring reading, as the book bears witness to immense human courage, spiritually inspired, under the most draconian of circumstances.

*George Weigel*

*Distinguished Senior Fellow and William E. Simon Chair in Catholic Studies*

*Ethics and Public Policy Center*

All nations on earth consist of the good, the bad and the indifferent, and Ryszard Tyndorf's voluminous volume amply demonstrates the truth of this assertion in regard to the Nazi-occupied parts of wartime Poland. Through exhaustive documentation, Tyndorf paints a convincing picture of self-denying compassion, which counteracts the widespread promotion of exclusively negative stereotypes, and helps to build, as is necessary, a multifaceted panorama of historical reality.

*Norman Davies*

*Honorary Fellow, St. Antony's College*

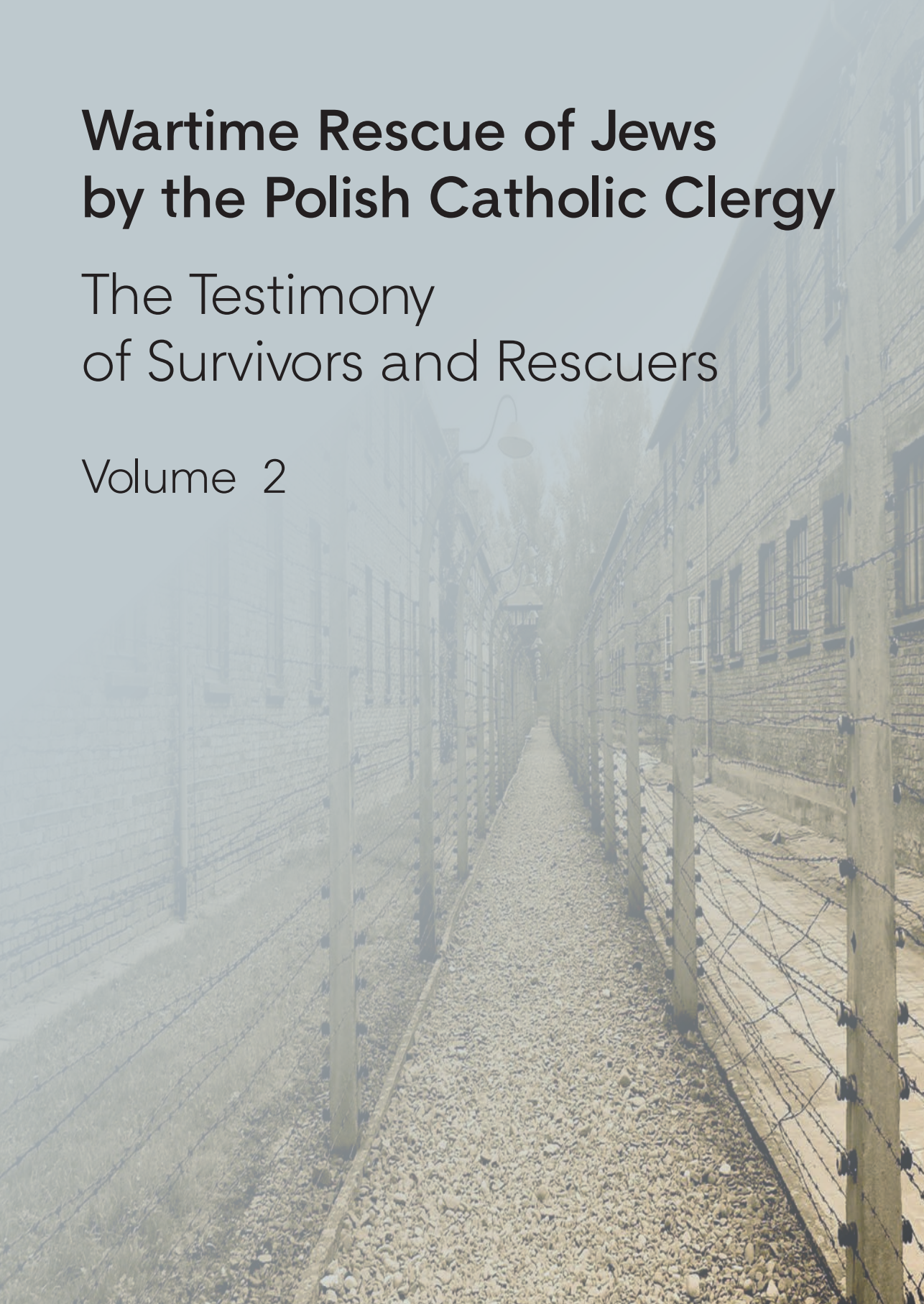
*University of Oxford*



# Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy

The Testimony  
of Survivors and Rescuers

Volume 2



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by the Polish Catholic Clergy**

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of Survivors and Rescuers

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin



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## The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers

Volume 2

Compiled and annotated by

Ryszard Tyndorf

with the assistance of  
Zygmunt Zieliński

Professor Emeritus  
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin  
Former Head of the Department  
of the History of the Church in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Wydawnictwo KUL  
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Reviewers

Prof. Waław Wierzbieniec, University of Rzeszów

Prof. Maciej Mróz, University of Wrocław

Proofreading

Lucyna Cynarzewska-Włażlik

Typesetting

Jarosław Bielecki

Cover and title pages design

Dorota Woźniak

Indices

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Wydawnictwo KUL

ul. Konstantynów 1H, 20-708 Lublin, tel. 81 740 93 40

e-mail: [wydawnictwo@kul.lublin.pl](mailto:wydawnictwo@kul.lublin.pl), <https://wydawnictwo.kul.pl>

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# Table of Contents

|                                                                                 |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Abbreviations .....                                                             | 9   |
| Maps .....                                                                      | 11  |
| Introduction .....                                                              | 15  |
| CHAPTER 1                                                                       |     |
| An Overview of Rescue by the Polish Catholic Clergy: 1939–1945 ...              | 19  |
| CHAPTER 2                                                                       |     |
| The Plight of the Polish Catholic Clergy .....                                  | 33  |
| CHAPTER 3                                                                       |     |
| The First Years of the German Occupation:<br>September 1939–June 1941 .....     | 61  |
| CHAPTER 4                                                                       |     |
| Germany Attacks the Soviet Union: June 1941 .....                               | 121 |
| CHAPTER 5                                                                       |     |
| The Holocaust Intensifies: 1942–1945 .....                                      | 141 |
| APPENDICES                                                                      |     |
| APPENDIX A                                                                      |     |
| Select Bibliography .....                                                       | 969 |
| APPENDIX B                                                                      |     |
| Parishes and Church Institutions Where Assistance<br>Was Provided to Jews ..... | 975 |

APPENDIX C

Religious and Monastic Orders of Women Who Rescued Jews ..... 979

APPENDIX D

Religious and Monastic Orders of Men Who Rescued Jews ..... 985

APPENDIX E

Polish Catholic Clergy Recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations”  
by Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Authority ..... 987

APPENDIX F

Polish Catholic Clergy Who Lost Their Lives for Helping Jews ..... 995

APPENDIX G

The Price of Rescue .....1013

APPENDIX H

Rescue Efforts of Christian Poles .....1023

APPENDIX I

(Non)Recognition and (In)Gratitude .....1115

INDICES

Personal Index .....1143

Index of Place Names .....1247

# Abbreviations

## (for Archival Sources)

|       |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FVA   | Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut                                                                       |
| JHI   | Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw                                                                                                                       |
| PRP   | Polish Righteous, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw<br>Internet: <a href="https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en">https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en</a>            |
| RD    | The Righteous Among the Nations Database, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem<br>Internet: <a href="https://righteous.yadvashem.org">https://righteous.yadvashem.org</a>               |
| SFV   | Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Los Angeles<br>Internet: <a href="https://vhaonline.usc.edu/">https://vhaonline.usc.edu/</a> |
| USHMM | United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.                                                                                                                |
| YVA   | Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem<br>Internet: <a href="https://documents.yadvashem.org/">https://documents.yadvashem.org/</a>                                              |



Masha Borenstein, a tiny Jewish girl, was smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942. Elżbieta Andersz took the child in a rucksack to the home of her parents, Helena and Leon Godlewski, in Warsaw. With the help of her friend Rev. Edward Tyszka, Masha obtained a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Irena Maria Janik. In 1943, Leon Godlewski was arrested for his activities in the Home Army and sent to Auschwitz, where he perished.

Helena had to manage on her own, raising three children, including the small Jewish girl. Despite her difficult financial situation, she did not abandon Misia, as she was then called, caring for her throughout the German occupation and beyond. Masha, later Miriam Adika, immigrated to Israel in 1956. Helena died in 1967; she was recognized by Yad Vashem 44 years later.<sup>1156</sup>

Both Rev. Tyszka, the pastor of St. Casimir Parish, and Rev. Franciszek Dyżewski, the pastor of the Parish of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in nearby Żbików, appealed to their parishioners to help Jews in any way they could. As head of the local branch of the Chief Welfare Council (Rada Główna Opiekuńcza), Rev. Tyszka provided food to the Pruszków ghetto.<sup>1157</sup>

There are numerous accounts mentioning the help of priests in Warsaw in obtaining documents (many more will follow):

- A Jew in hiding directed Wanda Kinrus (then Bołotna, b. 1919) to an unidentified priest in Warsaw for birth and baptismal certificates that shielded both Wanda and her sister Helena.<sup>1158</sup>
- After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Esther Lisak obtained an identity document from Rev. Zygmunt Kowalski.<sup>1159</sup>
- A Christian friend obtained birth and baptismal certificates for Wiera Baksztańska (later Sierpiński, b. 1920) and her mother, Frida Baksztańska (b. 1882), under the names of Zofia Weronika and Józefa Wojutyńska, from a priest in Warsaw.<sup>1160</sup>
- Felix Horn got false identity documents from the Home Army in Warsaw under the name of Feliks Wójcik, including a birth and baptismal certificate supplied by a priest.<sup>1161</sup>

<sup>1156</sup> Ceremony of Presenting The Righteous Among the Nations Awards, Warsaw, December 4, 2012, Embassy of Israel in Warsaw, Internet: [https://embassies.gov.il/warsaw/Departments/Sprawiedliwych/Documents/2012-12-04\\_ENG.pdf](https://embassies.gov.il/warsaw/Departments/Sprawiedliwych/Documents/2012-12-04_ENG.pdf); Helena Godlewska, RD.

<sup>1157</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 831; Skwara, *Pruszkowsky Żydzi*, 176–77.

<sup>1158</sup> Testimony of Wanda (Litwak) Bolotny Kinrus, YVA, file O.3/3510 (Item 3556636).

<sup>1159</sup> Testimony of Esther Lisak, YVA, file O.3/6820 (Item 3560295).

<sup>1160</sup> Baksztanska and Sierpinski Families Papers, USHMM, Accession no. 2004.331.3.

<sup>1161</sup> Oral history interview with Felix Horn, July 19, 1994, USHMM, RG-50.030.0294 (Transcript, at pp. 22, 41).



- Rev. Zbigniew Polanowski, a chaplain in an underground organization who worked as a fireman at the Fire Officers' School in Warsaw, supplied a number of birth and baptismal certificates to Jewish fugitives.<sup>1162</sup>
- A priest from Holy Cross Church in Warsaw provided birth and baptismal certificates for Mira Getler, Halina Lutkiewicz, and Halina's sister.<sup>1163</sup>
- Bella Rotstein obtained false documents from a priest in Warsaw, with which she passed as Catholic Pole in the countryside.<sup>1164</sup>
- Hana Hakman Debsztok (b. 1911) obtained documents from St. John's Cathedral under the name of Apolonia Kraśnicka.<sup>1165</sup>

Jews obtained documents from priests, either directly or through intermediaries, throughout occupied Poland. In most cases, the priest who supplied the document is not identified by name.

- Severin Kohn (later Gabriel), who passed as a Christian in Warsaw, obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from a priest at the Church of the Holy Cross (Podwyższenia Krzyża Świętego) in Łódź, establishing his identity as Władysław Gawroński.<sup>1166</sup>
- Other priests from Łódź, among them Rev. Teodor Budnikowski, a vicar at the Salesian Parish of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, provided false birth and baptismal certificates to Jews.<sup>1167</sup>
- Unidentified priests from Lwów provided falsified birth and baptismal certificates to Janina Kalita, a Jewish woman married to a Catholic Pole,<sup>1168</sup> and to Hena Bakalarz Nomberg.<sup>1169</sup>
- Renia Kukiełka, a native of Jędrzejów, went to a town where she knew a railway worker, a former client at her parents' shop. This couple sought

<sup>1162</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 130.

<sup>1163</sup> Testimony of Halina Lyutkevich Lutkiewicz, YVA, file O.3/5626 (Item 3740158).

<sup>1164</sup> Testimony of Bella Rotstein, SFV, Interview code 22858.

<sup>1165</sup> Testimony of Hanka Apolonia Pilichowska, SFV, Interview code 26808.

<sup>1166</sup> Severin Gabriel, *In the Ruins of Warsaw Streets* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2005), 100, and the illustration between pp. 96–97.

<sup>1167</sup> Dorota Sierpacka, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Łodzi podczas okupacji niemieckiej," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 706, based on Marek Budziarek, "Geneza, przebieg i następstwa masowych aresztowań duchownych katolickich 5–7 października 1941 r. (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem diecezji łódzkiej)," in Bohdan Bejze and Antoni Galiński, eds., *Martyrologia duchowieństwa polskiego 1939–1956* (Łódź: Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1993), 56. Rev. Teodor Budnikowski was arrested on October 6, 1941, and perished in Dachau on March 14, 1942.

<sup>1168</sup> Testimony of Janina Kalita, JHI, record group 301, no. 444.

<sup>1169</sup> Testimony of Hena (Bakalarz) Nomberg, YVA, file O.3/1652 (Item 3559955). This testimony also mentions an unidentified priest who found a hiding place for a young Jewish girl with a Polish family in the countryside.

help from their priest, who gave them the papers of a recently deceased local woman, Wanda Widuchowska.<sup>1170</sup>

A number of Jewish testimonies in the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies also attest to priests' supplying false documents to Jews in various localities: Rozwadow, near Stalowa Wola;<sup>1171</sup> Ulanów, near Nisko;<sup>1172</sup> and Mroczkowice, near Cielądz;<sup>1173</sup> a village near Lwów.<sup>1174</sup> There are many more such testimonies in various other collections.

- After escaping from the Siedliszcze ghetto, near Chełm, Bracha Bronia Kleinman obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate from a priest, with which she passed as a Pole, moving from place to place.<sup>1175</sup>
- Tosia Weissman Schrage from Łopatyn, near Radziechów, obtained false identity papers with the help of a local priest. She used her new identity to pass as a Christian worker in Germany.<sup>1176</sup>
- Chana Gindelman obtained false documents from a priest in Końskie;<sup>1177</sup> Maryśka Janowska from a priest in Bereza, near Międzyrzec Podlaski;<sup>1178</sup> Dawid Wajsbard (later Henryk Majewski) from a priest in Mniszew, near Warka;<sup>1179</sup> Shoshana Emilka (Kosover) Rosentzveig from a priest in Radzymin;<sup>1180</sup> Eva Reed from a priest in Stolin.<sup>1181</sup>

<sup>1170</sup> Judy Batalion, *The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos* (New York: William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2020), 103.

<sup>1171</sup> Pearl B. [Binder] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2876), FVA. Pearl Binder was born in Rozwadow in 1921. Binder recalled cordial relations with non-Jews before the war. She obtained food illegally from local Poles and hid family valuables with Polish neighbours. She received help from a former teacher and was hidden by a Pole. She obtained false papers from a priest, which enabled her to volunteer for labour in Germany.

<sup>1172</sup> Sabina G. [Green] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2181), FVA.

<sup>1173</sup> Emilia S. [Millie Selinger] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1907), FVA.

<sup>1174</sup> Ella and Leon S. [Sawicki] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-305), FVA. Leon and Ella Schatzberg obtained birth and baptismal certificates and a marriage certificate under the name of Sawicki from a priest in a Polish village near Lwów. Earlier, when Leon had contracted typhus, he was hospitalized in a town near Lwów, where he was treated by doctors and a nurse—a nun—who knew he was Jewish.

<sup>1175</sup> Testimony of Bracha Bronia (Kleinman) Freiberg Bendori, YVA, file O.3 V.T/10098 (Item 8169767).

<sup>1176</sup> Tokarski Family, RD; Testimony of Joseph De Shrage, SFV, Interview code 16070.

<sup>1177</sup> Testimony of Chana Gindelman, YVA, file O.3/4537 (Item 3558581).

<sup>1178</sup> Testimony of Marishka Yanovska, YVA, file O.3/5010 (Item 3558939).

<sup>1179</sup> Testimony of Henryk Majewski, SFV, Interview code 29086. The parish priest of Mniszew at the time was Rev. Karol Gozdalski.

<sup>1180</sup> Testimony of Shoshana Emilka (Kosover) Rosentzveig, YVA, file O.3 V.T/4584 (Item 4690779).

<sup>1181</sup> Oral history interview with Eva Reed, USHMM, Accession number 1992.A.0129.29, RG-50.029.0029.

- Jehoszua Grinberg (b. 1907) from Radzymin obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Jan Milewski from a local priest, allowing him to pass as a Catholic Pole in the vicinity of Warsaw.<sup>1182</sup>
- After escaping from the ghetto in Opole Lubelskie, Roza Korman (later Rosa Fajersztajn, b. 1919) turned to a priest in Chotcza who provided her with the birth and baptismal certificate of Jadwiga Ciecieląg, who had been sent to Germany as a forced labourer.<sup>1183</sup> The pastor at the time was Rev. Czesław Bociański.
- Geoge (Jerzy) Popper and his father, Leopold Popper, obtained false identity documents from a priest in Kraków.<sup>1184</sup>
- A Jewish girl born in 1942, known as Salomea (Sara), was adopted by Mrs. Gaszak. She was baptized by a priest in Fordon nad Wisłą, on the outskirts of Bydgoszcz.<sup>1185</sup>
- Janeta Wulkan (later Janeta Gościcki, b. 1912), obtained a Kennkarte under the name of Helena Kochanowicz with the assistance of a priest in Rokietnica, near Jarosław.<sup>1186</sup>
- Irena Jahr Rubin (b. 1913) obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from Rev. Franciszek Wróbel, the pastor of Jaworów, as Janina Terlecka. He also provided a certificate for her husband, Zenon Rubin.<sup>1187</sup>
- Regina Zofia Wand (later Wasner, b. 1923 in Wielka Wieś) and her mother, Rozalia Finder Wand, acquired false identity papers with the help of a local priest. Regina Zofia became Zofia Zięba, and Rozalia Wand became Maria Zięba. The two women worked as hired hands for landowners, mostly on large estates that belonged to Polish nobility. Immediately after the liberation they returned to Kraków.<sup>1188</sup>

In addition to her Polish husband, Adam Zoszak, Giza Greifinger, then Jadwiga Zoszak (later Sternberg, b. 1906), was aided by a priest and a Polish teacher from Warsaw.<sup>1189</sup>

<sup>1182</sup> Testimony of Jehoszua Grinberg, YVA, file O.3/3494 (Item 3557027).

<sup>1183</sup> Testimony of Rosa Fajersztajn, SFV, Interview code 18896.

<sup>1184</sup> Testimony of Jerzy Popper, SFV, Interview code 29235.

<sup>1185</sup> Testimony of Salomea Łukowska (Łukowska), SFV, Interview code 21009.

<sup>1186</sup> Paul Verlind Collection, USHMM, Accession no. 2002.251.1.

<sup>1187</sup> Testimony of Irena Jahr, SFV, Interview code 26053. Irena Jahr states that Rev. Wróbel provided certificates to other Jews as well.

<sup>1188</sup> Wasner and Wand Families' Papers, USHMM, Accession no. 2005.210.1.

<sup>1189</sup> Oral history interview with Jadwiga Roszak, USHMM, Accession number 2009.183, RG-50.621.0001.

In all likelihood, there many more cases that have not been recorded. What has been preserved is more than sufficient to belie two myths that crop up in Holocaust literature: the near universal unhelpfulness or hostility on the part of the Catholic clergy towards Jewish fugitives; those “few” Polish priests that provided documents to Jews were in the business of “selling” them, often for enormous sums.

There is no credible evidence that that was the case. This publication has provided copious examples of Jews obtaining birth and baptismal certificates directly from priests free of charge. Many priests worked closely with the Polish underground and supplied them with church certificates, both genuine and forged.

When individual Jews, posing as Christians, approached priests they did not know directly for such documents, like any other such person, they had to pay a small fee for the issuance of the document. (Clergymen had no pensions and relied on such fees for their livelihood and to maintain the parish.) Moreover, not to request the fee when dealing with unknown persons posed an obvious risk. One could never be sure who was behind the request; German agents were plentiful.

In June 1942, Minna Friedland (Frydland, later Aspler) escaped from the Warsaw ghetto with the help of her Christian friend, Henryk Krueger. Krueger secured an identity card for her as Maria Burczyńska, using the birth and baptismal certificate of a dead child he obtained from Holy Cross Church in Warsaw. Minna worked at a library under her assumed identity. During the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the library’s basement was turned into a first aid station, and Minna helped bandage the wounded, delivered messages to the outside, and searched burning buildings for people who were trapped inside. After the Warsaw Uprising, she was taken to forced labour in Germany under her assumed identity.<sup>1190</sup>

At first the relations during the occupation between Henry [Henryk] Krueger, a resident of Warsaw, and his friends interned in the local ghetto were completely businesslike. But the humanitarian values imbued in Krueger soon induced him to help the needy and the persecuted, at great risk to his own life and without receiving any payment. He supplied food to his acquaintances in the ghetto, such as Halina Wald and the Frydman [Frydland] family, but in the summer of 1942 when the big Aktion began in Warsaw in which the ghetto’s Jews were taken to Treblinka, he felt compelled to do more to save their lives. He managed to get into the ghetto, which was more closely guarded at the time, bringing Aryan papers in his pockets. He gave these to 20-year-old Mina Frydman [Frydland] and accompanied her to an apartment he had prepared to shelter her on the Aryan side of the city. While she was in hiding, Krueger continued to supply Mina with everything she

<sup>1190</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 405; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 273; Minna Aspler Papers, USHMM, Accession no. 1999.267.2.

needed, and when she was threatened by blackmailers he moved her to another apartment. She remained there until the late summer of 1944 and after the Warsaw Uprising was taken, with her borrowed identity, to forced labor in Germany, where she was liberated by the Allied armies.<sup>1191</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto in January 1943, 13-year-old Mosze Rozenblum (later Marian Rosenbloom) sought refuge with Stanisław Drabich, a family friend living in Warsaw. Drabich, who also assisted other Jews, took the boy in. He obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate for Mosze under the name of Marian Rudzki from a priest he knew. About six weeks later, the Gestapo raided Drabich's home. They found Mosze's ghetto registration card on his person when they searched him. They arrested Drabich and executed him on July 16, 1943. Mosze managed to escape and found shelter with a Polish family in the Praga suburb, together with several other Jews.<sup>1192</sup>

Marian Rozenblum was born in 1930 in Warsaw. In 1940 he found himself in the Warsaw Ghetto with his mother and siblings (three brothers and a sister). In 1942 his mother and twin brother were sent to Treblinka. The next year the two older brothers, who were laborers in a German factory, were sent there as well. Marian and his sister Elżbieta realized that the same fate would soon befall them. They reached out to a man their father had befriended before the war, the only person they felt they could trust in Warsaw: Stanisław Drabich. Stanisław sent word back to them that should they escape the ghetto, they could come to him. One day in 1943, Marian showed up on his doorstep. Stanisław let him in, showed him around, and told him he could stay. A couple of months later, the neighbors became suspicious, so Stanisław moved Marian away for a while but then took him back. Meanwhile, Elżbieta and her friends the Rozenfarb family escaped to the Aryan side. Because Stanisław owned an apartment, he was able to give them papers stating that they were registered at that address; he was also able to get false identification papers for them and Marian via a friend of his who was a priest. With Stanisław's help, Elżbieta and the Rozenfarbs found shelter in the attic of his cousins, Ireneusz and Teodora Studziński. Stanisław also helped another of Elżbieta's friends, Nora Goldman, who spoke perfect German and English and passed for Polish. He registered her at his apartment and found her a safe house for a while. ... One day the Gestapo came to Stanisław's house. Nora Goldman's German employer had found out she was Jewish, and when she was arrested, it was found that she was registered at Stanisław's apartment, so the Gestapo came to arrest him. They demanded to know who Marian was and arrested him as well. On the way to the Gestapo headquarters, Marian managed to jump into a passing street car and escape. Stanisław, however, was not seen or heard from again, and was apparently taken to a death camp. Marian ran to the only place he knew was safe—the Studziński's house, where his sister was staying. He only knew about the place because Stanisław had taken him there one day to meet his cousins. He may not even have been aware of the Jews hiding in the attic, but on the day of his rescuer's arrest, he joined them there. Marian remained there with

<sup>1191</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 405.

<sup>1192</sup> Susan M. Rostan, *Digging: Lifting the Memorable from Within the Unthinkable* (Cold Spring Harbor, New York: Rosalie Ink Publications, 2013).

the other Jews until summer 1944. After the war ended, Marian and the Studzińskis parted ways, but they remained in touch through letters over the years.<sup>1193</sup>

Helena Korzeniewska (née Krukowiecka-Kruk, later Korazim) was recognized as a Righteous Gentile for smuggling six Jews out of the Warsaw ghetto. Her uncle and aunt, Damazy and Julia Ciechanowski, sheltered them in Warsaw. An additional seven Jews joined them later.<sup>1194</sup> In her Yad Vashem testimony,<sup>1195</sup> Korzeniewska states that she repeatedly turned to Rev. Kolski for birth and baptismal certificates to protect her charges. (Rev. Kolski's identity has not been established.) Rev. Jan Sztuka, the pastor of the Purest Heart of Mary Church on Szembeka Square in the Grochów suburb of Warsaw, directed her to a woman who provided an identity document for Janina Eisenstadt. Two other Jews whom Korzeniewska assisted, Justyna Lilientahl and her young son Józio (b. 1944), were sheltered by Rev. Aleksander Grabowski in the parish rectory in Grodzisk Mazowiecki.

The following are some additional examples of priests from Warsaw who issued false baptismal certificates to Jews:

[1] Edward Chadzynski [Chądryński] worked for the Warsaw city administration in the public records department during the war. This position allowed him to provide Jews with false papers. He was also active in the Polish Resistance movements where one of his tasks was to organize false documents for underground activities. Edward also helped people who were in need of hiding places and for this he used his connections at work. ...<sup>1196</sup>

Procuring false documents required the cooperation of many people. First, one had to obtain a birth and baptismal certificate, which was necessary to fabricate an identity document and obtain a *Kennkarte*. For this, Chądryński relied on the parish churches of the Blessed Virgin Mary on New Market Square and St. Anthony on Senatorska Street. Employees in the public records department of the city administration helped by supplying birth and marriage certificates.<sup>1197</sup>

[2] Rosalia Werdinger met Boleslaw [Bolesław] Muchowski before the war at his place of work in the city of Drohobycz, in the Lwow [Lwów] district, and in time their friendship turned into love. After the attacks against the Jews began following the German occupation of the area, Boleslaw took Werdinger to his brother, Zygmunt Muchowski, who lived in the village of Dzięwule in Siedlce county, while he himself rented an apartment in the nearby town of Lukow [Łuków]. Zygmunt took Rosalia under his wing and hid her in his home in the village, and after he obtained Aryan papers for her in the name of a deceased relative [using a baptismal certificate he obtained from the Basilica of the Sacred Heart

<sup>1193</sup> Stanisław Drabich, RD.

<sup>1194</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 372–73.

<sup>1195</sup> Testimony of Helena Korzeniewska, YVA, file O.3/2518 (Item 3739944).

<sup>1196</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 132–33.

<sup>1197</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 75.



in Warsaw<sup>1198</sup>], he took her to Lukow, where his brother Boleslaw was waiting for her. In Lukow, Boleslaw introduced Rosalia as his wife. Together with Soviet partisans active in the underground in the area, Zygmunt Muchowski continued to extend his assistance to Jews in need ... After the war, Boleslaw married Rosalia and they remained in Poland.<sup>1199</sup>

[3] During the occupation, Bronislaw [Bronisław] Nietyksza worked in the manpower department of the city of Warsaw. He was also active in the underground organization that found hiding places and procured false documents for those persecuted by the occupation authorities. In this capacity, Nietyksza was approached by Jews who escaped from the ghetto, whom he also helped. Nietyksza had an arrangement with two Catholic priests in Warsaw, who agreed not to publish the names of all the newly deceased in their churches so that their identity cards could be adapted for use by Jews hiding on the Aryan side of Warsaw.<sup>1200</sup> Nietyksza supplied more than ten Jews with false papers in this way before the Germans discovered what he was doing. They arrested him on May 24, 1944, and sent him to the Stutthof concentration camp, from which he escaped during the evacuation of the camp.<sup>1201</sup>

[4] Before the war, the Sliwczynskis [Śliwczyńskis], from the town of Mława [Mława] in the Warsaw district, lived on the same street as Ella Zlotnik [Złotnik] (later Perkiel), who was in the same class as one of the Sliwczynski girls. During the occupation, the two families moved to Warsaw, where the Zlotniks were interned in the ghetto. In 1943, when Ella [sic] and her father hid on the Aryan side of the city, the ties between the two families were renewed and Ella and the Sliwczynski's son, Jerzy, met frequently. In 1944, after the Gestapo arrested Ella's father, Ella had to change her identity and disappear. Jerzy helped her by arranging a temporary hiding place for her outside the city and obtained new Aryan papers for her. When Ella returned to Warsaw, she stayed with Sliwczynski until the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944. When the Germans arrested Jerzy, Ella stayed with his father, Tadeusz Sliwczynski, until after the war, when she emigrated to the United States. The Sliwczynskis helped other Jews from the town of Mława who hid on the Aryan side of Warsaw, including the Makowskis, the Kleniecs, Celina Czech, and Biezuńska [Biezuńska]. Despite the danger, the Sliwczynskis considered it their human duty to help their Jewish friends and never expected anything in return.<sup>1202</sup> [They were able to obtain false Kennkarte

<sup>1198</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 363.

<sup>1199</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 531.

<sup>1200</sup> Bronisław Nietyksza described the process as follows: "I had two prearranged Roman Catholic parishes—one on Three Crosses Square (St. Alexander's Church) and the other on Narutowicz Square (St. James Church). I had an agreement with the parish priests and secretaries of these parishes that they would not issue death certificates for deceased people in the 18–60 age range, leaving them in the records of living people in a given parish. In case of the need to issue a kenkarta [Kennkarte] to a person of Jewish origin as an Aryan, a suitable birth certificate of a person already deceased but not deleted from the records was then chosen. In this way those people obtained authentic and formally valid documents." See Sebastian Piątkowski, "Aryan Papers': On the Help Provided by Poles in Legalising False Identities for Jews in the Territory of the General Governorate for the Occupied Polish Regions," *Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 1 (2020): 437–63, at pp. 444–45.

<sup>1201</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 546–47.

<sup>1202</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 722–23.

for these Jews based on birth and baptismal certificates issued by Rev. Bolesław Dudziński from St. Charles Borromeo church in the Powązki district of Warsaw.<sup>1203]</sup>

Sometimes, obtaining documents went hand-in-hand with religious instructions. A Catholic priest gave Ada Matulski individual instruction in Catholic faith and rituals before she was smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto and hidden with Poles. Ada's father had obtained false papers for her as Zosia Kotlecka.<sup>1204</sup>

In some cases, birth and baptismal certificates were provided by parish staff, with or without the knowledge of the priest. Bernard Radzicki obtained fifteen blank birth and baptismal certificates from his friend who worked at the parish in Krośniewice near Kutno. These certificates were then used to obtain Kennkarten, official German documents, for members of his extended family, most of whom survived passing as Catholic Poles.<sup>1205</sup> The organist at the parish in Mińsk Mazowiecki searched the church records for deceased persons with suitable birth dates, whereupon authentic birth and baptismal certificates were issued to the Jews.<sup>1206</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Wołomin, near Warsaw, Fania Warman (Stecher) was sheltered by her friend Maria Maliszewska and Maria's parents. Maria obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate for Fania from a local priest. This enabled Fania to apply for work papers. She then secured employment as a servant with a Polish family in Warsaw.<sup>1207</sup>

Henryk (Froim Fiszel) Prajs from Góra Kalwaria near Warsaw,<sup>1208</sup> who received a false birth and baptismal certificate from Rev. Stefan Ścibiorek, a vicar in Osieck, survived with the assistance of many villagers—often complete strangers.

On 25th February 1941 they deported the Jews from Góra [Góra] Kalwaria to the ghetto in Warsaw. My sister was already there, she hadn't come back to Góra Kalwaria with the outbreak of the war. Mom didn't even think of escaping, and me neither, I wanted to go

<sup>1203</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 558. Rev. Bolesław Dudziński, who was exiled in Warsaw, used documents and records from Mława. See also Ryszard Juskiewicz, *Losy Żydów mławskich w okresie II-ej wojny światowej* (Mława: Tow. Przyjaciół Ziemi Mławskiej, 1994), 119–20.

<sup>1204</sup> Ada M. [Matulski, née Gringlas] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-4003), FVA; Oral history interview with Ada Matulski, USHMM, Accession no. 1995.A.1272.346, RG-50.120.0346.

<sup>1205</sup> Testimony of Roma Rosenblat, SFV, Interview code 779.

<sup>1206</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 285.

<sup>1207</sup> Righteous Medal Award Ceremony, May 28, 2019, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/ceremonia-sprawiedliwych-w-lazienkach-krolewskich-w-warszawie>.

<sup>1208</sup> Henryk P. [Prajs] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-3171), FVA.

to the ghetto with my family. The neighbors would come over and say, “Listen, run away, go, you don’t look like a Jew, maybe you’ll make it.” I heard there were Jews in Magnuszew [town 25 km from Góra Kalwaria]—there was this sort of grapevine during the occupation—and that there are no deportations there. And so I basically ran away in the evening, after a talk with Mom. I don’t know what happened to my family. I lost contact with them on that day. They were gone without a trace. Only my brother came to me later on. Lots of people left the ghetto then, everyone tried not to surrender.

It’s twenty-something kilometers from Góra Kalwaria to Magnuszew, wintertime, so I stepped in a yard once in a while, knocked on the door, I asked, “Hello sir, open, please, I’m a Jew, I ran away, please, help me.” If it was a good man—he’d let me in, if not—he’d say “Go away, go away!” The Jews stayed in Magnuszew until May or June 1942. [The Magnuszew ghetto was liquidated in October 1942]. I didn’t know anyone there. I basically worked as a tailor, people came in, gave me something to sew, I did it, and it was enough to get by.

Two months before the deportations they created a ghetto, put everyone in, and later moved them to Koźienice [a town ca. 20 km from Góra Kalwaria, 80 km from Warsaw]. In Koźienice they selected young men and took them to Chmielew [village 5 km from Magnuszew] to dig irrigation ditches. There was a labor camp for Jews. I was one of those transported there.

We stayed there until December [1942], and later came the deportation and we went back to Magnuszew. I already had many friends there at the time, among those whom I tailored for. On our way back from Chmielew a Polish friend, Janek Cwyl, pulled me out of the column while the policemen weren’t paying attention. He took me with him, he saved me.

Somehow I managed to get through to Góra Kalwaria. I went to my neighbor, Mrs. Wasilewska. She immediately started to plan what to do. We went to Osieck [a town 15 km from Góra Kalwaria] together, to a parish priest, Kuropek [Rev. Stefan Ścibiorek] was his name I think. He issued a birth certificate for me. Later I got myself a *kenkarta*, in the name Feliks Zoladek [Żołądek]. You had to do it with the help of friends and friends of friends. Because the priest gave me the certificate, but not the *kenkarta*, naturally. A friend took the certificate, went to one of those doing funny business [people who fabricated false IDs], and had them make me a *kenkarta*, that’s how it was done. It wasn’t legal.

I lived in the country, staying with different farmers and tailoring for them. One told some other he knew a tailor, and so I kept going from one person to another. Some of them knew I was a Jew, they figured it out, but well, I did survive. I stayed in one village, returned to another, kept in hiding for some time, had to run away on another occasion, one was always looking for a safe house.

I’ve been exceptionally lucky. They told me: “Heniek, you don’t look like a Jew at all.” I also spoke correct Polish, more or less, I mean I had the right accent, because as for the grammar a peasant wouldn’t notice. I could quite safely assume I wouldn’t be recognized by anyone. Plus I was a soldier, I was brave. That’s why I took risks, I probably wouldn’t otherwise, just like many others. You can’t imagine, you could be killed any time, and not just you, but also the person harboring you. [On 15th October 1941, the death penalty for hiding a Jew was introduced in the General Government.]...

My longest single stay was in the village Podwierzbie near Żelechów [Żelechów, Podlęż community, Garwolin district] with a Mrs. [Katarzyna] Pokorska. She was an acquaintance or a cousin of Mrs. Wasilewska [Mr. Prajs’ neighbor]. Many decent people lived there

generally, the Pyz family for example, the Polak family, the Marciniaks. Even the head of the village protected me. And as for the villagers, some did and some did not believe that I was a Pole. Not once did they later tell me, after the end of the war: “It made us think, you lived here, it’s a poor house, and nobody came to see you, you didn’t leave for Christmas; we eyed you, a nice looking boy.” They didn’t know what to think.

I went to the dances once, but later decided not to go anymore, because I was afraid. I went to the church once, too, but was afraid someone would recognize me as well. But nobody gave me away, simply Godsend. I went to that church after the war and ordered a thanksgiving mass for all the villagers.

I’m not surprised people didn’t want to hide Jews. Everyone was afraid, who would risk his family’s lives? You can accuse the ones who kept a Jew, exploited him financially, and later gave him away or killed him. They’re murderers. But you absolutely can’t blame an average Pole, I don’t know if anyone would be more decent, if any Jew would be more decent.<sup>1209</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto with his wife Irene, Stanley Bors (then Stanisław Przedborski) took refuge in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, outside Warsaw, at the home of his wife’s great uncle, a Jew who was married to a Polish woman named Halina. The Bors couple lived there openly, under false identities, passing as Poles under the protection of a local priest. Another Jewish couple lived in the house next door.

We ran away to my wife’s other uncle, the one who was married to a gentile woman. They lived in Grodzisk, another suburb of Warsaw. We were able to stay with them till the end of the war. The family consisted of the uncle, his wife and his young daughter. We were six people in a two-bedroom house. All our relatives were gambling with their lives by helping us. We had false birth certificates and passports obtained by the colonel [a member of the Polish underground] through his contacts in city hall, but any priest would know we were Jews from our lack of knowledge about the customs and traditions of the Catholic religion. The priest in that neighborhood didn’t report us. He was a good man and didn’t want to cooperate with the Germans. ...

My wife’s uncle was a teacher in his seventies. His wife was about the same age. They were married a long time and had lived in Lodz [Łódź]. When Hitler came they came back to Grodzisk, where his wife’s family lived. Everybody knew my uncle was Jewish but no one reported him to the Gestapo.<sup>1210</sup>

Now, here is a fuller summary of the several documented testimonies given by Irene and Stanley Bors. After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto shortly before its liquidation, the Bors couple were taken in by Maria Czerwińska, Irene Bors’

<sup>1209</sup> Testimony of Henryk Prajs, January 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/henryk-prajs>.

<sup>1210</sup> Sylvia Rothchild, ed., *Voices from the Holocaust* (New York: New American Library, 1981), 224–25.

great uncle's former maid. Because Czerwińska lived close to the ghetto, and the Germans were scouting the area in search of Jewish fugitives, the Bors couple relocated to the home of a former Polish officer in Rembertów, on the outskirts of Warsaw. This officer, with ties to the Polish underground, was sheltering a number of Jews, whom he provided with false identity documents: two of Irene Bors' elderly great uncles (one of who died there), a young couple with a child, two women, and the Bors couple.

Because of the large number of Jews living there, they decided it would be safer for the Bors to make a go of it on their own in rented quarters nearby. The Germans raided the Polish officer's home after the Bors had left. They executed the young Jewish couple and their child, let the two Jewish women go after a priest vouched for them as Catholics, and for some reason they also released one of Irene Bors' great uncles but executed the other. They sent the Polish officer to a concentration camp. Afterwards, the Bors couple and surviving great uncle relocated to Grodzisk Mazowiecki, where they resided in the home of another of Irene Bors' great uncles. This (third) great uncle was married to a Polish woman, with whom he had one daughter.<sup>1211</sup>

Another Jewish-Polish couple in Grodzisk Mazowiecki—a Jew by the name of Schreidman, passing as Fiałkowski, and his Catholic wife, Janina—sheltered Ludwik Simonsohn (b. 1936). Ludwik's parents had made arrangements to have him smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto in April 1942, and he was handed over to Schreidman, who brought him to his home in Grodzisk. Ludwik lived there openly, passing as a Pole named Ludwik Szymański. When the Fiałkowskis' daughter started developing Jewish looks, they sent her to a convent.

Curiously, Schreidman worked as a driver for the Gestapo. It is likely that he was widely recognized as a Jew in Grodzisk, but no one bothered him until near the end of the occupation, when the Polish underground executed him as a collaborator, not as a Jew. Simonsohn recalled that, on one of his foraging trips, he encountered a nun, said to be a Carmelite who, realizing that he was Jewish, took him home and fed him. She also gave him a stick grenade and showed him how to use it.<sup>1212</sup> In fact, there was no Carmelite convent in Grodzisk or its vicinity, so the nun must have belonged to some other order.

<sup>1211</sup> See the following testimonies: Testimony of Stanley Bors, SFV, Interview code 6251; Oral history interview with Stanley Bors, USHMM, Accession no. 2000.91.2, RG-50.493.0002; Testimony of Irene Bors, SFV, Interview code 6250; Oral history interview with Irene Bors, USHMM, Accession no. 2000.91.13, RG-50.493.0013.

<sup>1212</sup> Testimony of Ludwik Simonsohn, SFV, Interview code 46649; Ludwik Simonsohn: *Escape from the Warsaw Ghetto—A Holocaust Survivor Remembers*, Parts 1–2, Internet: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/08/a6573008.shtml>; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/15/a6573215.shtml>.

Dora Śnieg, an aunt of Sima Wasser (née Gleichgewicht), placed her niece on the estate of Jan and Franciszka Wójcicki in Dąbrówka Szlachecka, outside of Warsaw. The Wójcickis' niece, Apolonia Gorzkowska, solicited the help of a priest. He issued a false birth and baptismal certificate for Sima under the name of Krystyna Budna. A Polish underground cell then used it to fabricate a Kennkarte (German identity document).<sup>1213</sup>

The following example from Włochy, on the outskirts of Warsaw, illustrates the risks associated with issuing false documents. Rev. Julian Chrościcki, the pastor (who was active in the Central Relief Council), local officials, and several other persons took part in an elaborate scheme to furnish false identity documents to Jews. Jewish escapees from the local ghetto were temporarily sheltered at the rectory in Włochy until hiding places could be found for them among parishioners.

The participants of the network were arrested on September 18, 1942 (or October 1, according to another version), interrogated at the Gestapo headquarters on Szucha Street, and then taken to the Pawiak prison, inside the Warsaw ghetto. From there, Rev. Chrościcki was sent to the Majdanek concentration camp where, by some miracle, he was released on May 15, 1944. The other conspirators wound up at Auschwitz.

September 1942—in Włochy, outside Warsaw, the Germans had seized Fr. Chruścicki [Julian Chrościcki], the parish priest, Franciszek Kostecki, the Mayor, Kazimierz Tarnas, the Registrar, Teofil Gruszka, the Town Hall cashier, and two teachers, [Michał] Latoński [Lotoński] and [Witold Zacharewicz, a popular actor], [the lumber merchant Mieczysław] Borkowski, [and Rev. Chrościcki's housekeeper] for helping Jews by issuing them with birth certificates and other documents. They were all taken to the Gestapo [Pawiak prison] in Warsaw and their homes were searched from top to bottom. The organist of the Church of the Holy Cross in Warsaw was arrested for abetting Jews in the procurement of false baptismal certificates.<sup>1214</sup>

Franciszek Kostecki, Kazimierz Tarnas, Teofil Gruszka, Michał Latoński, and Witold Zacharewicz all perished in Auschwitz, as did Wanda Zacharewicz, Witold's mother, who was arrested at the same time as the others.<sup>1215</sup> Rev. Witold Kiedrowski, from the Chełmno diocese, who was also imprisoned in Majdanek,

<sup>1213</sup> Kołacińska-Gałązka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 35.

<sup>1214</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 43.

<sup>1215</sup> Agnieszka Goszczyńska, *Ksiądz Julian Chrościcki: Życie i działalność* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, 1998), 66–67; Robert Gawkowski, *Moja dzielnica Włochy: Historia Włoch i Okęcia* (Warsaw: Urząd Dzielnicy Włochy m.st. Warszawy, 2010), 137–39; "Witold Zacharewicz—przedwojenny aktor: Wspomnienia żony Witolda Zacharewicza—Haliny: Aresztowanie; Auschwitz," Internet: <http://witold.zacharewicz.com.pl>.



witnessed Rev. Chrościcki accompanying a rabbi as he read psalms from a breviary the priest had managed to smuggle into the camp. Rev. Mieczysław Grabowski, the vicar at the parish in Włochy, also assisted in the rescue efforts. Rev. Grabowski sheltered the musical conductor Zdzisław Górczyński (Grunberg), passing as Jan Michalczyk, and his family.<sup>1216</sup>

The Herman couple, Jewish converts from Lwów, and their daughter, Ewa, survived the war in Włochy, on the outskirts of Warsaw, living openly as Poles, with the support of the local priest. “The Herman family occupied a small house in Włochy, all for themselves. ... They all three had a very distinctive Semitic features each of them looked not like one Jew, but like ten Jews, together. I think that all the surrounding knew that they are Jews, it was impossible not to. They survived the war ...”<sup>1217</sup>

The risks inherent in providing false documents are illustrated by the following account of Maria Rajbenbach, a Jewish woman who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto just before the outbreak of the uprising on April 19, 1943.

How did we obtain our documents? A brother [Tadeusz Romaszewski] of the painter [Marian] Malicki was employed, together with his wife [actually, with his sister Maria], at the Record Office of the Municipal Administration. Together with a parson they had forged both the death and birth registers to secure Christian birth certificates of two deceased women. Thus several people had to collaborate to prepare such certificates. The Malickis had supplied numerous Jews with such certificates. Unfortunately, one of these Jews was identified by the Gestapo and in this way the names of the three people became known to them. The parson was shot dead, the Malickis were sent to Treblinka [actually, it was Majdanek] concentration camp and Malicki had his arms and legs broken in an attempt to extort the names of other rescued Jews. But he would not give them away. Both perished in Treblinka [Majdanek] camp.<sup>1218</sup>

According to Teresa Preker (Prekerowa), the priest in question was pastor of the cathedral parish of St. John the Baptist; he was executed after a certificate he issued for Maria Rajbenbach fell into the hands of the Gestapo.<sup>1219</sup>

Not all the presumed facts in this account are accurate. Both Tadeusz Romaszewski and his sister, Maria Malicka, were employed in the chancery (record office) of the Warsaw Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. As members of the extreme right-wing Szaniec group (a continuation of the interwar National-Rad-

<sup>1216</sup> Gawkowski, *Moja dzielnica Włochy*, 139.

<sup>1217</sup> Rubin, *Against All Odds*, 151.

<sup>1218</sup> The account of Maria Rajbenbach and annotations are found in Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 233, 235, and Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 552, 554.

<sup>1219</sup> Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945*, 148–49.

ical Camp “ABC”), they issued dozens of false birth and baptismal certificates to endangered Jews, as well as to Christian Poles. Malicka was betrayed to the Gestapo by her brother’s fiancée, Irena Lis, who—unknown to the organization—was a Gestapo agent. The Gestapo arrested Maria Malicka and her husband, Marian Malicki, who was sent to Majdanek and perished there. Malicka was imprisoned in Warsaw but survived the war. Romaszewski went into hiding. The information about the priest’s death has not been confirmed; it appears to be an embellishment.

As a result of this one act of denunciation, scores of people—Poles as well as Jews—were apprehended by the Germans. The Polish underground issued a death sentence against Lis, but she escaped to Lwów. She was brought to trial after the war.<sup>1220</sup>

Guta Tyrangiel (later Genevieve Tyrangiel-Benezra) was born on August 26, 1940, one day after the ghetto was established in Mińsk Mazowiecki. When the Germans liquidated the ghetto two years later, Guta’s parents managed to escape with Guta and her younger sister, Esther. They hid in the surrounding villages and then moved to a labour camp named Kopernik, where the danger to their lives seemed less immediate. Their young daughters were hidden in the attic of a building because it was forbidden for children to live in the camp.

Guta and her sister were smuggled out of the camp in a closed wicker basket in October 1942. A local Catholic priest, who worked with the Żegota organization, and a notary, Kazimierz Hert (who helped many Jews) supplied them with false birth and baptismal certificates and made arrangements for them to be cared for by different Polish families. Guta was entrusted to Józef and Bronisława Jaszczuk, a childless Polish couple who lived in Mińsk Mazowiecki. They presented her as their niece, Genowefa Filipiak. Guta survived the war, but her parents and younger sister did not.<sup>1221</sup>

In August 1942, after the liquidation of the Minsk [Mińsk] Mazowiecki ghetto in the Warsaw district and the transfer of most of its inmates to the Treblinka death camp, the Tyrangel couple arranged a hiding place for their two baby daughters while they themselves found shelter with a peasant family in a nearby village. The girls’ hosts, fearing for their safety, enlisted the help of the parish priest to transfer Guta Tyrangel to the Jaszczuks, who lived in Minsk Mazowiecki. The other girl was sent to another family, where all traces of her

<sup>1220</sup> Damian Sitkiewicz, “Maria Malicka: O pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez organizację narodową Grupa ‘Szańca,’” *Kolbajnik: Biuletyn Gminy Wyznaniowej Żydowskiej w Warszawie*, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 28–31.

<sup>1221</sup> Guta Tyrangiel, Photograph no. 09378, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1039838>; Oral history interview with Guta Benezra, USHMM, RG-50.409.0001. See also Guta Tyrangiel Benezra, *Mémoire bariolée; Poetic Paintings; Głosy przeszłości: Post-Shoah peintures, poèmes, récits* (Ottawa and New York: Legas, 1995).

were lost. The girls' parents perished, and only Guta survived, thanks to the devoted care of Józef [Józef] and Bronisława [Bronisława] Jaszczuk, who saw to all her needs. ... After the war, the Jaszczuks adopted little Guta, who later emigrated to Canada.<sup>1222</sup>

Several other accounts mention the helpfulness of priests from Mińsk Mazowiecki, in particular Rev. Władysław Osiński, the pastor of the Nativity of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary parish.<sup>1223</sup> The rescue stories of the Berger sisters and Irena Kuper (Irit Romano) are mentioned elsewhere. With the assistance of their chaplain, Rev. Stanisław Wiśniewski, the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary hid three Jewish boys in the steeple of the hospital chapel for several days before they were transferred to a safer hiding place.<sup>1224</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto in the spring of 1942, Henia Niewiadomska (b. 1926), later Krystyna Wasiak, wandered from village to village in the vicinity of Mińsk Mazowiecki. She stayed for short periods of time with various farmers who knew or suspected she was Jewish. She eventually arrived at the farm of Leopold Sawicki in the village of Dąbrowa. Sawicki agreed to keep her longer. He obtained a birth and baptismal certificate for her under the name of Krystyna Orzechowska, a deceased relative, from the parish in Czerwonka Liwska, whose pastor was Rev. Franciszek Osiński. Henia retained this identity when she moved to Radzymin, where she resided in the home of Mrs. Wasiak. After the war, she married Mrs. Wasiak's son, Bolesław. In 1966, she moved to Israel together with her Polish husband and their three children.<sup>1225</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Aisic Hirsch (b. 1930) wandered in the countryside. He entered a church in Goszczyn, south of Grójec, and confided in a priest. Rev. Kazimierz Weber, the local pastor, gave him comfort and encouragement. He provided Aisic with a birth and baptismal certificate under a false name (Bronisław Porszskinsky?) and taught him prayers to help him pass as a Catholic. The priest helped Aisic find work on a farm, where he remained for three years.<sup>1226</sup>

<sup>1222</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 308. See also Józef and Bronisława Jaszczuk, RD; "Jozef and Bronisława Jaszczuk Honored at Yad Vashem," YVA, Internet: <https://www.yadvashem.org/events/23-december-2008.html>.

<sup>1223</sup> Lilla Małgorzata Kłos, *Historia parafii pw. Narodzenia Najświętszej Maryi Panny w Mińsku Mazowieckim 1422–2012* (Wrocław: Kobus, 2012), 85.

<sup>1224</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Part 2, *Nasz Dziennik*, March 12, 2008.

<sup>1225</sup> Testimony of Krystyna Wasiak (Henia Niewiadomska), October 8, 1962, JHI, record group 301, no. 5874; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 698.

<sup>1226</sup> Testimony of Aisic Hirsch, SFV, Interview code 17574.

In 1941, after more than year in a local ghetto [Mogielnica], Aisic, his mother, five-year-old brother, and grandmother were herded into the Warsaw Ghetto, the largest ghetto in Poland. There, amidst “absolute misery,” where “rats and sickness were everywhere,” he watched helplessly while his brother and grandmother died of typhus, and his mother slid into madness. Although he did not want to leave his mother, she pushed him out of the ghetto under the auspices of “Save the Children,” a Jewish organization that paid off German and Polish guards. Upon his release, the little boy was on his own.

After several nights of walking, eleven-year-old Aisic was taken in by family friends who hid him briefly in their barn. Fearing German retaliation, he was told he had to leave. Aisic moved on to the village of Goszczyn, arriving on a Sunday morning. Where else does one go on Sunday mornings, but to the local church? Thanks to his blond hair and blue eyes, Aisic blended in with the congregation. It was here that he found the noblest of humanity. When Aisic knelt for confession, all he could do was cry.

The young priest, suspecting the child was a Jew, touched his head through the confessional window and said, “This world will not go on forever. It will end. One day you will find all your loved ones again.”

The clergyman gave Aisic a “real” Polish name and birth certificate and taught him Catholic prayers that would one day save his life. He helped Aisic find work on a Polish farm of a half-German woman whose two sons worked for the Gestapo. Before he got the job, he had to prove he could correctly recite his Catholic prayers. He was saved again. Aisic remained on the farm for three years until his liberation by the Russians in May 1945. “That priest was my guardian angel. He saved my life. It is because of him that I am here today,” he says.<sup>1227</sup>

At least ten Jewish children were sheltered by the Sisters of St. Elizabeth. They had been displaced from Grabie, near Toruń, and relocated to Świder, now a part of Otwock, a town near Warsaw. The Sisters ran a home for children there; it was known as the Educational Institute of St. Anthony (Zakład Wychowawczy św. Antoniego—“Promyk”). The children were given false identities and supporting birth and baptismal certificates issued by Rev. Canon Ludwik Wolski, the pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Otwock, and his vicar, Rev. Jan Raczkowski. (The children were not required to undergo baptism.) Two nuns, Sister Gertruda (Stanisława) Marciniak,<sup>1228</sup> the superior, and Sister Ludwika (Halina) Małkiewicz, as well as Rev. Ludwik Wolski, Rev. Jan Raczkowski, and Bronisław Marchlewicz were all recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles for their role in the rescue.

Among their charges were: Daniel Landsberg (b. 1939, passing as Wojciech Płochocki, who was later placed with a Polish family);<sup>1229</sup> Maria (Marysia)

<sup>1227</sup> Aisic Hirsch, Birmingham (Alabama) Holocaust Education Center, Internet: <https://bhe-cinfo.org/survivors/hirsch-aisic/>.

<sup>1228</sup> See also Sister Gertruda Stanisława Marciniak, Yad Vashem, Internet: <https://www.yad-vashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/righteous-teachers/marciniak.asp>.

<sup>1229</sup> Testimony of Dan Landsberg, SFV, Interview code 45402.

Osowiecka (passing as Halina Brzoza, later Michaelle Donat and Michèle Donnet); Ruth (Rutka) Noy (passing as Teresa Wysocka); Manfred Karl Röder-Blicksilber (b. 1934, passing as Adolf Karol); Jurek Adin; Helena Kokoszko; Sasza Wecer (Staszek Wetzter or Szaszka Thau<sup>1230</sup>); Salome Rybak; Anita Szapiro; and Zeev Hertz Fulman (b. 1941).<sup>1231</sup> Their stories appear below. The nuns also gave refuge to a couple of Jewish adults while the local Blue Police commander, Bronisław Marchlewicz, a Home Army member, extended his protection to the convent.

Bronisław Marchlewicz from Otwock (Warsaw District) was a veteran police officer. During the occupation period, he served as the commander of the Polish “Blue Police” (named for the color of their uniform) and had connections with the Polish underground, the Home Army (AK). He was known for his fair treatment of both the Polish and the Jewish inhabitants of the city. Unlike many of his colleagues who collaborated with the German authorities, he endeavored in the framework of his complex job to help rescue Jews who arrived on the “Aryan” side from the local ghetto. While the ghetto still existed, Bronisław would turn a blind eye to Jews who came to market in order to purchase staples. He also released those who had been arrested and brought to the police station. He protected the Jewish woman, Zofia Eisenstadt, from Polish collaborators who tried to blackmail her. As a policeman in the city working under the direct command of the Germans and privy to classified information, he would warn Jews when deportations were about to take place. His involvement in the rescue of Jews increased after the liquidation of the ghetto in August 1942, particularly in the rescue of children. In this matter, he cooperated with the nuns of the St. Elizabeth convent (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Św. Elżbiety), under the guidance of Gertruda Marciniak, the mother superior, who ran the Promyk orphanage where several Jewish children were being hidden. The Jewish child, Maria Osowiecka (later, Michèle Donnet), was brought to the police station at the time of the liquidation of the ghetto. Bronisław Marchlewicz entrusted her to the Polish woman, Aleksandra Szpakowska and helped to bring the child to the convent. In addition, he arranged for another three Jewish children to be taken into the convent: Daniel Landsberg, Renata Noj, and Salomea Rybak. Bronisław did not participate in the liquidation of the ghetto and ignored the command of his German superiors to shoot fleeing Jews. He also forbade his Polish subordinates to participate in the plunder and pillage. After the liquidation of the ghetto, he knew of several Jews who were hiding in the city in Polish homes or under false identities, and was in contact with them and warned them in times of danger. Among these were the members of the Fleising family who entrusted him with valuables for their subsistence during the war, knowing that they would receive the remainder back.<sup>1232</sup>

**T**he rescue of Maria Osowiecka (later Michèle Donnet) has been recorded:

In August 1942, on the eve of the liquidation of the ghetto in Otwock (Warsaw District), five-year-old Maria Osowiecka (later, Michèle Donnet) and her mother, Anna (née Litewska), were evicted from the apartment they were renting after the landlord discovered that

<sup>1230</sup> Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Prowincja noc: Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2007), 356.

<sup>1231</sup> Testimony of Zeev Hertz Fulman, YVA, file O.3 V.T/10481 (Item 8837478).

<sup>1232</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 592.

they were Jews. Maria's mother tried desperately to find someone who would take her daughter in. She asked Aleksandra Szpakowska to rescue the girl, who in the meantime had been taken to the local police station. Following an exchange with the Polish police chief, Bronisław Marchlewicz, Aleksandra secured the girl's release and took her home with her. Maria stayed there for a time, until Aleksandra obtained a Christian birth certificate for her [under the name of Halina Brzoza] from the community priest, Ludwik Wolski, who cooperated with her. After Maria learned the Christian prayers, Aleksandra, who declared herself the girl's legal guardian, moved her, under an assumed identity as a Polish orphan, to the St. Elizabeth convent (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Św. Elżbiety), under the guidance of Gertruda Marciniak, the Mother Superior, who ran the Promyk orphanage where several Jewish children found refuge. She kept in touch with the girl and visited her frequently, and when danger loomed moved her to a different location. The girls' [sic] parents were murdered, and at the end of the war her cousin, Hanna Kaminska [Kamińska], arrived and took her. During the occupation, Aleksandra, who was known in Otwock for her activity in aid of the needy and distressed, opened her home to other Jewish fugitives as well.<sup>1233</sup>

The family of Max Noy survived the war in Otwock thanks to the assistance of a number of Poles, among them a priest and the Sisters of St. Elizabeth, who sheltered their daughter Ruth.

Raizel Noy of Otwock, near Warsaw, gave birth to her daughter Ruth in September 1939, after the German occupation began. In August 1942, during the large-scale deportation of Jews from Warsaw, the Noys managed to escape from the ghetto with their young daughter. Maks Noy, Raizel's husband, worked in a labor camp run by a German contracting company in the nearby town of Karczew; Raizel and her daughter wandered in the vicinity with no hope of finding shelter. Because she looked Jewish, Raizel experienced constant tension and fear of the lurking dangers that she and her daughter faced. Aware that the likelihood of her survival was dwindling, Raizel decided to spare no effort to at least to save Ruth. At his workplace, Noy made contact with Ludwika Malkiewicz [Małkiewicz], a Catholic nun who taught at the Otwock convent orphanage, and asked her to rescue his daughter. Malkiewicz consulted with Krystyna Bykowska, the mother superior [this is inaccurate, as the mother superior was Sister Gertruda Marciniak; Bykowska was not a nun but the daughter of Władysława Cygler (below)—Ed.], and the two agreed to admit the girl. In coordination with Malkiewicz and Bykowska, Ruth was left in the convent corridor one night and when she began to cry—alone and in the dark—the nuns came out and brought her inside. Little Ruth was placed with the Polish children and the nuns cared for her devotedly. Sisters Malkiewicz and Bykowska performed this act of rescue as a human duty flowing from their deep religious faith and sought no recompense for it even though it endangered their lives. Maks Noy eventually escaped from his labor camp and he and Raizel found shelter in Praga, Warsaw, in an apartment they rented from Władysława [Władysława] Cygler. Although Cygler knew they were Jews, she prepared a hideout for them in case of danger and sheltered them from inquisitive neighbors. The only person who knew their address was Sister Malkiewicz, who, in the summer of 1944—five weeks

<sup>1233</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 623.



before Praga was liberated—brought Ruth to them because a child in the orphanage had threatened denunciation. After the war, the Noys immigrated to the United States ....<sup>1234</sup>

Noy provides the following testimony:

During the German occupation, I worked in the Otwock ghetto as a guard.

One day Sister Ludwika Malkiewicz [Małkiewicz] came to me with a piece of paper from the Germans stating that she would be getting some furniture. I don't remember the precise details but she needed ten beds. ... I told the sister to take as many beds as she wanted ...

Soon our conversation turned around to my family. I told her I had a daughter. At first I feared revealing where Ruth was hiding, but finally I told her that she was in Otwock with relatives, but that it wasn't a permanent arrangement and that is why I would like for her to be in an orphanage. At that time my wife was staying with an acquaintance of hers, a Polish woman.

Sister Ludwika took the beds, as many as she wanted, and from that time we became friends—she used to telephone me, and I her, so as not to lose touch with each other. ...

Irka, the Polish woman, was frightened because she had her own family. After all, the Germans killed entire Polish families for harboring Jews! ... my wife went with Ruth to Kocowa [?], if only to stay there for two weeks. After staying in Kocowa, my wife wandered around with my daughter. Somehow we always managed to stay in contact. Then one day we made an arrangement. I sent a Pole I knew, Kobus, to bring my daughter. He couldn't take my wife because there was too much risk involved.

Kobus took my daughter to his place in Otwock, and then she became ill. ... She had to see a doctor. Since I had been a student at Warsaw University, I had many Polish doctors as friends. I asked a pediatrician, Stas Wieslawski [Staś Wiesławski], to help. He visited my daughter. ...

It was winter already. I made contact with Sister Ludwika, and as soon as Ruth got well, we gave her the child. It was a winter's evening, cold and snowy. The doors of the orphanage were open and my wife said to Ruth: "Go inside; you'll get some candy there."

Ruth went. We made an arrangement with Sister Ludwika that in case of trouble she would light a candle in the window. If no light shone that would indicate that everything had gone alright. We froze outside for two hours, but no light came, so we left the orphanage.

We visited our daughter only twice. She was under the care of Sister Anna, a brave young nun. Later, when we were in hiding, our link with our daughter was the Polish woman I've already mentioned, Irka.

Sister Ludwika was very careful in her activities, which is why we felt safe having Ruth stay in the convent. We left Ruth with a letter, because that's how it was done in those days. She also had an authentic [baptismal] certificate, with the name of Teresa Wysocka on it, which I got in Otwock from a priest I knew.

Provided with the letter and certificate, Ruth started to cry once she was inside the orphanage. The nuns came down to see what was happening, and then they talked about whether the child was Jewish and if so, whether they could put the other children in

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<sup>1234</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 485–86.

danger if they took her in. My daughter went up to the mother superior at that point, and the mother superior reacted with these words:

“If the child has come to me, then I will share her fate.”

Luckily, my daughter did not talk Yiddish or Hebrew; she only knew Polish and we only spoke Polish at home. Before we left for the convent, we had taught her what to say—that her mother had been taken by the Nazis to Germany, and that her name was Teresa Wysocka.

We gave Sister Ludwika *carte blanche* when we sent Ruth to the convent; she could do anything she wanted with the child for its safety, including baptizing it, for a little water would not be bad if it saved the child’s life. We also left the nuns a little money. They accepted the money, but it would have made no difference if we had not given it, for Ruth would have been accepted into the convent regardless.

We informed the Polish police commissioner in Otwock of the fact that we had given our child to the convent. He assured us that in case something happened and the child ended up at the police station, he would call an engineer living nearby, Szpakowski, and then his wife would take the child in as her own, so that our daughter would not fall into the hands of the Germans.

When Ruth was already in the convent, my wife and I went to Praga to hide. When the Germans were already losing the war, and the front was nearing Warsaw in 1944, Sister Ludwika managed to inform us that the Germans were moving the orphanage to the west and that she didn’t know what would be happening to them. So we sent our liaison, Irka, to pick up the girl, and after that our daughter was with us. She didn’t have to hide anymore and no one suspected that she was Jewish.<sup>1235</sup>

**S**ister Ludwika Małkiewicz gave a more detailed account of her rescue activities.

When on October 10, 1940, the Germans kicked us out of the children’s home in Grabia [Grabie], near Toruń [Toruń], and sent us to the General Government (to make room for the Hitlerjugend), the Social Welfare Dept. of Warsaw picked us up at the station in Warsaw and placed us with the Sisters of St. Teresa in Swidrze [Świder] on Mickiewicz St. The living space was too small for all of us, so we requested the mayor to let us have the Jewish boarding school in the neighborhood, which was empty since the Jewish population was already in a ghetto. By ourselves we painted the interior and created a chapel, and the mayor gave us the necessary furniture from that furniture that had been left behind by the previous boarders. I received desks from a Jewish school that had been closed in Otwock.

The owner of the boarding school, as we found out, was Jozef [Józef] Kaplon, a Jew, who was at the time in the ghetto in Otwock, about a kilometer away. We decided that since we were using his establishment, it was only proper to see if he needed food in the ghetto. I sought him out. It was 1941.

Kaplon was without any family and already very old and also ill. He was happy to see me and asked me to visit him regularly. He had something to eat, but every Sunday I brought him a warm dinner and a bit of this and that. Thus I became acquainted with Jews.

<sup>1235</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 218–20.

I always entered the ghetto under the barbed wire, for there was no entrance from the side of Swidrze. Except for Kaplon, the Jews looked at me with suspicion. But this didn't last long. The ghetto police themselves proposed that when I would be going from Otwock to Swidrze, I should shorten my way by walking through the ghetto. With time they began to trust me completely, so much so that they gave me their savings for safe keeping, and, needing money, they came for it at night. Later I started going to the ghetto on Saturday, right after school lessons, to see how the Jews prayed and observed the Sabbath.

And that is the way I began my contact with Jews and how it came to be that I wound up helping both Jewish adults and children.

The decision to help Jews belonged solely to the mother superior of our house, Sister Gertruda Marciniak, while I was the person who carried out her instructions, with the stipulation that in case of immediate danger the decision rested with me.

Jewish children were brought in through the requests of hiding parents or Mr. Adamowicz, who worked for the Welfare Department of Warsaw at 72 Złota [Złota] St.

The director of the department was Antoni Chacinski [Chaciński].

In our home there were several Jewish children. They came with fictitious names, some of which I don't remember. I will only tell you about those I do remember:

1) Alfred Karol (Leopold Blitzylberg, phonetically spelled), born in Baden-Baden. His mother was German, his father was a Jew. When the father was killed in the Warsaw ghetto, the mother escaped with Alfred to the Polish side, taking nothing with her. She begged for bread from some German soldiers but did not present herself to the German authorities in fear that they would take her child away to the ghetto. An Austrian woman, Marta Harf (likewise phonetically spelled) saw her on the street. Seeing a sick and teary-eyed woman in front of her, she decided to help. The mother was taken to a hospital, and Marta Harf took the child to her place. The mother died in the hospital, but before she died she asked Marta Harf to send the child to its family in Baden-Baden. The German authorities didn't allow this, and the child was to return to the ghetto.

Marta, a decent human being, looked around everywhere to save the child's life. Finally, Sister Gertruda sent me to Marta. Once there, after examining the situation, I was to decide whether to take the child back with me or not.

There was a fear, which Director Chacinski expressed, that this was a ruse on the part of the Germans, since Marta had assured the Welfare Department that the child was of pure German blood, in the face of which the question became why send the child to a Polish home for children? If I didn't take the child, it would have to go to the ghetto. So I took this seven-year-old boy to our home in Swidrze [Świder]. This was in 1941. The boy remained with us to the end of the war.

2) Daniel Lancberg (phonetically spelled). In 1941 his parents begged us to take him. At their request the child was baptized and received the baptismal name of Wojciech. The child was barely three. The boy's father died in the Otwock ghetto; the mother survived the war and became baptized.

Daniel was a very thin child; he looked half-starved. He constantly had to eat, so he would go by himself to the kitchen to get a bite there. One day he got on top of a table to take a look out the window. Two German soldiers who were passing by saw him and rushed to the kitchen very angry and accusing us of hiding Jews. I ran to Mother Superior Gertruda Marciniak, who knew German quite well. (In those days the populace in the

General Government did not know German.) The mother superior entered the kitchen, and with a smile on her face, said:

“How can you possibly think that we have Jews here?”

Daniel, who was called Wojciech at our convent, did not understand what was being said, and at the sight of these faces looking at him with such anger, he went into a panic, crying and cuddling to the mother superior, who took him by the hand and said to him in Polish and to the soldiers in German:

“So you are the one who is supposed to be a Jew? What a joke! Don’t cry, Wojciech; see how nicely these gentlemen are dressed and how good they are. They like children a lot—won’t you like them?”

The boy, though he was still crying, extended his hands out to one of the Germans so that he could hug him. The soldiers were speechless. The mother superior, ignoring their confusion, asked them if they wanted tea and something to eat, all the while acting very calmly and smiling. The Germans were so dumbfounded that all they wanted to do was to leave our convent as quickly as possible. And yet it would have been very easy for them to see if Daniel was circumcised. Apparently they thought our mother superior was German.

3) Ruth Noy, the daughter of Max and Roza [Róża] Noy. She was accepted to our home on Swiderski [Świderska] St. in Otwock in November 1942, at the request of her parents, who were hiding after the liquidation of the ghetto there. With the agreement of the convent I made out a fictitious birth certificate for her under the name Teresa Wysocka.

We arranged the “abandonment” of the child: Without being seen, the mother left the child in the courtyard in the evening. The little girl began to cry, at the sound of which the nuns, and the personnel of the convent, came rushing up, and everyone saw the abandoned child. The girl had a small pouch about her neck, and inside was her fictitious certificate and a letter requesting us to keep the girl for a short time. The mother wrote in the letter that her husband had been taken to Germany to work and that she herself was spending a lot of time trying to make a living and didn’t have a place to keep Teresa. In her difficult situation she counted on the mercy of the nuns. Of course, the mother signed her name as Wysocka.

The child was in our home for almost two years. Her parents saved themselves, hiding in Warsaw on Pelpinski [Pelpińska] St. After the war they wanted to give whatever money they had left to the convent for saving their child. The mother superior refused to take the money, so they offered it to me, and I likewise refused to take it.

4) Salome Rybak. In 1941 or 1942, I don’t remember exactly, thirteen-year-old Salome (I don’t know if that was her real name) was hiding under the stairs in the empty Jewish boarding school in Swidrze [Świder]. At night she used to come to our children’s home on 1 Mickiewicz St. and take from a barrel before our building the remnants of food left over left as fodder for pigs. Caught in the act, Salome was placed by us in our farm building and given a place to sleep and something to eat. When winter came, we took her in with the group of children in the children’s home where, unfortunately, she could only remain for a few months. One of the wards, the son of an [sic] Ukrainian, wanted to tell the Germans about her. Here, once again, Mr. Adamowicz helped out and found another children’s home for her, this one run by the nuns in Starowce [Starówka, Warsaw’s Old Town]. I took her there myself, though I’ve forgotten the name of the street.

Her Semitic features gave her away. To take her to Warsaw, I bandaged her entire head, leaving just an opening for one eye. I don't know what happened to her afterward.

All the children that were hiding with us were of the Hebraic religion. The only one who was baptized was, as I have already mentioned, Lanchberg, and this was done at the request of his parents.

My attitude toward baptizing Jewish children was based on canonical law, which states that in regard to the baptism of children, one should get the approval of both or one of their parents. Furthermore, the baptized child should have a Catholic upbringing. There was no such certainty with the Jewish children we had because their parents could survive the war and bring them up in the Jewish religion.<sup>1236</sup>

Jurek (Jerzy) Adin, who was born in Warsaw in 1933, was cared for by his prewar governess, Maria Pyjek, after he was spirited out of the Warsaw ghetto in February 1941. Unable to secure accommodation for Jurek, she turned to a Capuchin priest who assisted her in placing the boy at a children's home in Otwock run by the Sisters of St. Elizabeth.<sup>1237</sup> Adin gave his testimony not long after the war ended.

I sometimes went to the Aryan side and many times wanted to remain there but no opportunities arose. ... I asked one boy to take me to my private tutor. I could not stay there because she worked as a nurse for the Germans and lived in a *Krankenstube*. She placed me with her friend who was already hiding one Jewish boy named Borenstein. ... My tutor arranged for me to be taken to the home of Mrs. Adela. She told me to go to a particular shop at Belwederska Street from where I would be taken by Mrs. Adela. Mrs. Adela arranged a Christian birth certificate for me and registered me as Marian Podbielski. My tutor paid out of her own pocket to buy my false birth certificate. I spent some time at Mrs. Adela's home. She used to go to work in the morning and I was left on my own. In the summer of 1942, I went to a resort called Zielonka [a small locality in the vicinity of Warsaw] and in August I returned to Warsaw. The priest who baptized me was very good to me and placed me in St. Anthony's children's home in Świder [now part of Otwock, a suburb of Warsaw]. ... I stayed there until 1945, when my tutor came and took me with her to Rozalin. Again I felt so good. My family was found in the United States. They asked my tutor many times to place me in a Jewish orphanage. I am supposed to leave for the United States, but I would rather stay in Poland.<sup>1238</sup>

Halina Lewkowicz, who escaped to Warsaw from a ghetto in Upper Silesia, eventually found employment at a convent of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth, in the Warsaw suburb of Żoliborz.

<sup>1236</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 157–61.

<sup>1237</sup> Maria Pyjek's account is found in Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 372–74.

<sup>1238</sup> Testimony of Jurek Adin, JHI, record group 301, no. 3695.

In the summer of 1943, Halina Lewkowicz managed to escape together with her six-year-old son, Richard, during the liquidation of the Zawiercie ghetto in Upper Silesia. Their escape was made possible due to the assistance extended by Poles active in the underground, who moved her and her son to Warsaw, where they sent them to the apartment of Jan and Halina Mrozowski, both of whom were active in the AK [Armia Krajowa—Home Army]. Lewkowicz and her son, who arrived without any money or papers, were warmly received by the Mrozowskis, who provided them with false papers, shelter, and help. Within a short time, Mrozowska found work for Lewkowicz doing housework for her brother, while little Richard remained under the devoted care of the Mrozowskis. In time, Lewkowicz became active in the underground, acting as a courier. In November 1943, she began working as a practical nurse in the Elizbietanek [Elżbietanki] Sisters' convent in the suburb of Żoliborz [Żoliborz], where she remained during the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 to care for the wounded brought to the convent, which had been converted into a field hospital. Jan Mrozowski, who was arrested during the uprising, was deported to a concentration camp, where he perished. His wife and young Richard were deported to the Pruszkow [Pruszków] camp, and the child, whom she placed in the orphanage set up in the camp, was liberated in January 1945. Lewkowicz and her son remained in Poland.<sup>1239</sup>

The Dańko and Chłond families of Otwock extended help to a number of Jews with the support of Rev. Ludwik Wolski, the local pastor, and nuns, among them Sisters of St. Elizabeth.

From 1936, Mieczysław Dańko lived in Otwock, where he was director of the Finance Department of the Municipal Board. During the September military campaign, he was captured by the Russians, but he escaped from the transport and returned to Otwock.

During the war, he was an activist in the peasant movement, also its underground counterpart. In the years 1941–1943 Mieczysław was the commander of the Warsaw-Right-Bank circuit of the Peasant Battalions and used the pseudonym “Odwaga” (“Courage”). In 1943, he was imprisoned by the gestapo in Nowy Sącz for three months.

The Jewish family Wecer (Weczer) was starving in the ghetto in Otwock. Only little Maria would sneak out from the ghetto to buy medications, which she then sold to others, thereby earning bread for her brothers Zbyszko and Sasza, and her grandparents. In the fall, the girl's bare feet got injured. In such a state she met her former neighbor Jadwiga Dańko at a drugstore one evening. “My God, Muszka what happened to you?,” asked Jadwiga, then took the girl to her home on Reymont Street.

After many years, Miriam Thau (Maria Wecer) mentioned in the testimony for Yad Vashem: “That evening was fed and my injured legs were washed and dressed. The Dańko family—Jadwiga and her husband, Mieczysław and sister Nina—listened, horrified, to my account about poverty in the ghetto. It was a time when people were already lying on the streets swollen from hunger. In the morning, when I thanked and I wanted to go back, Jadwiga said to me solemnly: ‘Do not go back again to the ghetto, Muszka.’ Once again, I thanked and explained that I could not stay with her—‘Sasza is there waiting for me, he will die without me.’ The Dańkos could not take him home. He was circumcised, and they

<sup>1239</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 531.



had two children whom they did not want to expose to danger. On the same day, I brought Sasza a cart full of food. From then on, for weeks I would bring him meals every day.”

With the help of a parish priest, Ludwik Wolski, Maria Wecer received a birth certificate for the name Laskowiecka (it was the name of her mother's first husband). Little Sasza also received a similar birth certificate. Then, Mieczysław Dańko with a clerk from the municipal council in Otwock, Mr. Grzywacz, took Sasza away from the ghetto and placed him in a convent in Świder (which probably belonged to the St. Elizabeth convent) as a “Christian child, who had been circumcised by his Jewish caregivers.”

One day Tamara Wecer, the children's mother appeared at the Dańkos' house. She had previously left Otwock, seeking contact with her husband and ways to escape. And again, Mieczysław Dańko helped her. He managed to get her an ID with the name of her first husband. The Dańkos also helped the whole family to find accommodation. The mother took little Sasza from the monastery. However, he died soon. Years later, Maria Thau says “he was dying before my eyes. He died at night, holding my hand. His last words were: ‘Musia, give me bread.’” On his death certificate issued on October 20, 1942 by Rev. Wolski, Aleksandra Szpakowska, another Righteous of Otwock, signed herself as a witness.

Tamara, Maria and Zbigniew Wecer survived the war. In 1946, the children's father, Rudolf Wecer, returned to Poland. Zbigniew went to Israel in 1948, Maria and her mother did in 1958.<sup>1240</sup>

Krystyna's (Krysia) father (b. 1917), Karol Chłond, worked as secretary of the municipal council in Otwock for many years. As a widely respected citizen, he had many friends, both Poles and Jews. His four children grew up in a spirit of respect for other human beings regardless of their nationality or religion.

Krysia Chłond and Lusia Kokoszko became friends in middle school. They sat in one bench at school for five years and visited each other at home.

When the Kokoszko family was in the ghetto in Otwock during the war, Krystyna still visited them often, although it was forbidden. She also brought them money from Warsaw. Lusia's parents asked Krystyna to take their younger daughter, 6-year-old Maryna, to Warsaw, to a safer place in the district of Leszno. [Maryna or Maria Kokoszko was placed in an orphanage under an Aryan name.<sup>1241</sup>] The parents, along with Lusia, escaped from the ghetto and hid in Celestynów, and later in Józefów. Krystyna visited them there as well, serving as a contact person between the parents and daughter hidden in Warsaw. Dr. Michał Kokoszko, working under the false name Kosowski, ran a pediatric clinic.

The entire Kokoszko family managed to survive the war. They lived in Warsaw for the rest of their lives. As emphasized by Krystyna Dańko, her whole family believed that helping other people was completely natural. There was another Jewish child, who lived for several months in the Chłond family's home in Otwock on Łukasińskiego Street during the war i.e. a 4-year-old Jasia Kotowicz, the daughter of Olena Kotowicz née Zybert, who was hiding in Warsaw at that time. Krysia's older sister, Elizabeth, took care of Jasia. Olena with

<sup>1240</sup> The Dańko Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-danko-family>.

<sup>1241</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 169.

her husband and daughter survived the war. Her brother, Selim Zybert, Krystyna's former high school friend, was hiding in Warsaw, but unfortunately did not survive the war.<sup>1242</sup>

Rev. Ludwik Wolski, the elderly pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Otwock, and his vicar, Rev. Jan Raczkowski, both of whom have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem, assisted a number of Jews in various ways. They gave them food,<sup>1243</sup> helped them find shelters, and provided them with false birth certificates. In their sermons, the priests condemned German crimes against the Jews as well as the activities of local bandits and extortionists, and urged their parishioners to help those in need. When the Otwock ghetto was being liquidated, Rev. Wolski rescued seven-year-old Marysia Osowiecka (later Michelle Donat) with the assistance of Bronisław Marchlewicz, the captain of the Blue Police, and Aleksandra Szpakowska. After the Germans were driven out, the young girl's aunt wrote to Rev. Wolski to thank him for his selfless deeds.

During the Nazi occupation, the parish's presbytery in Otwock was attended by many people—regardless of their nationality or religion—it was a place of safe shelter, help and care. Those most needy could count on food, supply of medicines and financial aid.

Being in charge of the births, marriages and deaths register, Father Wolski issued selflessly fictitious birth certificates to children of Jewish residents in Otwock, so that they could stay legally in educational institutions and orphanages as baptized children, coming from Roman Catholic families. He would do it risking not only his own life, but also the lives of people from his closest circle. The exact number of people whom priest Wolski helped in this way is unknown. He certainly issued false birth certificates to five Jewish children: Maria Osowiecka (for the name of Halina Brzoza), Dan Landsberg (for the name of Wojciech Płochocki), Ruth Noj (for the name of Teresa Wysocka), Maria and her brother Sasza Wecer (for the name of their mother's first husband, Konstanty Laskowiecki).

Maria Thau (née Wecer, now a citizen of Israel), who was also rescued in such a way, says in her memoirs entitled *Powroty* (Returns):

"A priest in a church in Otwock cooperated with the underground. There were rumors among the survivors from the surrounding towns, who were hiding after the dissolution of ghettos, about a priest who helped Jews, and especially children. He placed many children in convents. He issued fictitious documents and birth certificates without any compensation."

Also in her testimony made in the Yad Vashem Institute in 1964, Maria Thau talks about "an old parish priest of the church in Otwock," and "his assistant priest," who "saved lives of many Jewish children" (referring to Father Wolski and Father Jan Raczkowski).

<sup>1242</sup> The Dańko Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-danko-family>.

<sup>1243</sup> Julek Sendler, an orphan who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto together with Zygmunt Datyner, stated that after they made their way to Otwock, they would go to the rectory for soup daily. See Izabela Stachowicz, *Ocalił mnie kowal* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1956), 111.

The parish priest from Otwock allowed the Jewish refugees (including adults) to sleep in a wooden presbytery building that no longer exists and even under the roof of the church. Hanna Kamińska recalls:

“During the war, thanks to Father Wolski, the parish of St. Vincent was known among the Jews of Otwock as a place where you could get help and, if necessary, spend the night. I myself spent the night there in November 1942 (over two months after the dissolution of the ghetto).”

Saving Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Poland required in almost every case the whole chain of people of good will. Priest Ludwik Wolski worked closely in this respect with other Righteous people from Otwock: Aleksandra Szpakowska, Bronisław Marchlewicz and the Sisters from St. Elizabeth convent.

Hanna Kamińska’s letter of September 12, 1945 [addressed to Rev. Wolski] (original spelling retained) is its beautiful testimony:

“I feel the pleasant duty to express [to] the Reverend canon priest warmest thanks for the care of my 7-year-old cousin, Marysia Osowiecka. In August 1942, during the highest intensity of Nazi terror in Otwock, where on 19 August and the following day the ghetto was being dissolved [liquidated], the priest did not hesitate to risk his life to save an unknown Jewish child. In the context of unruly bands of Germans and Nazis, as well as local villagers’ behavior who would rush out like vultures to grab the possessions left by the Jews, the Christian attitude displayed by Father Wolski, who along with Ms Szpakowska, an engineer, and with Mr Marchlewicz, a commander of the police station of the time, did not fear to save a helpless Jewish child, is reflected even more starkly.

The existence of such people as the canon priest, Ms Szpakowska and Mr Marchlewicz fills us with the faith for a better tomorrow, the victory of good over evil. I wish that my clumsy words could at least in part reflect the feelings that I cherish for the canon priest, Ms Szpakowska and Mr Marchlewicz. Let Poland be filled up with such people.”

In the remembrance of the Otwock’s residents—both Poles and Jews—Father Ludwik Wolski is perceived as a man who believed that helping other human beings is his human, Christian and priestly duty.

After the war, the parish priest of Otwock helped in turn those persecuted by the NKVD and Security Office, and especially the Warsaw insurgents and members of the Home Army. He continued to support passionately the upbringing and education of indigent children and young people, allocating for this purpose his time and money, since he was living a very modest, simple life himself.<sup>1244</sup>

Rev. Jan Raczkowski was honoured by Yad Vashem on the strength of Hanna Pinkert-Langer’s testimony. Ten Jews, including five members of the Pinkert and Wilner families, were rescued by the collective effort of several Poles from Otwock, among them Zofia Sydry, Czesława Dietrich, and Antoni Serafin.<sup>1245</sup>

<sup>1244</sup> Szymańska, *Ludność żydowska w Otwocku podczas drugiej wojny światowej*, 86–87.

<sup>1245</sup> Ludwik Wolski, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-wolski-ludwik-0>; Hanna Pinkert (Hanna Langer), PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/hanna-pinkert-hanna-langer>.

A number of misfortunes befell the Pinkerts in the Otwock Ghetto, until finally they were told in no uncertain terms that it was time to flee. [Czesława] Dietrich and [Zofia] Sydry came to their aid again, getting [Antoni] Serafin to add Hanna [Pinkert] to the number of Jews already hiding in his house, and later they convinced him to take Zygmunt [Pinkert] in as well. Their stay was not peaceful: one day a German soldier walked in and discovered them, and only a bribe drove him away. When Serafin found out, he was terrified and ran to the local priest, Jan Raczkowski, for advice.

Raczkowski was a figure of authority and renown in the area, and he had aided many Jews. He helped indirectly by influencing his parishioners to be merciful, even instructing them directly to help Jews; he also assisted people like Joanna Kaltman, who was hiding in the area under the guise of being a Catholic, and whom he instructed discreetly as to Catholic rituals and the things she was to say and do in church so as not to be discovered. Furthermore, he handed out fake baptism and birth certificates and did not fear the danger that was all the greater for him because he was such a public person.

Raczkowski told Antoni Serafin to continue hiding the Jews despite the danger, and he even offered his own home to one of the women [Anna Różycka] and her child [Aleksander or Olek Różycki]. In this way the families survived until the liberation in 1944.<sup>1246</sup>

Joanna Kaltman (b. 1929) escaped from the Warsaw ghetto with her mother, Dr. Ewa Kaltman. Toward the end of 1943 they changed their hiding place, moving from Warsaw to the nearby town of Otwock. Here she describes her stay in Otwock and assistance given by the school chaplain, Rev. Jan Raczkowski.

I believe that both for our hosts and in the private classes to which I was admitted almost immediately after moving, in spite of the good official documents and a reasonably believable story, the true state of affairs was quite clear. One can surmise this from the behavior of our landlady, who, during the more turbulent periods of roundups and ransacking by the Gestapo in Otwock, would come to us, sometimes at night, to lift our spirits. Also, from the fact that the vicar priest who was then effectively the spiritual leader of Otwock, Father Raczyński [actually, Jan Raczkowski], would push into my hands notes certifying to my alleged confession. I would later hand these in to the same Chaplain Raczyński during religion lessons in the private classes, as this was compulsory for pupils during the preholiday period. (I had no idea then that Mrs. [Anna] Różycka, who escaped the ghetto with little Olek [Aleksander], was hiding with him in the presbytery at that time.) We could also tell from other small, but then very meaningful, gestures of assistance and goodwill on the part of various people.<sup>1247</sup>

After fleeing from the Warsaw ghetto, Wanda Ziemska (née Posner, b. 1934) was sheltered by a number of Poles in Warsaw. When she found herself in an emergency shelter on Sienna Street at the beginning of 1944, afflicted with typhus, she was cared for by Rev. Bolesław Stefański. At the end of July, a nun

<sup>1246</sup> Jan Raczkowski, RD.

<sup>1247</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 82.

in lay clothing took Wanda and several other girls to St. Joseph's orphanage in Otwock, where Wanda survived the war.<sup>1248</sup>

It is not clear whether her caregiver at the Sienna Street shelter was Rev. Stefański, a vicar in Grójec, near Warsaw, who was a Home Army member and activist of the right-wing National Party. Rev. Stefański served as a hospital and prison chaplain. He provided Jews with false documents and gave shelter in his rectory to Jan Obalski (Oberfeld), a prominent engineer, postwar professor, and scholar of Jewish origin. The Stalinist security forces arrested Rev. Stefański in June 1946, tortured and sentenced him to death on trumped up charges. His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and he was released in 1954 because of ill health. He died ten years later.<sup>1249</sup>

A branch of Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews, also functioned in Lwów, headed by Władysława Choms (known in Polish as Władysława Chomsowa, her married name). Her local branch received extensive assistance from the Polish underground and Catholic Church.

In Lvov [Lwów], the Eastern Galician capital, those who offered to help Jews included Władysława Choms, a Polish woman known as the 'Angel of Lvov'. Following the establishment in Warsaw of Żegota [Żegota]—the Council for Assistance to the Jews—she became the head of its local branch. Later she was to describe how both the Roman Catholic Church and the underground Armia Krajowa or Home Army assisted her and Żegota in making it possible for Jews to be saved. "The Catholic clergy were of invaluable assistance," she wrote, "in enabling us to obtain certificates of baptism, for which they provided blank forms, instructions on what to do, and ready-made certificates. How much effort and nerves went into the making of one document! With time we became more experienced. Żegota from Warsaw began to supply us with blanks of documents and the Home Army legalizing cell with beautifully made official stamps. The fury of the Gestapo at our graphic skills was correspondingly great for they realized what was going on."<sup>1250</sup> ...

One of those who owed his survival to Władysława Choms and to at least one other member of Żegota in Eastern Galicia was Zygmunt Chotiner. ... "Mrs. Choms helped to hide the doomed Jews from the ghetto and the escapees from the underground water canals. Two of her Polish lady friends were tortured to death after the search and discovery of false papers for the Jewish people. ... She placed a lot of Jewish children in the orphan houses too."<sup>1251</sup>

<sup>1248</sup> Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 348–49.

<sup>1249</sup> Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 388–89; Jacek Żurek, *Ksiądz Bolesław Stefański: Żołnierz bezdomny* (Warsaw: Szkoła Wyższa Przymierza Rodzin w Warszawie, 2014).

<sup>1250</sup> Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life*, 50.

<sup>1251</sup> Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 34–36.

The following information is from *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*:

Wladyslawa [Władysława] Choms, the wife of a major in the Polish army, was known in her town, Drohobycz, as an active democrat ... In 1938, Choms moved to Lwow [Lwów] and, after the German occupation, began smuggling food, money, and medicines into the ghetto. Choms, who was elected chairman of the Lwow branch of *Zegota* [Żegota] in the spring of 1943, organized the escape of a number of Jewish families from the ghetto, provided them with Aryan documents, and arranged accommodation for them in and around Lwow. She placed many Jewish orphans in Christian orphanages and local convents and wrote a report on the situation of the Jews in Lwow which the Polish underground delivered to the Polish Government-in-Exile in London. In late 1943, when the Germans got wind of her activities, Choms fled to Warsaw, where she continued with her underground work. Until her death, Choms kept up contact with many of her survivors in Israel and other countries. The book *The Angel of Lvov*, which describes her activities, was written by people she had saved. On March 15, 1966, Yad Vashem recognized Wladyslawa Choms as Righteous Among the Nations.<sup>1252</sup>

The assistance provided by an elderly priest, identified as Fr. Joseph, in Janówka, near Tarnopol, in eastern Galicia, was described by Irene Opdyke (formerly Irena Gut), a Righteous Gentile credited with rescuing twelve Jews. The church in this village belonged to the parish in the city of Tarnopol.

In Janówka, about three hundred Jewish people escaped. Some of them were from our plant, and some were from other German plants. ...

There was a priest in Janówka. He knew about the Jews' escape—many of the Polish people knew about it. Can you imagine living underground as the Jews were forced to do when the winter came? Many people brought food and other things—not right to the forest, but to the edge—from the village. The priest could not say directly “help the Jews,” but he would say in church, “not one of you should take the blood of your brother.” ...

During the next couple of weeks there were posters on every street corner saying, “This is a Jew-free town, and if any one should help an escaped Jew, the sentence is death.”<sup>1253</sup>

In her memoir, Irene Opdyke describes in greater detail her encounter with the village priest after having smuggled some Jews from Tarnopol, where she worked in a German officers' dining room, to the forest near Janówka.

It was on my way back to Ternopol [Tarnopol] that day that I stopped at the church in Janówka. ...

There were not many people. They were peasants, mostly ... The priest was speaking when I dipped my knee toward the altar and took a seat in the back.

<sup>1252</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 143.

<sup>1253</sup> Rittner and Myers, *The Courage to Care*, 47–48.



I bowed my head and closed my eyes as though in prayer, but truly I was both exhausted and overexcited. ... at first I did not pay much attention to his words. But then I began listening, and I realized that he was encouraging his flock to resist the Nazis and to help the Jews.

"... and to remember those who are less fortunate than you," he was reminding them in a quiet voice. "Our Savior commands that we not stain our hands with the blood of innocents. The righteous path is never an easy path, but at its end lies eternal love, eternal life." Surely, he must have known that the forest surrounding his parish was filled with hunted men. He was telling his parishioners to help them. What he was saying could well bring him punishment from the Germans.

I looked up and studied him with new interest. He was a very old man, bald and wrinkled, but he had an upright carriage and his voice had no quaver in it. I noticed him glance my way from time to time, and I thought his look was kind. ...

When the service was over, I lingered in the churchyard, admiring the roses, while the priest blessed the country folk, and one by one, or in small family groups, they took their leave of him ...

At last, he turned to me. "Good morning," he said. "I am Father Joseph." ...

"Is this your *dorożka* [carriage]?" the priest said, walking to the bony horse and stroking his nose.

I wiped my nose quickly, sniffing back my tears. "Yes—at least, I borrowed it from a friend."

"Making a delivery?" he asked. He turned his mild eyes to me, the eyes of a man who had seen everything and yet still loved people.

At once, my heart ached to confide in him, to lay my worries and responsibilities in someone else's lap. ... The only thing I did not tell him was that I was helping Jews escape. It was too dangerous a secret to share

When I was finished, I looked at him anxiously, waiting to hear the sort of sorrowful rebuke that so many priests specialized in. But Father Joseph only nodded again.

"Irena, this is a war. God knows your heart. And God knows what you are doing with that *dorożka* today." ...

"Thank you, Father Joseph," I said at last.

"When you come through Janówka next time, stop and visit me." ...

I had taken six people to the forest, and although they had disappeared, they were never far from my thoughts. When I could, I borrowed the *dorożka* from Helen's farm and drove to Janówka, where I left bundles of food. ...

I did not always stop at the church to see Father Joseph. Occasionally, I was in too great a hurry, and had to be back to serve a meal. Or else I would see the old priest, with his straw gardening hat shielding his eyes from the sun, leaning on a pitchfork and talking with a neighbor. He knew what my trips to the *puszcza* [forest] meant. I was sure of it. I did not know if anyone else in the village noticed my comings and goings to the forest. In those days, people were either especially nosy, or they kept anxiously to themselves—but no one ever seemed to recognize me or take notice.<sup>1254</sup>

<sup>1254</sup> Irene Gut Opdyke with Jennifer Armstrong, *In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 146–51.

Irene Gut Opdyke recalls the executions of November 1943 that she watched in horror in nearby Tarnopol. These public spectacles—which Poles were often forced to watch—were calculated to strike terror into the hearts of ordinary civilians and thereby subjugate the Polish nation.

I was running across the town square ... and the square, although usually active on a market day, was choked with a milling, bewildered crowd. SS men abruptly pushed me into the middle of the square, just as they had the others, with a command not to leave. A scaffold had been erected in the center of the square, and what appeared to be two separate families were slowly escorted through the crowd to the block. A Polish couple, holding two small children, were brought up first, followed by a Jewish couple with one child, all three wearing the yellow Star of David. Both groups were lined up in front of dangling nooses. They were going to hang the children as well! Why didn't somebody do something? What could be done? Finally, their "crimes" were announced—the Polish family had been caught harboring the Jewish family! Thus we were forced to witness the punishment for helping or befriending a Jew. I thought I would die! I closed my eyes tightly, but I could still hear the horrible thuds, as the weight of the bodies hit the ends of their ropes. It is impossible that what I imagined in my mind could have been more terrible than what I might have seen, had I watched, but I felt as if it were. Nightmarish images passed in front of my eyes, unbelievable and horrible, as I heard the death sounds emanate from the scaffold. Not a soul moved; no one made a sound, although a sigh reminiscent of a moan seemed to sweep over the crowd.

"This family, caught harboring Jews against the law, has been executed as an example to all," and [sic] SS officer announced. "This is the result of their crimes." The officer pointed accusingly at the bodies dangling in front of him.

My mind would not accept this statement of brutality. Innocent people killed for saving lives? I kept my eyes shut tightly, wanting desperately to erase the whole scene from my mind, but of course the incident was played back, over and over again in my memory. I saw the same fate ahead of me, if my actions were ever discovered. But I had to go on as before. I had no choice.

Finally they released us ...<sup>1255</sup>

Jewish accounts from the vicinity of Tarnopol attest to the helpfulness of Catholic priests. Fr. Adolf Iwańciów, a priest from Tarnopol, provided the birth and baptismal certificate of a deceased Polish woman to a Jewish woman who fell into the hands of the Gestapo. Although Fr. Iwańciów was interrogated by the Gestapo, he was released for lack of proof of complicity.<sup>1256</sup> Abraham Wand (Avraham Vand) lived in a village, passing as a Christian with false identity

<sup>1255</sup> Irene Gut Opdyke with Jeffrey M. Elliot, *Into the Flames: The Life Story of a Righteous Gentile* (San Bernardino, California: Borgo Press, 1992), 139.

<sup>1256</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 156.

documents obtained from a priest.<sup>1257</sup> Yosef Schwartz recalled that a priest provided food to Jews.<sup>1258</sup>

After escaping from the hospital in Trembowla, where she worked, Dr. Natalia Weisselberg was sheltered by the Ganczarski family in Sady, on the outskirts of Trembowla, in Tarnopol voivodship, along with her husband, Jakub, and her daughter, Ludwika (later Steinfeld). Her host, Jan Ganczarski, turned to Rev. Wacław Szetelnicki, a local vicar, for guidance.<sup>1259</sup>

On June 5, 1943, we had to flee [from the hospital in Trembowla], past the Ukrainian guards and barking of dogs, and in enormous fear we hurried to Sady, arriving at the home of the Ganczarski family where we remained until March 1944, when the Russians entered. Near the end of our stay, still under the German occupation, Jan Ganczarski wanted to assure himself that he was doing the right thing by sheltering Jews and thereby exposing his entire family to death. [A Polish pharmacist's family living nearby had just been executed by the Germans.] He therefore went to confession. His confessor, Rev. Wacław Szetelnicki, presently residing in Wrocław, praised him for his actions, encouraged him to keep sheltering us and forbade him to surrender us to the Nazis. In March 1944, Mr. Ganczarski saw us off, giving us his blessing on our road to freedom.<sup>1260</sup>

Rev. Szetelnicki also paid regular visits (on the first Friday of each month) to an elderly Polish couple in Sady, by the name of Szajdek. They were hiding a Jewish couple—the Parilles, from Tarnopol—in the cellar of their small cottage. The Parilles, who survived the war, would come out of their hiding place to converse with Rev. Szetelnicki during his visits.<sup>1261</sup>

Rev. Jan Pawlicki, the pastor of Zborów, near Tarnopol, was one of several Poles instrumental in saving the Dul (Doll) family. He provided false documents to Maksymilian (Meniachem) Dul, his wife, Anna, and their daughter, Janina, and

<sup>1257</sup> Testimony of Abraham Wand (Avraham Vand), YVA, file O.3 V.T/3333 (Item 4030753).

<sup>1258</sup> Testimony of Yosef Schwartz, cited in Yehoshua Pinchas Klarner, “Bursztyn,” in Mordekhai Amihai, David Stockfish, and Shmuel Bari, eds., *The Community of Rohatyn and Environs*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/rogatin/rohatyn.html>, translated from *Kehilat Rohatyn ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rohatyn in Israel, 1962), 327 ff.

<sup>1259</sup> Ludwika Steinfeld, *Far from Lambarene: A Biography, the Second World War, and Typhus Spotted Fever* (Frankfurt am Main: Steinfeld, 1992); Ludwika Steinfeld, *Żydzi i ludzie* (Frankfurt am Main: Steinfeld, 1997); Ludwika Steinfeld, *Huragan i cisza: Epizody wojenne* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 2017). Dr. Natalia Weisselberg's daughter, Ludwika, had been previously sheltered, together with her grandmother, by Hanna Rozkosz in the village of Krowinka near Trembowla. See “Moja mała ojczyzna—Brodów,” (XV), Internet: <https://mularczyk-rodzice.jimdofree.com/moja-ma%C5%82a-ojczyzna-brod%C3%B3w/>.

<sup>1260</sup> Wacław Szetelnicki, *Trembowla: Kresowy bastion wiary i polskości* (Wrocław: Rubikon, 1992), 243.

<sup>1261</sup> Szetelnicki, *Trembowla*, 249.

transferred them to Brzeżany, where Maksymilian found employment with the assistance of a Polish friend, Karol Bogucki, who passed them off as Poles. Both Rev. Pawlicki and Bogucki were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations, as was Alfred Schlüssel.

In 1942, after the massacres by the Germans and Ukrainians against the Jews of Zborow [Zborów], in the Tarnopol district, Maksymilian Doll [Dul] and his wife, Anna, decided to flee with their daughter, Janina. Jan Pawlicki, the local priest, came to their aid, by providing them with false documents and moving them to nearby Brzeżany [Brzeżany]. While in Brzeżany, Doll found work through a friend, Karol Bogucki, who passed the Dolls off as acquaintances of his. In 1943, the Gestapo, on the basis of a tipoff, arrested the Dolls. When Bogucki discovered what had happened, he hurried to the Gestapo and testified that the Dolls were Polish friends of his. After the Dolls were released, Doll found work as an accountant in a Polish office run by Dr. Alfred Schuessel [Schüssel]. Although Schuessel knew that the Dolls were Jewish, he tried to help them to the best of his ability. Amongst other deeds, he went to the population registry to testify that their papers were authentic. When the Dolls were rearrested by the Gestapo, Schuessel used ties with government officials to obtain their release. The Dolls were liberated in the summer of 1944, after which they immigrated to Israel ...<sup>1262</sup>

The complicated process of obtaining false documents is described by Maksymilian Dul.

In Zborow [Zborów] I met with my colleague Waraszinski [Władysław Woroszyński], a former high-school teacher in Złoczów. He introduced me to the Roman Catholic priest, Jan Pawlitzki [Pawlicki], from whom I received documents for my wife and child. From now on my wife would be called Maria Konisz [Kunysz] and our daughter, Janina Konisz. They both had Catholic birth certificates. Maria Konisz was a little older than Anna Duhl, but that is how it had to be. On the blank forms that I had from Jezierna, I attached an identification permit with a photograph of my wife with the name Maria Konisz. That, along with the birth certificate, were her new documents. I had to translate my birth certificate into German and have it authorized by a notary. I could not get that done in Zborow because the notary there was a Ukrainian; one could only get it done in Tarnopol with a Polish notary. The priest Pawlitzki sent one of his people to Tarnopol and he delivered it to me. I burned the original.<sup>1263</sup>

<sup>1262</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 103.

<sup>1263</sup> Menachem Duhl, "A Year in Jezierna and Four Months in Zborow with the Germans," in Yitshak Sigelman, ed., *Sefer Jezierna* (Haifa: Committee of Former Residents of Jezierna in Israel, 1971), 230–53, translated as *Memorial Book of Jezierna*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/ozerna/Ozerna.html>. In his Yad Vashem testimony, Maksymilian Dul identifies several other Poles from Brzeżany who helped rescue Jews but were not recognized by Yad Vashem: Władysław Kruczkiewicz, Jan Nowak, Judge Stankiewicz, Dr. Stefan Biliński. See the testimony of Maksymilian Dul, YVA, file O.3/3302 (Item 3556429).

Rev. Pawlicki also came to the assistance of Maria Cukier. As she jumped from a train taking Jews from Zborów to the Bełżec death camp, Cukier was shot by a German guard. She managed to get to Złoczów, but the Jewish council would not help her. Two unknown Polish women took pity on her and took her to the local hospital, where she was operated on. The doctors and personnel surmised that she was Jewish but treated her very well. After her release from hospital, she went to the rectory in Zborów, where she met Rev. Pawlicki and confided to him that she was Jewish. Cukier remained at the rectory for about two weeks. Rev. Pawlicki provided her with clothes, money and food. He took her to Lwów, where she stayed for several weeks under the care of his friends. Since Cukier was known by many people in Lwów, Rev. Pawlicki relocated her to an estate in Synowódzko Wyżne, near Stryj. There, Cukier met Łukasz and Ludwika Kruczkowski, who took her into the room they lived in. She had to leave when the estate inspector tried to blackmail her. Fortunately, Cukier survived the war, moving from place to place.<sup>1264</sup>

Rev. Pawlicki is mentioned in other testimonies as a very courageous defender of Jews who encouraged his parishioners to shelter them. The family of Leib (Leon) Kronisch (Kronish) from Zborów, consisting of a couple and their two daughters, were among nine Jews sheltered by the Tyrz family in the village of Futory, near Zborów, with the priest's encouragement.<sup>1265</sup>

After escaping from a German work camp in Zborów, Zygmunt Margules and Yossel Zeigersohn found shelter with the Mikuliński family, near Zborów. The destitute fugitives randomly entered their barn and were allowed to remain there after they were discovered. Margules recalled the impoverished proprietor of the farm, Teodora Mikulińska, as an angel. Not only did the priest—believed to be Rev. Pawlicki—support their host's decision, but he also sent food to help feed the Jewish charges. When the Soviet front approached and the area came under bombardment, Margules and his companion took cover in a building where a priest led the faithful in prayer. The priest recognized them as Jews, and he protected them. Another priest then took them under his wing. He too realized that they were Jews. After the Germans had been driven out, in appreciation, Margules sewed a cassock for Rev. Pawlicki.<sup>1266</sup>

Sabina Fuchs (later Schweid, b. 1931) obtained false documents from Rev. Pawlicki that enabled her to survive.<sup>1267</sup> Faja Unruch Szapiro (Faye Shapira,

<sup>1264</sup> Testimony of Maria Cukier, JHI, record group 301, no. 2520.

<sup>1265</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 109–10. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 832–33.

<sup>1266</sup> Testimony of Zygmunt Margules, SFV, interview code 7785; Lucille M. [Margules] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1933), FVA.

<sup>1267</sup> Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 188 n.34; Sabina Schweid, *Consider Me Lucky: Childhood and Youth during the Holocaust in Zborów* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011). Sabina and

b. 1922) survived in the vicinity of Zborów with the help of a number of Poles, among them Julia Werbicka of Tustogłowy and Katarzyna Rozumkiewicz. She too obtained false documents from a priest, possibly Rev. Pawlicki.<sup>1268</sup>

Josephine Fiksel (then Józia Zauberman, b. 1930), who, together with her father, was hiding with Maria Bartosiewicz in the village of Tustogłowy, near Zborów, tells the story of a helpful priest from the village of Friszna (Jezierna?). The priest even told them when Yom Kippur occurred so they could fast.<sup>1269</sup>

Rev. Zygmunt Białowas, the pastor of Jezierna, near Zborów, provided false documents to Maria Fischer (later Zahn, b. 1929), a 13-year-old girl from Tarnopol who had escaped from a labour camp in Jezierna. She lived for several months with the priest's nephew Stanisław Mazur, and his wife, Bronisława, passing as Maria Sieczka, Bronisława's cousin. Afterwards, Rev. Białowas put her father in contact with a black marketeer from Katowice who arranged for Maria to become a nanny in Breslau (now Wrocław).

Her protectors, the Mazurs, continued to pose as her family. They corresponded with her in order to support her cover as a Catholic Pole. Maria's parents and brother remained in Jezierna, where "Everybody in the neighborhood knew we were hiding, but nobody told the Germans. The people in Jezierna were good people. They didn't give us away. They helped us with food. We couldn't have survived without them."<sup>1270</sup>

Rev. Białowas also came to the assistance of Bronisława Szarer (later Feuer, b. 1921), the daughter of Jewish landowners with whom he was on friendly terms. He provided her with false documents that she used to pass as a Catholic Pole. At first, Bronisława moved to Lwów. After she contracted tuberculosis, she moved to Warsaw, where she was hospitalized for the duration of the war.<sup>1271</sup>

Maria Kamińska (b. 1935 in Lwów as Ruta Linder), survived the war by hiding with Polish families. Her parents owned a pharmacy in Pomorany, near Zborów, in Tarnopol voivodship. Their acquaintance, Rev. Stanisław Kostołowski, the local pastor, found a safe hiding place for their daughter with Malwina

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her mother, Klara, were two of nine Jews sheltered by Antoni and Anastazja Bigos and Julia Czurko-Skrzeczynska, who were recognized by Yad Vashem.

<sup>1268</sup> Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 185 n.5; Testimony of Faja (Unruch) Szapiro, YVA, file O.3/3485 (ID Item 3557007).

<sup>1269</sup> Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 188 n.39; Testimony of Josephine Fiksel, SFV, Interview code 9757.

<sup>1270</sup> Account of Maria Fischer Zahn, in Carole Garbuny Vogel, *We Shall Not Forget! Memories of the Holocaust*, 2nd ed. (Lexington, Massachusetts: Temple Isaiah, 1995), 278–81. See also the testimony of Maria Zahn, SFV, Interview code 22028.

<sup>1271</sup> Testimony of Fryderyka Cassidy, SFV, Interview code 34645.



Lipińska in the village of Urlów, near Zborów. Because of raids on the Polish population by Ukrainian nationalist partisans, Lipińska and her young charge had to relocate to Czchów, near Brzesko.

I was born and lived in Lwów before the war. My name was Ruta Linder. My parents, Sara and Sender Linder, were pharmacists. Several years before the war, they settled in Pomorzany, where they worked in their own pharmacy. ...

In 1941, we found ourselves in the ghetto [in Brzeżany]. After three months, my mother decided that we had to get out of the ghetto. ...

In order to survive, my parents had to turn me over to some Polish family, because I was frequently sick and my cough could have given us away.

We made our way to Pomorzany. Here, my parents gave me over to a Polish family they knew. Unfortunately, I ran away from there to my parents. Another time, an acquaintance, Father [Stanisław] Kostołowski, placed me at the home of a lady he knew, Malwina Lipińska, in the village of Urlów in the Tarnopol province.

There, I stopped being Ruta Linder and began life as Maria Kamińska. The way it happened was as follows. Mrs. Lipińska was reading aloud a list of those who had been shot to death, and I happened to remember precisely this name and surname. I received a false certificate of my christening, I had to learn prayers other than the ones Mama had taught me, and I ceased being a child. From then on, fear that someone might recognize me was constantly with me. I lived like other country children. I took the cows to pasture and fed chickens and turkeys. I longed so much for my parents that I tried to kill myself by hitting my head against a wall, but I only managed to get my head banged up and not to kill myself.

We live in a Ukrainian village, and the followers of Bandera began to bother us. Surprisingly, the ones who helped Mrs. Lipińska were the Germans. There were German officers (Austrians) quartered with us. They gave us a truck and transported us with all our household belongings to Czchów on the Dunajec River in the province of Krakow.

We moved in with the sister of Mrs. Lipińska, Mrs. Maria Barącz. I was there as a relative. I called both ladies "Auntie," and everybody knew that my parents had perished during a bombardment. Mrs. Barącz had a very nice home in which there was also a pharmacy. The front rooms were occupied by Germans as their living quarters. It was extremely crowded in the house, because Mrs. Barącz's entire family had sought shelter under her wings. I remember that all the time I slept in a small child's bed. Behind the hose, in the woodshed, a Jewish man was hiding under the firewood.

The girls of this family belonged to the Home Army. It was a heroic family and very noble. Unfortunately, both sisters are no longer alive. I am still in touch with their daughters and grandchildren. At one time, I wanted to arrange for them to receive the medal of the "Just Among the Nations of the World." In response, I heard, "You know, Marysia, that is completely unnecessary. For us, the biggest reward is that you are alive." ...

In July 1945, my parents were repatriated to Bytom, and they then retrieved me from Czchów.<sup>1272</sup>

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<sup>1272</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 84–85.

According to Polish eyewitness accounts, two Jewish women were sheltered on the parish farm in Pomorzany. During an attack on the village by Ukrainian nationalists in April 1944, in which 48 Polish inhabitants lost their lives, the Jewish women had to escape from their hideout when it was set on fire. They were shot dead by the Ukrainian assailants.<sup>1273</sup>

Rev. Canon Adam Łańcucki, the pastor of Brzeżany, near Tarnopol, provided a number of false identity documents that helped Jews survive the war.

Stanisław [Stanisław] Codogni, a blacksmith by profession, lived with his family in the town of Brzeżany [Brzeżany] in the Tarnopol district. Throughout the existence of the Brzeżany ghetto, the Codognis kept their Jewish friends, the Bomzes, supplied with food and fuel. During the ghetto's liquidation (April–June 1943), Fishel and Ricka Bomze, their daughter, Chana Redlich, and her six-year-old son, Shimon, hid in the attic of their apartment in the ghetto. Even after all the Jews had been deported, they continued hiding in the attic, while Codogni continued to see to all their needs. In November 1943, when new people began moving into the ghetto, the refugees had to find a new hiding place. Under cover of darkness, Codogni's son, Karol, helped move Redlich and her son to a shelter Codogni had found for them on one of the farms in the nearby village of Raj. ... Redlich and her son stayed on the farm in Raj until the area was liberated in the spring of 1944.<sup>1274</sup>

Twelve-year-old Zula Helman also benefited from the assistance of Karol Codogni. She was the daughter of a lawyer from Brzeżany who perished together with a large group of Jews in the first days after the German army entered the city in 1941. Her mother and two younger sisters perished during the liquidation of the ghetto in 1943. Zula Helman managed to flee from the place of execution. She turned to the Codognis for help. Karol Codogni obtained a baptismal certificate for her from the local priest (Adam Łańcucki) and took her to an acquaintance of his in Lwów, where she worked as a nanny. Zula Helman survived the war.<sup>1275</sup>

Zofia Sniadecka [Śniadecka], a teacher from Brzeżany [Brzeżany] in the Tarnopol district of Eastern Galicia, had been friendly with the Podhorcer family and the dentist Emil Ornstein before the war. Thanks to her fluency in German, Sniadecka was hired as a secretary with a German company that had warehouses in the Jewish quarter of the city. This enabled her to remain in contact with and help her Jewish friends. In the spring of 1942, Rosa Podhorcer approached her, asking her to help save her family. Sniadecka took the seven members of the Podhorcer family into her home, among them Emil Ornstein and his six-year-old son, Jacek. After she located a family of farmers that would agree to hide the Jews in their home, she transferred five members of the Podhorcer family to the farm and hid them in the hiding place the farmer prepared. Disregarding the danger to her life, she took the care of the family upon herself ... although she obtained false papers for Ornstein, she decided to hide him in her apartment because of his Jewish appearance. Sniadecka searched for a suitable hiding place for Ornstein's son Jacek for a long time until she found a place to

<sup>1273</sup> Jan Selwa, "Banderowcy w Pomorzanach... żyją jeszcze świadkowie," *Na Rubieży* [Wrocław], no. 4 (1994): 20.

<sup>1274</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 152.

<sup>1275</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 89.

hide him far from the city. In late March 1944, a member of the Podhorcer family, Ornstein's sister—who was in the advanced stages of pregnancy—suddenly showed up at Sniadecka's door. The farmer on whose farm they had been hiding refused to allow her to give birth in his home and she had come to Sniadecka to give birth in her apartment. Sniadecka called in a trustworthy midwife and little Danita was born. The baby remained with Sniadecka and the mother returned to the hiding place on the farm. [Sniadecka notified the parish of the child's birth and Rev. Adam Łańcucki registered her in the parish books and issued a birth certificate for her.<sup>1276</sup>] The Germans eventually discovered the Podhorcer family's hiding place and murdered them all. Sniadecka, who feared that the Germans would soon come to search her home, moved Ornstein to her brother's home and fled with the infant to stay with friends who lived outside the city. Sniadecka cared for the baby as best she could, but after she returned home the Germans demanded that she give up the Jews she was hiding. This happened on the eve of the liberation and only the entry of the Red Army into the city saved her life.<sup>1277</sup>

A young woman from Brzeżany, identified as Anna Herzog, was born in 1922 into an affluent and culturally assimilated Jewish family. During the German occupation, a Polish priest and friend of the family sheltered her. She posed as a Catholic Pole and played the church organ. She met and fell in love with a Pole whom she married after converting to Catholicism. She survived the war, as did her parents. They settled in Western Poland, where they continued to live as Catholics.

Anna Herzog was saved by a Polish priest. The priest, who came from a poor Brzeżany [Brzeżany] family, had studied in a theological seminary before the war, and Grandpa Herzog has helped subsidize him. When the situation of the Jews in the ghetto became desperate, Anna travelled under an assumed Polish name to the village where the priest lived and preached. He was ready to help, and Anna played the organ in his church. That's where she met Lech, with whom she fell in love. Before marrying him, Anna was converted to Catholicism by the priest. "I revealed my identity to Lech and he was moved to tears. Lech came from a rather poor mixed Polish-Ukrainian family. His mother told me to consider myself her daughter." Anna, her mother, and her father, not knowing the whereabouts of each other, survived the German occupation and were later reunited. Her mother, too became a Catholic, and although the father never converted officially, they lived as a devout Catholic family in postwar Poland.<sup>1278</sup>

Rev. Stefan Chabło, the pastor of Chodaczków Wielki, near Tarnopol, sheltered Tosia Stadler (later Ajzenberg, b. 1919) after she escaped from a work camp. At various times, she resided with a villager and the priest's sister. Rev. Chabło also rescued a Jewish child.<sup>1279</sup>

<sup>1276</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 562.

<sup>1277</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 561–62.

<sup>1278</sup> Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1918–1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 126–27.

<sup>1279</sup> Testimony of Tosia (Ajzenberg) Stadler, YVA, file M.1.E/1615 (Item 3542367).

Rev. Franciszek Jastrzębski, the pastor of Kuropatniki, near Brzeżany, sheltered two Jewish women who survived the war. One of them became the priest's housekeeper under a false identity. She had been directed to him by the aforementioned Rev. Chabło. The other woman, who was supplied with food by the priest's sister, was the daughter of a local Jewish landowner. The latter woman's sister also survived with the help of villagers.<sup>1280</sup>

The Helfgott family—consisting of Fiszel and Ettel (Edzia) and their daughter, Anita (later Ekstein, b. 1934), was rounded up and placed in the ghetto in Skole, near Stryj. Fiszel Helfgott was sent to work in a labour camp outside the ghetto. He befriended Józef Matusiewicz, a prewar Polish army officer who worked as a warehouse keeper in the camp. After his wife was seized in a round-up, Fiszel confided in Józef. Though Józef was practically a stranger, Fiszel asked him to save his 8-year-old daughter. Józef agreed to try, but his wife, Paulina, initially expressed reservations initially about endangering the entire family, especially their 18-year-old niece, Emilia, whom they had adopted. The Matusiewiczzes were deeply religious. Although childless, they had raised two other orphaned relatives. One of them, their nephew, Michał Sujata, had become a priest.

Shortly before Christmas 1942, Józef managed to sneak Anita out of the ghetto concealed in a large bag. He placed the bag in a horse-drawn carriage, covered it with straw, and drove to his home in the nearby town of Rozdół. A priest supplied the essential, forged birth and baptismal certificate for Anita, who passed as the Matusiewiczzes' niece, using the name of Anna Jaworska. Anita was instructed on how to behave as a Catholic, since she knew nothing about the Catholic religion when she arrived at their home. In February 1943, the Matusiewiczzes' home was raided by Ukrainian policemen searching for Jews. Fortunately, Anita was able to escape from the house and avoid detection. She returned to her father, who was then living in the labour camp.

In April 1943, Józef again spirited Anita out of the camp and took her by train to the village of Liczkowce, near Kopyczyńce, in Tarnopol voivodship, where his nephew, Rev. Sujata, was pastor. Anita lived in the rectory with the

<sup>1280</sup> Grzegorz Chajko, "The Clergy of the Archdiocese of Lviv of the Latins in Aid of the Jewish Nation during the Years of the German Occupation from 1941–1944: An Outline of the Events," *The Person and the Challenges*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2013): 143–55, at p. 153; *Wspomnienie z życia ks. Franciszka Jastrzębskiego 1890–1962*, Internet: <http://www.kresowianiezkuropatnik.republika.pl/wspomnienieks.html>. A number of Jews were rescued in Kuropatniki. The Kmiec family sheltered eight Jews. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 354–55. Dr. Józef Szelong of Tarnopol placed Malwina Margulies with a Polish family; afterwards, she was taken in by a Ukrainian family. See the testimony of Malwina Knabel-Margulies, SFV, Interview code 14445.

priest and his housekeeper, posing as the priest's niece. She received further instruction in the Catholic religion, but she was not baptized. "He was an angel to me," Anita recalled, "a wise man and always on the alert." During her stay in Liczkowce, two villagers were hanged from a tree with signs around their necks that read, "I helped a Jew." Anita remained in the rectory until the arrival of the Soviet army in March 1944, at which time she rejoined the Matusiewiczzes.

Since Anita's father had been killed and no relatives could be found, Anita remained with the Matusiewiczzes, who treated her like a daughter. She moved with them to western Poland when the Polish population was expelled from that part of prewar Poland, which was incorporated into the Soviet Union. After some time, fulfilling Anita's father's request, the Matusiewiczzes were able to locate an aunt, who took Anita and left Poland with her. They eventually settled in Canada. Józef, Paulina and Emilia Matusiewicz were recognized by Yad Vashem in 1998, but the priest who gave her almost a year of care was not.<sup>1281</sup>

Rev. Szczepan Ufryjewicz, the pastor of Budzanów, near Trembowla, in Tarnopol voivodship, is mentioned in several accounts. From the fall of 1942 until the entry of the Soviet army in March 1944, Szymon Löffelholz was sheltered in a village about four kilometres from Budzanów, by a villager named Milanowski, at the urging of Rev. Ufryjewicz. Milanowski worked at the local mill, which belonged to the priest.<sup>1282</sup>

After being evicted from their hideout, Józef Kleiner of Budzanów turned to his friend, Rev. Ufryjewicz, for help. The priest approached Stanisław Zaranek, a watchmaker, who agreed to shelter the three-member Kleiner family—Józef, his wife Yocheved (Joanna), and their son Adolf (b. 1927)—in the attic of his home. The Witomski family assisted in this rescue effort and later prepared another shelter (a dugout) for the Kleiners. Towards the end of the occupation, Rev. Ufryjewicz directed five more Jews to the hideout: Dr. Julian Silberman and his son Michał, Mieczysław Koller, a pharmacist, and his wife Helena, and Mizio Pohoryles, Adolf's former teacher. When the Soviet army entered the area, Ukrainian nationalists began attacking the Poles. The Poles who took refuge in the local church were joined by the eight Jewish fugitives.<sup>1283</sup>

<sup>1281</sup> Anita Ekstein, *Always Remember Who You Are* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2019); Account of Anita Ekstein in Schoenfeld, *Holocaust Memoirs*, 193–94; Testimonies of Anita Ekstein, SFV, Interview codes 18289 and 54077. Anita Ekstein misidentifies Rev. Michał Sujata as Kujata. The entry for the Matusiewicz family in *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 498, does not mention the assistance of Rev. Sujata.

<sup>1282</sup> Testimony of Szymon Löffelholz, August 1, 1946, JHI, record group 301, no. 1922.

<sup>1283</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 874–75; Testimony of Al Kleiner, SFV, Interview code 11394; Testimony of Ignacy Witomski, SFV, Interview code 31700.

Rev. Ufryjewicz also came to the assistance of a family of converts from Czortków, the Vogels, parents with three children (two daughters and a son). The father had been the director of the electrical works in Czortków before the war. In 1943, the family moved to the vicinity of Zabłotów, near Kołomyja, where they spent the rest of the German occupation under false identities as the Jaworskis. The father turned to his friend, Rev. Ufryjewicz, who directed them to Rev. Zygmunt Gendzieński, the pastor of Kobyłowlaki. Rev. Gendzieński provided the family with the necessary birth and baptismal certificates.

The Vogels survived with the assistance of a number of Poles who were aware of their Jewish origin. Their son, Tadeusz (b. 1926), joined the Home Army. When their existence as Poles was threatened by Ukrainian nationalist partisans, they moved to Zabłotów, where Rev. Michał Rozlepiło, a family friend, headed the local self-defence against Ukrainian attacks, which took tens of thousands of Polish lives.<sup>1284</sup> The following curt account, provided by the daughter of one of those saved, merges some elements of this complex story.

Not far from Trembowla, in the small town of Budzanów [Budzanów], a Roman Catholic priest, Father [Szczepan] Ufryjewicz, saved a whole Jewish family by baptizing them and giving them baptismal certificates, and forging his parish register in such a way that he created for them a complete set of Christian forebearers. With the false identities that he had created they were able to move from place to place, away from those who might know their real identities, and thus to survive.<sup>1285</sup>

A family of faux converts, the Urbachs from Łódź, passing as the Urbans, consisting of Jan and Maria and their son, Jerzy (b. 1933), sought refuge in Budzanów. They lived there openly. Jerzy received his First Communion from Rev. Ufryjewicz, who likely was aware of the family's Jewish origin. At one point, fearing arrest as a Pole, Jan Urbach took refuge in the rectory. He then moved to another locality where he obtained employment, while Maria and her son remained in Budzanów until, fearful of Ukrainian attacks, they left for Tarnopol.<sup>1286</sup>

<sup>1284</sup> The account of Tadeusz Jaworski, an acclaimed filmmaker who settled in Canada, is found in Beata Gołombiowska, "Filmowa wędrówka przez życie: Wojna i nowa tożsamość," Internet: cultureave.com, also posted at: <https://gazetagazeta.com/2018/09/filmowa-wedrowka-przez-zycie-wojna-i-nowa-tozsamosc/>; Joanna Sokołowska-Gwizdka, "Filmowa wędrówka przez życie: Wojna, Bułan i rzeź na Wołyniu," Internet: cultureave.com, also posted at: <https://gazetagazeta.com/2018/10/filmowa-wedrowka-przez-zycie-wojna-bulan-i-rzez-na-wolynii-4/>.

<sup>1285</sup> Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 56, based on the account of Grażyna Cooper.

<sup>1286</sup> Jerzy Urban and Marta Stremecka, *Jerzy Urban: O swoim życiu rozmawia z Martą Stremecką*, Part 1 (Warsaw: Czerwone i Czarne, 2013); Testimony of Jerzy Urban, SFV, Interview code 42587. Jerzy Urban claims no one in Budzanów was aware of his family's Jewish origins. Since he was a boy at the time, he could not have known this as a fact, nor would he have



The Budzanów Memorial Book provides additional information about the rescue activities of Poles from that town, which was located in an area populated largely by Ukrainians. Budzanów was home to a convent of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, where Sister Stanisława (Teresa Rusinek) sheltered two Jewish teenagers who survived the war.<sup>1287</sup> “Only a handful managed to escape. And many of these Jews were caught by Ukrainians and murdered. A few managed to return to Budzanow [Budzanów] and hid in the homes of their Polish friends, or in the Klasztor [klasztor] (monastery).”<sup>1288</sup>

Rev. Franciszek Bajer, vicar of the parish in Założce, near Zborów, Tarnopol Voivodshop, extended help to the Schorr family.

When war broke out, 12-year-old Sophie Schorr was living with her parents, Otto (a physician) and Mary, in the town of Załoszce [Założce]. ... In 1941, the Nazis invaded [Soviet-occupied Eastern] Poland and the Schorrs were forced to move into a small apartment in the “old town.” Their landlady was Maria Szawłowska.

As the situation steadily worsened, the Schorrs decided to send Sophie away to safety. With the help of his friend Franciszek Bajer, a young Catholic priest, Otto managed to obtain Christian birth certificates for Sophie and Mary. Sophie Schorr-Reiner later wrote that Bajer became the family’s “guardian angel,” helping them continually throughout their trials.

The Schorrs then approached their acquaintance Artur Bukartyk, a local district attorney, to help them find a family that would agree to shelter Sophie, who was now 15 years old. Bukartyk himself had been adopted into a family as an infant, and his sister, Romana (Roma) Iżycka-Fedorska, agreed to take in Sophie. Roma lived in Lwów, and as a social worker before the war was now deprived of work. She was in her late forties, newly married to Witold Fedorski and supporting both her daughter and her mother. Fearing the antisemitism of some of her family members, Roma told them that Sophie was the daughter of an imprisoned Polish officer, and that her mother had been threatened by Ukrainians and had sent Sophie away. A few months later, Mary appeared at the Fedorskis’ doorstep. Sheltering both Mary and Sophie would have been tremendously risky, because despite the similarities in their looks, they had different names according to their “Aryan papers,” and the Germans often carried out surprise checks in the area. Roma decided to find Sophie another place to stay. She placed her on a train to Kraków, then to Ojców, where the daughter of Romana’s friends, Joanna Morawska, lived. Sophie was presented to Morawska as a Catholic girl, and remained with her until late 1944.

Meanwhile, Otto was in a labor camp in Załoszce, but his job as a physician gained him permission to treat patients outside the camp because of the shortage of medical

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been advised of the nature of the arrangement his father made with the local priest, who was engaged extensively in helping Jews.

<sup>1287</sup> “Pomoc Żydom w czasie wojny: Zgromadzenie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego à Paulo—szarytki,” undated typescript.

<sup>1288</sup> I. [Itzhak] Siegelman, *Sefer Budzanow* (Haifa: Irgun Yotzey Budzanow in Israel, 1968), 313.

professionals in town. During such a trip one day in 1942, someone told him that the camp was to be liquidated, and warned him not to return. He escaped to the woods and made contact with Bajer, who prevailed upon Maria Szawłowska, the Schorrs' former landlady, to harbor him. Schorr was hidden in Szawłowska's attic, a small triangular space where Schorr could only sit or lie down. He stayed there for a year, with Szawłowska bringing him food twice a day and changing the slop bucket every day. Bajer provided Schorr with constant moral support, and encouraged Szawłowska to continue her good "Christian deeds." At the end of the war, Otto had to learn to walk anew as the severely constricted space had damaged his legs.

After liberation, the family reunited and left Poland, first for Munich, where Sophie obtained a degree in medicine, and then to the US, where they settled in upstate New York. They stayed in touch with the Fedorskis, and Roma's daughter visited them in their new home.<sup>1289</sup>

The assistance to Jews provided by Rev. Bajer is described by the owner of the house in which the priest lived with his widowed mother. The account also mentions the assistance of Rev. Jan Kucy, pastor of Kokutkowce.

I know for certain that Father Franciszek [Bajer] helped Jews. Perhaps I will begin with Chaja or Chajka, a Jewess who lived in the Old Town and owned a small general store. ... The winter of 1943–1944 was terrible. The ghetto in Założce was already liquidated and the remainder of the Jews, who were not hiding with Poles, wandered through the forests where they were preyed upon by Ukrainian peasants with pitchforks, or the terrible butchers from the UPA [Ukrainian Insurgent Army], or the Ukrainian auxiliary police. Those caught were killed on the spot.

It was on such a night, when one would not turn out a dog, that someone knocked on our window. It was Chaja together with two of her daughters, Ryfcia and Gitla. One of them was about twelve years old; the other younger. They were frozen to the bone, in dire poverty, hungry and covered with lice. The priest took them in and hid them in the attic and later in a special shelter in the cellar. In doing so he risked his own life, the life of his [widowed] mother, and my life as well as that of my son and my two daughters. I agreed to this—commending my soul to God. [The home in question belonged to the narrator.] Our entire family would recite the rosary on a daily basis with the priest and pray that the Virgin Mary would protect us from Ukrainian denouncers and also that she would protect Chaja and her children. The Most Holy Mother heard our prayers and all three Jewesses survived. After the Soviets arrived, Father Franciszek provided them with false birth certificates so they could pass for Polish women. They left the Soviet paradise and came to Poland. They lived for a while in Bytom and later immigrated to the United States.

I know for certain that earlier Father Bajer had issued such certificates to many other Jews, especially young Jewish women, who then voluntarily, under false names, registered for work in Germany. ...

... On many occasions I opened the front door at night to allow in persons who were very obviously Jewish. ...

<sup>1289</sup> Iżycka Family, RD.

... When the numbers got too large, some of these Jews were directed to [Rev. Jan Kucy] the pastor of the neighbouring parish in Kokutkowce who also issued such certificates to Jews.<sup>1290</sup>

Rev. Jan Dziuban, pastor of Barysz, near Buczacz, Tarnopol voivodship, assisted the family of Dr. Max Anderman to survive the war. Rev. Dziuban was killed by Ukrainian nationalists at Easter time of 1944.

Dr. Max Anderman was of one of the few Jewish physicians in Buczacz, Eastern Galicia, who was allowed to practice outside the ghetto after the German occupation began. This came about because of the intercession of Dr. Anderman's Ukrainian friend, the district physician, Dr. Banach. In the course of 1942, as the danger facing the Jews in this city mounted, Banach arranged a special work permit for Anderman in Barysz, a large village near Buczacz, where he served a rural population of Ukrainians and Poles. Dr. Anderman, who moved to the village with his family, established friendly relations with priests in the area—especially the Polish Catholic priest [Jan] Dziuban. When the Jewish community in Buczacz was liquidated, Dr. Anderman realized that his family would face the same bitter fate and, on Father Dziuban's recommendation, turned to Franciszek Najbar and asked him to arrange shelter for himself, his wife, and their four-year-old son. After Franciszek consulted with his wife, Maria, the Najbars young peasants who owned a modest farmstead, agreed to accommodate the Jewish refugees in their loft. When Anderman asked how he could reward them, they answered that if the Germans discovered them they would share the same fate and if they survived they would discuss a reward at an appropriate time. The Najbars took in the Andermans unconditionally and concealed them for ten months despite the danger. They met all their wards' needs and Maria, who had a young child of her own, provided the Andermans' young son with the daily milk ration that he required. In the spring of 1944, the Red Army liberated Buczacz and the Andermans returned to their home. The Najbars sought no remuneration for their act of rescue, which they undertook out of virtue and humanitarianism. When Ukrainian nationalists burned the Najbars' house after the war, the Andermans came to their rescuers' assistance and accommodated them in their own home. Later, the two families—independently of each other—moved to Wrocław [Wrocław] (within Poland's new borders) ... the Andermans immigrated to Israel.<sup>1291</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Buczacz, Bleema Fenster (later Betty Katz, b. 1930) moved from place to place. On two occasions she turned to unknown priests for help. A priest in Buczacz provided her with a false birth and baptismal certificate and allowed her to stay in the rectory for several days, during which time he taught her the prayers she needed to know to pass as a Catholic. After that document was seized from her, Bleema approached another priest

<sup>1290</sup> Account of Wiktoria Procyk, February 17, 1996 (in the author's possession). See also Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 156 (Rev. Jan Kucy).

<sup>1291</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 537–38.

near Buczacz, from whom she received the birth and baptismal certificate of a deceased person. She survived with the help of several Poles.<sup>1292</sup>

Katarzyna Srebro was one of several Poles in Żyznomierz, on the outskirts of Buczacz, who helped a group of Jews hiding in nearby forests by providing them with food and occasional shelter. Caught in a German raid, in which several Jews were killed and a Polish farmstead was burned to the ground, Katarzyna was taken to the jail in Buczacz.

When her daughter, Karolina Lechka, learned that her mother was to be hanged for helping Jews, she turned to Rev. Ludwik Staufer, the administrator of the Catholic parish in Buczacz. Rev. Staufer, who was aware and supportive of the rescue efforts, appealed to the German authorities for clemency, as Katarzyna was an elderly widow. Remarkably, she was released after a few weeks. Katarzyna's daughter, Karolina, and her three granddaughters, Helena, Kazimiera and Józefa, from the Lechki family, were recognized as Righteous by Yad Vashem.<sup>1293</sup>

A number of Jews from Buczacz and other nearby localities took refuge in Puźniki, a Polish village in a largely Ukrainian area; the village was inhabited by about 1,000 Poles. The local pastor, Rev. Kazimierz Słupski, sheltered several Jews and helped many others. Rozalia Bauer, a Jewish pharmacist from Buczacz, who was passing as Teresa Krzyżanowska, stayed at the presbytery for more than three years without paying any remuneration. For part of this period, the Germans installed an officers' school on the ground floor of the presbytery, thus making the rescue more precarious. Several Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, whose superior was Sister Aniela Wesołowska, also resided in the presbytery and assisted with the rescue. Whenever the danger heightened, Bauer would put on a nun's robe.

Rev. Słupski also provided a hiding place for Adolf Korngut, a high school teacher from Buczacz.<sup>1294</sup> Dr. Bernard Seifer from Buczacz also frequented the presbytery. Dr. Seifer was sheltered by the Franciscan Fr. Wincenty Alfons Dwucet in the village of Panowice; his son was sheltered by the Kret family in the village

<sup>1292</sup> Testimony of Betty Katz, SFV, Interview code 15424.

<sup>1293</sup> Testimony of Iuzefa Krutnik, SFV, Interview code 37920; Karola Lehka and daughters, RD.

<sup>1294</sup> Adolf Korngut (1907–1973) was a teacher at the State Humanistic High School in Buczacz. In 1935, he married Bolesława Keffermuller, a Catholic Pole and fellow teacher. Although of Jewish origin, he appears to have assimilated into Polish society and converted. After the war, Adolf and his wife settled in Kluczbork, in Opole Silesia, where he was the principal of a high school. See Jerzy Duda, "Z Buczacza do Kluczborka: Historia kresowej, nauczycielskiej rodziny," *Indeks: Pismo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego*, no. 7–8 (October, 2013): 99–101.

of Gutyszyna (which was arranged by Fr. Dwucet).<sup>1295</sup> Rev. Słupski approached trusted parishioners, asking them to take Jews into their care. Jews living in the forest would often come to the presbytery, where they were fed by the nuns and given food to take away with them. Rev. Słupski and Sister Aniela Wesołowska were awarded by Yad Vashem in 2018.

During the war I administered the parish of Puźniki (Buczacz County) ... Being an eye-witness of the Gehenna of the Jewish people in the land along the Dniestr River during the anti-Jewish action [Aktion], I not only felt a deep sympathy for the Jews but also tried to alleviate their sufferings and ordeal as much as I could. I approached my trusted parishioners with a request to take Jews into [their] safekeeping. I also kept Jews at my presbytery. Thus, when visiting a chemist's in Buczacz, while buying medicines for partisan fighters, I made the acquaintance of Mrs Rozalia Bauer, a Jewish pharmacist, who asked me to find a hiding place for her among my parishioners. Before I could arrange for a safe place, she knocked at my door in the Puźniki presbytery one night in October [1941] and asked for shelter there and then. A harsh anti-Jewish action was on in Buczacz at the time in which Jews perished. I admitted her without hesitation. I could not do otherwise. She stayed with me for more than three years, until the Red Army came in 1945 [sic, 1944]. There was no fee, of course. There were nuns from the Congregation of the Family of Mary at my presbytery. Whenever the situation was dangerous Mrs. Bauer donned a nun's frock. There were many dangerous moments over the year, especially when, for a certain period, the Germans installed their officers' school on the ground floor of the presbytery. Spies and informants were rampant, too. At the most dangerous moments I always made it a point to face the danger dauntlessly. I would lead Sister Rozalia, broom in hand, to do some cleaning in the church. On one dangerous occasion, seeing the peril which constantly hung over my head (for providing a haven for Jews), the woman wanted to give herself up into German hands out of her own volition. I refused categorically. I reminded her then that I was an instrument in the hands of the Lord though which He meant to save her. And so it was. She stayed with me happily until the end.

I also provided a hiding place for Mr Adolf Korngut at the presbytery, a philologist and professor in a Buczacz secondary school. He was of Jewish extraction and, as we know, the Nazis did not fail to murder such people either. When "Jewish actions" in Buczacz were intensified, the professor fled to Puźniki and found refuge in a small room next to my dormitory. During hunts for Jews and various searching operations, he went down to a shelter under the staircase. A Nazi major had his quarters in a ground floor room underneath Professor Korngut's. He often drank too much, and one night, quite drunk, he fired his pistol into the ceiling. The bullet pierced through the bed on which Mr Korngut was sleeping, but luckily did not wound him. Doctor Seifert [Bernard Seifer], a Jewish specialist in internal diseases from Buczacz, also frequented my presbytery. He had his retreat with the Kret family in my parish, near the woods, at a place called Gotyszyn [Gutyszyna, on the

<sup>1295</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 484. Fr. Wincenty Alfons Dwucet administered the parish in Hnilcze, but resided in Panowice. Dr. Bernard Seifer was a controversial member of the Judenrat (Jewish council) in Buczacz. See also Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 171–74.

outskirts of Barysz]. Very frequently and covertly, other Jews from the woods would come to the presbytery, including children. There, they were fed by our Sisters and provided with bread and other food for their return way, while Mrs Rozalia Bauer dressed their wounds and dispensed medicines.

There were frequent searches for Jews in the village. My parishioner from Zalesie near Monasterzyska, Jan Baszczij, former head of the hamlet, kept Jews from the Buczacz Judenrat at his home. They approached him when the final action was about to begin and they were next on the list for extermination. He prepared a hideout dug under the house for them. His house stood out of the way near a creek. Alas, when the Jews became inured to their situation they started venturing into the yard by daylight. Mr Baszczij also kept buying poultry for them in the village. That reckless behaviour gave rise to suspicion among local Ukrainian nationals who began to watch Baszczij's farmstead. The hiding Jews were spotted and given away by Ukrainians: they called the Ukrainian police who arrested the Jews and extradited them to the Germans in Monasterzyska. Jan Baszczij was also arrested and transported to a jail in Czortków. The Ukrainian police took a rich booty—several sackfuls of gold. Jews from the Judenrat were very rich. A death sentence loomed over Baszczij's head. I succeeded in rescuing him through a person who was very influential with the Germans (in Czortków). Alas, he perished at a later date at the hands of Ukrainian nationalists, all the same.<sup>1296</sup>

Rev. Słupski urged his parishioners to help those in need. Confirmation of his caring attitude appears in several testimonies. Antonina Działoszyńska, a very poor widow with two young children, sheltered two fugitives from Tłumacz: Adela Krum, who pretended to be the wife of an imprisoned Polish officer from Buczacz named Kowalik; and her young daughter, Mira, who went by the name Marysia (later Mira Ledowski). They had been moving from village to village, begging for food and sometimes hiding in forests before they arrived in Puźniki. Mira recalled that Działoszyńska invited them into her small cottage near the church in April 1944. “She sat us by the table, and there we saw the seventh, eighth and ninth wonder of the world—a huge bowl of steaming hot potatoes. We hadn’t seen hot food for a long time. After the meal my mother thanked her and wanted to leave, but Mrs. Działoszyńska insisted on us staying, and we finally slept amongst people, and not under the earth.” A devout Catholic, Działoszyńska believed that the Blessed Virgin Mary had protected the Jewish mother and her child and brought them to her home, so she had a duty to protect them from misfortune. She turned to Rev. Słupski to issue false documents for her charges. They lived openly, not in hiding, posing as relatives of the Działoszyńskis, and attended Sunday mass in the local church. When German troops were stationed

<sup>1296</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 337–39.



in Puźniki in July 1944, the Krums stayed for several weeks with Działoszyńska's sister, Maria Komarnicka, who lived in a nearby hamlet.<sup>1297</sup>

A number of other Poles from Puźniki came to the assistance of Jews. The Koryzna family, consisting of Stanisław, his wife, Wiktoria, and their four children, rescued Shoshana Lederer (b. 1941 as Rojza Szechner, known as Róża), from Monasterzyska.<sup>1298</sup> This child's presence was also known to Rev. Słupski, the local pastor. Renata Tannenzapf (later Renate Krakauer), who was born in Stanisławów in 1941, was entrusted by her parents to the care of a villager by the name of Maria (Marynia) Koryzna. Renata's parents, Charlotte and Wilhelm (William) Tannenzapf, came to Puźniki later to join their daughter. They were sheltered by Joanna (Joasia) Krowicka, in a neighbouring cottage.<sup>1299</sup> Renata lived in the village openly, and Rev. Słupski was aware she was Jewish.

Once outside the ghetto walls, my mother ripped off her blue-and-white Star of David arm band and ran down the cobblestone street [of Stanisławów], fully expecting a bullet in the back. By this time I was well trained to be quiet. ... We reached the safety of the apartment of a former neighbour, who pulled us in quickly, no doubt fearing for her life. That night I was nestled in between my mother and Pani (Mrs.) Poliszowa on her bed.

My happiness didn't last long. The next day, my mother handed me over to Józia, who had been a maid in her brother's house, to take me to her widowed sister in Pozniki [Puźniki], a neighbouring village. Marynia and her two young sons were my new family for the next eighteen months. With my blond hair, blue eyes and button nose, I fit in easily as the baby sister. Suffering from malnutrition and one childhood illness after another, it took a while for me to become a healthy normal toddler.

Marynia treated me like her baby girl and I even began to call her Mama. I can imagine that her two boys, aged six and three, must have felt some resentment at this little Jewish impostor suddenly parachuted into their poor little home. But in the same way that my own preschool daughter used to trail her adored older brother, I can see myself following the boys around, perhaps to their annoyance, on my newly sturdy legs. They knew I was Jewish. .... the boys soon began to show their affection for me. The first and last serving in the communal bowl on the table was always reserved for me whether it was potatoes, pierogi or cabbage soup. At night they squeezed over on the bed they shared to make room for their new "little sister," Tusia. I'm sure that it made the little boys feel important to be my protectors. They could have but didn't betray me to the Nazis and Ukrainians who came

<sup>1297</sup> "The 'Righteous Among Nations' Have Been Awarded," October 21, 2008, Internet: <http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/en/news/news,287259,the-righteous-among-nations-have-been-awarded.html>; Działoszyńska, RD; The Działoszyński Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-dzialoszynski-family-0>. Antonina Działoszyńska and her two children were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2008.

<sup>1298</sup> The Koryzna family was recognized by Yad Vashem in 1988 and 1989. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 376–77; Koryzna, RD.

<sup>1299</sup> William Tannenzapf and Renate Krakauer, *Memories from the Abyss / But I Had a Happy Childhood* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2009), 31–42. See also Krzysztof Strauchmann, "Uratowała Żydówki, rodzina złożyła jej hołd," *Nowa Trybuna Opolska*, October 24, 2008.

on regular inspections of the village. And on Sundays, I can see us all trooping off to church as a family, the cute little blond girl holding the hand of each brother. The priest knew I was Jewish, and people found out after the war that he had been hiding a Jewish woman.

Unbeknownst to me, both my parents had escaped to the village before the ghetto was liquidated, one hidden in Marynia's hayloft and the other in the attic of her neighbour [Joasia] on the other side of the creek. From their vantage points, they were able to see me through the cracks, running around barefoot all summer ....

There was great animosity between the Polish and Ukrainian people in this part of Poland. The Ukrainians had nationalist aspirations and had allied themselves with the Germans in the war. This left the Poles to face two enemies—the Nazis and their Ukrainian neighbours. One day [in September 1943] Ukrainians from a neighbouring village attacked Pozniki, which was a Polish village, by torching the straw roofs. All the homes went up in flames except Marynia's. How was this one cottage spared? The peasants must have muttered and whispered that it was some kind of Jewish black magic.

The village priest knew that his people were frightened, uneducated and superstitious. ... But the priest also believed that they were God-fearing people, so on the following Sunday he preached about the protective hand of the Lord, who shields the innocent from danger. Anyone who betrayed an innocent was courting the wrath of God. The villagers understood the veiled reference to the Jewish child hidden among them and they kept silent.<sup>1300</sup>

The Koryznas' neighbour, Jędrzej Łacina, rescued a Jewish woman named Blima and her daughter, Bela. The rescue effort of the Komidzierski family, who hid Blima's husband, ended in tragedy when the Germans found the hiding place and shot him as he was trying to escape.<sup>1301</sup> More than 100 Poles were murdered by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in their attack on Puźniki on February 13, 1945.<sup>1302</sup>

The Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, who had a small convent in Puźniki headed by Sister Aniela Wesołowska, came to the assistance of Basia Geler Mandel, a fugitive from nearby Buczacz.

Basia and [her fiancé] Meier hid in the woods for another five months. They knew that they could be captured or killed at any time. The couple agreed that if they were discovered and had to separate to escape, they would meet up at a specific bunker in the former Jewish ghetto [in Buczacz]. They hoped that by then it would be safe to go back. The Nazi presence there was likely to have diminished since the ghetto had been cleared out. Eventually, their plan was put into action.

<sup>1300</sup> Tannenzapf and Krakauer, *Memories from the Abyss / But I Had a Happy Childhood*, 113–16.

<sup>1301</sup> Krzysztof Strauchmann, "Uratowała Żydówki, rodzina złożyła jej hołd," *Nowa Trybuna Opolska*, October 24, 2008; Testimony of Teofila Koryzna Kamińska, *Polscy Sprawiedliwi*, Internet: <http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/media/77/>.

<sup>1302</sup> Henryk Komański and Szczepan Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946* (Wrocław: Nortom, 2004), 170–71.

“We were spotted again and shot at. We had to run in different directions. I lost my balance on a steep cliff and rolled down it. I landed near a lake and hid behind some bushes. I stayed there until it was night. I did not know where to go. I was completely lost, and it had started to rain. I was drenched, but I kept on walking. I saw a church. I was desperate, so I took a chance and knocked on the door.

Some nuns answered it. They looked at me and knew I was Jewish, but they decided to help me. They took me in that rainy night and hid me for nearly a week. This placed them at great risk, and they were afraid to let me stay longer. The nuns dressed me in a nun’s habit before I left and pointed me in the direction of the old Jewish ghetto. I had to make it back. If Meier was still alive, I would find him there. ...

As I walked, I carried a crucifix the nuns had given me. ... I made it back to the bunker where I was supposed to meet Meier. He was there waiting for me. There were also others hiding there. ... There were fifteen of us in that bunker. One was a year-and-a-half-old girl. All of us survived ...”<sup>1303</sup>

Ewa Trauenstein (née Grus, later Turzyńska) and her son, Leon, were sheltered in Tarnopol voivodship successively by three Polish priests: Rev. Mikołaj Ferenc, a Capuchin until 1943 and administrator of the Roman Catholic parish in the village of Markowa, in the county of Podhajce, until that village was attacked by Ukrainian nationalist partisans on January 15, 1944, and Rev. Ferenc was killed together with 56 Polish villagers;<sup>1304</sup> Rev. Antoni Kania, the pastor of Huta Nowa, near the town of Monasterzyska, in the county of Buczacz; and Rev. Grabowski, with whom Ewa and Leon Trauenstein stayed briefly, in a nearby village, until the arrival of the Red Army.

Rev. Kania, a Home Army chaplain, found hiding places for several Jews, among them Dr. Leon (Leizor) Bandler from Monasterzyska, who posed as the village wagon driver in Huta Nowa. Dr. Bandler settled in Wrocław after the war. Yad Vashem recognized Reverends Ferenc and Kania as Righteous Among Nations in 2013.<sup>1305</sup>

Ewa Grus was born in 1913 and given up for adoption. Her new parents, Leon and Gusta-wa Segal, named her Lusia and took her to live with them in Rozwadów. They loved her very much and took care of her every need. When she finished her studies, she joined her father, Leon, working in his pharmacy. In 1933 she married Moshe Trauenstein, who was much older than she was. In 1935 they had a son whom they named Leon, in honor of Lusia’s by then deceased adoptive father.

<sup>1303</sup> Elaine Landau, *Holocaust Memories: Speaking the Truth in Their Own Words* (New York: F. Watts, 2001), 31–32.

<sup>1304</sup> Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 263–64.

<sup>1305</sup> Ewa Turzyńska, *Sądzonym mi było żyć...* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2009), 143–63, 175–82; Testimony of Evah Turjinskah, SFV, Interview code 4929.

When they learned that the Germans were about to bomb Rozwadów, Lusia and her mother, husband, and son ran away eastward with other Jews escaping the city. They tried to live in Lwów (today Lviv) for a while, attempting to live normally: Lusia worked in a pharmacy, and Moshe sometimes brought milk and potatoes from a friendly farmer in Zimna Woda.

Eventually life in Lwów became difficult, and the family wandered on. They moved to Gustawa's relatives in Różyszcze [Rożyszcze]. Again Lusia found a job in a pharmacy. ...

Moshe Trauenstein, Lusia's husband, volunteered for the Judenrat (Jewish council), which soon ran into difficulties that resulted in all of its members being shot. Lusia decided she would not return to the ghetto, and she had her mother and son hide in the basement of the pharmacy. ...

One day the officer [who she had helped with drugs] returned and said that the family had to leave town. He provided them with identity papers and money but told them they had to find their own transportation. After he left, a woman Lusia recognized from the period of Russian occupation walked in. Her name was Leokadia Krajewska, and when Lusia shared her concerns, Krajewska promised to try to find transportation for her and her family, which she managed to do. Her brother, Edmund Krajewski, came to drive the Segal-Tauersteins [sic] to safety. The Krajewskis also gave them some money and took Lusia's real papers for safekeeping.

Again they tried their luck in Lwów, but things did not work out for them there. Lusia went to Markowa to try to find Mikołaj Ferenc, a local priest who had promised her husband that one day he would help him out. Ferenc agreed to help, and Lusia and her son stayed in his house. Lusia's adoptive mother, Gustawa, passed away during this period. Lusia and Leon spent about seven months in Ferenc's house. Lusia helped around the house, and Leon tried his best as well.

In January 1944 Banderovists [Bandera followers] (members of the military wing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) came into Markowa and murdered all the men, including Ferenc. It was then up to Lusia and Leon to find a new place to hide. They passed through several houses where people put them up until the Nazis came hunting for Jews. ...

The next stop on the grueling journey was Nowa Huta and the home of Antoni Kania, a priest. Kania knew Lusia and Leon were Jewish, but he took them in anyway. The house was full of people who had escaped the destroyed village, and there was much housework to be done. Life was difficult, but it went on. Leon's legs healed. Lusia decided she would go to Lwów to see about her papers. Kania put her in touch with a Jewish doctor he had helped previously. The doctor [Dr. Leon Bandler] aided her in moving about safely. She managed to find Leokadia Krajewska, who was living in her barn because her house had been burned down. When the house burned, Leokadia had kept Lusia's papers on her body, thereby rescuing them from the fire. The reunion was joyful and full of memories, but there was still the question of getting back to Rozwadów. Fortunately, a Soviet officer who had a venereal disease struck a deal with Lusia—she would help him take care of his health, and he would provide fake documents for her and her son to get to Rozwadów. Lusia and Leon arrived there safe and sound and survived the remaining weeks of the war.<sup>1306</sup>

<sup>1306</sup> Mikołaj Ferenc, RD.

Rev. Stanisław Mazak, the pastor of Szczurowice parish, near Radziechów, in Tarnopol voivodship, helped Jews and encouraged his parishioners to extend aid to them. He was personally instrumental in saving the lives of several Jews. Rev. Mazak was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile.<sup>1307</sup>

Stanislaw [Stanisław] Mazak, a Roman Catholic priest, was the spirit behind the campaign to save a group of Jews from the village of Szczurowice in Radziechow [Radziechów] county, Tarnopol district. In his sermons in the local church, Father Mazak would call upon the faithful to take part in saving the persecuted, trying to convince them to do what they could, even at the cost of self-sacrifice. And indeed, the much-admired Father Mazak's flock responded to his appeal and extended its assistance to the Jews hiding in the area. Under Father Mazak's influence, even farmers who did not personally hide Jews in their homes volunteered to help them, providing food and keeping their hiding places secret from their Ukrainian nationalist neighbors. Mazak himself visited the hiding places, cheering up the Jewish fugitives and providing them with medicine as needed, all without asking for or receiving anything in return. In one case, the priest provided Scharlota Weksler [Wechsler] and her son with Aryan papers, accompanied them to Cracow [Kraków], and after learning that the mother had been sent to forced labor to Germany moved her son to a Catholic children's home in Warsaw, where his life was saved. In early 1944, Ukrainian collaborators learned of Father Mazak's efforts to save Jews and sentenced him to death. After he was warned of the danger to his life, the priest managed to flee from his village. He hid out in the nearby city of Lopatyn [Łopatyn] and after the war moved to Upper Silesia.<sup>1308</sup>

The Marciszczuk family lived in a village near Szczurowice. Their son, Piotr, recalled Rev. Mazak's involvement in the rescue of Mendel Friedman and his son Izaak, and Klara Hart and her son Aleks.

During one round-up, a few people were able to escape to the woods. We learned that they were near our house. Father began taking food out to them in the evenings.

One day, somebody knocked on our window. It was a group of Jews—people my father was acquainted with. Mendel Friedman, his son Izaak, Klara Hart, and her five- or six-year-old daughter asked the Marciszczuks for shelter. “Our family expanded,” writes Piotr.

The Germans were spreading fear. “They often drove by to ask whether we were hiding Jews. ‘If we find any, then you’re all going to the grave along with them,’” they threatened. Fortunately, they didn’t search the house. Had they done so, they would easily have found what they were looking for: “at that time, the Jews were staying in the attic (right over the Germans’ heads), because we hadn’t prepared a proper shelter, yet.”

After these visits, an underground shelter was constructed. The situation remained precarious, however: a portion of the Ukrainian population became engaged in hunting Jews (“so as to loot their possessions and kill them off”).

Fifteen-year-old Piotr Marciszczuk served as a courier between those in hiding and a Roman Catholic priest named Mazak. Among other things, he conveyed information and

<sup>1307</sup> See also Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 331–32, 336, 353; Engelking, *Na łące popiołów*, 73; Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews*, 91.

<sup>1308</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 500.

news. “We all rejoiced at any adversity the Germans faced.” But just before the liberation, tragedy struck. The Marciszczuk’s home was burned to the ground ... by Jews.

It was an accident. Someone knocked a lamp over in the shelter. The kerosene spilled, a fire broke out. Those inside managed to escape but “everything burned down.” All they were able to salvage was a pig and a horse. The Marciszczuks received assistance from family and from the priest. “Whatever father was able to obtain, he shared with the Jews [we were hiding].”

The Russians soon arrived on the scene, but not before Ukrainian nationalists had a chance to exact revenge upon the Marciszczuks. To punish them for hiding Jews, they killed Piotr’s father. The rest of the family, together with the Harts and Friedmans, took refuge in Łopatyn, which was already under Red Army control. For everyone involved, it was the start of a long journey. The Jewish families emigrated to America. The Marciszczuks, meanwhile, left for the so-called Recovered Territories of Poland.<sup>1309</sup>

In addition to Rev. Mazak, Yad Vashem recognized five Polish families from Szczurowice as Righteous Gentiles: Bednarczyk, Jaśkiewicz, Łukasiewicz, Marciszczuk, and Miniewski.<sup>1310</sup> Franciszka Łukasiewicz, one of those awarded, recalled the encouragement and assistance she received from Rev. Mazak in sheltering the Sterling family.<sup>1311</sup>

**M**ichał Czuba, a graduate of a Catholic seminary who lived in Radziechów, Tarnopol voidvodship, helped the Wajsmans family to survive the war. Although some reports allude to him as a priest, Czuba’s status is not clear. He was awarded by Yad Vashem in 1989.

In 1941, the Wajsmans, their two sons, and their daughters, Helen and Ziona, escaped from Lwow [Lwów] to the town of Radziechow [Radziechów] in the Tarnopol district, where they were interned in the local ghetto. At her parents’ initiative, 13-year-old Ziona escaped from the ghetto and found shelter with peasants in the surrounding villages. A few months later, however, the Germans raided the area and Ziona had to be moved to another village. Although Ziona had Aryan papers, the local peasants were afraid to hide her and took her back to the deserted ghetto. Not knowing what to do Ziona made her way to the home of Polish acquaintances, where to her enormous surprise she came across her mother and sister, who were hiding there too. Although the hiding place was designed for one person only, room was made for Ziona, and later also for the girls’ father. Although the Polish landlord feared for his life, Michał [Michał] Czuba, the landlady’s brother and a graduate of a seminary, persuaded him to let them stay. Czuba himself took responsibility for looking after the Jewish fugitives and saw to their needs during the ten months of their stay. Although the Wajsmans paid his family for their upkeep, Czuba himself refused to take

<sup>1309</sup> The Marciszczuk Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-marciszczuk-family>.

<sup>1310</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 307, 469.

<sup>1311</sup> Stanisław Bijak, “Bohaterowie są potrzebni,” *Pielgrzym* [Toronto], vol. 7, no. 11 (November 1990): 8.



a cent. With the advance of the Soviets in 1944, all Poles were ordered to leave the area, but Czuba, disregarding the danger, stayed behind in order to look after the Wajsmans. When the Germans converted the house into a military post office, the Jews found a new hiding place in the deserted ghetto, where they stayed with Czuba until the Red Army liberated the town. After the war the Wajsmans emigrated.<sup>1312</sup>

Rev. Józef Pochoda, the pastor of Białobożnica, near Czortków, had to hide when word reached the Ukrainian police that he had baptized two Jewish children. His property was seized by the Ukrainian police. Rev. Marian Niewieściuk from nearby Chomiatówka was arrested as a hostage in his place and jailed in Czortków.<sup>1313</sup>

Feiga Pfeffer's brother was sheltered in a priest's house in Przemyślany, Tarnopol voivodship, for several months after his escape from a train transporting Jews to Bełżec. The priest, who was afraid to keep him longer, gave him some money when he left.<sup>1314</sup>

After escaping from the Janowska camp in Lwów, a group of Jews made their way to the forests near Przemyślany. A village priest, whose rectory they entered, provided them with large quantities of food over several days. After gaining enough confidence in them, the priest directed the Jews to a large Soviet partisan group he was in contact with, which included Poles and Jews. Jakub Birkenfeld, one of the Jewish fugitives, described the priest as "an extremely noble person" and "an angel from heaven."

Ukrainian partisans later abducted the priest, took him to a forest where they hanged and then quartered him.<sup>1315</sup> This appears to have been Rev. Stanisław Kwiatkowski, the pastor of the town of Świrz, who was apprehended on February 14, 1944, while returning from the funeral of Rev. Józef Kaczorowski, who had been murdered by Ukrainian nationalist partisans in the village of Wołków a few days earlier. According to Polish accounts, Rev. Kwiatkowski was tortured before being put to death. Two other Poles who had accompanied the priest were also killed.<sup>1316</sup>

<sup>1312</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 161.

<sup>1313</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 157.

<sup>1314</sup> Testimony of Feiga Pfeffer, JHI, record group 301, no. 1356.

<sup>1315</sup> Testimony of Jakub Birkenfeld, JHI, record group 301, no. 3746, reproduced in Jerzy Diatłowski and Janusz Roszkowski, eds., *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945: Opór i walka z faszyzmem w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma and Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 2010), 100–1.

<sup>1316</sup> Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 302, 306.

Władysław Szela and his wife, from the town of Dunajów, near Przemyślany, obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate from the local Catholic pastor, Rev. Kazimierz Łoziński, for seven-year-old Janina Bleishtif (b. 1933), the Jewish girl whom they were sheltering. The Szelas subsequently moved with her to Lwów for about a year, and then to Czudec, near Rzeszów. Janina survived the war. The following passage comes from the account of Janina's husband, Sender Szwalbenest.

I will tell how the Poles saved my wife's life.

When she was seven years old, her parents placed her under the care of a certain Polish couple. Their surname is Szela ... The Szelas unselfishly procured a birth certificate for her at a Catholic parsonage and took her from Dunajów, Tarnopol Voivodship, to Lvov [Lwów] where she stayed with them in hiding about a year. When the Germans searched the houses for Jews, Mr. Władysław Szela sent her with his wife to Czudziec [Czudec], Rzeszów Voivodship, to his family and there she stayed until the liberation.<sup>1317</sup>

During the deportation of Jews from Skała Podolska, in Tarnopol voivodship, a Polish nun identified as Maria K. hid three members of the Frenkel family in the bell tower of the Catholic church—Fryda (Frieda) and her daughters, Miriam (Mira) and Rita, as well as the dentist Szwarcbach (Schwartzbach) and his sister. They remained there for nine weeks until they were discovered by Ukrainian policemen who were conducting a thorough search in the town for Jewish fugitives. In exchange for some gold, the policemen allowed the Jews to escape. They then went to hide in the forest. Fryda Frenkel found her husband, Julius, who was sheltered by a Pole identified as Adam S. However, he later perished. Fryda and her two daughters survived.<sup>1318</sup> The Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś) had a children's shelter in Skała Podolska, a small town on the River Zbrucz.

Another memoir mentions the assistance provided to Lotka Sternberg and other Jews by an unidentified priest from Skała Podolska.

Lotka [Sternberg] was passing as a Christian in Lvov [Lwów]. The Polish priest who had given religious instruction to the Catholic children in the Polish elementary school before the war, and who had since then sheltered several Jews, had taught Lotka Catholic prayers and liturgy every night for four weeks. He had gotten her "good" Aryan papers—those of somebody who had died—and had made the arrangements for a middleman to take her

<sup>1317</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 406.

<sup>1318</sup> Testimony of Rita Frenkiel (Frenkel), JHI, record group 301, no. 2884; Boaz Cohen and Beate Müller, "A Teacher and His Students: Child Holocaust Testimonies from Early Post-war Polish Bytom," *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2016): 68–115, at p. 91.

to live with a Polish couple as their niece in return for money sent with him by Lotka's parents.<sup>1319</sup>

According to Kalman Harnik, a native of Brody, in Tarnopol voivodship, a number of residents of that town, among them a priest, Rev. Emil Kobierzyński, came to the aid of Jews.

In order to save the children one had to hand them over to stranger gentiles. This is where I feel that it is my duty to mention some of the righteous Christians, those who helped Jews escape, or kept and saved Brody's Jewish children for years. They were undeterred by the dangers and the death penalty they had to face. The following is just a partial list of these people:

Yatsneti Miklashevski [Jacenty Miklaszewski] (a clerk in the tax office, who frequently did favors and charities), Timchishin, the former deputy governor of Brody, Homnyuk, Professor Buchkovski [Buczowski], Kist, Dr. Zavotski [Józef Zawadzki] (the regional physician who went from one bunker to another to provide cure to many of the Jewish sick people and smuggled a substantial amount of money from the outside, everything under a life threat), and Mironko Borchak Lukanich (Ukrainian printer who was very truthful in his relations with the Jews, his father was a pig merchant), Kumornik [*komornik*]<sup>1320</sup>—the executer [bailiff] of the court, and the Polish priest of the Christian community whose name escaped me.

My three years old daughter was saved by the Mikloshevski [Miklaszewski] family. They hosted her for four and half years. They treated her like their daughter.<sup>1320</sup>

Rev. Emil Kobierzyński, the pastor of Brody, actively encouraged his parishioners to assist Jews. At the urging of Rev. Aleksander Chodyko of Białystok, he looked for shelters for the Rivkind family and several other Jews.

In September 1939, at the start of the war, Avraham Itzhak Rivkind [Rywkind], his wife, Chaya, and their children, Menachem-Mendel and Raaya, all living in Białystok [Białystok], fled eastward to Brody ahead of the advancing Germans. Brody was then occupied by the Russians and remained in their control until the German attack on the Soviet Union. When the Germans struck again, in June 1941, Menachem-Mendel, at the time in his thirties, was married to Lonia, the daughter of the chief rabbi of Białystok, Rabbi Gedalia Rosenman. Acting swiftly to assist his son-in-law in Brody, Rosenman turned to the Catholic bishop [actually, the dean] in Białystok, Aleksander Chodyko, and asked for his intercession. Chodyko in turn approached a number of clerics in the Brody region and appealed to them to make an effort to save the Rivkind family. However before any of the clerics could act

<sup>1319</sup> Fanya Gottesfeld Heller, *Strange and Unexpected Love: A Teenage Girl's Holocaust Memoirs* (Hoboken New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, 1993), 113.

<sup>1320</sup> Kalman Harnik, "The Last Days of the Community," in Aviv Meltzer, ed., *Ner Tamid: Yizkor leBrody* (Jerusalem: Organization of Former Brody Residents in Israel, 1994), 165–66, translated as *An Eternal Light: Brody in Memoriam*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/brody/Brody.html>.

on the bishop's appeal, on November 2, 1942, the Germans and Ukrainians staged one of their murderous raids on the city's Jews. Avraham Itzhak Rivkind and wife Chaya were among the victims as was their daughter, Raaya. Only their son, Menachem-Mendel, and his two cousins from the Cygielman family were able to escape by finding temporary shelter and survived the bloody raid. ... Brody was one of the many Jewish communities in eastern Poland (today in Ukraine) that was totally obliterated by the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators.

... when during 1942 Father Emil Kobieżyński [Kobierzyński], in Brody, in response to Bishop [Canon] Chodyko's appeal, began to make inquiries among his parishioners to help the remaining member of the Rivkind family, Menachem Mendel, and his two cousins, Dr. Julian Cygielman and his brother Avraham, he was able to persuade one of his church members, the Polish-born Marian Huzarski to consider the matter favourably. Huzarski lived on the outskirts of Brody, in the nearby village of Sydonowka [Sydonówka], a distance of three kilometres—a village containing a mixed Polish-Ukrainian population. After receiving the priest's request, Marian Huzarski returned home and gathered his family for a serious discussion about how to respond.

There is no written record of this crucial family consultation attended by all the immediate members of the Huzarski family, including Marian, wife Alfreda, and their two sons, Fryderyk, aged 22, and Zbigniew, aged 19. ... The family consultation ended in a unanimous decision to shelter the fleeing Jews, people whom they had never seen before.

After the war, Zbigniew wrote that on November 25, 1942, he or someone else in the family informed Rivkind of the family's decision and set up a meeting for the next day in Brody. The two Huzarski brothers, Zbigniew and Fryderyk, arrived at dusk and took the three fugitive Jews to their village home through fields and side roads. The three new arrivals—Dr. Julian Cygielman, his brother Avraham, and Menachem-Mendel Rivkind—stayed there for a full 17 months, until the area's liberation in July 1944.

The two Cygielmans and Rivkind were very religious and made an effort to strictly observe the Jewish rituals, even in the unfavourable conditions of their new setting. This included daily prayers, with the donning of the obligatory tefillin (phylacteries) and tallit (prayer shawl) for morning services and eating only kosher food as prescribed by Jewish religious law. ... In consideration of their charges' religious sensibilities, the Huzarskis, themselves religious, purchased special utensils and mother Alfreda cooked their wards' food as prescribed by the Jewish religion. In fact, during prayers, which were at times uttered with intensity and raised voices, the Huzarskis were forced to ask the supplicants to lower their voices for fear that outsiders might overhear them, with all the risks involved for all. Not at all oblivious to their hosts' own religious obligations, the three Orthodox Jews celebrated the Christian festivals with them.

The fall of 1943, a year after the arrival of the three Jews, ... led to the burning of Polish homes in the region, including Huzarski's village of Sydonowka. Many Polish inhabitants took to fleeing to the forest at night, returning to their homes only during daylight hours. Over time, the frequency of raids by Ukrainian nationalists in the village intensified, a situation that greatly concerned the Huzarskis—themselves Poles.

In light of this troublesome development, the Huzarskis prepared an underground shelter at the edge of the forest near their home, filling it with all the necessary items to accommodate their three charges. After transferring Rivkind and the Cygielman brothers to the new hiding place, the Huzarski family continued to supply them with all their needs on

a daily basis, resolving not to abandon them even after the majority of the Polish peasant population of the village had deserted their homes.

In March 1944, the Red Army approached Brody. Out of fear of the Ukrainians, the Huzarskis advised the three Jews to flee toward the approaching Russian army. In June 1944, during the final German retreat, the Ukrainians set the Huzarski home on fire. The Huzarskis fled to neighbors in the forest, and on the following day the Red Army took over. The Huzarski family had escaped in good time and had headed westward to Lancut [Łańcut, a town in south-central Poland].

Rivkind and the two Cygielman brothers made their way back to liberated Bialystok. As a professional textile engineer, Menachem-Mendel Rivkind was inducted into the Red army with the rank of captain and appointed to manage the large textile firm in the city. Once he had located his rescuers, he invited them to Bialystok and ensured their employment in the factory that he managed. In 1946 when he decided to leave Bialystok, Rivkind transferred to his rescuers his big house, which had earlier been occupied by his father-in-law, Rabbi Rosenman, and left for Israel [Palestine]—as did the Cygielman brothers.<sup>1321</sup>

Initially, the refugees hid in a specially-prepared place in the stable with an emergency exit. As raids on the village by Ukrainian nationalist partisans intensified, and a growing number of Polish farms were burned down, Huzarski and his sons prepared an underground shelter for their three charges at the edge of the forest. The brothers Fryderyk and Zbigniew Huzarski were active in the Home Army.<sup>1322</sup>

**R**enata Präminger (later Irena Szczurek) was taken out of the Brody ghetto by her nanny, Maria Hromiak, as a young child. At the request of her father, who continued to visit her, Renata was baptized as Irena Hromiak, with the assistance of two trusted friends. She survived the war as her nanny's purported daughter.<sup>1323</sup>

Irena Szczurek was born in Brody in 1938. Her nanny, Maria Hromiak, lived with the Szczurek family for 13 years, dedicating herself to the loving care of Irena. In January 1942 a ghetto was established in Brody, and the Szczureks were imprisoned in it. Maria found a job and took care of her beloved former employers by providing them, and other Jews in the ghetto, with provisions.

In August 1942 the Brody Ghetto was liquidated. Maria managed to rescue Irena from certain transfer to Belsen and sneak her into her own home. She also tried to save Irena's parents, but eventually they were denounced by an ill-wisher and killed.

Maria Hromiak kept Irena with her throughout the war, despite the vast danger to herself. Even her own relatives threatened her, but she resisted the perpetual fear because of her love for the girl. She gave Irena her own last name and acted for all intents and

<sup>1321</sup> Paldiel, *The Righteous Among the Nations*, 173–76.

<sup>1322</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 281–82; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 189.

<sup>1323</sup> Kołacińska-Gałązka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 267–68.

purposes as her adoptive mother, bribing suspicious policemen, constantly changing her address, and avoiding discovery until the liberation.

After the war Maria remained Irena's "second mother," as the girl called her, although life was very difficult. All of the Szczureks' possessions were gone, and Maria was forced to work as a manual laborer at a cement factory in order to keep herself and her adoptive daughter afloat. She never established a family of her own, dedicating herself to Irena.<sup>1324</sup>

**E**ugenia (Gina) Hochberg (later Gina Lanceter, b.1927) was able to survive thanks to the help of a number of people, including the Catholic priest who came to her assistance and nursed her back to health after she jumped from a deportation train headed to the Bełżec death camp in May 1943. She was shot by a German guard as she jumped from the train and lost consciousness; fortunately, all she suffered was just a flesh wound. This happened near the village of Zaszków, north of Lwów, in the parish of Kościejów.

A Polish railroad employee came across the injured girl, dressed her wound, fed her, and gave her some clothes. She made her way to a church in a nearby village. A compassionate priest sheltered her until she recovered and provided her with a false birth and baptismal certificate. He purchased a ticket for her to return to Brody and escorted her to the nearby train station. With the help of Christians there, she remained in hiding in Brody until the Red Army drove the Germans out.<sup>1325</sup>

Crowds of Jews, surrounded by armed guards with dogs, were led out of the ghetto towards the railroad station some two kilometers from the center of town. During this forced march, those who could not keep up with the pace were beaten and bitten by the dogs. Those unable to go on, were shot on the spot. Squeezed into packed freight cars which were directed towards Belzec [Bełżec] and, later on, towards Majdanek near the city of Lublin was the human cargo destined for destruction. In one of them was the family Hochberg. They made a desperate decision to push their daughter Ginia through the narrow bars of the tiny window, imploring her to save herself, crying out: "You have got to survive!" The German guard shot after and hit the escaping girl. She lost consciousness, but fortunately it was a flesh wound. After a while she came to in a pool of blood. Two villagers were in the process of stripping her clothes, thinking she was dead. Realizing she was alive did not prevent them from taking all her clothes. They were going to hand her over to the police when a Polish railroad employee intervened, stating that the area was under the jurisdiction of the railway department and that he would take custody of the girl. He escorted the wounded, chilled girl into a booth, where he dressed her wound, gave her some food and clothing and released her. Ginia made her way to a church in a nearby village, where a compassionate priest helped the unfortunate girl. He gave her shelter until she recovered and provided her with a false birth and baptism certificate.<sup>1326</sup>

<sup>1324</sup> Maria Hromiak, RD.

<sup>1325</sup> Testimony of Gina Hochberg Lanceter, SFV, Interview code 3529.

<sup>1326</sup> Bolesław Kulczycki, "Genocide in Brody," JewishGen KehilaLinks, Internet: [https://kehila-links.jewishgen.org/Brody/boleslaw\\_kulczycki\\_memoir.htm](https://kehila-links.jewishgen.org/Brody/boleslaw_kulczycki_memoir.htm).



Another Jewish woman who jumped out of a death train headed for Bełżec and survived with the help of a priest was Felicia Singer. She approached the priest in the village of Rzyczki, near Rawa Ruska. The local pastor there at the time was Rev. Tomasz Marszałek.

During the war, Jadwiga Walkow [Walkow] (later Szejnbaum) lived in Kamionka Strumilowa [Strumilowa] in Eastern Galicia. She was a nurse by profession and during the occupation she worked in the local hospital. A Jewish doctor, Henryk Singer, worked in the same hospital. When the liquidation of the local ghetto drew near, a local Volksdeutsch helped Dr. Singer, his wife, Felicia, and her brother (who was a lawyer). For Felicia and her brother he arranged false papers and gave them an address in Lwow [Lwów]. He directed Dr. Singer to Jadwiga (partly because of Dr. Singer's marked Semitic appearance) to find shelter for a while. "Since this 'while' became longer, I had to look for another apartment," wrote Jadwiga Szejnbaum in her testimony. Jadwiga moved to a safer apartment in which she hid Henryk behind a closet. In March 1943, Felicia joined Henryk in the hideout. Felicia had previously been arrested in Lwow—despite having Aryan papers—and then transferred to Belzec [Bełżec]. Luckily, she managed to escape from the transport near Rzeczką [Rzyczki]. She found shelter with the local priest, who then informed Jadwiga and asked her to come to Rzeczką to pick up Felicia. Shortly before the liberation, Felicia's brother, who came by foot from Lwow, joined the Singers.<sup>1327</sup>

In the Tarnopol region of Eastern Galicia, two Polish villages were wiped out because, with the encouragement of Catholic priests, their inhabitants offered refuge to Jews and Soviet partisans.

Fifteen Jews escaped from the Sasov [Sasów] labour camp at the end of June 1943 after learning that the Jews in the labour camps at Olesko and Brody had been exterminated and received food and shelter from peasants in the Polish village of Dzwonica. ... The 70 to 80 Jews who had managed to get away [from Sasów] encountered in the forests an equal number of Jews who had escaped from other camps and ghettos, but despite their relatively large number they were able to survive thanks to the Polish peasants from Huta Pieniacka and Huta Wierchobuska [Werchobuska or Werchobudzka].

The two Polish villages were surrounded by hostile Ukrainian settlements and to defend themselves against the attacks of Ukrainian nationalists the Poles had organised in each village a defence body armed with a few rifles. Despite the dangers they were running, the Poles, encouraged by their Catholic priests, provided the Jews with food, for which the Jews paid if they had the means, and when the cold weather came they allowed them to sleep in their sheep-pens and barns. The Ukrainians from the neighbouring villages reported what was happening to the Germans and the Zolochew [Złoczów] Kreishauptmann (District Chief) warned the headmen of the two villages that unless they stopped sheltering the Jews, the inhabitants would meet with the same fate as other enemies of the German Reich. The Poles did not, however, change their attitude to the Jews and only asked them not to appear in the villages in daytime.

<sup>1327</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 782.

... the Polish underground learnt that the Germans were preparing a punitive expedition against the village. The Jews took the warning seriously and ceased sleeping in the village, but the Poles did not ... But three days after the departure of Krutikov's [Soviet] partisans a force of Germans and Ukrainians captured the village, crammed all the inhabitants into a barn and their cattle into stables, and burnt them all alive. ...

Three weeks later, on 23 March, a force made up of Ukrainians from neighbouring villages attacked the village of Huta Wierchobuska. Warned of their approach, three-quarters of the peasants fled into the woods and forests. Those who stayed tried to defend themselves, but were quickly overpowered and met with the same end as the inhabitants of Huta Pieniacka.<sup>1328</sup>

David and Golda Chartan, their son Boris, Golda's father Hirsch Milgrom, and Boris's cousin Junap Oleska, who hailed from Podkamień, near Brody, were sheltered by Jan (Antoni) and Maria Marciniak on their farm in the nearby village of Palikrowy. The Marciniaks confided in a priest who used to visit them from the Dominican monastery in Podkamień. Maria perished in March 1944 during a Ukrainian partisan attack on the village shortly before the Soviets arrived.<sup>1329</sup> Shmuel Leib Karp was hidden by a priest at his rectory in Podkamień.<sup>1330</sup>

Yitzhak Sarid, a native of Podkamień, hid from the Germans together with his family by moving from place to place. For a period of time, they were sheltered in the cellar of the Dominican monastery in Podkamień. After their hiding place was exposed, they hid in a burial chapel in the nearby Catholic cemetery. Subsequently, they were sheltered by local farmers.<sup>1331</sup>

In the summer of 1942, Witold Charasz, a native of Brody, found refuge in the Dominican monastery together with his wife. They were placed there by a Pole who vouched for Witold as a Polish officer hiding from the Germans. Afterwards, Witold and his wife were transferred to the house of the organist, Karol Ptaszek, where they were joined by Witold's sister, Danuta, and his brother,

<sup>1328</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe (with a historical survey of the Jew as fighter and soldier in the Diaspora)* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), 450–53. See also Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 66–71 (Huta Pieniacka), 499–500 (Huta Werchodudzka).

<sup>1329</sup> Testimony of Boris Chartan, SFV, Interview code 15082.

<sup>1330</sup> Regina Hader Rock, "From Hiding Place to Hiding Place," in Amihai, Stockfish, and Bari, *The Community of Rohatyn and Environs*, 250 ff. Regina Hader was sheltered in Podkamień by the Dżugała and Pizio families. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 204–5.

<sup>1331</sup> "Yocheved Sarid About Her Husband Yitzhak (born 22/9/1922 in Podkamien) and His Family," Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/podkamien/16,accounts-memories/14371,yocheved-sarid-about-her-husband-yitzhak-born-22-9-1922-in-podkamien-and-his-family/>.

Henryk. The four Jews remained under the care of Karol and his wife, Helena, until the arrival of the Soviet army at the end of March 1944.<sup>1332</sup>

Earlier that month, Ukrainian nationalist partisans attacked the monastery, where several hundred Poles from the surrounding area had taken shelter, and rampaged through the village murdering any Pole they encountered. Several hundred Poles were killed in Podkamień and nearby villages.<sup>1333</sup>

After escaping from a German labour camp in Tarnopol in March 1944, Joachim Schoenfeld and his companion made their way back to their hometown of Lwów with the help of an unidentified priest. Along the way, they begged for bread at the homes of Polish peasants. In Lwów, they hid in a cellar with the assistance of a Pole until the Red Army arrived. Their Polish benefactor, Stanisław Tarnawski, was killed by Ukrainian nationalists when he went to visit his sister in a village near Lwów.<sup>1334</sup>

Jan Misiewicz was recognized by Yad Vashem for having rescued thirteen Jews in the town of Mikulińce, near Tarnopol. However, he did not act alone. Some of the Jews were hidden in an underground bunker, while a group of five was concealed in the spire of the Catholic church, where Misiewicz's father was a deacon, or perhaps a caretaker. Misiewicz also enlisted a friend, Michał Ogórek, to bring food to the Jews.<sup>1335</sup> This arrangement lasted for some two years. It is inconceivable that the parish priest would have been unaware of it.

There [sic] first furtive handshake, one midnight 40 years ago in a town patrolled by Nazi troops, risked both their lives—the young Polish Jew on the run and the young Roman Catholic with a conscience.

On Tuesday, the Redondo Beach man who once knocked on the right door for help and the Polish man who answered the knock clasped hands again—openly this time—as they were reunited in a ceremony honoring the Pole, Jan Misiewicz, for concealing Leon Kahane and 10 other Jews from Nazi sweeps that sent 6 million others to death camps.

Every night for seven months, as German and Russian troops battled around them, Misiewicz and a friend, Michael Ogurek [Michał Ogórek], carried food and reassuring words to the Jews. Five were hidden in a makeshift room in the cross-tipped spire of a Catholic church where Misiewicz's father was deacon—and six more, including Kahane, were in a bunker beneath a German soldier's [sic] outhouse.

<sup>1332</sup> Testimony of Henryk Charasz, SFV, Interview code 14823; Józef Burda, "Wydarzenie w klasztorze dominikanów w Podkamieniu w latach 1943–1944," *Nasza Przyszłość*, no. 93 (2000): 289–340, at p. 328.

<sup>1333</sup> Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 87–89.

<sup>1334</sup> Schoenfeld, *Holocaust Memoirs*, 152.

<sup>1335</sup> See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 521; Jan Misiewicz, RD.

From September 1943, until the Russian advance in April 1944, Misiewicz and his friend, now dead, were the lifeline for the 11.

And some, like Kahane, now 60 and a rabbi, have survived to thank him. ...

Kahane's family had already moved several times by the time they came to the town of Mikulince [Mikulińce], where Misiewicz lived. And there, Kahane heard rumors that the Misiewicz family would help Jews in trouble. ...

Still, on Yom Kippur, 40 years ago, Kahane had to take a chance that the gossip was true. His family had been dispersed after the last arrests, and he and his brother were hiding in the forest outside of town, fasting until nightfall to observe the religious holiday.

Then they split up to find food, and Kahane never saw his brother again. But he did find Misiewicz, who became more than a brother.

"I crossed through the Catholic cemetery and went to the gate," Kahane recounted. There he saw a Ukrainian soldier, suborned to the Germans, peering in the Misiewicz's window. "I knew if I made just one little noise, I'd be discovered, he (Misiewicz) would be caught, an entire neighborhood would be destroyed."

So he hid for hours until the soldier left, and at midnight, he knocked furtively on the door.

"This man's hand, this man's smile greeted me," he said Tuesday.

From that night, he spent seven months in the dank, cramped darkness of the bunker under the latrine, with only Misiewicz and Ogurek to trust. The pair, knowing that they were being watched came by with food and news; they even banked the hidden entrance with cattle manure to mask the scent of meals they brought. ...

But Misiewicz, who was "surprised" by Tuesday's ceremony, said that as a good Catholic, he could have done nothing else. "When I saw that the Jewish people were hunted everywhere, I knew what the end was going to be for these people," he said, as Kahane translated.

His family, headed by his father, "a very religious man," decided "without hesitation" to help, "in spite of the fact that I heard troops were shooting people in every corner of town."

It was as simple, Misiewicz said, as "loving my neighbor as myself."<sup>1336</sup>

With the help of his friend Tomasz (Tomek) Ziemia from Bursztyn, near Stanisławów, Pinkhas (Paul) Trepman acquired the identity papers of Jan Krzus, a deceased Polish man. Ziemia had obtained the document "free of charge from his parish priest who knew very well what purpose it would serve." Trepman used these documents to travel to Warsaw, where he passed as a Catholic Pole.<sup>1337</sup>

<sup>1336</sup> Patt Morrison, "This Time They Could Shake Hands Openly," *Los Angeles Times* (1983), reproduced in Preshel, *Mikulince: Sefer yizkor*, 99 ff., translated as *Mikulince Yizkor Book*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Mikulintsy/Mikulintsy.html>.

<sup>1337</sup> Paul Trepman, *Among Men and Beasts* (South Brunswick, New Jersey and New York: A.S. Barnes, 1978), 68–69.

Henryk Kronstein, who owned an estate in Lubieńce, obtained Aryan papers for his entire family from Monsignor Aleksander Cisko, dean and pastor of Stryj, in Stanisławów voivodship, who was a good friend of the family. The family consisted of Henryk and Mira Kronstein, their son John (Jacob) Kronstein and his wife Bella, their daughter Helene Kronstein Schatzker and her son Joseph. They relocated to Warsaw under their new identities.<sup>1338</sup>

Anna Heller Stern, a native of Bolechów, near Stryj, survived with the assistance of false documents that were supplied to her by an unidentified priest.

She shared, too, her own remarkable story of hiding ... she showed the picture of the Polish priest who had saved her life by making false papers for her. ... she showed us the false baptismal certificate, the one that had given her the name *Anna*, which she'd kept ever since. Matt took a picture of the document. Anna Kucharuk, it said.<sup>1339</sup>

Mila (Amalia) Sandberg (later Mesner) of Zaleszczyki, then a young woman, was interned in the ghetto in Kołomyja together with her parents and sisters. There they received help from Poles, as well as from a former Jewish employee of their father's who sent food to them by way of a Catholic priest from Zaleszczyki, likely the pastor, Rev. Andrzej Urbański. After the ghetto in Kołomyja was liquidated, Mila, her sister Lola, and their cousin, Jasia Elberger, jumped out of a train destined for Bełżec and reached the ghetto in Chodorów.

There they turned to Albin Thiel (Tyll), a Pole they had befriended. Albin approached Rev. Ludwik Peciak, the dean and pastor of Kołomyja, who agreed to issue false birth and baptismal certificates to enable the sisters and their cousin to pass as Catholic Poles. Mila, who passed as Albin's wife, her sister Lola, who passed as Mila's cousin, and their cousin Jasia, who passed as their servant, all survived the war with the help of Albin and a number of other Poles.

Rev. Peciak extended assistance to other Jews as well, among them Iser and Toni Reisman. The Germans caught and murdered the Reismans. Rev. Peciak's signature on their documents may have led to his arrest on November 11, 1942, by a Ukrainian policeman who delivered him to the Gestapo. Rev. Romuald Chłopecki, the vicar, and Rev. Wojciech Kośmider were also arrested at that time. Rev. Peciak was imprisoned in Lwów, then sent to the Majdanek concentration camp and subsequently to the Flossenbürg concentration camp, where he per-

<sup>1338</sup> Schoenfeld, *Holocaust Memoirs*, 312; Feuerstein and Kronstein Families, Internet: <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/drohobycz/families/isaac-feuerstein-family.html>. While the family was in the Stryj area until late 1942, Joseph Satzker's governess, Aniela Kazimierowicz, helped them to survive.

<sup>1339</sup> Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 390.

ished on April 16, 1943. Rev. Chłopecki perished in Majdanek in March 1943; Rev. Kośmider perished in the Gross-Rosen concentration camp in April 1944.<sup>1340</sup>

At home, our Jewish cook and Catholic maid were both loved and respected by us, the children. Our Polish friends invited us to their Christmas dinners. Mrs. Nedilenko used to send us a plate of Christmas goodies, and my mother reciprocated with an equally elaborate plate of sweets on Purim. In our home, I don't ever recall hearing a derogatory remark about other people's religion or customs. Overall, we were quite at ease in the homes of our Polish friends and did not feel out of place among them. It would be difficult to overestimate how this ease in our relationships and familiarity with Polish life helped to ensure our survival later on, when we had to pass for Catholics and live under assumed Polish names. ...

We hid in the forest until the next morning, when we met some Jews on their way to work. They told us that we were near Chodorów, that the ghetto there was still open, and that we could temporarily hide there. In the Chodorów ghetto, the people welcomed us with warmth and sympathy. They seemed to be better off than the people in the Kolomyja [Kołomyja] ghetto. We were fed and put to bed. They even arranged for a telegram to be sent to Albin [Thiel], with a coded message stating that we were alive. Albin arrived the next day with some clothes, money, and our papers. When he arrived, we all broke down sobbing. He cried with us. He loved my parents and mourned their fate.

The Catholic church in Kolomyja was located on Sobieski Street. Albin went to see the parish priest and told him: "I have to save the lives of a number of Jews. Will you help me?" The name of the priest was Father [Ludwik] Peciak. His reply to Albin was: "You provide me with the names of people living in Kolomyja from the town registry, and I'll get you copies of the birth certificates." It was only later that we learned that Father Peciak had made out numerous birth certificates to help many people.

After spending a day with us in Chodorów, Albin returned to Kolomyja and vacated his living quarters. He then went to the ghetto, to our place, and retrieved some of our clothing. Next, he contacted a friend in Lwów, who lived with his mother, asking him to put us up at his place. His friend consented, but to no more than three persons. Albin then returned to Chodorów with clothing, money, and identity papers, and took Lola [her sister] and I by train to his friend's house in Lwów, while Jasia [her cousin] remained behind in Chodorów. The trip was traumatic for Lola and I; just a few days ago another train had been taking us to the Belzec [Bełżec] death camp. ... Sometime later, Albin fetched Jasia and smuggled her into our place. ...

Early in the spring of 1943, Albin's assignment arrived. It was with the *Liegenschaft* in Ernsdorf near the town of Bobrka [Bóbrka]. The job came with a furnished apartment, and this was where he moved in with his "wife," Maria Kabanowska-Thiel (Lola), his wife's cousin, Stanisława [Stanisława] Schmiedel (me), and his maid, Aniela Wojciechowska (Jasia). Shortly after, he arranged a job for me, first as a secretary and later as a statistician in the *Liegenschaft* offices. Being an employee of the Estate Administration, I received rations.

<sup>1340</sup> Marek Kozubal, "Ks. Ludwik Peciak: Zapomniany sprawiedliwy," *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], August 18, 2016; Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 111–12.



We were no longer hungry. I worked for the Ernsdorf Liegenschaft, which administered some twenty estates. ...

At about this time, the Germans issued an order that everyone had to obtain an ID card called a Kennkarte, a document proving there were no Jewish ancestors in the family. To obtain a Kennkarte, one had to show copies of birth certificates going back three generations. Kolomyja, from where we had to get duplicates of the birth certificates, had already come under Soviet control, and the SS had executed Father Peciak: obtaining the necessary papers seemed impossible. But Albin solved even this problem. He went to the Bishop's palace in Lwów, where the archives of all parishes of this jurisdiction were kept. He explained the obvious difficulties of obtaining documents from Kolomyja and requested copies of the birth certificates from the archives. He succeeded in getting them for all of us. We were also fortunate that the documents showed no traces of Jewish ancestry. All we had to do then was provide photographs and proof of residence. ...

Father Peciak was the parish priest of the church on Sobieski Street in Kolomyja. It was his invaluable assistance to Albin that saved our lives. Unfortunately, I have no further information that would shed light on the heroic work of this saintly man, who died a martyr's death at the hands of the Gestapo.

I know that Albin sought his help in procuring copies of birth and baptismal certificates for many Jews. Jasia, Lola, and I were among the lucky ones he had helped, Albin having access to the City Hall registers. Father Peciak asked him to obtain a list of names of persons born in Kolomyja of the approximate age of those he intended to save. Albin passed the list of names to Father Peciak, who then issued copies of the birth certificates. I know Albin received many such life-saving documents from Father Peciak. Among those who obtained such papers were our friends, Iser and Toni Reisman. Sadly, the Reismans were later caught by the SS and murdered. The irony is, that it may have been Father Peciak's own signature on the Reismans' documents that led to his arrest and execution. Father Peciak truly merits the epitaph: "Perished for the cause, faithful to God's commands." ...

On the first floor in our house was my father's office, where his right-hand man, Gedalia Barad, ruled. He was an accountant ... Shortly after the invasion by the Red Army, our mill was nationalized. ... Barad continued to look after the financial affairs of the mill. He even remained in this capacity for a short while under the German occupation. Barad was still there in the fall of 1941, when we were in Kolomyja and hungry. Through a local priest who served as an intermediary, he arranged for the delivery of flour to us. I still recall how deeply we were moved by this gesture of good will.<sup>1341</sup>

Rev. Michał Białowąs, the administrator of the parish in Kołomyja after the arrest of Rev. Peciak, furnished a false birth and baptismal certificate for Janina Ludmiła Lutnik (her new name), as well as other Jews. The child was sheltered alternatively by Szczepan (Stefan) and Zofia Lutnik of Kołomyja, Szczep-

<sup>1341</sup> Mila Sandberg-Mesner, *Light from the Shadows* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2005), 30, 79–82, 90, 104–5, 106.

pan Lutnik's sister-in-law, Janina Kozulkiewicz, in Śniatyn, and the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Kołomyja.<sup>1342</sup>

The aforementioned Rev. Andrzej Urbański, the pastor of Zaleszczyki, helped to rescue the town's rabbi. Initially, the rabbi was hidden by a woman who lived near the church. He would visit the priest dressed as a woman. Afterwards, he stayed with Rev. Urbański, disguised as a priest. Rev. Urbański counselled Genowefa Linkiewicz, during confession, to continue providing for the fourteen Jews who were hiding in a cave near the Linkiewicz family's cottage in Hińkowce.<sup>1343</sup>

Gustaw Bernhaut, a lawyer and former judge, and his wife, Salomea, were deported from the ghetto in Kołomyja. They managed to jump from the train taking them to a death camp. They arrived in Chodorów, a town southeast of Lwów. There they turned to the catechist, Rev. Konstanty Kruczek, a good friend of Gustaw's, who helped them establish themselves as Catholics. Their son, Joseph (b. 1922), was able to escape from the Kołomyja ghetto for the safety of the home of Zofia Pietroń, the family's former housekeeper. Soon after, he joined his parents in Chodorów. Joseph's father died from injuries he sustained when he had jumped from the train. He was buried in a Catholic cemetery.

Rev. Kruczek helped Joseph, passing as Jarosław Urbański, to secure a job at a sugar mill run by the priest's friend. He also helped the family to find lodging. Zofia sold off belongings left with her for safekeeping and brought the proceeds to the Bernhauts in Chodorów. Tragedy struck after Joseph took in six Jewish fugitives and the premises were raided by the Ukrainian police. Joseph managed to escape and returned to Kołomyja, where he was again sheltered by Zofia. Later on, he escaped to Romania. Joseph returned to Poland after the war before immigrating to Australia.<sup>1344</sup>

The Sisters of St. Joseph (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Świętego Józefa), who worked as nurses, helped rescue the Jewish hospital staff in two towns of Eastern Galicia. In Sokal, north of Lwów, Sister Wacława Hrycaj and Sister Ottona Golańska assisted Dr. Dawid Kindler, his wife, Laura, and their sons, Simche (Simcha)

<sup>1342</sup> "Lutka Janina NN," Missing Identity Project, Internet: <http://missing-identity.net/lutka-janina-nn-poland-kolomyja-ukraine/>.

<sup>1343</sup> Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 141–42; Klara Spector, "The Story of the Cave in Hinkovtza," in G. [Gavriel] Lindenberg, ed., *Sefer Tluste* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Tluste and Vicinity in Israel and the USA, 1965), 169–71, translated as *Memorial Book of Tluste*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Tovste/Tovste.html>; Józef Juzwa, "Ostatni proboszcz zaleszczycki ksiądz Andrzej Urbański," *Kwartalnik Cracovia Leopoldis*, no. 2 (2012). See also Antoni Linkiewicz, RD.

<sup>1344</sup> Testimony of Joseph Urbanski, SFV, Interview code 4439.

and Eli (Elias or Oleś). For a brief period of time, Eli (b. 1938) was sheltered at an orphanage run by the Sisters in nearby Łaszczów. Once he disclosed his identity to the other wards and would not stop crying, it became too dangerous to keep him there. In 1944, Sister Ottona Golańska escorted the dentist Bereś Pelc, dressed in a nun's habit, to a safe house in the village of Munina, near Jarosław, where he spent the remainder of the war.<sup>1345</sup>

After the liquidation of the Sokal ghetto, the Kindler family was taken in by Franciszka Hałamaj and her daughter Helena, who sheltered sixteen Jews in total (one of whom died in hiding). Franciszka's son, Wilhelm, supplied barrels of oil, which his mother bartered to feed this large number of charges. In the final months of the war, Franciszka also provided shelter to a German soldier who had defected—an act that nearly led to her execution.<sup>1346</sup>

The Sisters of St. Joseph who worked at the hospital in Skałat, in Tarnopol province, among them Sister Amalia Cisek, Sister Aleksa Żółtek, and Sister Kryspina Rajner, provided food and temporary shelter to two Jewish doctors, Dr. Fryderyk Sass and Dr. Leon Guttman, who were employed at the hospital, and to their families. The nuns helped arrange the escape of these doctors and their family members from Skałat. Dr. Sass and his daughter survived the war in Lwów, where they were assisted by Sister Helena Ratajczak. Dr. Guttman, his wife

<sup>1345</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 127; Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 230 (testimony of Sister Bernarda Sochacka), 244; Agata Mirek, "Udział siostr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 148; Account of the Sisters of St. Joseph, June 12, 2009; "No. 4 Street of Our Lady" (documentary film, 2009).

<sup>1346</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 266–67 (Franciszka Halamajowa, Helena Liniewska-Halamajowa); The Halamaj Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-halamaj-family>. See also Moshe Maltz, "Pages about Pain and Death of the Jewish Settlement in Sokal," in A. [Avraham] Chomel, ed., *Sefer Sokal, Tartakov, Varenz, Stoyanov ve-ha-Seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Sokal and Surroundings, 1968), 277–316, translated as *Memorial Book of Sokal, Tartakow and Surroundings*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokal/sokal.html>, as well as accounts by Dr. Dovid Kindler. The local pharmacist provided medicine for Dr. Kindler's son and for at least one other Jew while they were in hiding. To the dismay of the rescued Jews, Yad Vashem declined to recognize Franciszka Hałamaj's son, Wilhelm. See Judy Maltz, "Who Is 'Righteous' Enough for Yad Vashem?," *Haaretz*, January 27, 2014. A family of three Jews, Beile Gittel Linsker and her two daughters, was sheltered by Franciszka Hałamaj's former housekeeper, Tekla Weksler, who lived next door. See Gitl Linsker, "One of the Righteous Among the Nations," in Chomel, *Sefer Sokal, Tartakov, Varenz, Stoyanov ve-ha-Seviva*, 363 ff. During their stay in the Hałamaj home, a newborn was killed to prevent him from giving away the hiding place, and another young girl who wouldn't stop crying was poisoned, but survived. Unfortunately, there were many such painful acts of desperation.

and daughter were placed with a Polish family in a village near Skałat, where they survived the war. The nuns also sheltered Jewish children in Skałat.<sup>1347</sup>

Memorial books record the assistance provided by priests in the voivodship of Volhynia (Wołyń), in eastern Poland. Catholic Poles constituted a small minority among the Ukrainian population, and were themselves subjected to a savage campaign of ethnic cleansing by Ukrainian nationalist factions. This campaign took the lives of tens of thousands of Poles in Volhynia in 1943. Subsequently, it spread to Eastern Galicia.

Poles living in the cities had fewer opportunities to assist Jews in finding shelter. The German and Ukrainian administration watched them very closely. Polish Catholic priests formed a group apart in this respect. Thus in Rovno [Równe] a priest by the name of Sirkiewicz [actually, Ludwik Syrewicz, the dean and local pastor] together with a notary Szumski handed out birth and baptism certificates to the hiding Jews. A priest from Janowa Dolina (his name is unknown [actually, Rev. Jan Leon Śpiewak]), who distributed baptism documents, was arrested and, as a punishment, sent to the Kostopol ghetto where he worked at hard labor together with the local Jews. The members of his flock brought him food which he shared with the ghetto residents. In Vladimirets [Włodzimierzec] the priest Dominik Wawrzynowicz volunteered to sell church treasures to help the local Judenrat to pay ransom imposed by the Germans. He also preached the duty to help the Jews. In his efforts he was assisted by priests of congregations of the villages in the district. The priest Ludwik Wołodarczyk [actually, Włodarczyk, the pastor of Okopy] from the villages across the Słucz River rendered considerable assistance to the refugees from Rokitno and the environs.

One of the survivors related a story of his meeting with a Polish priest, which took place in a small church one kilometer from Trilisitse [Trylisica, near Szczurzyn, Łuck county]. The witness decided to appeal for help to the old priest serving in the church. The priest invited him in, knelt, prayed and having finished he asked him what he wanted. The Jew asked for help and based his request on the New Testament. Thereupon:

He embraced me, kissed my head and both of us started crying. I felt that my pain was his pain too. He offered me money but I refused to take it. He promised me work—to copy his book on honeybees breeding. He cheered me up and promised to find out what had happened to my family in Lutsk [Łuck].

Beside priests, the testimonies mention also working-class Poles who rescued Jews. ...

Assistance rendered by Polish peasants was more frequent. ... Large numbers of cases of assistance are documented to have occurred in remote Polish villages in the northeastern and, particularly eastern parts of the region across the Sluch [Słucz] River ... Hundreds of Jews hiding there were given food and shelter.<sup>1348</sup>

<sup>1347</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 127; Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 211 (testimony of Sister Kryspina Rajner), 244; Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 148; Account of the Sisters of St. Joseph, June 12, 2009.

<sup>1348</sup> Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941–1944*, 248–50.

The aforementioned Rev. Dominik Wawrzynowicz, the pastor of Włodzimierzec, who enjoyed excellent relations with the Jews before the war, also faithfully preserved valuables that many Jews had entrusted to him. Sender Appelboim (Apelbaum) writes: “The Polish priest from Vladimertz [Włodzimierzec] endangered himself by saving Jews. In church, he told his congregants that it was their duty to save Jews, to hide them, give them food and offer help. Some of his people followed his direction.” In his 1966 testimony, he urged Yad Vashem to recognize Rev. Wawrzynowicz as Righteous among the Nations.<sup>1349</sup> Rev. Wawrzynowicz was overlooked by Yad Vashem.

Rev. Jan Leon Śpiewak became the pastor of Janowa Dolina in August 1941. According to Polish sources, the Germans arrested him in May 1942 for providing false birth and baptismal certificates and other forms of assistance to Jews. He was held in the Kostopol ghetto, and then sent to a hard labour camp in Ludwipol. He managed to escape when Soviet partisans attacked the camp at the end of 1942 or in early 1943. Afterwards, he had to hide from the Germans. He fled to Huta Stara, where he became the pastor and chaplain of a Home Army unit named “Bomba.” Both Rev. Śpiewak and the leaders of that unit were apprehended by the NKVD in December 1943. He was sent to Lubianka prison in Moscow and was released in April 1944.<sup>1350</sup>

Rev. Józef Kuczyński was the pastor of two parishes, Dederkały and Szumbar, near the prewar Polish-Soviet border. When the Germans arrested the Jewish wife of a Ukrainian named Serwetnik, both husband and wife having converted to Catholicism, Serwetnik was told by the authorities that they would release his wife if the pastor issued a statement confirming that she had been a practicing

<sup>1349</sup> Sender Appelboim, “In the Forests and Villages with the People of Raflovka [Rafałówka] and the Surrounding Area in the Years 1942–1944,” *Memorial Book for the Towns of Old Rafalowka, New Rafalowka, Olizarka, Zoludzk and Vicinity*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rafalovka/Rafalovka.html>, translation of Pinhas and Malkah Hagin, eds., *Sefer zikaron le-'ayarat Rafalowka ha-yeshenah, Rafalowka he-hadashah, Olizarka, Zoludzk voha-sevivah* (Tel Aviv: Irgun yots'e Rafalovkah ha-yeshanah, Rafalovkah ha-hadashah, Olizarkah, Z'alutsk voha-sevivah, 1996), 48–53; Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 245; Testimony of Sender Appelbaum, YVA, file O.3/2882 (Item 3557420). When Rev. Dominik Wawrzynowicz moved to Lower Silesia after the war, he received many letters of thanks and packages from Israel—addressed to “Their Priest”—from former Jewish residents of Włodzimierzec. See Róża Wawrzynowicz-Billip, “Jak to dobre myśli się sprawdzają,” *Gazeta Otwocka*, no. 12 (2010): 26.

<sup>1350</sup> Leon Popek, *Janowa Dolina* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Krzemieńca i Ziemi Wołyńsko-Podolskiej, 1998), x n.2. See also Marek A. Koprowski, *Mord na Wołyniu: Zbrodnie ukraińskie w świetle relacji i dokumentów*, vol. 2 (Zakrzewo: Replika, 2018), 271–72; Marek A. Koprowski, *Wołyń: Krwawa epopeja Polaków*, vol. 1 (Zakrzewo: Replika, 2018), 346.

Catholic before the Germans invaded the area in June 1941. Such an offer was extremely unusual. Rev. Kuczyński willingly obliged. Serwetnik's wife was released and survived the war under the priest's protection. The couple relocated to Poland after the war.<sup>1351</sup>

Rev. Jan Szarek, the pastor of Wyrka, near Stepań, counselled Felicja Onuchowska to continue sheltering the two Jews whom her family had taken in, namely, Abraham Tchor and his cousin, Batya Becker Scheinboim.

Abraham Tchor was born in Stepan [Stepań], Poland (now Ukraine), in 1927. When war broke out in 1939, the Soviets occupied Stepan, and in 1941 the Germans took over the town. They built a ghetto for the Jews of Stepan and the surrounding villages; in total some 3,000–4,000 people. There were sporadic killings, but the methodic annihilation of the ghetto began only in 1942. This was when Abraham and his father Michael managed to escape. A few days later, they were captured hiding in a grove by Ukrainian policemen and taken to a killing site. Abraham's father was shot, but the 15-year-old managed to run away.

Abraham remembered that his father had known a villager in Siedlisko, 18 kilometers away. Traveling at night, he made it to the village and found the house of Lucjan Onuchowski, who lived with his wife Fela [Felicja] and teenage sons, Cyprian and Bronisław. When Abraham knocked on the door, the family was very frightened; they began crossing themselves and asking him what had become of his parents. He told them he was alone. They took him in, fed him and decided to hide him. The next day, Lucjan told the boy: "Whatever happens to us, will happen to you as well."

One day, as Abraham was in his underground hideout, a woman knocked on the door. It was Abraham's cousin, Batja. She had come from the forest where she was hiding with a group of Jews to ask for some food. The Onuchowskis suggested she remain in their house along with Abraham. For the remainder of the war, Lucjan also provided food to the group in the forest. All this was done out of good will, and because the Onuchowskis remembered the kindness and friendliness of Abraham's father.

In 1944, the situation worsened. Ukrainians began attacking Poles, robbing and killing them. Soon, they had taken over the entire region, and Polish families were fleeing to zones occupied by Germans. The Onuchowskis decided to run as well. Abraham escaped together with them, but in the mayhem he was separated from Batja and his rescuers. He tried to join the local partisans, but was refused because of his youth and because he possessed no gun.

After the area was liberated in 1945, Abraham returned to Stepan in the hope of finding someone alive. He did not find anyone, or his rescuers, although he kept searching for them. In 1946 he moved to Israel, where he was reunited with Batja. Their continued search for the Onuchowskis proved unsuccessful, even with the help of a friend of Abraham's wife Henia in Poland, who posted ads in local papers.<sup>1352</sup>

<sup>1351</sup> Józef Kuczyński, *Miedzy parafią a łagrem* (Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, 2017), 14. See also Koprowski, *Mord na Wołyniu*, vol. 2, 112–15.

<sup>1352</sup> Onuchowski Family, RD.



Batya, with her mother and her little sister Brendala, Bronia Sheinboim with her children, Henia Tchor, Batya Tchor, Sonia from the Tchor family with her baby, all escaped the carts that went to Karchovla [Korczewie], ten kilometers from Kostopol, the place of killing of the Jews of Stepan [Stepań] and the area.

Most of them jumped from the carts and tried to flee to the forests, knowing that death was near. They were caught in the shooting of the Ukrainian policemen and some were caught and returned to the carts that led them to their deaths. ...

After additional searches and living together with eighteen Jews from her area in the depths of the forest in inhumane conditions, with fear and terror always, Batya was left alone. She finally got to a righteous non-Jew, a Pole by the name of Lutzian Onochobaski [Lucjan Onuchowski], from the Polish village of Sadlisko [Siedlisko]. He hid her. The woman being very religious asked the priest from Virka [Wyrka], a nearby Polish village, and he suggested to her to help the Jews even though it was dangerous. ...

In 1943, when the Ukrainian uprising began in Stepan and the area against the German authorities and attacks on Polish villages began in order to annihilate the Polish residents, Batya and Mosik wandered together along with other Poles to nearby towns and cities. There Batya met two Jewish girls from Stodin, by the names of Fayeh and Etta. Together along with five Poles from the area of Recholovka [Rafałówka] (a railroad station), they turned to the direction of the forests, in order to join the partisans. On the way, they ran into shooting by the Ukrainian nationalists and most of the group was killed.

Batya returned to Recholovka, and with the girl from Stodin [Stydyń] by the name of Ita Shinis, they traveled as Poles to Germany by Sarny and Rovno [Równe]. They fixed their papers and were on their way.<sup>1353</sup>

Halina Mirska (later Lasota) describes, in her memoir, how various people, including the aforementioned Rev. Ludwik Syrewicz, helped her survive the German occupation. After escaping from the ghetto in Równe, Volhynia, with her mother in 1941, 11-year-old Halina was taken in successively by Kazimierz Milewski; then for two months—in November and December 1941—by Rev. Syrewicz, who issued her a false birth and baptismal certificate; by unknown benefactors and by the family of Zielonko, a railway worker who took her to Warsaw.

In Warsaw, Halina lived with the Rauch family. She was helped by the sisters Ania and Lonia Burzyńska. In May 1943, she was taken to the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul on Tamka Street. Afterwards, one of the nuns, Sister Maria Stanke, sheltered her at the hospital of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, where she worked as a nurse. Her next place of residence was with the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary on Hoża Street in Warsaw, where she was accepted by Mother Matylda Getter.

Halina was transferred to the nuns' orphanage in Płudy, where a number of Jewish children found shelter. She recalled being treated fairly, on a par with all

<sup>1353</sup> Batya Scheinboim, "Escape from the Murderers," in Yitzhak Ganuz, ed., *Our Town Stepan*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/stepan/Stepan.html>, translation of *Ayaratenu Stepan* (Tel Aviv: Stepan Society, 1977), 294–95.

of the other children. She had fond memories of her instructor, Sister Ludwika Peńsko, who cared for her lovingly.

When the Soviet front approached, the Germans evacuated the institution. After escaping from a transport train headed for Germany, Halina, then 14, found herself in the town of Sierpc. She was taken in by a woman by the name of Czerwińska, who then passed her on to the Kłobukowski family, who treated Halina like a member of their family. She remained with them until 1946.<sup>1354</sup>

The following account, which mentions the assistance of an unidentified priest in Warsaw, also refers to the Rauch family, mentioned above, and the assistance of an unidentified priest who was likely a chaplain at a convent.

In 1943, Mariam Feier placed her four-year-old daughter, Warda [passing as Krystyna Wojciechowska, later Shenbaum], in a Polish children's home in Warsaw. A priest who worked in the home, realizing that Warda was Jewish, feared for her safety, since German policemen frequently came to inspect the home looking for Jewish children. The priest turned to his friend, Teofilia [Teofila Burzyńska] Rauch, who lived with her daughter [in] Zalesie, not far from Warsaw, and asked her to take Warda in. Rauch agreed and, for almost two years, looked after Warda and saw to all her needs as if she were her own daughter. After the war, Mariam Feier returned from Germany, where she had been sent as a forced laborer, and began looking for her daughter through the press. When Rauch found out that Warda's mother was looking for her, she was extremely ambivalent about contacting her, but in the end, for religious reasons, decided to return Warda to her mother without asking for any remuneration.<sup>1355</sup>

Romualda Mansfeld-Booth (née Estera Goldynsztajn or Ester Goldenstein) was born in Brody in 1939. She turned up among Polish orphans who took refuge in the city of Równe, Volhynia, fleeing Ukrainian assaults on Polish settlements. She was taken in by Maria Titarenko at Easter, 1943. Her new “mother” took her to Rev. Ludwik Syrewicz, pastor of the local church, who baptized her and provided a birth and baptismal and birth certificate.<sup>1356</sup>

Another person whom Rev. Syrewicz aided was Leah Bodkier, a young Jewish woman who escaped from the massacre of the Równe Jews and was concealed, with her little sister, in the attic of Jerzy Nowakowski's mother's home. Rev. Syrewicz agreed to baptize Leah as Krystyna Broniewska so she could marry Jerzy, a Polish Catholic, and pass as a Catholic Pole. He then referred them to the

<sup>1354</sup> Halina Mirska Lasota, *Ucieczka od przeszłości* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2006), 18–29. See also the testimony of Halina Mirska, SFV, Interview code 38197.

<sup>1355</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 664.

<sup>1356</sup> Kołacińska-Gałązka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 259; Maria Kalas, “Moja babcia Maria Titarenko,” *Wołanie z Wołynia*, no. 5 (September–October 2014): 13–20, at p. 17.

priest in nearby Żytyń, Rev. Ludwik Warpechowski, who married the couple on December 30, 1941.<sup>1357</sup>

The Równe memorial book states that Rev. Ludwik Syrewicz taught his congregation “moral and humane teachings.” Many Jews were able to survive in other cities, where they were not recognized as Jews, with the birth and baptismal certificates he issued free of charge.<sup>1358</sup> The Germans arrested Rev. Syrewicz in January 1944 and imprisoned him in the Gross-Rosen and Dachau concentration camps. He survived the war.

Chana Comins (Cominetsky, née Bebczuk), who together with her young child survived in the forests near Równe with the help of Poles, mentions an unnamed priest from Równe who hid Jews in a church.<sup>1359</sup>

Rev. Ludwik Wrodarczyk, from the Order of Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was awarded posthumously by Yad Vashem at the behest of the brothers Alex (Joshua) Levin and Samuel Levin (Levinson), whom he had sheltered in the village of Okopy, in Volhynia. Rev. Wrodarczyk incurred the wrath of Ukrainian nationalists, who tortured and killed him in December 1943.<sup>1360</sup> He was recognized as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem in 2000.

On August 26, 1942, at the time of the liquidation of the Rokitno ghetto (Sarny County, Volhynia District), the local Jews were ordered to gather at the train station. The German and Ukrainian police surrounded the assembled Jews. Many began to flee, whereupon the SS and police opened up with automatic fire. In the resulting panic, many Jews succeeded in fleeing to the forests and surrounding villages. Among those who escaped were the two Samuel brothers, 17-year-old Lewin and 10-year-old Alexander, who tried to find a hiding place in one of the [Ukrainian] villages but were repelled by the farmers. After wandering for a long time, they reached the [Polish] village of Okopy and knocked on the door of a house at the edge of the forest asking for food. This time they were lucky. They were taken inside by a man and a woman who warned them that a roundup of Jews was being carried out at that very time in the area. The woman, the teacher Felicja Masojada, was the mistress of the house, and the man was the local priest, Ludwik Wrodarczyk, who happened to be visiting at the time. They decided to hide them in the house until the danger was past. While the murderers scoured the area, the teacher and the priest hid the brothers in a closet. Once the roundup was over, they gave them food and sent them

<sup>1357</sup> Jeffrey Burds, *Holocaust in Rovno: The Massacre at Sosenki Forest, November 1941* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 84.

<sup>1358</sup> Moshe Gildenman, “The Attitude of the Non-Jewish Population Toward the Jews,” in Aryeh Avatihi, ed., *Rowneh: Sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rowno in Israel, 1956), 518 ff., translated as *Rovno: A Memorial Book to the Jewish Community of Rovno Wolyn*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rovnno/rovnno.html>.

<sup>1359</sup> Chana Comins: Oral History Transcript, January 28, 1980, Wisconsin Historical Society, Internet: <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/pdfs/Comins.pdf>, 17.

<sup>1360</sup> Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 292–95.

to hide in the forest, explaining that it was safer than in the village. After they settled in a cave in the depths of the forest, Masojada's house remained for them a kind of aid station to which they returned to receive food and a change of clothing. Felicja and Ludwik were exceptional in this rural community for their high moral values and their profound social commitment. They also assisted other escaped Jews who happened to come to their village, and they paid for this with their lives. Felicja Masojada was murdered in June 1943 by Ukrainian ultra-nationalists. In December 1943, the priest Wrodarczyk was also murdered by them on suspicion of collaboration with Jewish partisans and anti-Fascists activists.<sup>1361</sup>

Alex (Joshua) Levin (b. 1935) wrote about his and his older brother Samuel's (b. 1928) escape from the Rokitno ghetto in August 1942.

We managed to escape from Rokitno. We didn't know where to go at first, but soon headed deep into the woods. We wanted to get as far away from that murderous place as possible. The forest was dense and thick and frightening or two boys already deeply traumatized, but we soon found some small relief. In the woods we came across other escapees. At first we met one person and then a few more until there were a significant number of us together in the woods. The adults talked to each other in whispers. ... There was hurried discussion among the adults. Finally, they agreed. "We're in more danger if we all stay together," they said. "Let's break up into small groups. That way it will be harder to find us."

For the next two weeks or so, Samuel and I wandered alone, moving toward the Polish villages of Netreba and Okopy. The woods in that area were denser and the swamps there provided better cover. I remember occasionally meeting people along the way who warned us that we should only go into the villages in the case of extreme emergency. If we did come close to any villages, they said, we should still stay as close to the woods as possible in case we ran into the police. ... When we did go to try to find or beg for food we mostly went into the Polish villages because they were more generous to us than the Ukrainians were.

Our journey over those couple of weeks was very hard and dangerous, but there were some memorable acts of kindness and courage that stand out. The two names in particular that are forever etched into my heart are Ludwik Wrodarczyk, a Polish Catholic priest, and Felicia [Felicja] Masojada, a Polish teacher from Okopy. When we arrived at their door after the massacre in Rokitno, they hid us in a closet and gave us some clothes and enough food to last a little while. We found out later that these wonderful people, truly good souls, paid a high price for their compassion—they were executed by Ukrainian Nazi collaborators. ... In 1998, Samuel and I initiated the process to have Wrodarczyk and Masojada declared Righteous Among the Nations by the Jewish Holocaust memorial organization Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The presentation was made in 2000.

During this time we ended up staying for a while at a farm belonging to a Polish peasant. He fed us and in return we had to work for him.<sup>1362</sup>

<sup>1361</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 594–95.

<sup>1362</sup> Alex Levin, *Under the Yellow & Red Stars* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2009), 21–22.

Jews who mention Rev. Wrodarczyk with deep gratitude include Chaim Bar-Or, Yissakhar Trosman, and Moshe Trosman.<sup>1363</sup> Here is the account of another Jewish survivor, Yosef Segal:

In the Polish village of Okopi [Okopy], some tens of Jews were saved thanks to two special individuals. They are worthy of being considered part of the Righteous of the world. They are: the Catholic priest [Rev. Ludwik Wrodarczyk] and the village teacher [Felicja Masojada]. The priest used to give sermons to his followers telling them not to be involved in the extermination of Jews. He asked them to help the Jews to survive until their redemption. At that time justice will prevail and the evil Nazis and their helpers will be wiped off the face of the earth. The village teacher also had compassion for the unfortunate Jews. Their suffering touched her heart and she helped in any way possible. She was killed by a Ukrainian gang on the way from the village of Rokitno while she was helping a Jewish family. The priest was burned alive in his church. The memory of these two saintly beings stands as a ray of light in the darkness of the Nazi rule.<sup>1364</sup>

The next account depicts the tragic plight of ordinary civilians caught between warring sides and local insurgents.

Escapees from Rokitno went ... to the area of the three Polish villages [Okopy, Budki Borowskie, and Dołhań] ... The Polish peasants, who had been living there for generations, saw in the Jews poor creatures persecuted by the enemies of the Poles: the Ukrainian nationalists and the Germans. All of them were basically friendly to the Jews, especially the Catholic priest, Ludwik Wolodarczyk [Wrodarczyk], and the local schoolteacher, Felicja Masojada, who organized a Polish resistance group that established contact with the Soviet partisans ... The three villages (and the fourth, Netreba, which was part-Polish) were on the edge of the thick forests in that area, and many Jews hid there. They spent the nights in the makeshift dugouts in the forest and begged for food—and sometimes worked for it—during the day. ... These Polish villagers were pro-Soviet for the simple reason that there was no one else who could save them from the *Bulbovtsy* [Ukrainian nationalist partisans]—and indeed, the *Bulbovtsy* in the end burned their villages and murdered many Poles; the rest fled into the forests and joined the Jews who were hiding there. During 1943, Ukrainian nationalists murdered tens of thousands of Poles in Wolyn [Wołyń] ... The four Polish villages mentioned, and both Wolodarczyk and Masojada, were among the victims.<sup>1365</sup>

The rescue activities of Rev. Wrodarczyk—through his sermons, in private conversations with his parishioners, and by sheltering Jews in the parish rectory

<sup>1363</sup> Interview with Moshe Trosman, Yissakhar Trosman, Chaim Bar-Or, and others, YVA, file O.33/8458 (Item 9391291).

<sup>1364</sup> E. [Eliezer] Leoni, ed., *Rokitno-Wolyn and Surroundings: Memorial Book and Testimony*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rokitnoye/rokitnoye.html>, translation of *Rokitno (Volin) ve-ha-sevivah: Sefer edut ve-zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rokitno in Israel, 1967), 334.

<sup>1365</sup> Yehuda Bauer, "Sarny and Rokitno in the Holocaust: A Case Study of Two Townships in Wolyn (Volhynia)," in Steven T. Katz, ed., *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 273.

in Okopy, near Rokitno, and feeding them in their forest hideouts—are also documented by Polish authors.<sup>1366</sup>

Jakub (Jakow) Solcman, a Jewish pharmacist from Rokitno, arrived at the parish rectory after escaping from a German execution site. Rev. Wrodarczyk placed Solcman with a parishioner who sheltered him for a short period of time. Afterwards, Solcman joined the Communist partisan group “Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła” (Poland Has Not Yet Perished), where he was in charge of the sanitary unit.<sup>1367</sup>

Another person rescued by Rev. Wrodarczyk was Benedykt Lusthaus, who had converted to Catholicism before the war. He escaped to Eastern Poland after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939. With the arrival of the Germans in that part of Poland in June 1941, he turned to Rev. Jan Lewiński of Sarny, Volhynia, for guidance and assistance. Rev. Lewiński enlisted the help of Rev. Antoni Chomicki, the pastor of Klesów, who in turn directed Lusthaus to Rev. Wrodarczyk. He remained in Okopy until April 1943, serving as the parish organist.

Lusthaus recalled Rev. Wrodarczyk’s openness and kindness towards everyone, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. Because of increasing attacks on Polish settlements by Ukrainian nationalist partisans, Lusthaus joined the Soviet partisans together with a number of Poles from the area. Hanka Halicz, his future wife, also assisted in his rescue. After the war, Lusthaus became a renowned botanist at the University of Łódź, where he was known as Benedykt Halicz.<sup>1368</sup>

Eleonora Kos, who escaped with her parents from the ghetto in Rożyszcze, Volhynia, was sheltered by two Polish families. She recalled the assistance

<sup>1366</sup> Bronisław Janik, *Niezwykły świadek wiary na Wołyniu 1939–1943: Ks. Ludwik Wrodarczyk OMI* (Poznań: Misjonarze Oblaci Maryi Niepokalanej, 1993), 167–68—see also *Niezwykły świadek wiary na Wołyniu 1939–1943: O. Ludwik Wrodarczyk*, 3rd rev. ed. (Poznań: Misjonarze Oblaci Maryi Niepokalanej, 2014); Leon Żur, *Polacy i Ukraińcy: Którędy do pojednania* (Suwałki: Hańcza, 2007).

<sup>1367</sup> Kazimierz Lubowicki, “Ratował Żydów—zamordowali go Ukraińcy,” *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 156–61, at p. 160. See also Krzysztof Juszczak, “Zgrupowanie partyzanckie ‘Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła’ (wrzesień 1943–sierpień 1944),” *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici: Historia*, vol. 21 (1986): 149–177, at p. 155; Henryk Grabowski, *Szlaki bez drogowskazów: Z Wołynia przez Polesie Lubelskie* (Pruszków: Ajaks, 2001), 60; Czesław Dołęga, *Z dziejów zgrupowania partyzanckiego “Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła”* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2008), 70.

<sup>1368</sup> Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 293; Kazimierz Lubowicki, “Ratował Żydów—zamordowali go Ukraińcy,” *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 156–61; “Benedykt Halicz,” Wikipedia, Internet: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benedykt\\_Halicz](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benedykt_Halicz); Benedykt Lusthaus, Photograph 67822, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1160999>.



that Rev. Stanisław Dąbrowski, pastor of the village church in Wiszenki, gave to Jews and Soviet prisoners of war. Rev. Dąbrowski gathered abandoned Jewish children and, from the pulpit, urged his parishioners to take them in.<sup>1369</sup> Esther Pop (née Tesler), who obtained a birth and baptismal certificate from a Catholic priest under the name of Janina Skalska, received assistance from various villagers in the vicinity of Rożyszcze.<sup>1370</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Kowel, Volhynia, with her young son, Bronia Eckhaus first turned to Rev. Antoni Dąbrowski, the vicar at the local parish, who comforted her, fed her, and provided her with guidance where she ought to go, as it was too dangerous for her to remain in Kowel.<sup>1371</sup> She found shelter with Polish families in nearby rural settlements and assistance from Józefa Wołoszyńska of Kowel.

During the war, Jozefa Wołoszynska [Józefa Wołoszyńska] lived with her family in Kowel, Volhynia. The family had moved to Kowel in 1933 when Jozefa's husband took a job in the local post office. During the occupation, the Wołoszynskis' house was close to the ghetto. In July 1942, when an Aktion began in the ghetto, Bronia Eckhaus, along with her one-year-old son, hid in a hideout on a roof together with a dozen or so other Jews. At nightfall, Bronia climbed down from the roof with her son and they hid for a few days in a ransacked, empty house. When she thought that the Aktion was over, she left the hideout. She went into a church where she met a priest who fed her and advised her to look for shelter in the neighboring villages. He even gave her names of Polish and Ukrainian villages. Bronia took his advice and wandered from village to village carrying the child in her arms until she arrived in the village of Elizarow [Elizarów or Olizarów]. There, she met a woman from Kowel, Josefa [sic] Wołoszynska, who had come there to buy food. Jozefa immediately recognized that Bronia was Jewish. She gave Bronia her address in Kowel and Bronia came there a few times whenever her situation became desperate. She was warmly received and Jozefa always fed her and offered her advice. In March 1943 Jozefa had a heart to heart talk with Bronia and told her that the Germans were beginning to withdraw and that the Russians were getting closer. She advised her not to give up and return to the villages. She then gave her food and a coat for the child—taken from her own young child. Jozefa walked with the fugitive for a few kilometres and wished her well. "She gave me hope, courage and belief in the future," Bronia recalled.<sup>1372</sup>

<sup>1369</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 730–31.

<sup>1370</sup> Testimony of Esther (Tesler) Pop, YVA, file O.3/3878 (Item 3557404).

<sup>1371</sup> See also the testimony of Bronia Eckhaus-Waserman, JHI, record group 301, no. 6948, noted in Michał Czajka, ed., *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespol 301, Nr. 6001–7297 / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue: Jewish Historical Institute Archives, Record Group 301, No. 6001–7297*, vol. 7 (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2011), 269. Rev. Antoni Dąbrowski, a Home Army chaplain, was arrested by the NKVD in Lublin in January 1945 and executed by the state security police a few months later. See Tadeusz Wolak, "Biografia ks. kapelana Antoniego Dąbrowskiego ps. 'Rafał' (1910–1945)," *27 Dywizja Wołyńska AK—Biuletyn Informacyjny*, no. 2 (106) (April–June 2010): 22–29.

<sup>1372</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 894.

The wife of a Jewish mill owner left her two-year-old daughter in some shrubs near the parish rectory in Luboml, Volhynia. The pastor's housekeeper found the child. Rev. Stefan Jastrzębski, the pastor, turned to three nuns from the Order of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus to care for her. The child was baptized and named Teresa. She had to learn Polish and Catholic prayers in order to pass as a Polish child because Yiddish was all she knew. On the suggestion of the local reeve, the child was officially registered as a foundling. After several months of living with the nuns, who shared just one room, the child was adopted by the wife of a forester. After the war, the mother came to reclaim her daughter.

Rev. Jastrzębski, the dean of Luboml, was known for his interventions on behalf of Jews, who dreaded bands of roving marauders based on experiences occasioned by the entry of Bolshevik troops during both the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920 and the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland in September 1939.<sup>1373</sup>

The Sisters of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus provided temporary shelter to Jews in the basement of their convent in Włodzimierz Wołyński, Volhynia. They also assisted Jews that were hiding among Poles. With the help of Rev. Leon Kapturkiewicz, they sheltered two Jewish girls in their small convent.<sup>1374</sup>

Stanisław Wiczuk, and his wife, Barbara, were both doctors, originally from Częstochowa. They survived the German occupation in Uściąg, on the Bug River, near Włodzimierz Wołyński, in a conspiracy that involved several Poles. Rev. Stanisław Symon, the administrator of the local parish, assisted them and protected their cover as Catholic Poles. The Yad Vashem description of this rescue, as is all too often the case, greatly underplays what was done to help the Wiczyks along their way.

At the beginning of the war, two young Jewish doctors, the couple Stanisław and Barbara Wiczuk from Częstochowa, were fugitives in the city of Lwów ... With the occupation of the city by the Germans in June 1941, which was accompanied by a cruel pogrom against the Jews [carried out by Ukrainians], Stanisław came to the conclusion that the way to survive was to be swallowed up in the Christian population. However, all his efforts to receive employment as a doctor in Lwów under a false Christian identity were unsuccessful because he was recognized as a Jew. A senior Ukrainian doctor [Panchyshyn], aware of his distress, advised him to try his luck in the outlying rural areas. He gave him a letter of recommendation, without mentioning that he was Jewish, and directed him to the town of Łuck (capital of Volhynia District) in the hope that he would find work there. Stanisław left his wife in Lwów and went to seek a safe haven for them both. In Łuck he stayed with a Polish family and by chance met there a relative of the housewife, a middle-aged woman called Maria Belszan. From the first instant, Maria demonstrated a wish to help him in his

<sup>1373</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 210–11; Berl Kagan, ed., *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanished Shtetl* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1997), 290.

<sup>1374</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1025; Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 131; Account of Mother General Cherubina Radzewicz.

new locality. From Łuck he was directed to the county town, Włodzimierz Wołyński (called Ludmir by the Jews, today Volodimir-Volinski [Volodymyr-Volynskyi], Ukraine), where it was possible that he might find employment. Belszan, who was from that town and was about to travel there, suggested that he accompany her so that she might help him if necessary. On the way there, she gained Stanisław's trust and he revealed to her that he was Jewish and that he wished to settle somewhere and then send for his wife. It emerged that Maria Belszan has [sic] suspected from the outset that Stanisław was Jewish and when she saw his great need she had decided to help him survive. Maria Belszan was a devout Catholic, the wife of a Polish soldier who had been exiled to Siberia. When Stanisław asked her what motivated her to help him, she replied that her religion commanded her to help people in need without reference to creed. She took him under her protection, and Stanisław was hired as a doctor in the nearby town of Uściliug (today Ustilug [Ustyluh] in Ukraine). She presented him as a relative, and through her social relations she opened doors for him that allowed him to bring his wife from distant Lwów. Maria provided her with a forged identity document, and created around them a circle of loyal, influential people, who were able to protect them from the suspicions that abounded.<sup>1375</sup>

Additional information about the rescue was provided by the Wiczyks' daughter, Janine, and her husband, Richard Dreyfus.

Maria [Belszan] also recruited Frank [Franciszek] and Maria Jachimek, another devout Catholic family, to help with the operation. They went back to Lvov [Lwów] to get Barbara [Wiczyk], who had just finished medical school. ... they put her in a cart and buried her in hay. ... Maria [Jachimek] also got in touch with the village priest, Father Stanisław [Stanisław] Symon, to enlist his help. He and Maria helped Stanisław and Barbara get their all-important identification cards from the Nazis. ...

Before getting the identification cards, Stanisław and Father Symon had already struck a very close friendship. ... Stanisław's Jewish identity was unknown to Father Symon until one day, while the two were walking together. He said, "Father Symon, I am a Jew." ... And Father Symon said, "It's O.K. I love you. I will take care of you, I will be part of this conspiracy. I will vouch for your identity," which periodically was questioned by the [sic] some of the townspeople.

During their time hiding there out in the open, Stanisław and Barbara stayed busy. He ran a medical clinic, while she worked at a post office and cleaned as a domestic. Barbara even played the organ at Sunday Mass, which was attended by Germans. She could not practice medicine ... because it was felt that if a husband and wife were both doctors, they would be more likely to be discovered and sent to the concentration camps. ...

In order to acknowledge the courage, love and humanity that they received from the rescuers, the Wiczyks tried to honor them through Yad Vashem ... Yad Vashem only accepted Maria Belczan [sic] into its exclusive list in 2001. "We actually went to the Yad Vashem and we pleaded on behalf of all of them." Richard [Dreyfus] says ... But there is no doubt in the experiences, hearts and minds of the Wiczyk family that all of them were involved in

<sup>1375</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 533–34.

the small “conspiracy” of Catholics who risked their lives to save a Jewish family during World War II were, indeed, righteous and heroic.<sup>1376</sup>

In his Shoah Foundation testimony, Stanisław Wiczek disclosed that Maria Beszan passed him off as her husband’s relative and that Maria Jachimek vouched for his wife, Barbara Wiczek, as her cousin in order to obtain an identity document (Kennkarte) for her. He also identified Jan Trywiański as another member of the conspiracy of rescuers. Stanisław joined the Home Army in mid-1943 and became head of the self-defence group that was organized in Zosin to fend off attacks on Poles by Ukrainian nationalists.<sup>1377</sup>

A number of Jews, among them the lawyer Jacek Grębicki (then Grisza Grinberg) and his brother, were sheltered by the Strójwąg family in the hamlet of Władysławówka, near Włodzimerz Wołyński, where their presence was an open secret. Since the Polish rescuers were extremely poor, Rev. Franciszek Jaworski, the local pastor in Swojczów, implored his parishioners to provide assistance to the fugitives.<sup>1378</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Kowel, Volhynia, in the summer of 1942, Eve Wagszul (later Rich and then Blumberg, b. 1924) found herself in a labour camp she again escaped from to the safety of a convent at an unspecified location. The Carmelites had no convent in that area, so the attribution to that effect in the following account is inaccurate. Eve was one of several Jewish girls hidden in the cellar of the convent. After several months, it became too dangerous to continue sheltering the girls. The nuns provided them with crucifixes, prayer books and peasant blouses to help them blend in. After leaving the convent, the girls wandered in the forest begging for food. Later they were imprisoned in the Majdanek concentration camp. Eventually, Eve ended up as a farm worker in Bavaria.<sup>1379</sup>

And it didn’t take long before we were arrested, and we were taken to some ... labor camp ... it was very easy to walk out and to escape. And I remember walking away from the labor camp with some ... at the time I called him older man because I was like fourteen or fourteen and a half years old, and they told us that not too far there’s some religious

<sup>1376</sup> Daniel Cooney, “Hidden in Plain View,” *Faith, The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Erie*, July–August 2011, 20–23.

<sup>1377</sup> Testimony of Stanisław Wiczek, SFV, Interview code 50923.

<sup>1378</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1026–27; Testimony of Jacek Grębicki in Edmund Mazur, “Po prostu człowiek: Materiały dotyczące pomocy niesionej Żydom w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej w Warszawie,” *Palestra*, no. 11 (1968): 65–104, at p. 84. The Strójwąg family was recognized by Yad Vashem.

<sup>1379</sup> See also the testimony of Eva Blumberg (née Hava Wugshul), SFV, Interview code 18666.

installation. It's a convent and they are helping a lot of people and I walked to this ... there was ... a gate and cemetery, a big cemetery plot and then we noticed nuns dressed in habits and we waited until not too many people were around. There were like four of us I believe, and we walked in and we told them that we needed help, that we have no place to go and they asked us if we were Jews and we told them. ... they told us they were crowded, that they had a lot of infants. They had a lot of sick people and they indeed did, but this Mother Superior ... Theresa was her name, Mother Theresa. By the way, they were Carmelites ... they took us in and they told us that we had to be very quiet and it was a basement where they put us and sometimes we did chores for them and they gave us some food and they really didn't know how long we could stay because they were constantly being watched ... we stayed there for several months and slowly they tried to explain to us that things are getting very bad and they are threatened they would kill them if they would find out how many Jews they had. They had quite a few later on we found out. We heard the babies cry at night. We saw corpses being taken out of very old people and finally they told us that we have to go.

Well, they gave us [a] cross and a prayer book. ... that prayer book that I still have ... I memorized all the prayers and when we parted they gave me a peasant blouse to wear so I wouldn't look suspicious. I would look like a peasant. And this was a very sad time to part with them because you had like a little security and I remember feeling good. They would take us into the chapel to pray, you know, and they would make us kneel and it just felt good after the prayer. You know, I kept saying to myself, God, there's nobody Jewish to pray with me, therefore I have to pray with them and when we parted it was very sad and it was like dying and I even told ... there was one nun that took a special liking to me and every time she looked at me she would cry and she wanted me so much to stay there because she kept saying that I looked less Jewish than the others ... it was very hard for this nun to part with me. She wanted me to stay but they were afraid and they let us go ... there's no one that extended a hand anymore like the nuns did. ... They were very, very good to me, to us and I want you all to know that they risked their own lives. They didn't have much food and they shared it with us.<sup>1380</sup>

Rev. Władysław Bukowiński, the pastor of the cathedral parish in Łuck, Volhynia, sheltered Moshe Berezin in the diocesan seminary after his escape from the Łuck ghetto. Berezin later joined the 27th Division of the Home Army, where he was known by his nom de guerre, "Michał." Berezin was in charge of a special unit that included ten other Jews (4 men and 6 women). They ran the kitchen and mended footwear for the partisans. All of those Jews survived the war.<sup>1381</sup>

A Polish rescuer from Ośnica, near Łuck, in Volhynia, sought counsel with her confessor, the aforesaid Rev. Bukowiński, when her family was sheltering David Pristal (Princental).

<sup>1380</sup> Oral history interview with Eve Wagszul Rich, USHMM, Accession no. 1990.433.1, RG-50.030.0188.

<sup>1381</sup> Testimony of Moshe Berezin, YVA, file 0.3/4812 (Item 3558711); Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 386.

He [Pristal] then decided to seek out the Bron family, whom he knew, and who lived in the village of Ozhenitsa [Ośnica]. ... “my host and my rescuer agreed to let me stay in the house through the winter.”

There were times when the danger came very close. On one occasion a Jewish road-building contractor was caught in the house of a Polish woman, who was executed for the help she had extended to him. But other Christian families in Lutsk [Łuck] were hiding Jews; and this, David Pristal recalled, “undoubtedly encouraged the Bron family and raised their spirits considerably.” ... Mrs Bron was so anxious at the continual presence of a Jew in her devout Roman Catholic home. But one day, after she had asked a priest to visit her, she told David Pristal, with tears in her eyes: “Now I am totally relaxed, as the priest, Bukovinsky [Rev. Władysław Bukowiński], said I was doing a great act of kindness in hiding a Jew in my house. Now I have regained my peace of mind.”<sup>1382</sup>

After the Germans entered Łuck in the summer of 1941, Carolyn Feffer (née Safier) and her husband, Eugene Lebenstein, turned to the bishop of Łuck, Rev. Adolf Szelażek, an acquaintance of her husband’s, for documents that would help them pass as Catholics. The bishop gave them birth and baptismal certificates of deceased Poles. He was “extremely sympathetic.” The Germans seized her husband in a street raid and executed him. Carolyn placed her young daughter, Halina (then Barbara Olenyk), in a Catholic convent and continued to disguise herself as a Pole. After some Ukrainians recognized that she was Jewish, Carolyn applied for work in the Reich and succeeded in reaching Austria with her daughter.<sup>1383</sup>

The family of Edwarda (Eстера, Edzia) Finkielgluz (b. 1926), later Siekiera, and the Polish Hosticzko family—neighbours in Żytyń Wielki near Równe, in Volhynia—were good friends. After the Soviet invasion of September 1939, the Hosticzko family were endangered because of Józef Hosticzko’s service in the Border Protection Corps, so they moved to a farm in the village of Palcze, near Ołyka. After the German entry in June 1941, the Finkielgluz family was confined to the ghetto in Aleksandria, near Równe. Edwarda managed to escape. She arrived unexpectedly at the Hosticzkos’ home in Palcze.

After hiding with them for some time, Edwarda left for the nearby village of Chorłupy, where she worked on a farm belonging to Jan Sereździński, a relative of the Hosticzkos. She lived there openly under a Polish identity and attended church services in Ołyka with her hosts. In confession, Edwarda confided to the priest that she was Jewish. The priest told her not to take Communion, a sacrament reserved for Catholics, but protected her. The pastor at the time was Rev. Stanisław Woronowicz.

<sup>1382</sup> Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 10–12.

<sup>1383</sup> Testimony of Carolyn Feffer, SFV, Interview code 34750.



The Hosticzko family continued to visit Edwarda. Both families fled their homes when Ukrainian nationalist partisans started to attack and kill Polish villagers. Edwarda relocated with her employers to the town of Łuck, where the Germans were driven out by the Soviet army in January 1944. Edwarda and the Hosticzkos met up again in Warsaw after the war. When Józef Hosticzko was arrested for political reasons during the Stalinist period, Edwarda testified on his behalf.<sup>1384</sup>

Julia (Chaya) Zecker (b. 1928), later Miller, was placed with members of a Ukrainian Protestant sect in the village of Smyga after being spirited out of the Dubno ghetto by a Jewish smuggler. She remained there for about a month, until her hosts told her to leave because they were afraid to keep her any longer. Not knowing what to do, she decided to knock on the door of her family's former servant, Helena Niewiarowicz, who lived in the village of Straków, near Dubno, Volhynia.

In her testimony, Julia described Niewiarowicz as a nun who lived outside a convent. (She was probably a tertiary, a lay person affiliated with a religious community.) In any case, Helena kept Julia hidden in her small cottage throughout the German occupation. When she confided in a priest, he endorsed what she was doing. Julia's father also survived, and after the war they were reunited.<sup>1385</sup>

After being sheltered by two Polish sisters, Dora Chazan (b. 1929) was recognized as a Jew by a Ukrainian and arrested by the Germans in Łuck, Volhynia. She was eventually released after a Polish woman prisoner falsely claimed she was her aunt. Chazan then took refuge in a church. The priest, realizing that she was Jewish, placed her in a convent where she remained until the Soviet army arrived in 1944.<sup>1386</sup>

Polish accounts describe other rescue efforts in Łuck. The Benedictine Missionary Sisters, under the direction of Sister Marta, ran a shelter for children and the elderly. One of their charges was an 11-year-old Jewish girl with Aryan

<sup>1384</sup> "Trudging Through the Snow: The Story of the Hosticzko Family," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/trudging-through-snow-story-hosticzko-family>; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 278.

<sup>1385</sup> Testimony of Julia Miller, SFV, Interview code 43866.

<sup>1386</sup> Testimony of Dora Chazan, JHI, record group 301, no. 2900, noted in Czajka, Młodkowska, and Umińska-Keff, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue*, vol. 3, 345; Boaz Cohen and Beate Müller, "A Teacher and His Students: Child Holocaust Testimonies from Early Postwar Polish Bytom," *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2016): 68–115, at pp. 106–8.

documents who was known as Krysia. She was baptized after the Germans retreated from the area and left afterwards with the nuns for western Poland.<sup>1387</sup>

Sister Flawia (Helena Lipka) took charge of a two-year-old Jewish girl who was left at their orphanage by her mother. She turned to Leandra and Tadeusz Mirecki, who were assisting Jews, to find a home for the girl. The Mireckis entrusted her to Jan and Maria Brzechwa, who baptized the girl and gave her the name of Teresa. The child survived the occupation and, after the war, relocated with her adoptive parents to Kostrzyn, on the Odra River.<sup>1388</sup>

Five Franciscan Sisters of the Suffering (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek Od Cierpiących), who worked at the hospital in Łuck, provided food to Jews. Dr. K. From, a native of Łódź who had fled to Łuck in 1939, continued to work at the hospital during the German occupation. He fled when German gendarmes came to arrest him and hid with a Polish woman for several days. Sisters Kazimiera Wirgowska and Wacława Mirola transported him secretly to the countryside. Unfortunately, he was killed in unclear circumstances shortly before the return of the Soviet army.<sup>1389</sup>

Peppy Rosenthal (née Naczycz), was an only child, born in 1935 in Rożyszcze, Volhynia. The family escaped as the ghetto was to be liquidated and was sheltered by three Polish families in succession. Peppy's mother got separated from the family and was never seen again. After their Polish benefactor was killed, Peppy's father took her to a Catholic convent in an unspecified location. (It may have been in nearby Łuck, where the Benedictine Missionary Sisters ran an orphanage.) He joined up with a group of Jews in the forest. Sometime later, the nuns gave Peppy to a Polish family, and her father reclaimed her after the Germans were driven out of the area.

My dad and his partner worked outside the ghetto, and they found out that the ghetto was going to be liquidated, and we couldn't tell any of his relatives, my dad couldn't. So he came back with his partner, and he must have paid off the guards. They let us cross the river, and my dad was carrying me on his shoulders, and the six of us escaped. And we went to stay with one of the people that worked for my dad's bus company. It was a Sunday. And they went to church, and we were looking out in the attic outside, and ... my mother tried to keep me away from the windows, so I wouldn't see ... And then we stayed there

<sup>1387</sup> Zygmunt Zieliński, "Activities of Catholic Orders on Behalf of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland," in Otto Dov Kulka and Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, eds., *Judaism and Christianity Under the Impact of National Socialism* (Jerusalem: The Historical Society of Israel and The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1987), 387, based on the order's wartime chronicle.

<sup>1388</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 155, 195, 322.

<sup>1389</sup> Kazimiera Wirgowska, *Ojczyzna moja, gdzie jesteś: Wspomnienia z Łucka 1939–1945* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2009), 52–53.

till the ... they came back from church, and they wanted us to leave, because they were afraid, you know, that somebody's gonna find out that they're hiding us. So my father and his partner went to the country to see if he can find the, one of the conductors, and see if they'd let us stay there. And then my mother and my father's partner's wife and their son, the four of us, stayed there. And we went and we stayed with the ... where the pigs were staying. So if somebody came, then he can say that he didn't know we were there. So we stayed there, and he insisted that we leave. And my mother said she'll leave, and go and see if she can find my father, but would he just keep me safe, you know, hide ... for them to hide me some place. So she left, and I never saw her again. ...

Then they put us in a wagon and covered us with straw, the three of us: my father's partner's wife, their son, and myself. And they were taking us to the country, where my father was. ...So they left us there, and they dig [dug] out from under ... there was like hay and straw against the barn. And we dug out an entryway, and made the straw and hay hollow, so five of us could get in there. ... And we stayed with those people [Kowalczyk], I don't know how long, but I know it was one winter for sure, and it was a summer ... And they had children too. But he [Kowalczyk] was killed ... He was riding his bicycle from Lutsk [Łuck] ... we had to leave there ... they also had a hiding place underneath some flooring inside the house. But we didn't stay there very long, maybe sometimes in the wintertime, we would come in to warm up at night. One night, we came out of the hole, and they found a man from underneath the straw and there was a man in the barn hiding too. And my dad and his partner lied to him and told him that we were just there for the night, ... because they didn't want another person there. And I don't know whatever happened to that man. ...

When it was time for us—so they moved us in a wagon covered with straw. My father ... we separated at that time. I don't know what happened to the partner and his wife and son; they somehow survived. ... But I know my father and they took me to this convent, and my father left me there, and he joined the Partisans. But everybody was whispering that he was dead, because he had this fur coat, and he gave it away so it would look, you know, that he died, and so people wouldn't search for him, the Ukrainians. But he hid out someplace in the forest, with, with other Jews, and also with some Partisans. And I stayed in the convent for a while until they told, found me a place, and they told that I was an orphan. ...

They were very nice to me. I have special warm heart, ... in my heart, you know, about how they treated me, and they took—New Year's Eve, I remember them taking me to church. I didn't have any shoes on, so they wrapped my feet with towels and stuff. ... I wore a cross. ... I was raised Catholic. ... And you know, I remember when my Dad came back, and we moved into our house, my dad not once said, "Take off that cross," or, "Don't say that," or, "Don't go to church." He never said a word. And then all by myself, you know, I stopped doing those things.

They knew that I was Jewish. So I, I don't remember how long it was that I stayed at the convent, but I know it was wintertime, because I was cold, and I remember not having warm things. And then they gave me to this family that lived way, way far away from the road ..., so, and it was safe there. And if I saw a person walking towards the house, I would immediately hide. I had a special place where to hide. And I stayed there I know one winter, and a summer, not whole summer ... and sometimes when it was nighttime

I would go outside and play. Then one day I saw this man coming in the distance, and I went and I hid, and then, as he came closer, the woman recognized my dad. And she went and she got me ... my dad came and, you know, that was the first time I saw him in a long time. And we stayed together.

And some of those Jews went and they stayed at our house. They went as, as we were being liberated from the Russians, Jews came out from hiding, and they came and they stayed in our house [in Rożyszcze]. ... I remember that ... we traveled to Lublin. And we stayed there for a while ... then we went from there to Łódź. ... from Łódź we went to Danzig [then Gdańsk, Poland]. ... I didn't know how to write, read or anything. Then when we came back to Poland, ... I met some nuns, and they taught me the alphabet, and how to write, or read. ... they didn't push catechism on me, or any religion. ... And the Russians were so sympathetic to me. ... And the Catholics. ...<sup>1390</sup>

Krystyna Niekrasz was born in Rożyszcze, Volhynia, in 1941 as Ewa Putter. Her parents died in unknown circumstances. As an infant, Ewa was left with a note in the garden of a home belonging to the Zalech family. Mr. Zalech had worked as a caretaker in the school where Ewa's father was principal. The Zalech family took the child in.

A Ukrainian neighbour denounced them to the Gestapo, but a Catholic priest came to Ewa's rescue, swearing under oath that she was the child of a young unmarried woman from Rożyszcze whose identity he could not reveal. With the assistance of a Polish woman who worked as an interpreter for the Germans, her guardians obtained an official document stating that she was a Polish child who had been separated from her parents during the deportation of Poles to Germany for forced labour. Because their Ukrainian neighbours continued to harass them, the Zalechs moved to a village near Dęblin, on the Vistula River, and took Ewa with them. Ewa survived and continued to live with the Zalechs after the war.<sup>1391</sup>

An unusual case is that of Zeev Portnoy (b. 1932). After escaping from the ghetto in Tuczyn, Volhynia, Zeev was given the identity of a Polish boy by a Polish benefactor. He then moved from place to place. He eventually became attached to a Hungarian military division, where he was fostered by a Hungarian officer. When his Jewish identity was discovered, a Polish priest in Turka, southeast of Lwów, came to his rescue. Zeev came across this unidentified priest once again, after he was released from detention.<sup>1392</sup>

<sup>1390</sup> Testimony of Peppy Rosenthal, July 1, 2009, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/rosenthal/>.

<sup>1391</sup> Meloch and Szostkiewicz, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 4, 39–43.

<sup>1392</sup> Testimony of Zeev Portnoy, YVA, file O.33 V.T/182 (Item 3561018); Testimony of Ze'ev Portnoy, SFV, Interview code 36211.

Józef and Józefa Marć hid at least twelve Jews in the attic of their house in Jedlicze, near Krosno, among them many members of the Fries family. They also received assistance from the Zub family, especially from Rev. Stanisław Zub (later Zborowski), who lived nearby and regularly provided them with food. Many inhabitants of the village were aware of this rescue, yet no one betrayed them. In 1950, ten members of the Fries family declared in their statement: "We hid in the small town of Jedlicze, in the neighbourhood of the Zub family, and the entire Zub family, and Stanisław Zub in particular, assisted us at every turn, especially by providing us with food."<sup>1393</sup>

Rev. Jan Zawrzycki, a school chaplain in Krosno and nearby Rymanów, saved about a dozen Jews. He hid Jewish children in the church belfry and found shelters for them in private homes and convents. One such child who was placed in a convent was Małgorzata Brenner (later Margalit Asher, b. 1939).<sup>1394</sup> Another child was taken in by the Sisters of St. Michael the Archangel (Michaelite Sisters) in nearby Miejsce Piastowe. At the request of Rev. Zawrzycki, Rev. Stanisław Lechowicz of Felsztyn issued a birth and baptismal certificate to that girl.<sup>1395</sup> Using the identity documents of the priest's deceased grandmother (Anna Szafraniec), Leontyna Bodner, from Krosno, and her two daughters, Anna and Gizela, moved to Warsaw where all three survived the war.<sup>1396</sup>

The assistance of Rev. Zawrzycki is gratefully described by a group of Jewish beneficiaries who settled in Israel.<sup>1397</sup>

Father Zawrzycki ... saved first of all the lives of Jewish children by hiding them in convents; often he personally went to the hideouts and Jewish bunkers and from there he took the children and put them in safe places, and it is thanks to this that those children lived and were delivered from Nazi satanism. Father Zawrzycki did this of his own accord, guided by the principle of unselfish love for his neighbour and fellow-man. As soon as he

<sup>1393</sup> Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 92, 178–79; Ks. Stanisław Zub (Zborowski), Muzeum Polaków Ratujących Żydów podczas II wojny światowej im. Rodziny Ulmów, Internet: <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/zub-zborowski-stanislaw-ks/>.

<sup>1394</sup> Testimony of Margalit Asher, SFV, Interview code 39430.

<sup>1395</sup> Zych, *Diecezja przemyska obrządku łacińskiego w warunkach okupacji niemieckiej i sowieckiej 1939–1944/1945*, 204.

<sup>1396</sup> Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 174–77; Ks. Jan Zawrzycki, Muzeum Polaków Ratujących Żydów podczas II wojny światowej im. Rodziny Ulmów, Internet: <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/zawrzycki-jan-ks/>.

<sup>1397</sup> For additional confirmation of the assistance rendered to the family of Bronisława (Bluma) Fischbein by Rev. Jan Zawrzycki, see the following testimonies: Testimony of Dora Cohn, SFV, Interview code 48253; Testimony of Dora Cohn, SFV, Interview code 52546.

learned that a hiding place where Jews were concealed had no guarantee of safety, Father Zawrzycki, often at night and under great danger to his own person, came on his bicycle and took them away, especially children who he saved in this way. Here in Palestine there is a whole group of people who owe their lives solely and exclusively to Father Zawrzycki. Bronisława Fischbein from Krosno, Franciszka Leizer from Cracow [Kraków], [M.] Rubin from Korczyna, J. Szapira from Warsaw, Anna Majerans and her three sons from Łódź. Others in Palestine and in Poland owe their lives to the aforementioned Father Zawrzycki.<sup>1398</sup>

A Home Army chaplain during the war and active in the anti-communist underground *Wolność i Niepodległość* (Freedom and Sovereignty) after the war, Rev. Zawrzycki was arrested by the State Security Office in December 1946 (released in March 1947), and again in October 1947. In May 1948, he was sentenced to ten years in prison. The sentence was commuted the following month, thanks to the intervention of Jews whom he had rescued. Rev. Zawrzycki was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2007 as a Righteous Gentile. According to Yad Vashem:

Local Jewish women, aware of his great character and his kind disposition towards Jews, brought him their children in the hope that he would save them. Zawrzycki hid the children in his church, and then relocated each of them to a neighboring monastery or into the care of trustworthy families.

Among those he saved were two young Jewish girls and their mother, who lived across the street from his house. He found the identification papers of a deceased Polish woman and gave them to the mother, and then used his driver to take them to the station, whence they made their way to Warsaw and survived the war. Other survivors aided by Zawrzycki included Bronisława Fiszbejn, Franciszek [Franciszka] Lejzer and Anna Majerans.

Zawrzycki also collaborated with the *Armia Krajowa*, organizing a radio interception point in his attic. Together with his brother-in-law, he created caches for weapons and diversion supplies, including in the beehives by his house. He also secretly taught children in Rymanów.

In 1947, Zawrzycki was arrested for his wartime underground activity. The Jews he had saved during the war played an active part in liberating him the following year.<sup>1399</sup>

The Michaelite Sisters sheltered Jewish children in convents in several localities, among them Miejsce Piastowe, near Krosno and Godowa, near Strzyżów.

During the war the sisters hid several Jewish children among others, Lila Freiherter and Zofia Goltweld, in the monastery in Miejsce Piastowe. Michaelite Sisters hid a Jewish girl, Maria Kaleta (Alfreda Baruszyńska) from Kołaczyce in their filial house in Godowa near Strzyżów. Barbara Kraciuk, the mother superior of the monastic house within the years

<sup>1398</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 340.

<sup>1399</sup> Jan Zawrzycki, RD.



1942–1945, took care of the baby. ... Alfreda Baruszyńska survived the German occupation, she was baptized in Miejsce Piastowe and after the war she was given to her parents.<sup>1400</sup>

The Michaelite Fathers (Congregation of St. Michael the Archangel) ran a residential school for boys in Miejsce Piastowe, where several Jewish boys were hidden, among them two sons of a teacher from Łódź. Józef Goldfeld and his son, well-known local Jews from the area, were employed in the Michaelite Fathers' tailor shop. The priests also supplied medicine, food and clothing to Jews interned in the labour camp in Rymanów, and they passed information between the prisoners and their families.<sup>1401</sup>

The story of Sylvin Rubinstein is particularly unusual. Sylvin left Russia with his mother and twin sister, Maria, after the Bolshevik Revolution. He and his sister became professional dancers. Billed as Dolores and Imperio, they headlined at music halls throughout Europe. They were performing in Warsaw when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. They were consigned to the Warsaw ghetto, but Sylvin managed to escape. He was spotted by Major Kurt Werner, an anti-Nazi German officer who remembered Sylvin from an appearance in Berlin before the war.

Major Werner hid Sylvin for a time in Iwonicz-Zdrój. With the assistance of the Michaelite Fathers in Miejsce Piastowe, Sylvin obtained false papers under the name of Turski. He stayed with Michaelite Fathers for a time, in 1943, before leaving for Berlin, where he survived the war living in Major Werner's apartment. After the war, he continued his dancing career as a cross-dresser. His mother and sister perished in the Treblinka death camp. In 2003, a documentary film, "He Danced Life," was made of his life story.<sup>1402</sup>

Rev. Mieczysław Lachor, a vicar in Pstrągowa, near Strzyżów, and a Home Army chaplain, hid Krystyna Makut, a Jewish girl from Rozwadów, in his family's house in Przybyszówka. Maria Witer and Anna Drozd sheltered Krystyna's sister, Wanda, in Pstrągowa.<sup>1403</sup>

<sup>1400</sup> Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 186.

<sup>1401</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 76.

<sup>1402</sup> Kuno Kruse, *Dolores & Imperio: Die drei Leben des Sylvin Rubinstein* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2000); Sylvin Rubinstein, Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/biographies/4489-sylvin-rubinstein>.

<sup>1403</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 317; Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 149–50, 180.

**B**asia, the 10-year-old daughter of Majerowicz from Krosno, who was passing as Jerzy Krawczyk, found shelter in an unspecified convent, where she survived the war.<sup>1404</sup> A number of Jews were treated at a hospital in Krosno that was staffed by the Sisters Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (Zgromadzenie Służebnic Najświętszego Serca Jezusowego, commonly known as *sercanki*). Dr. Bogusława Gołachowska-Szczygłowska, who worked at the hospital, provided the following account.

A forester came to the hospital one day in December 1943 and told about a Jewish family living in the woods in a dugout they had built. He had been leaving potatoes and food for them, but now they were ill. They had fevers and diarrhea and he did not know how to help them. I conferred with the nuns who worked in the contagious diseases section and they all agreed without hesitation to accept them as patients in the typhus ward (the Germans never went there; a sign warned: *Seuchengefahr*—dangerous contagion). I filled out hospital admission forms for Stanisław Guzik, Janina Guzik, etc. (This was the most common surname in Krosno). That same day, the forester delivered them in a cart of hay. The nuns bathed them, shaved their heads and hung medallions around the necks of the children. They spent the whole winter recovering, with no one to bother them. Things only turned dangerous when the children, now healthy and with their red hair growing back, began sneaking out into the garden. That was when the director of the hospital, Dr Zygmunt Lewicki (head of the medical service of the Home Army resistance movement in the Krosno region), summoned me and said that we could not go on sheltering them because the whole hospital could suffer. We could already hear the artillery from the east. The Red Army was drawing near. Home Army soldiers led the “Guzik” family into the forest at night and ordered them to make their way eastward. I do not know what became of them. Nor do I know their surname. I hoped that they survived until liberation.

During the battle for Krosno in September 1944 a Jewish couple was admitted to the hospital. He was a physician (a morphine addict), already on his old age pension. When the Soviet bombs fell on the town, he thought it was a thunderstorm and decided to close the windows in the hospital barracks. A bomb blast tore off his arm. He died soon after. What happened to his wife? What were their names? I do not know. This was another case where the nuns admitted them without hesitation and cared for them tenderly.<sup>1405</sup>

**Z**ila Weinstein-Beer (b. 1939), later Cipora Re'em or Zippora Ram, was taken in by Maria and Stanisław Dudek of the village of Odrzykoń, near Krosno, and looked after as if she was their own child. She was able to pass, thanks to the solidarity of the villagers and the assistance of the local pastor, Rev. Ernest Świątek, who baptized her under a false identity and preached the duty of helping one's neighbours.

Born in Krosno in 1939, Zippora Ram was the daughter of a Jewish timber plant owner, who employed many of the Polish inhabitants of the nearby village of Odrzyków [Odrzykoń].

<sup>1404</sup> Lauer, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, 145–46, 208, 228, 495.

<sup>1405</sup> Turski, *Polish Witnesses to the Shoah*, 177–78.

Zippora was very young when Stanisław Dudek took her into his home during the war. Most of the villagers knew where the little girl had come from, but kept silent, in part due to a sermon delivered by the local vicar, who preached the human duty of helping their neighbors.

Dudek and his wife Maria had no children of their own. They cared for the little girl with great devotion throughout the occupation. They looked out for her and did not let other children make fun of her or call her Jewish. Zippora was baptized by the vicar and raised as a Catholic.

At a certain point, the Krosno police ordered Dudek to bring the girl in to be checked. With tears in her eyes, Maria Dudek bid goodbye to her husband and adopted child, as the danger of discovery was immense. However, the German doctor conducting the “check-up” found the girl not to be Jewish.

After the war, Zippora was taken to Israel by a Jewish organization that took care of orphaned Jewish children. She was only eight or nine years old, and still wore a cross around her neck. She grew up with no recollection of the events of the war, or of her origins. It was only much later that her family decided to investigate her past. After a prolonged search, it was established that she had been saved in Odrzyków. Zippora made a trip to Poland in search of her roots.

When she saw the village and some of the people who still remembered her, many memories came flooding back. With the aid of the villagers, she pieced together the story of her survival and the Dudeks’ dedicated help. Unfortunately, neither Maria nor Stanisław were still alive at that time.<sup>1406</sup>

Zippora Ram herself gave the following account.

As early as fall 1940 my mother’s father, Suessman Katz, who owned a sawmill, approached one of his employees and asked him to hide me until the war ended. This employee was not able to assist, but he knew Stanisław [Stanisław] and Maria Dudek and helped my grandfather contact them. Sometime during the winter of 1940, a rendezvous was organized in the forest near Odrzykon [Odrzykoń]. I was handed over to the Dudeks, who raised me as their own daughter and baptized me as Cecilia [Cecylia] Dudek. I was nicknamed Cesia. It may be that my Jewish name was Zirl or Zila after my father’s mother and Cecilia was similar sounding.

I was born on 7.5.1939, or at least so I was told years later by my late half-brother who survived the war. In my childhood memories I live in a rural area with a Christian Polish family. I knew nothing about my Jewish origin or anything about the war that was going on, but I do remember that food was scarce and it was mostly potatoes that filled my hunger. I would shepherd the family’s geese during the day and sleep on the kitchen floor at night.

I have very vivid memories of two traumatic events. In the first a gun is aimed at my face and my command of church prayers is being tested. Only recently did I learn this was during a Gestapo interrogation to which I was taken with my Polish father, Stanisław Dudek. In the second memory it is winter and I am attempting to cross a river, but the strong current carries me away and I nearly freeze to death in the icy cold water. A mo-

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<sup>1406</sup> Dudek Family, RD.

ment before I die, I am pulled out of the water. Last year I realized this was not just an old vague memory, as I had the opportunity to meet Aleksander Blicharczyk, whose mother was the one who rescued me.

After the war was over I remember being taken away from my family to an orphanage in Krosno. I did not want to leave my Polish mother, who I now know was Maria Dudek, and we secretly decided that I will run away from the orphanage and she will pick me up and take me back to the village. This is why I remembered for years that Krosno was not far from the village, which in May 2009 turned out to be the lovely village of Odrzykon. The escape plan worked out well, but I was taken a second time, never to see my Polish mother again.

I was sent to an orphanage in Krakow [Kraków] and later travelled with a group of similar children to Israel in 1948, where I grew up without having knowledge of my biological family or a reason for being called Cesia Beer.

In 1956 my half-brother arrived in Israel and, for the first time, I was told all about my biological family. Up until May 2009, that was all I knew, but then, prompted by my children, I travelled back to Poland to look for traces of both my families. With the help of God and many good people I discovered numerous new details about my parents, siblings, and the wonderful Dudek family who took care of me during the war, while risking their own lives.<sup>1407</sup>

Rev. Lesław Kędra-Chodorski was a priest of the Polish Catholic Church (Kościół Polskokatolicki), which was not affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. He also joined the Home Army. Rev. Kędra-Chodorski brought Nelly (Aniela) Arluk and another Jewish woman from Łódź to the village of Łęki Dukielskie, near Krosno, where his church was located. These two women were sheltered by Rev. Aleksander Piec, the parish administrator. Rev. Piec entered into a fictitious marriage with Nelly Arluk for the sake of her cover; the other woman posed as his mother-in-law.

Rev. Kędra-Chodorski also rescued Dr. Stefan Stiefel, who had been hiding in the shed of a Polish friend in Krosno. He arranged to bring Dr. Stiefel to the village dressed in a priest's cassock. Dr. Stiefel was passed off as a priest who had been expelled from the Poznań area, which had been incorporated into the Reich. Rev. Kędra-Chodorski obtained false identity documents for Dr. Stiefel under the name of Stefan Szymański, which he used until the end of the war. Dr. Stiefel was aided by a number of villagers who were in on the ruse, among them members of the priest's family and Jadwiga Niepokój, who helped to hide Dr. Stiefel's two sisters, Helena and Sala, and his father, Samuel. Dr. Stiefel later

<sup>1407</sup> From a brochure published for the "Righteous Among the Nations" award ceremony held in Warsaw on June 14, 2010.

relocated to Kraków.<sup>1408</sup> Alicja Heiler (née Sala Stiefel, b. 1918) gave the following account of her brother, Dr. Stefan Stiefel:

My brother, Dr. Stefan Stiefel ..., who currently lives in Austria, hid from the round-ups at the house of the Sochański family. Immediately after the operation, he turned to his friend Father [Lesław] Chodorski-Kędra, a relative of the pianist Władysław Kędra. Chodorski belonged to the National Church. He agreed to give my brother a shelter at his house. What's more, he sent him a priestly robe to make his departure from Krosno to the countryside easier. And so, my brother left Krosno, at bright noon, dressed as a priest, accompanied by Jadwiga Niepokój and another friend named Cichocka. As they were walking down the street, women approached my brother to kiss his hand, a common gesture, unaware who that priest was! As it is customary in small villages that the newly arrived priest celebrates masses, Father Chodorski had to think how to get my brother and himself out of trouble. He explained that my brother was a priest, a refugee from Poznań, who suffered a nervous breakdown after Nazi persecution. My brother lived with Father Chodorski and his friends for some time. Later, provided with Aryan papers, he moved to Kraków.<sup>1409</sup>

Other clergymen of the Polish Catholic Church, or the Old Catholic Church (Kościół Starokatolicki), also came to the assistance of Jews. Rev. Antoni Ptaszek and his son, Rev. Kazimierz Ptaszek, were particularly active in Kraków. A number of Jewish testimonies—e.g., given by Celina Herstein, Ludwika Silber, Franciszka Berestyńska, Zofia Irena Müller, Helena Fedorowicz, and Berta Majerhoff—attest to the fact that the Ptaszeks helped as many as 43 Jews by furnishing false identity documents, sheltering Jews and finding shelters for them.<sup>1410</sup>

When some Jews arrived at the cottage of a Polish woman in Chobrzany, near Sandomierz, having been brought there temporarily by her brother, who had sheltered them in Zwierzyniec, near Szczepieszyn, the entire hamlet was

<sup>1408</sup> Testimony of Alicja (Steifel) Heiler, YVA, file O.3/3421 (Item 3557162); Testimony of Helena Stiefel, YVA, file O.3/1270; Elżbieta Rączy, "Ludność żydowska w Krośnie 1939–1946," *Biblioteka Krośnieńska*, no. 15 (1999): 28–29; Elżbieta Rączy, "Jews in Krosno Between 1939–1946," in William Leibner, comp., *Krosno by the Wislok River*, April 2014, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Krosno/Krosno.html>; "Parafia polsko-katolicka pw. Dobrego Pasterza," Łęki Dukielskie—650 lat historii, Internet: <http://www.stowlekidukielskie.dukla.org/Historia%20wsi/Historia%20wsi%20-%20Koscioly%20PNKK.htm>. A photograph of Dr. Stefan Stiefel dressed in a cassock can be found on the Yad Vashem website at: <http://collections.yadvashem.org/photosarchive/en-us/51619.html> (now inactive).

<sup>1409</sup> Testimony of Alicja (Steifel) Heiler, YVA, file O.3/3421 (Item 3557162).

<sup>1410</sup> "Three testimonies about the role of the priest Ptaszek in rescuing Jews, and a list of those he rescued," Ghetto Fighters House Archives (Israel), catalog no. 5996, registry no. 19627 collect; Testimony of Berta Majerhoff, JHI, record group 301, no. 2022; Testimony of Zofia Irena Müller, JHI, record group 301, no. 2023; Testimony of Helena Fedorowicz, JHI, record group 301, no. 2024; Testimony of Celina Herstein, JHI, record group 301, no. 3747; Testimony of Franciszka Berestyńska, JHI, record group 301, no. 3749; Testimony of Ludwika Silber, JHI, record group 301, no. 3750.

alarmed by the attendant danger. Luba Krugman Gurdus describes the calming effect of the stance taken by a priest, who was a complete stranger to them.

In order to throw off suspicions about our being Jewish, we accompanied Marysia [their hostess] to Sunday services. The compassionate, young priest sensed our problem and added a few words to his sermon on our behalf. He advised his congregation to respect their fellow men and not to condemn them too hastily for their beliefs and convictions. His effort proved beneficial, and the strained atmosphere around us eased.<sup>1411</sup>

No one betrayed the Jews throughout the duration of their stay in those parts.

Rev. Kazimierz Wiechecki, the pastor of Iwaniska near Opatów, approached the miller Gajewski to administer—for safekeeping—the property of the family of Ignacy Goldstein. The Goldsteins were thus able to access funds as needed for their upkeep. The village head, Stefan Mirowski, and the Polish police commander, Bakas, were equally sympathetic and helpful toward the Jews.<sup>1412</sup>

Zofia Zysman survived the war thanks to the assistance she received from a number of Poles, including Rev. Ignacy Życiński, the pastor of Trójca, near Zawichost, in the vicinity of Sandomierz, who sheltered her in the parsonage. Rev. Życiński was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile, along with two other rescuers, Maria Przysiecka and her son, Józef.

During the war, Maria Przysiecka and her son, Jozef [Józef], were living in Sandomierz. One day, Jozef met an old school friend, Zofia Zusman [Zysman], in the street. Zofia had arrived in Sandomierz from the neighboring town of Ozarow [Ożarów]. Jozef invited Zofia to come with him to his house. Zofia followed Jozef to his house, where she was warmly welcomed by Maria. At the Przysieckis, Zofia also met her prewar friend Itka. ... Itka was being sheltered in the Przysieckis' home and Zofia joined her. One evening in October 1943, when Zofia and Itka were climbing down to the cellar, they heard dogs barking outside followed by the clatter of Polish security officers pounding on the Przysieckis' front door. ... The intruders subsequently made an extensive search of the property, turning everything upside down, but discovered nothing. Nevertheless, following this incident, Przysiecka and her son came to the conclusion that it was too dangerous to continue hiding Zofia and Itka. Maria then turned to the priest Ignacy Zyczynski [Życiński], who knew that she was harbouring Jews. He told her to bring them to his house, where they could live in a garret. Under the cover of darkness, the fugitive Jewish girls moved to the rectory. In the meantime, Jozef prepared a new hideaway for them—in the woodshed. Zofia and Itka stayed there for the entire winter, lying huddled together and keeping absolutely still. ... In June 1944,

<sup>1411</sup> Luba Krugman Gurdus, *The Death Train: A Personal Account of a Holocaust Survivor* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 105–6.

<sup>1412</sup> Testimony of Ignacy Goldstein, YVA, file 0.33/1252 (Item 3555359); Laskey, *Night Voices*, 75–76; Testimony of Yitz'chak Goldstein, *The Ivansk Project e-Newsletter*, no. 3 (March–April 2004).



Zofia and Itka were once more taken to Zyczynski's home while Jozef began to construct a new shelter for them, this time in his garden. When it was complete, he ushered the girls into it. This was the last hideout used by Zofia and Itka on the Przysieckis' property because at the end of September 1944 the Przysieckis were ordered to evacuate their home. When they did Zofia and Itka had to look for a new shelter. They parted cordially with their courageous hosts and moved to Ozarow, where they found a new hideout. Itka later relocated to Zawichost, where the Germans caught and killed her. Zofia survived the war.<sup>1413</sup>

During an Aktion in Sandomierz, carried out by the Germans on a Sunday morning with their habitual brutality, Zysman witnessed the following reaction on the part of Poles: "I mingled with the Catholics who were coming out of church. I heard them moaning, weeping and screaming. 'Mother of God.' I did not cry—the tears in my eyes had dried up."<sup>1414</sup>

With the knowledge of the local priest, Jews used a church passageway that bordered onto the ghetto in Jedlińsk, near Radom, as a smuggling point to bring food into the ghetto.<sup>1415</sup> The pastor at the time was Rev. Franciszek Góralski.

After escaping from the Pionki labour camp in the fall of 1943, Michael (Majer) Rosenberg (b. 1926) survived with the help of Rev. Władysław Paciak, under the nose of the German police, who had installed themselves in the parish rectory in Tczów, near Radom. Passing as Marjan Róžański, Michael stayed with two farmers in succession; the second farm was located in Rawica-Kolonia.

When I was 17, I walked into a German police station [in Tczów] and asked for papers ... I couldn't work without them. They called in a Catholic priest and he asked me to say a prayer. I still remember it in Polish. "Our Father, who art in heaven ..." The priest said, "Yes, he is Roman Catholic." They then took a photograph and gave me identification papers. It was a miracle that they didn't ask me to drop my pants and see if I was circumcised. If they had, I would have been put against the wall of the church and shot.

... Prior to escaping from the concentration camp [in Pionki], I had learned how to cross myself. But after passing myself off as a Catholic, it became necessary for me to go to confession. I was in fear. Not knowing how to make confession, I walked into the confessional box and said to the priest: "Father, I don't know what to do—I am a Jew."

<sup>1413</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 646–47.

<sup>1414</sup> Testimony of Zofia Zysman, JHI, record group 301, no. 2016. A number of other Poles provided Zofia Zysman with temporary shelter and other forms of vital assistance; the following rescuers were *not* recognized by Yad Vashem: Mrs. Brzezińska; Maria Ziemniak, the priest's housekeeper; and her brother Józef; Ola Ziemniak and her future husband, Jan Jasiński; Mr. and Mrs. Kwieciński; Mrs. Kowalska.

<sup>1415</sup> Account of Icek Heider, noted in Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 825.

The priest opened the confessional window, looked at me, and said: “Son, don’t be afraid. I won’t betray you.” Then we prayed together. I still remember what we said together: “God bless Poland ... please help the oppressed.” ...

I wrote to the priest ... Then in 1953, a letter came back to Toronto: Address unknown. I haven’t heard anything since.<sup>1416</sup>

The interruption in corresponding with his “confessor” came at the height of the Stalinist terror against the Catholic clergy. Rosenberg’s visits with Rev. Paciak not only helped him pass as a Catholic, but also provided him with much needed solace. He expanded on his story as follows:

The German police officer had an office in the church rectory [in Tczów]. ...

In rural Poland, it is customary for the farmers to go to confession often. The farmer reminded me, I had not gone since my arrival and urged me to go that week. Again I was confronted with a serious dilemma. I did not know what to do. I had no clue what was expected of me or what the protocol was when confessing. ...

I entered the church and looked around trying to assess my surroundings. I had never been inside a Christian place of worship, but from what I overheard, I had a general idea what to expect. ... I knelt at the top of the aisle and crossed myself before proceeding down the outside aisle towards a cubicle. Inside, I could barely make out the silhouette of a man. I entered the empty side, closed the curtain, sat on a stool and waited. A few nervous minutes passed, while I became accustomed to the dark interior.

From the other side of the partition, a voice spoke. “Bless you my son.”

I waited, unsure what to say. The priest remained quiet, and the silence became heavy. Confused and frightened, I blurted out, “Father, I don’t know what to do—I am a Jew.”

Again there was silence. The confessional window separating the two cubicles opened, and the priest looked at me, saying, “Do not be afraid my son, I will not betray you.” We looked at each other for a few minutes, and finally he asked me if I knew any prayers.

I nodded.

He began to pray, “God bless Poland ... please help the oppressed ...” and I repeated the words after him. When he finished, we talked, and as I was leaving he said, “when the hyena leaves Poland, and if you do not find any of your family, I will sponsor you for baptism, if it is your wish.”

For as long as I lived on the farm, the priest kept my secret. “Come to me whenever your heart is heavy and we will talk,” he told me. Over the next fourteen months, we had many conversations on numerous subjects. At no time did he make any attempt to convert me to a Catholic, nor did he make any offer to help me to escape. [To where, one wonders.—Ed.]<sup>1417</sup>

<sup>1416</sup> “In the Shadow of the Holocaust: Six people whose lives were greatly affected by the Holocaust recently met at the Star to discuss their experiences,” *The Toronto Star*, December 3, 1992. See also the testimonies of Michael Rosenberg, SFV, Interview codes 2970 and 54355.

<sup>1417</sup> Abram, *The Light After the Dark*, 194–99.

After escaping from the ghetto in Połaniec, near Staszów, presenting herself as a Christian without a family, Miriam Korn (later Gutman, b. 1931) approached a random farmhouse begging for food. The family took pity on her and took her in. It turned that the husband was a Home Army member and meetings of the underground took place in this home. Miriam attended church services with the family and accompanied them when they went for confession before Christmas. Not knowing what to say to the priest in the confessional, she disclosed that she was Jewish. The priest behaved prudently. He stroked the girl's head (confessionals were not enclosed so this would have been visible) and told her to come weekly to. Miriam's cover was protected, and enhanced. Although she took communion (considered a sacrilege for non-Catholics), nothing was ever said. While staying at this home, a Jewish boy whom she knew came around begging for food. He did not divulge her origin.<sup>1418</sup>

In some cases, Jews betrayed their cover in the confessional inadvertently. After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, David Kochalski (b. 1928), posing as a Catholic, sought employment as a farmhand in the vicinity of Warka and Garbartka, south of Warsaw. When he went to confession, unfamiliar with the rituals, the priest immediately detected that the boy was Jewish. The elderly priest befriended David, who visited the priest on Sundays when he stayed at the farm nearby.<sup>1419</sup>

Józef Sztarkier (later Josef Starger, b. 1931) was placed in a lay orphanage, known as Helenów, in Międzyzlesie, outside of Warsaw, by Kazimierz Młynarski, a steward at that institution. In addition to Młynarski, Józef's true identity was known to his wife, Janina, and at least one teacher. The children regularly attended mass on Sundays and received the sacraments. On one occasion, not knowing the rituals involved, Józef went to confession. The priest did not question him, but rather simply told him to tell him what sins he had committed.

At least one other Jewish child, Teresa, also resided at the orphanage. Józef remained there for about a year, after which he rejoined his parents, who were living in a cottage that Młynarski had arranged for them with financial assistance from Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews. Józef's father, Maurycy Sztarkier, was given an identity document under the name of Franciszek Pawlak. Since his mother, Fryda, spoke Polish poorly, she pretended to be mute. The Sztarkier family survived the war, as did their older daughter.<sup>1420</sup>

<sup>1418</sup> Testimony of Miriam Gutman, YVA, file O.3/6747 (Item 3560370).

<sup>1419</sup> Oral history interview with David A. Kochalski, USHMM, RG-50.030.0001. Kochalski states that he never heard anti-Jewish comments from a priest.

<sup>1420</sup> Testimony of Josef Starker, SFV, Interview code 40214; Testimony of Kazimierz Młynarski in Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 166–67.

Rev. Ludwik Barski, the pastor of Ciepiałów near Iłża, provided false birth and baptismal certificates and temporary shelter to Jews.<sup>1421</sup> Two months after his death, on December 6, 1942, Ciepiałów and the nearby village of Rekówka were pacified by the Germans for the help extended to Jews by a number of Polish families. Thirty-four Poles were executed.<sup>1422</sup>

Rev. Józef Adamczyk, the pastor of Boże, near Białobrzegi, assisted in the rescue of three siblings who escaped from the ghetto in Białobrzegi and were sheltered by Stanisław and Wanda Skowroński. Rev. Adamczyk also helped a Jewish lawyer named Smoliński and his wife—who took up residence in the village posing as Catholic Poles—with their cover. Mr. Smoliński regularly took Communion at mass with no objection from the priest.<sup>1423</sup>

A forest inspector found an 8-month-old girl named Zelda in the woods near Dzierzkowice and notified the village elder. The girl's parents, Chemia and Sara Tenenbaum, had been deported to Kraśnik. Apolonia and Aleksander Ołdak took the child in and cared for her. In 1943 they adopted the foundling, calling her Basia (Barbara). Because some of the villagers were fearful of German repercussions and wanted the child to be surrendered, the local commander of the Peasant Battalions, who had found the child in the forest, requested Rev. Józef Baranowski, the local pastor, to baptize her, with the secretary of the commune office acting as the godfather. The protection of these various persons shielded the child from further adverse attention. After the war, Barbara Tenenbaum and the widowed Apolonia Ołdak settled in Israel.<sup>1424</sup>

<sup>1421</sup> Sebastian Piątkowski, "'Aryan Papers': On the Help Provided by Poles in Legalising False Identities for Jews in the Territory of the General Governorate for the Occupied Polish Regions," *Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 1 (2020): 437–63, at p. 447; Henryk Bednarczyk and Helena Kowalska-Kutera, eds., *Ciepiałów dawniej i dziś* (Sycyna: Stowarzyszenie Oświatowe Sycyna, 2001), 163.

<sup>1422</sup> "A Crime in Stary Ciepiałów and Rekówka: The Story of the Kowalski, Obuchiewicz, Skoczylas and Kosior Families," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/crime-story-ciepielow-and-rekowka-story-kowalski-obuchiewicz-skoczylas-and-kosior-families>.

<sup>1423</sup> "Priest Józef Adamczyk...", Memory and Identity, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/priest-jozef-adamczyk-stanislawa-barszcz-wanda-and-stanislaw-skowronszy>.

<sup>1424</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 561–62; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 387; Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Polacy i Żydzi 1918–1955: Współistnienie, Zagłada, komunizm* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2000), 263–64; Kraśnik: Jewish Community: History, Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/towns/k/688-krasnik/99-history/137536-history-of-community>.

Several accounts mention the assistance given by a priest in Krasnystaw. Monsignor Bronisław Malinowski was the pastor at the time in question. The following draws on Yad Vashem's recognition of Pelagia Łukaszewicz, who resided in Krasnystaw.

Jona Wiesenberg (later Teichman) was born in 1939 in Drohobycz to parents Artur and Fryda. Artur was a doctor, and as such was enlisted by the Russian army in 1939. He ended up in Anders' Army (the Polish armed forces in the east), which he deserted in 1943 for Mandatory Palestine. Meanwhile, Fryda and Jona remained in Drohobycz, which was occupied by the Germans in 1941. Soon after the arrival of the Germans, the Jews of the town were incarcerated in a ghetto. Fryda, however, managed to escape with her daughter and hide in the hospital where Artur used to work. Eventually the hospital refused to shelter the two of them any longer. Fryda took Jona to Warsaw, where they sought refuge until their financial resources were depleted. Fryda then rode around with her daughter on trains in order to find shelter, but was not successful.

One day, Jona fell seriously ill. Fortunately, on one of the trains they met a woman called Waleria (her last name is unknown), who offered her help. She took the Jewish mother and child to a nearby monastery, where Jona regained her health. With the help of the nuns at the monastery, Fryda found Pelagia Łukaszewicz [Łukaszewicz], who agreed to take Jona in as her adopted daughter for the duration of the war. By then, Jona was about three years old. Her mother explained to her that they needed to separate, so that she could be safe, and that she would be with a nice new family and would have food to eat and a brother to play with.

Pelagia "Lucia" Łukaszewicz was a charming, educated woman who was employed in a storehouse outside the village where she was living with her son Jacek and an adopted daughter. As the wife of a Polish officer who had helped the partisans and been taken prisoner by the Germans, Łukaszewicz was in danger, and was forced to leave Warsaw. Luckily, Jona looked like Polish, so her sudden addition to the family did not raise any suspicion. It also allowed Jona to roam free and play with Jacek.

Jona later recalled a life that was "completely pastoral: skiing, swimming in the river, walks in the forest, taking care of rabbits." She also remembered her "new mother" Lucia and her "brother" Jacek. Jacek's father was rumored to have been a partisan and killed at the beginning of the war, and as there were nighttime meetings in the house, the children were forbidden from leaving their rooms after dark. In fact, Jacek's father was freed after the war and returned home.

Fryda visited her daughter on occasion, but progressively less often, because Łukaszewicz was worried that Jona would inadvertently reveal her true identity to someone, perhaps one of the Germans who frequented the village. The goal was for Jona to treat Łukaszewicz as her real mother. In turn, Łukaszewicz took care of Jona as her own daughter, equal in every way to her son. Jona was christened and taken to church regularly for her protection. [Obviously, the priest would have been aware that a child christened at that age was a Jewish child.—Ed.] Gradually, Jona came to believe she was Łukaszewicz's daughter.

After the war, Fryda, who had managed to obtain Aryan papers and survive, returned to reclaim Jona. It was a traumatic experience for all involved, as a mutual love and devotion had developed between the little girl and her adoptive family. The danger in which Pelagia

Lukaszewicz had placed herself and her son had been immense, but she acted out of pure compassion for Jona. To separate from her now was understandably difficult and painful.<sup>1425</sup>

The following account from Krasnystaw is based on Yad Vashem's recognition of Jan Osiewicz.

In 1942, after the Jews of Krasnystaw (Lublin district) were deported, Ester Knobel's mother sent the teenager back to Krasnystaw to join her brother, who was hiding there. She equipped her daughter with jewelry that she could sell to keep herself and her brother alive. However, Ester was robbed *en route* and, although she reached her brother safely, she could not stay with him for long because she had no source of support. In her distress, Ester turned to Jan Osiewicz, a good friend of her brother's, who concealed her with his parents and with his married sister for some time. Eventually, Osiewicz found a job for Ester in a nearby village, where she remained until the liberation. Throughout that time, Osiewicz stayed in contact with Ester, sustained her morale, and represented someone on whom she could rely. Osiewicz also assisted Jakub Altman, who was hiding on the Aryan side of the town, and provided Altman's wife with papers [obtained from the parish<sup>1426</sup>] that enabled her to go to Germany in the guise of a Polish woman and find work as a waitress. All of Osiewicz's rescue actions were prompted by humanitarian principles and were without material reward.<sup>1427</sup>

After moving from place to place in Volhynia, and the neighbouring province of Lublin, Zofia Dulman arrived in Krasnystaw with her daughter, Danuta, in March 1944, posing as a Polish Catholic woman with the help of falsified documents. Zofia got a job at the local hospital, which was run by nuns. A priest who used to lead prayers there took an interest in the Dulmans. He taught Danuta religion in preparation for her First Communion. Zofia disclosed her secret to the priest when he asked to see her daughter's baptismal certificate, believing he had already suspected the truth. The unidentified priest was sympathetic and protective, and even rebuked some girls who worked in the hospital for implying that Zofia was Jewish. Zofia remained at the hospital until the end of the war.<sup>1428</sup>

When the ghetto in Zamość was being liquidated in the fall of 1942, Rachela Bromberg and her daughter Gabriela (b. 1938), then known as Rysia or Rywka, were hidden for a time by Józefa Wajland-Meyer in the cellar of her home. Gabriela's father, Michał Bromberg, made arrangements to shelter his daughter with Regina Jabłońska, an impoverished woman with four children of her own. He gave Jabłońska money to purchase a cottage in the nearby town of Izbica.

<sup>1425</sup> Pelagia Lukaszewicz, RD.

<sup>1426</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 389.

<sup>1427</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 567.

<sup>1428</sup> Memoir of Zofia Dulman, JHI, record group 302, no. 261.



But Gabriela's parents were seized before she could take her place in Jabłońska's new home. Gabriela remained in the Zamość ghetto with her cousin Olek.

An unidentified woman accompanied Gabriela and Olek on the forced march to Izbica, where local Jews were gathered on their way to the death camp. German guards shot the three of them as they tried to leave the large group of Jews near Izbica. Olek and the woman were killed while Gabriela, bloodied and unconscious, was left for dead. Miraculously, Jabłońska found her and took her to the parish rectory in Tarnogóra, where Rev. Michał Jabłoński removed the bullets from her leg with the assistance of his housekeeper. For almost two years, Jabłońska hid Gabriela in a small enclosure in her home. After the war, Gabriela was taken by an uncle, as her parents had perished.<sup>1429</sup>

**B**ronisława (Bronia) Eisner (later Sz wajca, b. 1932) recalls the assistance she and her mother received from a number of families and individuals—the Twardziks, the Syndutkas, Mrs. Dębińska, Mrs. Szwestkowa, Mrs. Kaźmierczak, Mr. Sitek, Mrs. Świtał, Mrs. Ronczoszkowa, and the Czaplas—both in Sosnowiec and in her native Katowice, after escaping from the ghetto in Sosnowiec in August 1943. Until the Red army arrived, Bronia Eisner stayed, longer than anywhere else, with the Czaplas, Polish-speaking Silesians whom she remembers fondly as “good people.” Among those who helped her and her mother was a Catholic priest, Rev. Józef Szubert.<sup>1430</sup>

We were also helped by Dr. Schubert [Rev. Józef Szubert], the parish priest of St. Mary's Church [Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary], the second oldest and most important Catholic church in Katowice after the Cathedral. Mama knew him already from before the war, although I don't know how. He assisted us financially. We used to go to the parish where Mama would give his two sisters manicures. They clipped out food ration cards for us, which we ourselves, didn't receive at all. Following all the holidays, they would give us cakes to take home. The priest's sisters brought me shoes and tights, as I remember.

<sup>1429</sup> Adam Jaworski, “Opowiedz to jeszcze raz,” *Kronika Tygodnia*, Internet: roztocze.net (Zamojski Dziennik Internetowy) April 26, 2007; Testimony of Józefa Wajland-Meyer, JHI, record group 301, no. 5951.

<sup>1430</sup> Rev. Józef Szubert's biography does not coincide entirely with the details provided in this account. The Germans arrested Rev. Szubert in May 1940. They sent him first to Dachau and then to Mauthausen. After his release in November 1940, Rev. Szubert lived in Katowice, in a building that belonged to Caritas, a charitable organization, as the Germans forbade him from engaging in pastoral activities. Bronisława Eisner and her mother, who was a prewar friend of Rev. Szubert's aunt, stayed in the Caritas building for about a month in 1942. It was dangerous to keep her longer because the Gestapo were stationed right next door, so another hideout was arranged with a Polish family that lived nearby. In 1947, Rev. Szubert was transferred to Godula, a suburb of Ruda Śląska. The Communist authorities imprisoned him in 1955–1956. He died in 1973. See his account in Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 600–1. See also the testimony of Bronisława Sz wajca, SFV, Interview code 48302.

They knew that Father was a Jew. Father Schubert did not insist on baptizing me; he declared it could wait until after the war, and then he did indeed try to convince me. Anyway, he continued to visit us many times. But one time he asked, “Bronia, would you like to learn the prayers?” I answered that I already knew them. I recited “Our Father,” “Hail Mary,” and “Angel of God.” I knew how to pray because Mrs. Czapla had taken me to church several times, and even before then, Zuza had taught me prayers—in Polish, of course. Dr. Schubert was very pleased and taught me several other things, gave me a little prayer book, and told me it would be good if I always carried it with me. He also presented me with a religious medallion, which I always wore from then on.

As fate would have it, Mama was quite soon able to repay the priest. Namely, he was arrested by the Germans and sent to Dachau. His terrified sisters pleaded with her to go there and give him a blanket into which they had sewn the names of some Germans who were willing to attest to his pro-German sympathies before the war. He was one of the few priests who had been willing to offer confessions to non-Polish-speaking Germans in their native language. [This latter claim is untrue.—Ed.]

The sisters gave Mama cigarettes and vodka to bribe the guard, and Mama went there and delivered the blanket. After a few days, the witnesses from the list he received were interrogated, and Father Schubert was allowed to return to his parish. He was very grateful to Mama. Where did she, being a Jew, muster enough courage to go deep into Germany and mill around a concentration camp to bribe a guard? She was always very brave. Before the ghetto was set up, she traded in food products between Sosnowiec and Katowice. She could always keep a cool head in difficult situations. I assume she must have had some Aryan papers, but I don’t know anything about it.

The priest, having been released from a German prison, after liberation, ended up in a Polish [Communist] jail. Someone reported that he had returned from Dachau suspiciously quickly, considering that so very few returned at all. Unable to help in any way at the local level, Mama this time set out for Warsaw to the Ministry of Religions. She told them everything about herself and about what Father Schubert had done for us and explained the circumstances of his release from Dachau. He was soon released from this second prison but was not allowed to return to his parish. He took over the parish in Godula, a district of Ruda Śląska. Grateful to us, he visited us nearly every month for many years. He passed away already a dozen years or so ago.<sup>1431</sup>

After his parents were deported by the Germans, David Danieli, a nine-year-old boy from Rybnik, knocked on the door of the Kapicas, his parents’ friends. They looked after him devotedly and saw to all his needs. The local priest baptized the boy and issued a birth and baptismal certificate stating that he was their son. David stayed with the Kapicas until the area was taken over by the Soviet army in January 1945.

The Kapicas, who adopted David Danieli, were a mixed family of [coal] miners—Anton [Antoni] a Pole, Martha [Marta] a German—who followed a typical proletarian way of

<sup>1431</sup> Account of Bronisława Szwajca (née Eisner), “Among the Silesians,” in Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 293–95.

life. They attached no special importance to their national origins and were not religious. Nevertheless, they were compelled to baptize David at the priest's urging, so that he would be issued a birth certificate stating that he was their son. David attended school and joined a German youth movement. At first he was under the impression that no one in the neighborhood knew he was a Jew. Later, however, he discovered that many people had known he was Jewish but had not denounced his adoptive parents.<sup>1432</sup>

Janina Bauman recorded open displays of solidarity with Jews by priests in Warsaw and in the environs of Kraków. Bauman escaped from the Warsaw ghetto with her mother and hid on the Aryan side until they were forced to abandon Warsaw after the uprising of 1944. Along with other refugees, both Poles and the Jews concealed among them, they were scattered in villages throughout the German occupation zone.

One time Staś, who was making desperate efforts to help them, had to abandon them in a church [in Warsaw], while he rushed off to find a friend who, he hoped, might take them to her flat. The friend could not be found at that moment, so Mother and Sophie [the author's sister] had to stay in the church for many hours. They were wearing their usual disguises and pretended to be praying all that time. The priest noticed them and took a deep interest in the two miserable figures. He must have guessed who they were and why they kept praying so keenly. When towards evening most of the congregation had left, he then brought them food and drink which they badly needed. He also found a few words of Christian consolation for them. Soon after Staś arrived with good news and took Mother and Sophie to his old friend Vala. ...

... The Mass [in the village church of Zielonki, near Kraków] continued, the young priest [Rev. Jan Pietrzyk] knelt and stood by turns, followed by the crowd. He sang, he prayed, he performed various rites at the altar, then he climbed into the pulpit and began to preach. The sermon was simple and clear. It was about the equality of all humankind in the eyes of the Almighty God and the sacred duty of every Christian soul to help those who were in peril, no matter what race they belonged to or which faith they espoused.<sup>1433</sup>

A Jewish woman identified as S.F. worked in a labour gang composed of Poles and Jews in the fields of a manor requisitioned by the Germans on the outskirts of Warsaw. She was separated from the group just prior to the outbreak of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in April 1943, when the Jewish farm labourers were taken by the Gestapo. She ran to the manor of a Polish woman, Mrs. Fijałkowska, who had sheltered her earlier.

After a narrow escape during a raid on the manor, she turned to a priest, Rev. Edward Wojtczak, the chaplain at a nearby convent, who was known as a "friend to the Jews." He provided her with temporary shelter at the convent

<sup>1432</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 62–63.

<sup>1433</sup> Janina Bauman, *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond, 1939–1945* (London: Virago Press, 1986), 145, 180.

before placing the Jewish woman with his sister in Warsaw, who had also taken in a Jewish child, and then with a doctor. Rev. Wojtczak supplied the woman with false identity documents and found employment for her.

It is not clear which convent this story refers to. Rev. Wojtczak was a priest at the chapel of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Kaplica Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny), which was attached to an institution for the infirm located in the Królikarnia home at 113 Puławska Street. That institution was under the care of the Franciscan Sisters of the Suffering. However, during the occupation, the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union had to relocate to that same building, and Rev. Wojtczak is mentioned in one of their accounts reproduced later. During the Warsaw Uprising, on September 16, 1944, the Germans dropped a bomb on the chapel and institution, killing many insurgents, many patients, and five nuns.

The Gestapo squad called to the lord of the manor to come out. Fijalkowski [Fijałkowski] appeared and they pounced on him like wolves, slapping him and screaming: “Juden seinen bei dir!” It was no use when he protested that the German authorities had given permission. They beat him up so bad all his teeth came flying out of his mouth. Next, they ordered all the Jews to come out with their hands up. They were all marched off to a waiting truck and beaten and humiliated without mercy. I ran straight into Lady Fijalkowska’s chamber, crying to her that I was finished. She led me down into the cellar and told me to wait there until they’d gone. But a Polish policeman broke into the house ... “I was told there’s a Jewess in here!” The lady couldn’t talk him out of it. He ran down to the cellar and found me right away. He dragged me up to the ground floor. I kept crying and kissing his hands: “Tell them no one’s here! Give me a second and I’ll be far away!” He did. He must have been an angel of some kind. He let go of me and in an instant, I flew through the back door and out of the house. When the truck was gone, I went back into the lady’s chamber. She wouldn’t let me stay. She herself was still trembling from what had just happened. I knew I had to go now. I left the estate and walked through an open ditch by the side of the road. I stayed down there till morning.

As the sun was coming up, I fell into a panic. I knew no way of escaping my horrid fate. I went back to Lady Fijalkowska again. I clung to her, crying and pleading for her to save me. Her answer was telling me there was no reason to panic—I didn’t look “too much” like a Jew. She talked me into going to the nearby monastery and asking for sanctuary from the father, Edward Wojtczak. He was supposed to be a kind man and a friend to the Jews. I went. What else could I do? A sister answered my ring and asked what it was I wanted. I told her I had to see the father. She didn’t say anything—just looked me up and down as if trying to figure out who I was. She told me to wait. A long time passed. The father himself came out to see me. A tall man, gray-haired—he looked about sixty—with a kind face. I started crying and said I was a Jewish daughter. I took out my purse with the little money I had left and some jewelry I always carried with me for whenever I had to buy my way out of getting killed. I told him I would give it all away to the sick people in his infirmary. The priest looked at me with understanding and said: “I don’t need it. You might have to use it someday. Where will you go now? It’s night already.” He took me inside the monastery, I felt lost in the darkness. There were only small candles flickering over the heads of the marble and bronze icons. It was all horrifying. I sank quickly into a sleep.

At five in the morning, the priest came to me. He took me to his cell, gave me some food. I was beginning to feel that my fate was changing. He told me that in two hours, his real sister was coming here to talk things over with me. It was true—she really came. A nearsighted woman, she stared straight into my eyes as we stood nose to nose. She was simply radiant with kindness. She kissed me and calmed me down. I offered her my little bag with all my possessions.

"I'll only hide it for you. Hitler won't be around forever," she said.

She combed out my hair so I'd look like a Gentile girl. She changed my clothes. She took me with her. We got on a trolley and she took me to Pulawska [Puławska] Street, to her unmarried sister. This sister was caring for a Jewish child—a girl of about two. Such a beautiful and wonderful child you've never seen. The child treated her like a mother and she simply cherished the little girl.

"And you say," she says to me, "that I'm a cousin of yours."

The priest's sister had a buttons-and-notions shop downstairs. I stayed in her flat and sometimes I came down to help out. My Polish was perfect.

Soon, Germans came and took over the store, letting only Volksdeutsche run it. I happened to be there that day. You can imagine how scared to death I was. After that, I never left the room. That's right. I made it too obvious when I ran back to the room like that—but I was so scared.

The priest came. He comforted me. "Don't worry," he said. He told me to go back inside the monastery and to stay there till he got me papers and a job. I was now back inside the cloister. I learned all their prayers and the group recitations the nuns sang.

The priest went to see Fijalkowski—the lord of the manor where I worked on the labor gang. It turned out they were very well acquainted and he brought me back the Kennkarte of a real Gentile girl—Zofia Ryclinska [Rychlińska] of Białystok who had just died in the Warsaw Hospital. The father accompanied me—I was supposed to be a simple farm girl now—to the Gestapo, to have me registered. The Gestapo were completely cynical. They stared at me maliciously—they knew perfectly well who I really was—but since a Catholic priest had come along, they didn't feel like starting the investigation.

So now I had the identity card of an "Aryan" Christian girl and my name isn't S—V— anymore, it's Zofia Rychlinska. I keep attending the services in the convent and sing along with the nuns.

The priest did me more favors. He got me a job with Dr. Niewiadomski on Marszałkowska [Marszałkowska] 87—a completely Gentile street—and I worked for a Gentile family. The priest had mentioned me to the doctor a few times. The father didn't want to take on another person in times like these! The doctor finally agreed.

I got along in Dr. Niewiadomski's house. Sleep, food, and a couple of zloty [złoty] a week. I helped take care of his house, and also his office.

The Jewish woman turned to Rev. Wojtczak again, frightened by a Gestapo raid on a nearby building.

Three weeks later, I was in the priest's cell and Fijalkowski walked in. He was pale as the wall. He didn't say anything. I got scared—something must be wrong. He was the one who got me the identity card. I tried to keep up appearances and say something pleasant. But

he was lifeless. The next day, I had to go back to the priest to find out what was going on and again, I met Fijalkowski. I tried sounding cheerful ... Then, it suddenly dawned on me that he was hiding out here, and it was because of me. His caretaker had denounced him to the Gestapo for giving the identity card of his servant girl, Zofia Rychlinska, to a Jew. The Gestapo rushed over to Fijalkowski's estate, found the place abandoned because he'd escaped through a back door, so they beat up his father and mother and arrested his wife and children. It was like this for many sad days until the priest was able—for a huge sum of money and through personal contacts—to free Fijalkowski's family and have the whole matter disposed of.<sup>1434</sup>

This Jewish woman remained in Warsaw until she was deported to Germany in November 1944, after the Warsaw insurgents capitulated.

Most Jews, to survive the long years of German occupation, had to rely on any number of Poles—both long-term and casual benefactors, along with the many who simply kept their mouths shut, despite the mortal danger they were placed in by the presence among them of Jews in hiding.

Róża (Rosa) Reibschaid-Feliks identified numerous, devoted benefactors, among them priests, who came to her family's assistance. Four of these, including Rev. Wojciech Bartosik, the pastor of Wawrzeńczyce, a village east of Kraków, were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2014. A fifth, Rev. Ferdynand Machay of Kraków, was recognized in 2017.

My conscience would not leave me alone if I kept silent about the deeds of these "Righteous." Some helped me for a whole year, others for two months, some for a few days only, but I shudder to think what would have happened if they had not held out their helping hand just for those few days! Even he who gave me shelter for one night only—may he be blessed! ... Here are my saviors:

1. The Reverend Canon Wojciech Bartosik, Wawrzeńczyce, district of Miechów
  2. Professor Sarna (W.S.H., Kraków), during the war owner of an estate near Kraków, now living in Kraków
  3. Władysław Bukowski, now living in Kraków (during the war owner of the Makocice estate near Proszowice)
  4. Helena Bukowska, wife of Jan, now in Łódź
  5. Jadwiga Goetel (wife of the writer Ferdynand), now living in Warsaw
  6. The Reverend Dr. Ferdynand Machay, Our Lady's Church in Kraków
  7. The Lach family, Kraków, owners of a house in ulica Dobrego Pasterza
  8. Wiktoria Krawczyk, janitor, Kraków, Kościuszki [Street] 52
  9. Jan Wiecheć, Kraków (employed during the war in the Krischer firm, Zwierzyniecka [Street] 6)
  10. Engineer Karol Kulczycki, Warsaw (and his wife Julia)
  11. The family of Michał and Maria Stepiński, Makocice 12 near Proszowice
- Every one of these people has done a great deal for me at the risk of his own life.<sup>1435</sup>

<sup>1434</sup> Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, 135–38.

<sup>1435</sup> Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life*, 284–85.



The Reibschoid family—Marian Reibschoid, his wife, Rosa Reibschoid-Feliks, and their son, Edward (b. 1938)—were from Kraków. In 1940, having procured Aryan papers, they escaped from Kraków and moved to Wawrzeńczyce, a town in the area. The local priest, Wojciech Bartosik, was quite influential in the town; he was extremely welcoming toward them and helped them find their feet in their new location. The Reibschoids believed it was best for them to all be baptized. Bartosik obliged, while fully understanding that this was not a true baptism but merely a way to escape persecution. He also provided for their nonspiritual needs: food, respectable paid work for Marian, release from forced labor for Rosa, and even Polish parents' names registered in his books for the Reibschoid's parents.

July 1942 saw Jewish families transferred to the town by the Germans. This encroachment of the regime increased the danger for the Reibschoids. Wojciech found them a family to stay with. Włodzimierz Bukowski was a well-off Polish estate owner. He lived with his sister and his sister-in-law, Helena Bukowska. (Helena later moved to a different village nearby.) They received the Reibschoids warmly and provided for them. When need arose, the Jews hid, but most of the time they simply lived on the estate together with the Bukowskis. One day a local tailor by the name of Latał reported the Bukowskis for sheltering Jews. It was September 1942, and the police were raiding the town, looking for Jews who might be hiding there. Someone tipped the Reibschoids off that people were out to get them. Rosa picked up little Edward and ran with him to the village that Helena Bukowska had moved to. Helena sent word to Marian's workplace to warn him of the danger, and he was able to jump on a bicycle and escape to Kraków. Rosa and Edward spent the night hiding in the local church and returned to Helena's home in the morning. They spent three days with her and then joined Marian in Kraków. From there, in 1943, they decided to move to Warsaw.

In Warsaw, they were sent to Jadwiga Goetel, the wife of a famous Polish writer, who greeted them warmly and helped in every way she could. She found a position for Rosa as a seamstress and a job for Marian as an engineer. She kept them in her own home for three months, until they were able to find an apartment for themselves. Once the Warsaw Uprising broke out, Marian volunteered to fight and was killed in battle. Rosa and Edward were sent to a transit camp in Pruszków and were liberated from there by the Russians in January 1945. Rosa returned to Judaism, remarried, and moved to Israel with her new husband and son in 1948.<sup>1436</sup>

Róża Reibschoid's testimony from 1946 provides additional details of the assistance she, her husband, Marian, and young son received from various priests and nuns in the Kraków area, including Rev. Bartosik of Wawrzeńczyce, Rev. Wacław Radosz of Proszowice, and an unidentified priest from Michałowice. Rev. Machay was the chaplain at the Norbertine Sisters' convent and church of St. Augustine in Kraków, where Róża was sheltered temporarily. Afterwards, the Reibschoids moved to Warsaw, where they were also helped by numerous Poles.

When they started to collect Jews from nearby towns in Wawrzeńczyce, Nowe Brzesko county, Poles warned us that something was about to happen, especially after stories of

<sup>1436</sup> Wojciech Bartosik, RD.

the events in Tarnów reached Wawrzeńczyce. The pastor, Rev. Wojciech Bartosik, who was very kind to us, referred us to Buchowski [Władysław Bukowski], the owner of a nearby country estate, who took my husband on as a mechanic for all his farm machinery and tractor operator, and his wife recommended me as a seamstress to neighbouring manors. ... Materially we were well off there, but peasants from Wawrzeńczyce came by who knew us. Some Pole betrayed us. The Germans looked for us in the entire area ... but found out nothing ... The sołtys (village administrator) warned me and sent his daughter to the warehouse to warn my husband. When the girl was in the warehouse, Gestapomen were already circulating in the courtyard. My husband got on a bicycle and was able to escape undetected by the Germans. I went with my son to the Bukowskis, who did not allow me to leave because all the field roads and highway were guarded by the Gestapo, and the train at the train station was held up for three hours and all the passengers searched. I took my son to the barber to have his head shaved so he would not be recognizable, and there I learned from clients' conversations of the arrival of a punitive expedition who searched all the brush along the Vistula River.

In the meantime my husband went by bicycle to a priest he knew in Michałowice who allowed him to stay for the night. I went to Proszowice to seek advice from Rev. [Wacław] Radosz. He reproached me for not having told him earlier that I was a Jew, as he would have found my husband a position in Radom. He sent for horses to take me to Michałowice. The next day a carriage arrived with a pair of horses (later I learned that the priest rented the horses for 300 złoty), and I travelled to Michałowice like a lady. There I met my husband at the priest's house. I arranged with my husband to meet in Kraków.

In Kraków I endured a real hell. Our Polish acquaintances were afraid to take us in, so we spent every night somewhere else. Rev. [Ferdynand] Machay showed us great compassion, and found a shelter for me with the Nobertine Sisters in Salwator. He helped us financially and found a position for my husband as a mechanic on an estate in Olszanica, seven kilometres from Kraków. After leaving the convent I had nowhere to live so we decided to go to Warsaw.<sup>1437</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Rev. Machay provided birth and baptismal certificates and other forms of assistance to many Jews, among them, Felicja Seifert (later Ela Manor), who passed as Elżbieta Smoleń.<sup>1438</sup> Rev. Machay vouched for Ewa Rose-Boratyńska, her husband and her mother when they were arrested in Kraków in March 1943 on suspicion of being Jews, and thus helped secure their release.<sup>1439</sup>

<sup>1437</sup> Testimony of Róża Reibschoid, JHI, record group 301, no. 1713; Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 315–16.

<sup>1438</sup> Aleksandra Mianowska, RD.

<sup>1439</sup> Testimony of Ewa Rose-Boratyńska in Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 559.

Marian Seidner was born in Kraków in 1937 or in 1938 as Józef Seidner. He was caught with his mother during a raid and taken to the Montelupich prison. Afterwards, they were placed in the Kraków ghetto, from where they were sent to the concentration camp in Płaszów. Afraid her son would be deported to Auschwitz, Marian's mother asked Maria Nawrocka and a priest to help him escape. She threw the wicker basket in which she had placed her son from a train. Fortunately, nothing happened to the boy.

Maria took him in and fell in love with him, naming him Marian, after her son who had been killed in the war. After the war, Marian was taken by the Jewish Committee and placed in a Jewish children's home in Zabrze. Two years later, when the children were being sent to Israel, Marian fled to Maria. He was found again and sent to an orphanage in Bielsko-Biała. At the age of 18, he moved to Israel. Many years later, he learned that his mother had survived Auschwitz and settled in Holland.<sup>1440</sup>

When she was three years old, Janina Katz (b. 1939) was smuggled out of the Płaszów concentration camp, where she was imprisoned with her mother, and entrusted to the care of Stefan and Maria Kapłański of Dobczyce, south of Kraków. The local priest was taken into their confidence. He baptized Janina and she was taught Catholic prayers by her adoptive parents. The family was well known in the town, so it was impossible for the community not to have been aware that Janina was Jewish. The child lived there peacefully throughout the war. After the war, she was reclaimed by her mother.<sup>1441</sup>

After being smuggled out of the Płaszów work camp with the help of a Pole named Kajdas, Tadeusz Jakubowicz (b. 1939) and his parents stayed with Katarzyna Siwek in Kraków, before taking refuge in the village of Kornatka, near Dobczyce. A number of Jews were hiding in the forest nearby, and soon the entire village became aware of their presence. The priest from the parish in Dobczyce urged his parishioners to help the Jewish fugitives, and not to betray them. Villagers, among them the Krupa, Morajek and Kopera families, provided them with food. During the winter months, they allowed them to stay overnight in their homes, barns and stables.<sup>1442</sup>

<sup>1440</sup> "Maria Babrzyńska...", Memory and Identity, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/maria-babrzynska-and-marian-seidner-from-cracow>.

<sup>1441</sup> Wierzbieniec and Rączy, *Righteous Among Nations*, 50; Janina Katz, *Moje życie barbarzyńcy* (Warsaw: Jacek Santorski, 2006).

<sup>1442</sup> See also Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 263–66; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 371; Monika Stępień, ed., *Witnesses to Polish-Jewish History: The Stories of Holocaust Survivors, Former Prisoners of Nazi German Concentration Camps and Righteous Among Nations* (Kraków: Galicia Jewish Museum, 2016), 40–41.

We hid in dugouts in the forest ... in the village of Kornatka. Close by there were more than ten other persons, but they all kept in small groups. For reasons of safety, they didn't form a camp. We spent the entire day lying so that we would not be seen. Only in the evening did we crawl out in order to straighten out bones somewhat. Practically the entire village knew that we were hiding. Imagine, even the priest said in his sermon, "You know that Jews are hiding here in the forests. You have to help them, and do not betray them." And these people helped us. Without them we would have had no chance of survival. There was terrible poverty in the village. My mother, who had Aryan features and documents, travelled to Kraków and bought food, which we shared with our benefactors. I remember many people who helped us. To me those people are real heroes.

Winter of 1943/1944 was exceptionally frigid. The temperature would fall to minus 30 degrees (Celsius). Good people who lived near our hideout helped us out. They took us in overnight. I slept in the stable with animals. ... While there was frost, we spent every night with farmers. A member of the household would stand guard observing the vicinity to see if Germans were approaching. When today I hear someone say that Poles behaved badly, I can't agree with that. Of course no society is without its faults, whether they are Poles, Jews or Russians. ... But my family encountered wonderful people and to them we owe our salvation from the Holocaust.<sup>1443</sup>

After the liquidation of the ghetto in Nowe Brzesko, northeast of Kraków, in September 1942, Rozalia Elbinger and her daughter Pola took shelter in the parish rectory, where Rev. Józef Zdun resided with his sister. But when their presence there became known, Mrs. Elbinger took her daughter and joined her husband, who was hiding in a nearby village with their son.<sup>1444</sup>

Fela Rotsztajn, who lived in the village of Jeziorna, near Warsaw, recalled her many Polish benefactors, among them Rev. Antoni Konieczny, the pastor of Słomczyn.

I am a resident of Jeziorna near Warsaw where my family has lived for generations. I survived the occupation years in this area thanks to kind people. This wasn't for a day or a month, but my wanderings lasted more than three years. Risking their own lives people lent me a helping hand. These were: Wojciech Dominik of the village of Łęg, Edmund Komorowski of Konstancin, Rev. Antoni Konieczny of Słomczyn, Kazimierz Wandel of the village of Łęg, Władysław Moskaiewicz of Słomczyn, Stanisława Suchecka of Słomczyn, Władysław Zduńczyk of Słomczyn, Bolesław Zawadzki of Klarysew, Andrzej Rossman of the village of Bielawa, Kornelli of the village of Bielawa, Jerzy Mrówka of Mirków, and Zbigniew Kępka of Mirków.<sup>1445</sup>

<sup>1443</sup> Przemysław Miśkiewicz, interview with Tadeusz Jakubowicz, "Dzięki nim żyję, dla mnie to bohaterowie," *Narodowy Dzień Pamięci Polaków ratujących Żydów*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, *Dziennik Zachodni*, March 26, 2018.

<sup>1444</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 32, 40; Testimony of Emanuel Elbinger, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/emanuel-elbinger>.

<sup>1445</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 308.

**A**nna Forkasiewicz (née Niuta Studnia), who married Józef Forkasiewicz, a Catholic Pole, during the war, described the assistance she and her family received from numerous Poles—three Polish families (consisting of 11 people), three individual Poles, four priests, and a boarding school run by nuns—in the vicinity of Radom and Warsaw. The following priests who extended help were identified by name: Rev. Bolesław Skwarliński of Radom; Rev. Józef Kuropieska, the pastor of Garbatka-Letnisko; and Rev. Jan Podsiadły of Mszczonów.

So much is heard about the unsympathetic attitude of the Polish clergy towards the Jews that I want to place special emphasis on two names:

Father Boleslaw Skwarlinski [Bolesław Skwarliński], Prefect from Radom: Whilst I was hiding for six months at the parsonage in Garbatka near Radom, the Prefect was a frequent guest of Father Jozef Kuropieski [Józef Kuropieska], who provided me with all the care and attention a pregnant woman requires. I had to leave when my baby's birth was approaching and it was then that I went to live with the Stopinski [Stopiński] family.

Father Jan Podsiadly [Podsiadły], my husband's school friend: We were guests of his cousin during Easter of 1943 while he was still studying for the priesthood. In 1943 when the Germans evacuated areas on the right bank of the Vistula, we were taken to a camp in Pruszkow [Pruszków], where I was separated from my husband who was sent to the Dachau concentration camp. I was left with my baby in Sochaczew in tragic circumstances. (My striking Jewish features were only partially offset by my faultless Polish accent.) With the help of the local curate (who did not know my origin) I reached Mszczonow [Mszczonów] near Żyrardow [Żyrardów] where Father Podsiadly was a curate. He took care of my child and me, by lodging us with a childless couple and visiting us frequently; although the visits could have led to his arrest and even death, they served to allay suspicion about my Jewish appearance.<sup>1446</sup>

Rev. Kuropieska of Garbatka-Letnisko provided false birth and baptismal certificates—in the names of Łucjan and Edward Rakoczy—for the sons of a Jewish woman from Warsaw. All three members of this family were sheltered by the Karpała family from 1943 until the Red army displaced the Germans in January 1945.<sup>1447</sup> Anna Dembowa also credits an unidentified priest near Mszczonów with helping her and her husband, Franciszek Dembowy, by securing a hiding place for them.<sup>1448</sup>

<sup>1446</sup> Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 26–27. See also the testimony of Anna Forkasiewicz, SFV, Interview code 31814, where she mentions the helpfulness of another priest and nuns in Mszczonów.

<sup>1447</sup> Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Nieznane historie z dziejów ratowania Żydów pod okupacją niemiecką: Matka zostawiła otwartą piwnicę z ziemniakami," *Rzeczpospolita*, PlusMinus, March 23–24, 2019.

<sup>1448</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 536.

After the outbreak of the war, Zofia Pilichowska (later Weiser, b. 1927) moved to Warsaw with her parents and sisters, Janina and Wanda, from their hometown of Łódź. After their escape from the Warsaw ghetto in November 1942, the entire family underwent baptism at the Church of the Holy Saviour (Najświętszego Zbawiciela). The ceremony was presided over by Monsignor Seweryn Popławski, the pastor of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, on Leszno Street. Each family member took on a false identity. Zofia recalled:

All our family members were baptized in the parish of the Saviour in Warsaw. Father [Seweryn] Popławski agreed to baptize us at once without any further questions. Our Polish friend directed us to this priest. Our baptismal certificates became the proof that we were Aryan. My mother got her birth certificate under the name of an already deceased parishioner, Maria Anna Kowalewska. My father [Henryk] became Aleksander Franciszek Będzikowski. I and my sisters kept our original surname.<sup>1449</sup>

After residing for a time in Henryków, a friend named Heininger directed Zofia to the Kosiński family in Buków, outside Warsaw. The Kosiński family were also helping other Jews. Mrs. Kosiński introduced Zofia to Rev. Zygmunt Siedlecki, the pastor of Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą. Zofia stayed at the parish rectory for about three months, helping with farm chores.

Because her presence attracted too much attention, Rev. Siedlecki directed her to the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin Mary in that same town, as someone who wanted to pursue a religious vocation. Zofia was sent to the order's mother house in Mariówka, near Przysucha, where she lived in the novitiate for the remainder of the war. After the war, she left the convent and was reunited with her family.<sup>1450</sup>

Gustaw Alef-Bolkowiak, a Jewish partisan who fought in the Communist People's Guard, recalled the assistance he received from a number of Poles, including members of the Catholic clergy, after he was wounded in partisan warfare near Opoczno, west of Radom.

After I was wounded in a skirmish near Osa [Ossa] in Opoczno county, many people cared for me: Mirosław Krajewski, Elżbieta Krajewska, Mrs. Pieszczyk—the owner of a laundry near Jasna Street in Warsaw, Waclaw and Ryszard Strzelecki, the teacher Gromelski, the engineer Bukowski, Rev. [Jan] Gałęza, Sister Stefania [Miąskiewicz], Irena Ciesielska and doctors whose names have faded in my memory because of the passage of time. Those are the people who, in the fall of 1942, during a period when the occupier heightened their terror, risked their lives and the lives of their families to come to my assistance.<sup>1451</sup>

<sup>1449</sup> Testimony of Zofia (Weiser) Pilichowska, YVA, file O.3/2826 (Item 3556712).

<sup>1450</sup> Testimony of Zofia (Weiser) Pilichowska, YVA, file O.3/2826 (Item 3556712).

<sup>1451</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 533.



When his safety was endangered, Alef-Bolkowiak was dressed in Rev. Jan Gałęza's soutane and escorted to a safer place by Sister Stefania Miałkiewicz, a Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary.<sup>1452</sup>

Several priests in the vicinity of Włodawa, in the voivodship of Lublin, are mentioned in Jewish memoirs. Rev. Józef Sobieszek, the local dean, placed Mirka Bram (b. 1935), later Miriam Erlich, with the Orzechowski family, who took her in and cared for her. Another priest in a nearby village taught Mirka religious practices to help her pass as a Catholic. Mirka recalled:

Mrs Szusterowa [from Adampol] told me I should go and see the priest in Włodawa, and that he would certainly help me. We went to Włodawa across the gardens and fields so that no one would see us. She left me by the church and forbade me to go back to her house, because she was very much afraid. I went to the church and went looking for the priest ... I saw the priest by the little house behind the church and I went up to him. I said: "Good morning, Mr. Priest. I'm an orphan, please can you help me?"

The priest [Rev. Józef Sobieszek] smiled and said: "Go and see Mrs Orzechowska, the doctor's wife, and tell her that I sent you." And he gave me Mrs Orzechowska's address, even though I knew where she lived, but I did not say anything because I was pretending not to be from Włodawa. But Mrs Orzechowska and her husband recognised me straight-away and told me not to be afraid. I burst into tears and told them everything. Then Mrs Orzechowska sent me into the country to a priest she knew who knew that I was Jewish. The priest taught me how to talk so that no one would know that I was Jewish, how you must not say "Mr Priest" but "father," and many other things. I stayed there for several days.<sup>1453</sup>

Masza But (b. 1934), who lived in Dubeczno, was entrusted to a local farmer by her father, who paid for this arrangement. She remained with the farmer for about a month. Afterwards, she was sheltered by an unidentified priest, assuming the identity of Marysia Bidziek. Dubeczno was located in the parish of Hańsk. After the war, Masza was taken by the Jewish Committee to a children's home in Łódź.<sup>1454</sup>

Harold Werner, a Jewish partisan active in the area between Włodawa and Parczew, recalls in his memoirs:

<sup>1452</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Part 1, *Nasz Dziennik*, March 10, 2008; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at pp. 184–85.

<sup>1453</sup> Cited in Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 139–40. See also Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 230; Testimony of Miriam Erlich, YVA, file O.3/10995 (Item 3565513).

<sup>1454</sup> Masza But, Ghetto Fighters House Archives (Israel), catalog no. 1265, and catalog no. 3735, registry no. 16061R"M.

In a small village not far from the Bug River, we went at night to the house of a friendly local priest and asked him to take us to the shallowest point of the river. He led us to a spot where the water was waist deep, and with our weapons over our heads we crossed, with the priest leading the way. When we got to the other side, we directed him to go back.<sup>1455</sup>

**D**iane Armstrong (b. 1939), who was known as known as Danusia, together with her parents, Henek and Bronia Baldinger, spent the war years in the small town of Piszczac, near Biała Podlaska, under the protective umbrella extended to them by Rev. Roman Soszyński, the local pastor. Her family lived for three years, posing as Catholics under the assumed name of Bogusławski. They were befriended by the priest, who played chess with her father. The Gestapo was close by, and they lived in fear of being denounced.

Ever since my father [Henek] had arrived in Piszczac, the problem of making friends had been on his mind. Being newcomers made him and Bronia too vulnerable, because all new arrivals were suspected of being Jews until proved otherwise. He'd noticed that all the other newcomers in the village, who were Catholics, soon found mutual friends or church connections which made them accepted, but neither he nor Bronia could claim such links. He'd already asked the church organist to enter his certificate of baptism into the parish records. Although it was a false certificate, once it was entered it would appear genuine and he'd be able to make copies if he ever needed proof of baptism.

It was vital to make friends and become part of village life as fast as possible. ... A few weeks after the new priest [Rev. Roman Soszyński, then 32 years old] had arrived, Henek was heading towards the post office. ... He was about to walk into the post office when he heard a cart rattle along from the direction of Chotyłow [Chotyłów]. The driver tugged the reins, the cart stopped, and out stepped the new parish priest, brushing the sleet off his black soutane. His heart beating at his own audacity, Henek hastened towards him and apologised for accosting him in the street. "On the contrary, my dear Dr Boguslawski," replied Father Soszynski with a disarming smile. "I'm the one who should apologise for not having called on you, but I've been following the bishop's orders [not to call on his parishioners, but let them seek him out]. What can we do, we live in such dangerous times!"

Heartened by the priest's friendly manner, Henek pressed on. "This evening my wife and I have invited some friends over to our place. If Reverend Father would come and have a glass of tea with us, we'd be honoured."

Roman Soszynski looked with interest at this greying man whose neatly trimmed moustache and slight limp added to his air of distinction. He'd already heard about the new dentist from the organist, who'd reported the conversation about the baptism certificate with a look which had implied some doubt. But he liked Dr Boguslawski's sincerity and his direct gaze. "I'll be delighted to come tonight and meet your good lady," he replied.

When Henek told Bronia the good news, her forehead crinkled like a washboard. "How do I know what to say to a priest?" she fretted.

<sup>1455</sup> Harold Werner, *Fighting Back: A Memoir of Jewish Resistance in World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 191.

“Don’t worry about anything, leave the talking to me,” Henek said. “Anyway, he seems very approachable.” As it turned out, the evening proceeded better than either of them could have hoped. Roman Soszynski was an entertaining raconteur with an easy flow of conversation, and although his observant gaze missed nothing, he knew how to put people at ease.

He loved to hear what was going on in the parish and laughed at jokes as loudly as anyone, but with his Jesuit training he also enjoyed arguing, debating and exchanging ideas. One of his regrets about coming to this sleepy hollow was that there would be little opportunity to sharpen his wits, so he was delighted that the dentist was a thinking man, well read and cultured. ... Before leaving that evening, Father Soszynski told Henek that he’d welcome a game of chess in the presbytery. While they washed the glasses after their guests had gone home, Henek couldn’t help smiling. “Just imagine, the son of Reb Danil Baldinger playing chess with a priest!” ...

Not a day passed without some traumatic incident which threatened to reveal their secret. ... before long, rumours about the Boguslawskis were spreading through the village. ... Father Soszynski had heard rumours about the Boguslawskis. ... “At school today one of the children said that Danusia was Jewish,” he said casually. Henek’s eyes were boring into his face. “I told them it wasn’t true,” Father Soszynski continued. ... he [Henek] understood that the priest was letting him know that he was on his side.<sup>1456</sup>

Decades later, Armstrong visited the town and met with the priest, then in his 80s. The encounter restored a lost part of her childhood and gave her a new perspective on those years she spent in hiding. She had always been angry at the villagers and their rumours. Now she understood that everyone had suspected her family was Jewish; but despite this, no one had ever denounced them. The village, under the guidance of the priest, had in fact protected them. Her anger was transformed into wonder and gratitude.

Benevolence shines from Father Soszynski’s face. In a voice that’s surprisingly strong for a man of eighty-three, he says, “I was thinking about you just two days ago. I thought about your parents and wondered whether little Danusia was still alive. While I was in town today someone said that people from overseas were looking for me. I thought of you straightaway. Danusia! I thought, and flew home like a bird!”

Why should this telepathy astonish me, when the fact that I am looking into the face of the priest who helped us survive the war in Piszczac is beyond anything I ever dreamed of? ...

While he speaks, I keep pushing back the question that is nagging at me. Not yet, I keep thinking. Not yet. Suddenly Father Soszynski stuns me by answering my unspoken question. “Of course I knew that you were Jewish. We all knew.” ...

Father Soszynski continues his reminiscences. “Not long after I arrived in the village, your father asked the organist to enter his certificate of baptism into the parish records. This seemed a strange request, and I wondered then whether he had bought this certificate

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<sup>1456</sup> Armstrong, *Mosaic*, 294–307.

somewhere. If so, it was a very smart move because once the information was recorded, he'd be able to obtain authentic copies. Still, in those days it was better not to know too much so I decided not to inquire too closely into it and we entered your names in the parish records." ...

One day in 1944, Mrs. Forycka, the doctor's wife, came to see me and dropped a bombshell. "Has Reverend Father heard the latest? The whole town is saying the Boguslawskis are Jews!" I thought to myself, Jesus Maria, can this be true? Then I recalled that business with the baptism certificate, that embittered fellow Mr Jozek [Józek] who came to work with your father but turned out to be a Jew, your mother's nervousness, your father's constant vigilance ...

Next day, your father came to see me. He was not the same person. He had lost all his strength, he was a crushed man. Despair in his eyes. So sad to see.' ... "Catastrophe, Reverend Father!" he told me. "They're saying that we are Jews ..." ...

"When your father came to see me that day, I felt like weeping," he says. "Such a cultured, witty man, so intelligent and companionable. How could I not extend a helping hand?" I said, "Doctor Boguslawski, let's look at it another way. There's no merit being born a Pole any more than there is disgrace being born a Jew. It's not up to us. It's up to God. I can't feel proud of being born a Pole any more than another should feel ashamed of being born a Jew. But the issue is that to accuse someone of being born a Jew today is to sentence them to death." He leans towards me. "You know, the Gestapo were stationed only three kilometres down the road in Chotyłow."

So I said to your father, "Doctor, let me figure out how to climb out of this pit. I won't run from house to house, but what I will do is come to your place this afternoon with my sister, and we will walk down the centre of the main street of the town so that everyone will see that we're coming to visit you as if nothing has happened. Let them all see. Will you give us a glass of tea when we come?" ...

"I can still see the relief on your father's face when I told him that I'd come over that afternoon and keep coming to visit him," says Father Soszynski. ... For the first time in my life I realise that our only hope of survival, however slight, rested entirely with Father Soszynski. ...

"After that visit with my sister, I kept coming more often than usual, to demonstrate my support. When the villagers saw their priest socialising with your parents, they figured out that I must know what I was doing, and decided that they had no business gossiping about them."

Leaning towards me, Father Soszynski says with great emphasis, "And no-one in that village denounced you, even though everybody knew that you were Jews. In your case, Piszczac passed with flying colours. We had drunkards, thieves, and cheats amongst us, but on that occasion, everyone behaved beyond reproach." ...

Throughout my life I had been angry that our existence in Piszczac had been so tenuous, that dangerous rumours had proliferated and that, had the war continued, one of our neighbours or acquaintances would have denounced us to the Germans. But Father Soszynski's account of our survival helps me to see it in a different light. During the Holocaust it took only one person to send hundreds to their death, but it sometimes took one

hundred people to save a single Jewish life. For the first time I realise that by their silence the people of Piszczac had helped us to survive.<sup>1457</sup>

An unidentified village priest in the vicinity of Drohiczyn, on the River Bug, assisted Bella Bronstein, an orphan, by finding her a position with a local farmer under her new Christian identity, Antonina Bujalska. Later, the priest visited her when she was hospitalized, provided her with money, and invited her to sing in the church choir. Bronstein was helped by many Poles as she moved from village to village, even though she was recognized as or suspected of being Jewish. The priest also kept a Jewish housekeeper who went by the name of Wanda; she was *not* pleased at the arrival of another Jew.

I came by a Catholic church, and sat down to rest a while chanting a holy Christian hymn. An old man came out of a little house and invited me in. I accepted the invitation willingly. The old man was the warden of the church. After he gave me some warm food in his cozy little room I asked him if I could find employment around the place. He suggested that we go in to see the priest who might take me in as help to his housekeeper. It turned out later that the priest's housekeeper was also a refugee Jewish woman who was not too anxious to have another Jewess around ... (not unusual in those terrible days).

The priest however, was glad to help a child in distress and sent me to one of his rich parishioners, with a recommendation. I was accepted and was again rechristened Antonina. My new patroness was the wife of a rich farmer. She offered me the job in the cow barn and sheep shed, in which they had over eighty heads. I was too timid and scared to refuse the job although I knew that it was really too hard for a girl. I was willing to try and so I remained in the service of this family.

The churchwarden left me there, and I again felt at home with good people. At night I heard them talk about the horrible situation and how the poor Jews were being exterminated. ...

The rainy season began. Every day I had to take the sheep to pasture, and I returned soaking wet. Yet I didn't mind the cold or the discomfort of my wet clothes. I was determined to go on; until one day I caught cold, and got sick; but I was afraid to tell anyone how miserably sick I was. However, my kind mistress noticed how I suffered, and when she measured my fever it was above 40 degrees C. The doctor came and I was ordered immediately to the hospital. Now it was a struggle for life and all my thoughts were how to get well again.

One night I dreamt that my mother came to me and said that soon I would get well; I should then try to get away from this hospital as far as possible. The priest also came to visit me. All the nurses took an interest in me, but I avoided all their questions about my past. I was afraid I might be discovered. During my recuperation period, I got acquainted with a nurse named Sophia. This nurse suggested that I should not go back to the farm. Instead she offered me a place with her sister who needed help with her little ones. I was

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<sup>1457</sup> Armstrong, *Mosaic*, 573–83.

considering the change but dared not tell my former patrons, who were very good to me. When I was well again I decided to leave the hospital under cover of darkness. ...

Sophia's sister received me gladly and offered me her home. I kissed her hand and immediately began to attend to the two little girls, who soon took a liking to me. They never asked me who I was and where I came from. Evidently, the letter I brought from Sophia explained everything.

Once I was so exhausted from work in the field that I fell asleep on the spot. I was brought home to rest, and was not even scolded. I felt happy in my new home, and even attended religious services with all the other children of the village. Once when I came to church I noticed that I was being pointed at. I thought that again I was recognized as being Jewish. So after the services I slowly slipped out into the street and was again on the road, feeling once more the gaze of hostile eyes on me. As I was walking along I found myself before a group of German policemen, two of which turned out to be Polish. I thought that the best thing would be to go on walking calmly and briskly. But then I heard one of them calling me to stop. They said "Gut Morgen" rather politely and walked away. One of them, however, remained behind. Now, I thought, is the crucial moment. It turned out that this was a young Polish policeman whose name was Solick. He was a native of Drohichin [Drohiczyn] and recognized me.

"You are Jewish, aren't you? Your uncle's name was Sholem. I know all about you. Let me see your identity card."

Trembling I handed him the card with the name of Antonina Bujalska. Again he looked at me and said: "You are not telling the truth, but I shan't do you any evil. You better clear out of here, for somebody else might recognize you. Then, you shall be among all the other dead of your people." He let me go but wrote down the place where I lived.

Again I was facing danger. I didn't sleep all night, planning how to find safety elsewhere. I did not run away the next morning for I was hoping that the war would end soon. So a few months passed and it was already the eve of Passover, the season when good Catholic Christians go to church to confess their sins. I, too, went to the "father confessor" with the other children of the village.

On the way to church the children were discussing how and what to confess and made fun of the whole thing. Wanting to be part of the conversation, I decided to say something positive and affirmative. So I said that we must perform the duties of our religion, and urged them to hurry lest we be late. I was glad to be last to remain in the church after everybody had already gone and made as if I was praying devotedly. I drew the attention of a fine middle-aged lady who came over to me and asked why I had remained in the empty church so late. I took the opportunity to tell the lady about my sad lot. I told her how difficult it was for me to stay with the family I was living, and expressed the wish to find work with some other family, attending to children or taking care of an old woman. She immediately offered to take me with her as she had two children and an old mother.

I couldn't believe my ears, but here I was already walking by the side of my new benefactress. As we were walking the distance of about 3 kilometers from church to her home, the woman told me how her Jewish neighbors were taken out to be killed. I listened to her story of horror but made no reply.



When we came into the house, I met the old lady her mother. I bowed, kissed her hand and greeted her in the manner that good Polish Christian children do. Her reply was also cordial and traditional, but I noticed tears in her eyes and a benevolent smile on her face. Later, when all left for the fields and I was left alone with the old lady and the two children I again felt at home hoping that now I would resume a normal life as a refugee Christian girl under the name of Antonina Bujalska. The old lady took a liking to me and told me her own story. It appeared that she too, was Jewish, but eloped with her Polish lover when she was only 16 and never returned to her family. Now she would recall her old father who never recovered from the shock of his daughter's conversion, while her old mother perished in the Warsaw ghetto.

Hearing her mention Warsaw, I burst out crying. The old lady then told me that she knew right away I was Jewish by my appearance and gentle manners. ...

I remained with this family for several months, and everything appeared normal for nobody but the old grandmother knew that I was Jewish.

One sunny Sunday morning I was in the fields with the children of my adopted family and I felt fine. The children wanted me to sing for them, so I began a church hymn I knew well. Just then I heard the voice of the local priest who remembered me from the time I was in the hospital. He was glad to see me again and said: "Good morning, Antonina ... what are you doing in my parish?" I answered that I was already a year with the Timinsky [Tyminiński] family and was fine and happy. Complimented [sic] me on my singing he invited me to come and sing in his church choir. Without waiting for a reply he handed me some money to buy myself some decent clothes before I come to church.

I was in a real predicament. To appear in a church choir before many people where somebody might recognize me was dangerous. But it was equally dangerous not to accept the priest's invitation. I was also afraid to tell my patroness. So I decided to seek the advice of the old grandmother. I came to her room when everybody in the house was already asleep kissed her hand and sought her opinion in regard to the priest's invitation. The wise old woman listened carefully and advised me to accept the offer; buy new shoes, dress nicely and join the choir. She was sure my outward appearance could never betray my being Jewish.

Next morning I did exactly as the wise old lady told me to do. I washed and dressed neatly and went to the priest's house. From there I was taken by the priest's housekeeper (who was also Jewish) to buy the right sort of clothes for a good Christian choir girl. We bought a pair of sandals, a beret, and a nice blue knitted skirt. When I was all dressed, Wanda (that was the housekeeper's name) slyly remarked that now I really look like a "Jiduvka [Żydówka]" (a Jewish girl) ...

I was really frightened, but soon Wanda calmed me by saying that nowadays anyone who looked gentle and cultured is suspected as Jewish ... We both knew the truth about each other, but acted as if we didn't, and so parted, to our respective non-Jewish "homes."

I was nervous and impatient, during the last days of the week, thinking how it would be on Sunday morning—my hour of trial. At nine o'clock, when I heard the church bells ringing I was ready but jittery. I only plucked up courage when grandma, my old friend, wished me good luck saying: ... "Sing well. Think of me when you stand before the public, and have no fears."

So I did. Standing there among the other girls in the choir, I felt the priest's approving look, and saw the old man's lips whispering: "Dobje [Dobrze]" (Polish: well done!)

My first appearance was successful. The next time it was easier. They got used to me and no one seemed to question my origin. I was well liked in the village and at times I was even permitted to substitute my master on night watch duty with the other villagers. No one suspected my Jewishness. Yet, I was often tormented by the thought of being the only Jewess left in the world.

So the days and months passed. ...<sup>1458</sup>

Rev. Jan Auder, the pastor of the village of Ostrożany, about 30 kilometres northwest of Siemiatycze, was known for his protective attitude toward Jews. Hinda Sarashka (Seroszko), who was sheltered by Poles in that area, recalled, "Christians Treated Me Well."

In Ostrożany the pastor was Auder, a decent man, very good and smart. He summoned all the Christians to church and told them that one must obey the Ten Commandments, help everyone who is in need, first of all those who are homeless. If one does not want to help, then one should allow them to go their own way. Many Jews survived thanks to that priest.<sup>1459</sup>

After their escape from the ghetto in the town of Siemiatycze, Chana Lisogurski Broder, then four years old, her parents and her grandmother were given shelter by several Polish families, most notably the Kryńskis, in the hamlet of Morze, near Ostrożany. The Lisogurskis lived there for a year and a half in a bunker under a barn, coming out only late at night when it was safe to do so. The Kryński family gave them the sustenance to survive all that time, until the Soviets overran the area in 1944. When their Polish benefactors were at their wit's end because of the fear of German reprisals if their charges were discovered, in desperation, Mrs. Kryńska turned to her pastor, Rev. Jan Auder, for guidance. He told her, "What you are doing is very good. They are innocent people. If you can, continue to hide them."<sup>1460</sup>

The Sisters of Divine Providence (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Opatrzności Bożej, commonly known as *siostry Opatrzności Bożej*) sheltered Irena Likierman (later Bołdok), born in Warsaw in 1932, in Międzyrzec Podlaski, where Irene's

<sup>1458</sup> Shtokfish, *Sefer Drohiczyn*, 29–42 (English section).

<sup>1459</sup> "Christians Treated Me Well," in Shtokfish, *Sefer Drohiczyn*, 400–4.

<sup>1460</sup> Paweł Rytel-Andrianik, "Ratowali od zagłady," *Nasz Dziennik*, August 3, 2013; Paweł Rytel-Andrianik, "Trzeba uczcić ich pamięć," *Nasz Dziennik*, December 2, 2013. Chana Lisogurski Broder's account, "The Lisogurski Family," dated April 2005, was submitted to Pier 21, Canada's Immigration Museum, Internet: [https://www.pier21.ca/wp-content/uploads/files/stories/displacedrefugee/Polish\\_Displaced\\_People\\_and\\_Holocaust\\_Survivors\\_The\\_Lisogurski\\_Family.pdf](https://www.pier21.ca/wp-content/uploads/files/stories/displacedrefugee/Polish_Displaced_People_and_Holocaust_Survivors_The_Lisogurski_Family.pdf).

family had sought refuge. A Polish railroad worker the girl and hid her temporarily before she was given over to Mrs. Cydzik, a friend of her mother's. Afterwards, Irena stayed in two institutions run by nuns, an orphanage and a home for the elderly.

I came from the train station to Mrs. Cydzikowa's. I had jaundice. I remember that I looked completely different from the other kids. My mother's friend let me stay for a little while, but then she said, "You know that I have two sons. I can't take such a risk." She turned me over to the nuns. These were the Sisters of Providence—located at 69 Lubelska Street [in Międzyrzec Podlaski], a place donated by Count Potocki. There was a barracks for orphans there. I was the oldest, but there were thirty other little ones. The nuns knew very well that I was Jewish. I was emaciated, with little braids, yellow like a lemon because of the jaundice.

I don't know how long I stayed with those nuns. One time, Germans came and told the nuns that if they had any Jewish children, they would have to give them up. They ought to go back to wherever they came from. The nuns decided to send me back to the woman who had brought me there. You should have seen the expression on Mrs. Cydzikowa's face when she saw me. She said that she was very sorry, but that unfortunately, she could not take me in and that I should return to the nuns. I didn't really know what to do; I went back and forth maybe twice. ... I spent the night on the doorstep of a church mortuary. ... Gendarmes came in the morning. They asked, "What are you doing here, little girl?" I answered astutely that I was waiting for my mother, even though she wasn't there, of course. "Where's your mother?" "She went to the store."

They came back once—I was still sitting there. A second time—I was still sitting. They said, "Come with us, your mother probably won't come back." They took me to the town hall, to the mayor. ... I think his name was [Franciszek] Majewski. ... The mayor got the idea to send me to a home for the elderly, so that I could wait out the worst period there. He figured out that I was Jewish. When someone asked me what my name was, I answered "Irena Likierman." What more did he need?

At the home for the elderly, I sat under someone's bed. I would only come out to eat and wash myself. I was already there for some time (months or weeks), when I once went outdoors. ... In any case, some woman saw me and began screaming ... I ran back into the home, and the nuns that were running it, afraid that this woman would come after me, took me back to the sisters where I had stayed before. I spent the following year with them. ...

In 1944 the Russians entered. Some time before, when the front was approaching and there was nothing to eat, the nuns handed me over, as the oldest of the girls, as a servant to a woman teacher. I was twelve years old already. ...

When the front passed, I went back to the nuns (those at the orphanage, not with the elderly), and in 1945 I went to school. I had never gone to school before ...<sup>1461</sup>

Sister Romualda Józefa Kuliberda, who was head of the convent, offers an additional perspective on this rescue. In 1943, the nuns at St. Michael's Parish, who included Sisters Hermina Helena Jaskulska, Wincenta Wiktoria Kłęk, and

<sup>1461</sup> Account of Irena [Agata] Bołdok, née Likierman, "Back to Being Myself!," in Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 30–32.

Innocenta Janina Skowrońska, opened an orphanage for homeless children in Międzyrzec Podlaski. As a result of a denunciation, the Gestapo from Lublin arrived at the mayor's office to investigate. The mayor, Franciszek Majewski, quickly sent a confidant to the convent warning of the Gestapo's impending inspection of the convent; ultimately, he succeeded in convincing the Gestapo that the denunciation was fabricated. For a time, Irena Likierman was hidden in the church belfry.

The mayor also warned Rev. Stanisław Nosek, the pastor and dean, that he was sought by the German authorities for issuing false baptismal certificates to Jews. During the deportation of Jews from Międzyrzec, two Jewish families, originally from Żyrardów and resettled in Międzyrzec, escaped from a train bound for the Treblinka death camp and made their way to the convent, which was located near a palace occupied by the German authorities. The nuns sheltered the Jews for a short period of time, providing them with food and treating a Jewish child who had injured his leg when he jumped from the train. Afterwards, dressed as peasants, they were taken by a neighbour in a cart to the forest.<sup>1462</sup>

The Sisters of Divine Providence also sheltered Jews, mostly children, in their convents in Przemyśl, Rodatycze (near Gródek Jagielloński), Rzeszów. Skole (near Stryj), and Sterdyń (near Sokołów Podlaski). Three of the girls rescued in their convent in Przemyśl went under the assumed names of Maryla Lewkowicz, Anna Mikołajczyk, and Czesława Wolska. The nuns most actively involved in the rescue effort were Mother Laurencja Szwandron of Przemyśl, Sister Aurelia Prokop of Rzeszów, Sister Małgorzata Filak of Skole, Sister Jolanta Puchałka of Sterdyń, and Sister Kamila Kadłubkiewicz of Rodatycze.<sup>1463</sup>

Rev. Antoni Poznański, the pastor of Rodatycze near Gródek Jagielloński, sheltered a young Jewish man in the belfry of the church and, later, in the cemetery chapel, with the assistance of the aforementioned Sister Kamila Kadłubkiewicz. The man was shot by German soldiers who came across him in the cemetery. Rev. Poznański successfully sheltered the Redler (Riedler) family, consisting of

<sup>1462</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 448–50; Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 292–93, 308–11; History of St. Michael's Parish in Międzyrzec Podlaski, Internet: <http://mokolaj.miedzyrzec.pl/historia.php?i=207>.

<sup>1463</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 128–29; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 448–50; Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 74–75; Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 298–99, 321–22; Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 143.

parents and their daughter, Roma. The Jewish family took turns staying with the priest and the Zdobyłak family.<sup>1464</sup>

After her escape from the ghetto in Łosice, Stella Zylbersztajn took shelter in several villages in the vicinity of Łosice. In total, 25 Polish families helped her survive the war. The attitude of local priests proved to be beneficial in assuring her survival.<sup>1465</sup>

Having been taught by experience, we gave our most valuable belongings to Poles for safekeeping and they were all we had later. On the day that the ghetto was destroyed several women stood on the boundary in front of our window in order to help us out in some way. Out of the window we threw things that we had no hope of carrying off and we did not lose any of them. ...

I left my mother and fled to the garden of Mrs Piotrowska. This was only 200 metres (650 ft) from the market square where everyone had been assembled.

At noon Mrs Piotrowska's sister-in-law brought me milk and bread. But too many children knew of my hiding place so in the evening I went to Świniarków [Świniarów]. Along the way I had to ask where Mr Śmieciuch, our customer, lived. Village patrols showed me the way but guessed I was a refugee and asked Śmieciuch to send me on further. So, after spending the night and eating a good breakfast I moved on towards Wyczółki. There I knew the head of the hamlet and his family. People were already returning from Church after High Mass. I avoided large groups but joined a peasant who was walking alone. I asked him the way and he asked me about myself, where I was from, and so forth. He quickly guessed the truth and put his whole heart in simple words:

"You still have time to get to Wyczółki; the Kalickis will take you in later, too. In the meantime come to my place; in the bay of my barn I have a hiding place for pigs, and no one will find you there, you can hide there."

He was moved to pity at the thought of my pampered childhood and compared me with his daughter. [Her benefactor, a complete stranger, was Waclaw Radzikowski of the village of Szańków. At the mass he attended in the church in Łosice, the pastor, Rev. Stanisław Zarębski, had spoken of the terrible fate of the Jews and urged his parishioners to assist them: "All people are brothers and you should help everyone."] ...

Whenever I went my hosts always guessed [that I was Jewish] but we got on well together and they kept me as long as they could. Only when the entire village started frightening them [about the danger and possible repercussions for the entire village] did they pay me for my work and advise me where I should go further. I was looking after children in Kornica where once again my hostess was 'advised' to send me away for I would bring misfortune down on the village. Shortly after that I heard at the Sunday sermon: "Fear the Lord more than people. When they tell you to turn over your pigs, you know how to

<sup>1464</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 450; Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 383; Piątkowski, *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 5, 322–25.

<sup>1465</sup> Stella Zylbersztajn provided additional details about her rescue in her memoir, *A gdyby to było Wasze dziecko?*, especially at pp. 36, 52, 55–56, 58–64, 145.

conceal them though you could give them up without a sin. But when they tell you to give away Jews, the Germans must not be obeyed for God said ‘Thou shalt not kill’ and we must help them, give them food and shelter” ..., etc. I do not know whether or not the priest already knew something about me or whether he saw me under the organ loft but I do know that talk about me in the village died down. (And I know that he gave a lead by way of example more than by word—a female catechumen of the family of Abraham came to the presbytery daily for lessons in the catechism. [She later learned that Rev. Czesław Chojecki, the vicar, had informed the pastor of Radzików, Rev. Zygmunt Wachulak, that a Jewish woman was hiding in the area, and the pastor appealed to the congregation to extend help to Jews.]

Though I looked like a baited hare, the photographer took my picture and the community [county office] issued me a Kennkarte without any document of previous registration. Someone who wished me well brought me the card so that I would not have to show myself without need. I felt I was saved.

At Christmas the priest went around but he deliberately did not ask me about the catechism. On Christmas Eve, C.G. gave me verses of his sister and Rena X [Renia, Regina Hądyńska]. She was 13 years old. Father [Henryk] Sulej [from the Marian monastery in Bielany, a suburb of Warsaw] saved her and got her a Kennkarte and guardians. Since my hostess was too poor to keep me through the winter I got myself other work. It is with emotion that I recall that the poorest paid me best and showed me the most affection. How delicately Halina warned me not to tell anyone that “Mother used to bake *chala* [plaited white bread]” or pretended that she did not notice my ignorance about the Catholic faith! They probably all knew who I was but they didn’t let me feel it.

It happened that a woman known to have a long tongue recognized me to be the daughter of ‘that sweater maker’ ... I told the priest [the vicar] about it. He became gloomy for a moment, but then he immediately comforted me: “I’ll take care of that.” And the woman did not let the cat out of the bag.

During the bombing in 1944 a family I knew from Siedlce took shelter in the home of my host. They had previously concealed a small Jewess but she took ill and died, so they asked me to come to their home. After the war I gladly took up their offer because thanks to them I was able to resume my interrupted schooling. My former hosts and the priest [the pastor] continued to help me materially and gave me whatever I needed when I asked for it.

After so much proof of people’s goodness I come back to what I started from. Was that relative correct when she said that “If they could, the Poles would murder us all?” I know that there were such persons, although they were exceptions for me. But there were more true human beings ...

I once heard of a charge made by Mr. T., an engineer, that “Catholics concealed us in order to convert us to Catholicism.” Though I passed through many homes which I could not even list here, I never ran across this. I was taught my prayers and how to behave in church so that I might not give myself away; the rest was left to God and His mercy.<sup>1466</sup>

<sup>1466</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 288–89, 295–96.



In Konstancin, east of Łosice, Rev. Aleksander Kornilak, the pastor and dean, had a good relationship with the Jews and helped the Jews in the ghetto. The Polish police would often look the other way, thus helping the Jews to leave the ghetto and smuggle goods into the ghetto.<sup>1467</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Lily Fenster (née Luba Skórka) took refuge in Łuków, north of Lublin, where she passed as a Pole. With the help of Dr. Kornacki, she secured a job as nurse at the local hospital, run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. It was there that she happened to witness the execution of a priest who assisted Jews. (The identity of this priest is not clear.)

I endangered her life. It's true. I did. If they caught her [Mrs. Zając, for whom Fenster had worked as a maid], they would kill her and burn her like, that's what they did to a lot of Gentiles. I've seen they killed a priest, *ksiądz* Rosak ... He saved a couple of Jews ... in the parish there. They took him out. I was going [to the cemetery] with [a woman to] put flowers on the grave [of her mother]. She said, "Jesus Christ, that's *ksiądz* Rosak. What are they doing to him?" ... So we hid under the [grave] stones ... The whole city was crying that they killed [the priest] ... Shot in the cemetery because he saved some Jews.<sup>1468</sup>

Frieda Cukierman (later Halina Bartosiak) was born in Warsaw in 1921. She left the Warsaw ghetto shortly before the uprising in April 1943. She made her way to Łuków but soon had to leave when the Germans liquidated the ghetto there too. She was sheltered by a priest (who "helped her a lot") in a nearby village. She stayed in the rectory for several weeks, rested, and was cared for by the priest's housekeeper, who gave her a peasant skirt. It appears that the priest equipped her with a false birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Halina Chruścicka, which undergirded her pretended status as a Polish Catholic. Cukierman survived the war with the help of a number of Poles.<sup>1469</sup>

After leaving the ghetto in Łuków, Ruzhka Huberman was sheltered and helped at various times by Michał Nurzyński and his wife in the village of Gołębki, near Łuków. Mrs. Nurzyńska wanted Ruzhka to convert, and took her to see the parish priest in Łuków for that purpose. The priest declined to baptize Ruzhka, telling her that, if she still wished to do so, she could convert after the

<sup>1467</sup> Testimony of Louis Hofman, SFV, Interview code 13655.

<sup>1468</sup> Testimony of Lily Fenster, November 8 and 10, 1994, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/fenster/> (section 28).

<sup>1469</sup> Testimony of Halina Bartosiak, SFV, Interview code 31545.

war. When Mrs. Nurzyńska pressed the priest, he informed her that she could baptize Ruzhka herself.<sup>1470</sup>

Together with her mother, 10-year-old Estera Borensztain (later Mitrani, b. 1932) jumped from a train headed for Treblinka. They got separated, and Estera never saw her mother again. Helped by random Polish farmers, Estera managed to reach her mother's home village of Osiny, south of Stoczek Łukowski, where they had agreed to meet. There, "the peasants arranged among themselves that each would hide a Jewish girl for a certain period so that 'everyone would be guilty and no one could inform.'"<sup>1471</sup>

Estera obtained identity documents in the name of Teresa Wiśniewska. Since she was well known in the village, Estera eventually moved on. For a time, she was sheltered by Józef and Marcjanna Goławski, but had to leave when a priest warned them that someone (a non-local person) threatened to denounce her.

After staying with various other farmers, Estera arrived at the village of Kłoczew. There Genowefa and Bolesław Pieniak took her in, and she remained with this family for two years. Once again, her presence became widely known in the village. The local pastor, Rev. Stefan Kosmulski, extended his protection to the her out of sight when German raids were anticipated. After the war, Estera wound up in a Jewish orphanage and eventually settled in Israel.<sup>1472</sup>

Lea Starowiejska, a young girl with Semitic features, somehow made her way from Warsaw to Żeliszew Podkościelny, a village between Mińsk Mazowiecki and Siedlce. She was taken in there by Rev. Julian Borkowski, the local pastor, who taught her Catholic prayers so she could pass for a Polish orphan. The Górczyńskis answered his appeal for a Polish family to accept her. They lived in

<sup>1470</sup> Testimony of Ruzshke Huberman-Ayvan in B. Heller, ed., *Sefer Lukow: Gehelikt der khorev gevorener kehile* (Tel Aviv: Irgun yots'e Lukov be-Yisra'el, 1968), 365–96, translated as *Le livre de Lukow: 1200–1945, récits et témoignages: Pages de l'histoire sorties de l'ombre* (Paris: Association des Originaires de Lukow d'Israël et des États-Unis, 1987), 53–71; Testimony of Ryszka Huberman-Iwan in Polish, Internet: <https://sites.google.com/site/jewishlukow/relacje/huberman>.

<sup>1471</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 271; Testimony of Estera Borensztain, JHI, record group 301, no. 2989; Olga Orzeł, ed., *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady: Wczesne świadectwa 1944–1948: Relacje dziecięce ze zbiorów Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2014), 59–60.

<sup>1472</sup> Waldemar Piasecki, "Gdzie jesteś Teresko," *Dziennik Związkowy* [Chicago], March 9, 2009; Wojtek Maślanka, "Dlaczego, Teresko... dlaczego nie chcesz się spotkać...," *Nowy Dziennik* [Garfield, New Jersey], August 3, 2015; Wojtek Maślanka, "Szczęśliwy finał 44-letnich poszukiwań: Spotkanie po 44 latach," *Nowy Dziennik* [Garfield, New Jersey], November 26, 2016. Józef and Marcjanna Goławski were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2017; Genowefa and Bolesław Pieniak have not been recognized.

the hamlet of Łęki, and they treated her like a daughter. Everyone there knew that the child was Jewish. No one betrayed them.<sup>1473</sup>

On a summer day in 1944, in the village of Leki [Łęki] near Siedlce (Lublin District), Aleksander and Genowefa Gorzyński [Górzyński] were attending a memorial prayer service in the village church. At the end of the service, they learned that there was a Jewish orphan girl in the village in need of a home. Her situation touched their hearts. Aleksander was particularly moved since he himself had been orphaned at the age of four. The Górzyńskis, the parents of one child, decided to take in the Jewish orphan. The Górzyńskis renamed the little orphan girl “Halinka.” She had dark hair and Jewish features, but so did Aleksander and his son, which made it easier for her to blend in to the family. Despite the risk, they decided to leave her with them. Her real name was Lea Strowieska [Starowiejska] and she was from Warsaw. After her parents died, she had wandered through the villages, until she finally ended up in the village of Leki, where she came to the home of the priest. It was the priest who was the one to hand her over to the Górzyńskis. Aleksander and Genowefa treated her warmly and at once she began to call them “Mama” and “Papa.” She played with their little son and helped look after him, and they grew to love her. She remembers how lovingly they cared for her. After the war, her aunt came and took her; they also found her younger sister. She immigrated with the two of them to Israel.<sup>1474</sup>

Rev. Szczepan Zasadziński, a Home Army chaplain and priest of the Mariavite Church (a Catholic-based sect not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church), prepared a hideout under the church in the nearby village of Żeliszew Duży. It served as a refuge for members of the Polish underground and fugitive Jews. Rev. Zasadziński also arranged for a shelter for Karolina Mantel, the aged mother of a Jewish convert to Catholicism. She was housed in the village rectory in Wiśniew, near Mińsk Mazowiecki, where she adopted the name of Maria. A Jewish boy (b. 1930) had arrived at the Mariavites’ orphanage before the war. Despite his plainly Semitic appearance, he lived openly in Wiśniew throughout the entire German occupation without being delivered up by the villagers, as they were required to do. The parish in Wiśniew, which was under the care of Bishop Wawrzyniec Rostworowski (Fr. Maria Franciszek), extended help to many Jewish fugitives who came around begging for food.<sup>1475</sup>

<sup>1473</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1021; Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 304; *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady: Przywracanie pamięci / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust: Recalling Forgotten History* (Warsaw: Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland and Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2008), 53.

<sup>1474</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 557.

<sup>1475</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 566, 574–76; Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 304; Sławomir Gołębiowski, “Pochylając się nad historią,” *Mariawita*, nos. 11–12 (2004); Urszula Grabowska, “Mariawici i Żydzi—rzecz o pomocy,” *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 4 (2008): 442–65; Urszula Grabowska, “Stosunki mariawicko-żydowskie czasu Zagłady: Kilka przykładów z Mazowsza i Podla-

Dr. Maria Mantel [née Kłosińska] was the wife of a Polish officer of Jewish ancestry who was murdered at Katyn in the [1940 Soviet] massacre of Polish prisoners of war. Mantel, who lived in Warsaw and ran a private medical clinic in her home, invited her mother-in-law, Karola Mantel, 70, who until then had been hiding in various places in and around the city, to come live with her. Despite the danger to her life, Dr. Mantel took care of her mother-in-law, nursed her, and provided for all her needs. Because of the many patients that visited her clinic in the house, Dr. Mantel feared that the elderly woman's identity would be revealed. After a few months, Dr. Mantel moved her mother-in-law to an institution run by priests in the city of Minsk-Mazowiecki [Mińsk Mazowiecki], where she remained until the Red Army liberated the area in August 1944. In 1943, Mantel also hid Erwin Aleksandrowicz, an old acquaintance, in her apartment. He, like Mantel's mother-in-law, had also been forced to wander from one hiding place to another. Mantel also found a hiding place for Irena Aleksandrowicz, Erwin's daughter, until he found a more permanent place for her in an institution run by nuns.<sup>1476</sup>

Members of the numerically small Mariavite clergy were instrumental in rescuing a number of Jews in other places as well. In his memoir, Simcha Guterman describes how he, his wife, Ewa, and their young son, Yaakov (b. 1935), were sheltered in Warsaw by Mariavite nuns as well as other members of that city's Mariavite community. At his father's request, Yaakov (Jakub) was taken from Warsaw by a nun who travelled to Wygoda, a village near Łowicz, to visit relatives. There she arranged for Yaakov to live in the nearest village, with a family he tended cows for.<sup>1477</sup>

Sister Makryna (Natalia Siuta), a deaconess in Jędrzejów Nowy, near Mińsk Mazowiecki, who collaborated with Żegota, sheltered several Jews, among them Frajda Gewis, Jan Himilbach, and relatives of Ludwik Landau.<sup>1478</sup>

Kitty Felix (later Hart-Moxon) was 12 years old when the war broke out. She fled from her hometown of Bielsko, near the German border, with her parents and younger brother. They took refuge in Lublin, but were confined in the ghetto there. While in Lublin, Kitty's mother made the acquaintance of a priest,

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sia," in Zofia Chyra-Rolicz, Renata Tarasiuk, and Edward Kopówka, eds., *Żydzi na Podlasiu* (Siedlce: Wydawnictwo Akademii Podlaskiej, 2010), 341–55, at pp. 346–51.

<sup>1476</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 489.

<sup>1477</sup> Simcha Guterman, *Leaves from Fire* (U.S.A.: CreateSpace, 2015); Sicha Guterman, *Kartki z pożogi* (Płock: Towarzystwo Naukowe Płockie, 2004). See also the testimony of the Mariavite nun, Weronika Białkowska, JHI, record group 301, no. 3577.

<sup>1478</sup> Urszula Grabowska, "Mariawici i Żydzi—rzecz o pomocy," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 4 (2008): 442–65; Urszula Grabowska, "Stosunki mariawicko-żydowskie czasu Zagłady: Kilka przykładów z Mazowsza i Podlasia," in Chyra-Rolicz, Tarasiuk, and Kopówka, *Żydzi na Podlasiu*, 341–55, at pp. 342–46; Testimony of Natalia Siuta, JHI, record group 301, no. 6129.

identified as Rev. Krasowski, possibly Rev. Aleksander Krassowski, the pastor of St. Nicholas' Parish. "He saved our lives," Kitty recalled.<sup>1479</sup>

Rev. Krassowski sheltered them in the rectory and provided them with false identity documents identifying them as Catholic Poles. He also devised a rescue plan that required them to separate in order to increase their chances of survival. He found a hiding place for Kitty's father, Karl Felix, in Tarnów, but he did not survive. Kitty and her mother, Lola Rosa Felix, joined a group of Poles being sent to Germany for forced labour. Unfortunately, their guise was discovered at the factory where they worked. They were deported to Auschwitz, yet both survived.

Soon a small section of the town was allocated to the Jews and we all had to move into this section—which became the Lublin Ghetto. Leaving the ghetto area was punishable by death. ...

My mother, who was a qualified English teacher, made contact with a Catholic priest whose vicarage was opposite the Gestapo headquarters. She gave him English lessons in return for food. Crawling through the city sewers, she too risked her life, but without our endeavours we would have died of starvation. ...

Conditions were now intolerable there and we could not find anywhere to live even though there were constant deportations. Once again my father decided to take us out of the ghetto. Disguised as peasants with bundles on our backs, we walked out before the ghetto was completely sealed off from the outside world. ...

We hid in the forest some three weeks, living mostly on berries. Eventually [in September 1942] we made our way back into Lublin—not to the ghetto but to the vicarage of the Catholic priest, who had obtained non-Jewish documents for us that were to help save our lives. I now had a new identity. My name was Leokadia Dobrzynska [Dobrzyńska], born in Lublin.

The priest had worked out a survival plan, but we would have to part, as together we were unlikely to survive. My father was to go to Tarnow to be employed in a sawmill. My mother (now my aunt with a different name) and I would go into a Lublin collection centre where the SS were holding non-Jewish Poles they had grabbed off the streets to dispatch them to work in German factories. We got to the centre and soon found ourselves in a train, on our way with a group of Poles into the German Reich. Our destination was Bitterfeld, the ammunition plant of IG Farben.<sup>1480</sup>

**S**onya Bimko (later Sarah Salamon, b. 1922 in Lublin) was married to Stanley Litwiński, with whom she had two children, Henry and Barbara. Her father,

<sup>1479</sup> Testimony of Kitty Hart-Moxon, SFV, Interview code 45132; Kitty Hart-Moxon, Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, Internet: <https://www.hmd.org.uk/resource/kitty-hart-moxon/>.

<sup>1480</sup> Account of Kitty Hart-Moxon in Wendy Whitworth, ed., *Survival: Holocaust Survivors Tell Their Story* (Lound Hall, Bothamsall, Retford, Nottinghamshire: Quill Press in association with The Aegis Institute, 2003), 204–5. Also posted in the Internet: <https://web.archive.org/web/20110721162030/http://www.hmd.org.uk/assets/downloads/1251978650-120.pdf>.

Zeleg Bimko, had befriended an unidentified Catholic priest in Lublin who visited his home regularly before the war. Before Sonya's arrest and deportation to a concentration camp, her father had arranged with a priest to leave Sonya's daughter on the steps of a church on Zamojska Street in Lublin.

When Sonya returned to Lublin after the war, she learned that the priest had entrusted the child to a nursery. However, she was unable to find her daughter because the priest was arrested by the Soviets and imprisoned in the USSR. Her son, Henry, had been left in the care of a Polish woman. Shortly before the Soviets arrived, he was recognized as a Jew while playing in the street, and the Germans shot him.<sup>1481</sup>

After being separated from her parents and siblings, Szyfra Fiszbaum (later Stefi Altman, b. 1926 Lublin) obtained false identity documents with the help of a teacher and a priest in or near Lublin. When the Germans discovered that she was Jewish, they beat her and put her in jail. Apparently, the priest, whose identity is unknown, was hanged. Eventually, Szyfra escaped from a camp in Dorohucz, a branch of the Trawniki labour camp for Jews. After wandering about, she was taken in by a farmer in Płouszowice, near Lublin. She spent the remainder of the war with another Jewish family in a makeshift cave beneath the barn.<sup>1482</sup>

In Lubartów, a town north of Lublin, Jan Maluga, the sexton of the parish church, hid Mrs. Zylber and her son from Lublin in a cellar under the church with the approval of the vicar, Rev. Władysław Pardyka. After a stay of several weeks, they were moved to more comfortable premises, where they survived the war.<sup>1483</sup>

After escaping from the Lubartów ghetto during its liquidation in October 1942, Mojżesz Apelbaum made his way back to his hometown of Firlej, in the Lublin region. He turned to the local priest for help. Rev. Szymon Tomaszewski hid Mojżesz Apelbaum in the attic of the rectory until the arrival of the

<sup>1481</sup> Testimony of Sarah Salamon, SFV, Interview code 748.

<sup>1482</sup> Stefi Altman, Obituary, *Houston Chronicle*, December 4–5, 2017, Internet: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/houstonchronicle/obituary.aspx?n=stefi-altman&pid=187421957&fhid=7433>. It is not clear who sheltered Stefi Altman. Several Jewish families survived the war hiding with farmers in the village of Płouszowice near Lublin. The Mazur family sheltered 13 Jews. See The Mazur Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-mazur-family-0>. The six-member Roset family was sheltered by an unidentified farmer. See Alter Roset, "Grupa partyzantów spod Płouszowic," in Adam Kopciowski, ed., *Księga pamięci żydowskiego Lublina* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej 2011), 548–50; Testimony of Rubin Rosset, SFV, Interview code 37105.

<sup>1483</sup> Zdzisław Ligęza, *Lubartowskie drogi Armii Krajowej* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 1998), 50–52.



Soviet army in July 1944. Mojżesz's daughter, Dwora, was hidden in a pigsty. As a Home Army chaplain, Rev. Tomaszewski stood trial in 1946 on trumped up charges of the Communist authorities. Mojżesz Apfelbaum came forward to testify on his behalf.<sup>1484</sup>

Rev. Wincenty Szczepanik, the pastor of Kurów, near Lublin, assisted Hersh and Helen Kotlar by holding on to their money and paying out sums as required for their upkeep. He found Christian families willing to take in their two young daughters. The Kotlar family, consisting of the parents and two daughters, survived their long ordeal through the assistance of numerous.<sup>1485</sup>

The Kotlarzes were a Jewish family living in Kurów, Poland. Hersz and Chana had two daughters, Golda and Basia, and ran a large textile shop that had many non-Jewish customers. They were a well-respected family in the local Jewish community and had good relations with the local Christian leaders as well, particularly the Catholic priest, Wincenty Szczepanik.

When the war began Hersz was able to give the priest a sum of money for safekeeping, a resource which later helped him immensely. When the town's Jews were deported in May 1942, the Kotlarzes managed to stay behind with a small group of Jews who were left to work in the German dairy and to produce fur clothing for the Wehrmacht. This group, too, was murdered in 1942, but the Kotlarzes escaped in the nick of time.

By the time they escaped, Hersz and Chana were without their children. When the danger had become great, Szczepanik had suggested that the infant Basia be hidden with the Zarzycki family (recognized as Righteous Among the Nations in 1978<sup>1486</sup>) in a nearby village, while Golda, who was then 7 years old, was taken in by Aleksander Kozak and his wife, Janina. Aleksander was a forest ranger who took a liking to little Goldele and promised to take good care of her. He was a good, intelligent man, and there were other Jews hiding in the forest that was under his care, of which he was obviously aware.

After surviving the liquidation of the ghetto, the Kotlarzes went to the Kozaks to hide there as well. For a few days Aleksander and Janina kept them safe, but then, fearing for their own family's safety, they asked them to find another place. They said, however, that Golda could stay. The older Kotlarzes set out to wander the surrounding area in search of a place. It was winter and cold, and they were unable to find anything. A couple of weeks later, they returned to the Kozaks. The welcome was warm, and Aleksander even built them a hideout for the winter months.

<sup>1484</sup> Testimony of Mojżesz Apfelbaum, JHI, record group 301, no. 2013; Testimony of Dwora Appelbaum, YVA, file O.33/11159 (Item 11059030); Aleksander Baca, "Ks. Szymon Tomaszewski (1886–1957)—kapłan, który ocalił Żydów," *Głos Ziemi Urzędowskiej* (2012): 36.

<sup>1485</sup> See also Antoni Sułek, "The Righteous from the Barłogi Hut: The Story of the Kozak Family," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/righteous-barlogi-hut-story-kozak-family>.

<sup>1486</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 925.

In the spring, when more people were around, this became unsafe again. While her parents once again needed to find a better place, Golda remained at the ranger's house. The Kozaks told strangers that she worked for them, herding their cow, and she did help their cowherd, a boy named Janek. In the summer of 1943, however, someone reported the Kozaks to the Germans, and soldiers came on a raid. Golda was not discovered, but she could no longer stay there.

The Kotlarzes were therefore forced to pick up their daughter and go to the Zarzyckis, who let them stay together with both girls until the liberation. After the war they went to the United States. Chana, now Helen, Kotlarz wrote a book about their survival story, in which she sang the Kozaks' praises and said in general that there had been quite a few good people around willing to lend a hand to the persecuted Jews. She lived in California until the ripe old age of 102.<sup>1487</sup>

In her memoir, Helen Kotlar wrote:

The only money that was still ours was entrusted to the priest. ... The priest was a good-natured and just man. He was concerned about the great sufferings of the Jews. Hersh was friendly with the priest. ... When the Nazis began to confiscate Jewish belongings and the Polish zlotye [sic] was devaluated, Hersh endeavored to exchange both our textile and yardgoods for gold coins. Both of us realized that in the future there will be a need for this type of currency. Having succeeded in selling some of our merchandise for payments in gold, we looked for a place to hide our money as well as the unsold goods. The priest helped us immensely. He hid our gold coins for us in his house.

One day he said to us, "In case I will not be present when you will be in need of the money, it is important that you know the location of the hiding place." He also assured us that only one other person knows about the money. This person, he told us, is an honest man, reliable and trustworthy. ... Had it not been for the priest we would not have been able to make the payments to the peasants who gave us shelter. The priest was an honest man and was fond of Hersh because he knew of Hersh's good reputation in the community.<sup>1488</sup>

Two Jews who hid in the Skrzynice forest, near Lublin, received assistance from an unidentified priest they happened to encounter there.

The next morning, we watched a priest and a peasant roll a wagon into the forest to get firewood for the church. We went up to the priest and asked for some bread. The priest said he had no bread with him, but in the afternoon, when he came to the forest for more wood, he'd bring us some. Later, he did bring us bread and two bottles of milk. The bread and the bottles were hidden under the straw in the peasant's wagon, and he didn't know it. While the peasant was busy gathering wood, the priest told us to go to the wagon, where to look for the bread and milk, we found it and left.<sup>1489</sup>

<sup>1487</sup> Kozak Family, RD.

<sup>1488</sup> Helen Kotlar, *We Lived in a Grave* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1980), 53, 89–90.

<sup>1489</sup> Account of A.G. in Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, 169.

Gitel Hopfeld and her two young children moved from village to village in the vicinity of Bełżyce and Wronów, near Lublin, until the Soviet army arrived. While few farmers were prepared to shelter them for any length of time, almost no one turned them away empty-handed, and no one betrayed them to the German authorities. Eventually, the regional leader of the Home Army took them under his wing. Along the way they encountered the kindness of two unidentified priests.<sup>1490</sup>

Ryfka Goldiner, a newborn at the time, was sheltered by Stanisław and Helena Wiśliński in Bełżyce, near Lublin. Although the villagers were aware of Ryfka's origin, no one took it to the authorities. The local priest would not formally baptize the child as long as there was any chance her parents might still be living. In fact, they did survive the war, and eventually they reclaimed their daughter.<sup>1491</sup> The pastor of Bełżyce at the time was Rev. Tomasz Wilczyński.

An unidentified priest came to the rescue of Simon Grunwald (b. 1933), who worked as a hired hand, moving from one farm to another near the village of Sadurki, in the vicinity of Nałęczów, west of Lublin. When a drunkard for whom the boy had worked identified him as a Jew, the priest insisted that the boy, going by the name of Staszek Rudzki, was not Jewish. From that moment, no one questioned his origin.<sup>1492</sup> The pastor of Nałęczów (Bochothnica) at the time was Rev. Antoni Kargol.

Edwarda Kleinfeld (later Rorat, b. 1935) fled from Warsaw with her parents (who were professionals) and an older sister, arriving eventually in the Lublin area. After the Germans shot her parents, villagers urged the girls to run away. The village head of Olszanka, a prewar acquaintance of Edwarda's father, took an interest in the girls' fate. He arranged for each of them to work on separate farms.

After Edwarda left the first farm because of ill-treatment, she was taken in by Jan and Stefania Rorat, a poor, elderly couple. Having lost their only son in the war, they treated Edwarda like their own daughter. Her Jewishness was Jewish was an open secret in Olszanka and the nearby village of Krzczonów, where she attended school. Edwarda enjoyed the protection of teachers, who

<sup>1490</sup> Gitel Hopfeld, *At the Mercy of Strangers: Survival in Nazi Occupied Poland* (Oakville, Ontario and Niagara Falls, New York: Mosaic Press, 2005), 87, 99.

<sup>1491</sup> Anna Dąbrowska, ed., *Światła w ciemności: Sprawiedliwi Wśród Narodów Świata: Relacje* (Lublin: Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka-Teatr NN," 2008), 56–61. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 630–31.

<sup>1492</sup> Simon Grunwald, *Trilogie de la Persécution* (Paris: Éditions des Écrivains, 2000), 71–72; Testimony of Simon Grunwald, SFV, Interview code 26862.

would hide her when Germans came to the village. The parish priest, who was very fond of her, lent her books from his personal library; he did not press her to convert. Edwarda abided with the Rorats after the war, resisting efforts by the Jewish committee to remove her. Her sister also survived.<sup>1493</sup>

Thirteen Jews were sheltered by the Jarosz family in Piaski (then Piaski Luterskie), near Lublin. Marianna Krasnodębska (née Jarosz), who was awarded by Yad Vashem along with her parents and two brothers, recalled their rescue efforts and the help that Jewish fugitives received from many local residents, including priests.

“We had to help them,” she reflects on the Jews. “It was simply the duty of any human being. They helped us too, as is normal when living together.”

Marianna lived in Piaski, near Lublin. Her father was a clerk, one of the town’s elite; they let a tenement house and owned a large farm. There were eight children in the family. All of them were part of the underground from the very moment the occupation started. The Germans murdered four of Marianna’s brothers and her grandfather for harboring the guerillas. Her Home Army codename was “Wiochna.”

“With absolute confidence and with a clear conscience,” she states, “I can say that none of the residents of Piaski ever betrayed the Jews in hiding. They might have been too afraid to help, but would not sell one out. There were two informers, but they were executed by the Home Army.”

She enumerates the Jews hiding in Piaski. Nina Drozdowska from Warszawa [Warsaw] at Janek Król’s, Mrs. Makosiowa and her son at the Baranowskis’. There was a Jewish boy with the Świtacz family, a German or Czech Jew at the Siedliska [Jan and Aleksandra Pasternak rescued Johewet Netzman of Piaski in Siedliszczki<sup>1494</sup>], and an entire family at the Zajączkowskis’. Zajączkowski was of great help to the Jews, and so were priests, and also doctor Bażański, who provided them with medication and bandages. The friends of her family who were saved, with their help, also included: Godel Huberman, Mendel Plinka and Józef Honig with his father and brother.

She accounts their stories in her book “Stories Told.”

“Every war,” she says, “brings out either the heroes or the beasts in people. And people are the same, no matter the nation.”<sup>1495</sup>

A young Jewish woman from Bohemia by the name of Rutka was taken by members of the National Armed Forces from Piaski Luterskie to the estate of

<sup>1493</sup> Rorat Family, RD; Oral history interviews with Edwarda Rorat, April 15, 1995 and February 25, 1996, USHMM, RG-50.030.0319 and RG-50.549.01.0010, respectively.

<sup>1494</sup> “Piaski,” Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/piaski/5,history/>. Many other rescue stories are recorded in that article.

<sup>1495</sup> *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2008), 79.

Jan Koźmian in nearby Bystrzejowice. Afterwards, she was cared for by Rev. Piotr Stodulski, the pastor of Piaski. (He died in September 1942.) Eventually, the priest's housekeeper escorted Rutka to a hiding place in the nearby locality of Chmiel, where she remained until the arrival of the Soviet army.<sup>1496</sup>

Samuel Gruber, a Jewish partisan leader, described the attitude of a village priest in Pryszczowa Góra, near Lublin, in his memoir.

The [Jewish] partisans, the priest told the assembled mourners, were not robbers but fighting men, regardless of whether they were Christians or Jews. They were human beings who wanted to live and not be caught by the Germans. Accordingly, the priest warned his congregants, if a band of partisans came to your farmstead you should give them food and shelter for the night and not tip off the Germans, at least not immediately. You could always make the report the next morning after the partisans had left. Just be sure you don't inform the Germans while the partisans are still in your house, because if you do, you will end up having trouble from both sides, from the Germans for having taken in partisans, and from other underground fighters for having reported their friends.

It seems that the villagers took the words of their priest to heart, for the next day they treated us with unusual deference and hospitality. They gave us food, clothing, and even shoes, "so you can march better," they said. However, this was not enough for some of our men. They went out on their own and, instead of asking peasants for what they wanted, acted the part of thieves and holdup men.<sup>1497</sup>

Tema Rotman-Weinstock, who was born to a poor family in Frampol, a small town north of Biłgoraj in Lublin province, had only four years of schooling, but her Polish was fluent, and she was familiar with village customs. Penniless, she moved from farmer to farmer in the surrounding countryside, and from village to village—Trzęsiny, Gorajec, Czarnystok, Smoryń, Kajetanówka—in the surrounding countryside offering her services as a labourer. She too encountered the protective support of a priest, probably the pastor of Trzęsiny parish, when she hid in the village of Kajetanówka with a woman named Niedźwiecka. Of her numerous benefactors, only Aniela Chmiel and her daughter, Janina, have been recognized by Yad Vashem.<sup>1498</sup>

From the beginning of the Nazi occupation, Tema, dressed as a peasant, smuggled food from the countryside to the town to help support her family. During the last stage of the war she roamed the familiar countryside. She worked hard and had to move from employer to

<sup>1496</sup> Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne: "Żqb" przeciw dwu wrogom*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (Warsaw: Fronda, 1999), 118, 353 n.202.

<sup>1497</sup> Gruber, *I Chose Life*, 83–84.

<sup>1498</sup> Testimony of Tema Wajnsztok, JHI, record group 301, no. 7214; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 137.

employer, most of whom were hungry themselves and found it hard to feed her. Constantly exposed to raids, cold, and hunger, Tema fought against her feelings of hopelessness.

One winter, while searching in vain for shelter, she suffered frostbite in three of her toes. A peasant woman who could hardly support herself and her retarded daughter took pity on Tema and kept her for three months. But the days when peasants were willing to keep her were [because of their fear—Ed.] coming to an end. Tema's frostbitten toes continued to hurt her, and hunger made her grow thin. Finding solace in prayers, she persevered. For a while she hid out with a few meager provisions in the attic of a small roadside chapel. But hunger drove her out, and she went on until she found a hut. There she met a cousin who had come in from the forest to buy provisions. He told her that he and his wife lived in a bunker in the forest. Tema begged him to let her join them. He refused. She continued to roam the countryside, sick and often starving. When she was on the verge of collapse, kind peasants took her into their home. She describes her stay.

"I could not regain my health. I stopped feeling hunger, vomited a lot, and suffered from headaches. I was hardly able to work. And after a month, afraid to keep me, this peasant, Popko, directed me to a woman who lived on a farm with her daughter. This woman had a hard time running the farm, yet she was too poor to hire a farmhand. The village was called Kajtanówka [Kajetanówka], and the name of the peasant woman was Niedźwiedzka [Niedźwiecka]. Her hut was far from the main road, and the Germans were unlikely to come there ... She was not [visibly—Ed.] afraid to take me in; and I worked for her as much as I could. ..."

The year 1944 brought the Russian front closer. Tema's health continued to deteriorate. She could barely eat, yet she had to work hard. Her employer seemed pleased with her; then somehow the word spread that Tema was Jewish. Fortunately, no bad consequences followed because she found a powerful protector in the local priest. He baptized Tema and defended her against those who still saw her as a Jew. "The priest stood up for me, arguing that conversion was a wonderful Christian deed ... Slowly, I began to feel better, my health improved, and the wounds on my toes healed ... Then a miracle happened. I saw my mother, dressed the way she had been when we parted. She entered the hut, smiling, and said that we wouldn't be suffering much longer because on the 23rd of July the Soviets would come to liberate us." When Tema reported this vision to her employer and neighbors, they laughed at her. She herself began to doubt her dream or vision. But "the miracle happened—on July 23, 1944, the first Soviet soldiers came to our village and to the next one."

After the Soviets came, a group of women rushed into Tema's house, calling her Santa Teresa. Each wanted her to come and stay. Each brought delicious food, insisting that Tema eat it. Like the people around her, Tema believed in miracles and saw herself as a saint. Eventually, however, Tema decided to return to her Jewish faith. She settled in Haifa, Israel ... Tema stayed in touch with the peasants who were kind to her.<sup>1499</sup>

**K**rystyna Modrzewska (Mandelbaum), a 20-year-old Jewish woman who had converted to Catholicism before the war, and her mother, Franciszka Mandel-

<sup>1499</sup> Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, 227–29.



baum, survived with assistance of nuns and Rev. Paweł Dziubiński, the pastor of the Conversion of St. Paul Parish in Lublin. Rev. Dziubiński provided temporary shelter and other assistance to his former neighbours, the Mandelbaums. His housekeeper, Sister Pelagia, the superior of the Sisters of the Family of Bethany (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Rodziny Betańskiej), arranged for Krystyna to be housed in a convent of that order in Mełgiew, near Lublin.

Krystyna's mother was groomed as a Catholic at the rectory and then taken by Sister Jadwiga Szafran to a home belonging to the Sisters of the Family of Bethany in Międzylesie, near Warsaw. She lived there with a nun, passing as Maria Górka, a displaced Polish widow.<sup>1500</sup> Rev. Dziubiński also provided birth and baptismal certificates to Sara and Lea Bass, whose story is found later on.

(At the beginning of March 1941 the landlady of the flat found out that the Jews were to be deported the following day.)

She was afraid to share this news with anybody, but she simply had to tell us, her lodgers. ... Unfortunately, I have no illusions. We began nervously to pack our suitcases, but that of course was no answer. What were we to do with ourselves? My mother and I were invited for lunch on the same day by a priest (Father Dziubiński), our former neighbour, who throughout had been taking a genuine interest in our welfare and assisted us whenever he could and as much as he could. Mother was very upset and told him about our new trouble. He said not to worry at all for we could simply stay with him and wait until the deportation was over—if it really did happen—and we would see later what could be done. He said this in a matter-of-fact voice, as if it were quite obvious and needed no comment, though sheltering a Jew was punishable by death then. We stayed at his parsonage.

Our fellow lodger was promised a new place. Should her new flat prove too big for her, we could move in. But only my mother went to live with her, since I, following the priest's advice, got out my hidden "Aryan" documents and from 15 March 1941 began the life of a new person. The priest recommended me to Sisters [of the Family of Bethany] from a convent (in Mełgiew, near Lublin).

Winter passed. The spring of 1942 began grimly. One of the Sisters returned one day from Lublin with hair-raising news. Piles of bodies lay in the streets following several days' massacres of Jews in that town. Blood was flowing in the gutters. Ukrainian soldiers of the SS were breaking into homes, killing whole families, throwing children out of windows, ordering sons to hang their parents, husbands their wives. Terrible manhunts were taking place in the streets. "Your mother is probably no longer alive," the Sister concluded her story. It was quite probable. I prepared myself for the worst, and in the evening held council with Marysia (a clerk the author got to know in the Village Council, where she was working). She kept vital statistics records and promised to help me should anything happen. She already knew about the massacre in Lublin. They had talked about it in the Council. Marysia promised to search the archives for the necessary documents: somebody's birth and marriage certificates and to issue a provisional identity card in that name. I was to give it to my mother and perhaps with the help of friends she would be able to find

<sup>1500</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 653.

a hiding place somewhere. But there was a great deal of work in the office the next day and Marysia could not spare the time. The next day was Sunday. Thus it was Monday by the time we set off for Lublin. Marysia did not want me to walk about the town in those terrible days all by myself. She dressed me in a big country-style scarf, and I took a basket and we went by train to Lublin.

In Lublin, I went first to the priest who was in touch with my mother but he said he knew nothing about her. In the Jewish quarter terrible things were happening; it was impossible to go there. The four of us: the priests, Sister Pelagia (his housekeeper and at the same time Mother Superior of a convent), Marysia and I held council as to what should be done. The bell suddenly rang and my mother entered. She had come to say good-bye to the priest and ask him to take care of me. She brought a letter for me and her wedding ring. She was to report to Majdanek the same day at noon. All Jews with names beginning with the letter M were to go there. The priest ripped off the band from her arm.

“You’ll stay here,” he said quietly. And mother stayed at the parsonage. She was rapidly coached on how to be an “Aryan.” Sister Pelagia taught her to pray and after a few days sent her in the company of another Sister to Międzylesie near Warsaw, where the nuns had a small place. It was really of no importance, just two attached houses in a garden, looked after by one Sister. There was peace and genuine, literal poverty. Mother went to live there as an elderly lonely woman, a resettled widow. For the time being I could stop worrying about her. But I was filled by apprehension, by a nagging fear. ...

I escaped again to my village but, afraid to appear with my suitcases, went first to Marysia. She was really glad to see me and told me at once that the head of the village was sorry that I had left, that they were about to offer me a permanent position, and that I should not be afraid, everything would be all right! She would defend me if I were suspected, but I should keep up a bold front and on no condition admit who I was. Naturally! I went to the Sisters after I had arranged for a job at the Village Council, and though they were not particularly enthusiastic, they took me back—as a Village Council employee—into their uninviting home. There followed long days of dull office work. Marysia stood guard over my life, she constantly watched everything and everybody. When she saw through the window that strangers were approaching the office, she prudently hid me in the archives. Later she would come to inform me: “It’s all right. You can go back to the office, it’s a local girl dressed in town clothes.” Or sometimes: “Stay here. It’s some woman from Lublin. I’ll come again when she’s gone.”

Several times I had to hide with a beating heart among dusty volumes of old documents waiting for some “suspicious” person to go.<sup>1501</sup>

Sabina Irena Czerkies (née Ossowska) was married to Jakub Czerkies, a Jew who was forced into the Warsaw ghetto. Her husband was eventually sent to Treblinka, and thus disappeared without a trace. Just before the Great Deportation started in July 1942, two of her husband’s cousins—Ruta Helman (b. 1936), later Ruth Haberman, and Zdzisław Dynlacht (b. 1936), later Sigmund Dynlacht—managed to escape from the ghetto. Mrs. Czerkies, who had two chil-

<sup>1501</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 277–80.

dren of her own, took charge of hiding the two Jewish children. After she began receiving threats from blackmailers, Mrs. Czerkies left Warsaw in May 1943.

While in Puławy, she was arrested and imprisoned in Lublin. The Jewish children were placed in an orphanage in Lublin run by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś), where Ruta was known as Basia Ossowska. Through bribery, Mrs. Czerkies was released from prison after three months. In June 1944, as the front was approaching Lublin, she was asked to take the children from the orphanage. Ruta was placed in the home of friends in Puławy who knew she was Jewish, while Mrs. Czerkies took Zdzisław with her to Warsaw, where they survived the uprising together.

After the war, Mrs. Czerkies found Ruth at a Jewish orphanage in Piotrolesie. She handed the children over to the Jewish Committee. They were adopted by a Jewish family from the United States.<sup>1502</sup>

**D**avid Zabludovsky met other Jewish survivors in Lublin after the war. He recalls what they told him of the help they had received from priests and nuns.

I meet with remnants of the survivors of our nation. ... I speak with a few sisters that wandered in the forests and the priest of the village provided them in secret food and clothing; he consoled them and foresaw for them "God tells me that you'll remain among the living."

Everyone has the miracle of their staying alive and their experience: A Jew in mid-life, hidden in an attic in a house outside the city by a priest. On the day of liberation when the Russian forces entered the city, he wanted to greet the liberators, full of happiness and enthusiasm. To his misfortune, the priest removed the ladder from which he would descend on the same day. The Jew fell and broke his spine and limbs. ...

The kitchen manager of the Jewish town representatives in the branch where I got my meals, was a Jewish woman with Aryan features. Her husband, a well-known surgeon, was cremated with all the Jews. She wandered as a Christian; they said that only recently she left a cloister but still wears a crucifix on her neck. It's impossible to convince her that there is no reason to fear that as a Jew nothing bad will happen to her. But no reason would help. She has a fear complex and cannot escape it.<sup>1503</sup>

<sup>1502</sup> "Polin Museum Hosts Righteous Medal Award Ceremony," June 16, 2016, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/polin-museum-hosts-righteous-medal-award-ceremony>; "Małżeństwo Halina i Jerzy Wesołowski oraz Sabina Irena Czerkies uhonorowani tytułem Sprawiedliwych Wśród Narodów Świata," Internet: <http://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/malzenstwo-wesolowskich-oraz-sabina-czerkies-uhonorowani-tytułem-sprawiedliwych-ws-rod-na>; Testimony of Ruta Helman, JHI, record group 301, no. 997.

<sup>1503</sup> David Zabludovsky, "Horrors, Death and Destruction (Experiences of a Holocaust Survivor)," *Chosen Pages From the Zabludow Yiskor Book*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/zabludow/Zabludow.html>, translation of Nechama Shmueli-Schmusch, ed., *Zabludow: Dapim mi-tokh yisker-bukh* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Zabludow in Israel, 1987).

Rev. Józef Rukasz, the pastor of Żyrzyn, near Puławy, Rev. Stefan Bielawski, the vicar, and their housekeeper Stanisława Woś, fed Jews who came to the rectory begging for food. After German gendarmes took over part of the rectory, the Jewish fugitives no longer came around.<sup>1504</sup>

Assistance was provided by the pastor of Wąwolnica, near Lublin. Rev. Józef Gorajek, a Home Army chaplain, extended protection to Danuta Winnik and her seven-year-old son, Eugeniusz, who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto in 1942. Rev. Gorajek was awarded by Yad Vashem.<sup>1505</sup> At a Holocaust remembrance ceremony in Los Angeles on April 14, 1988, Rev. Gorajek stated:

In Wąwolnica, where I am living, before the war the Jews constituted fifty percent of the entire population. ... From the very beginning of the occupation, the Polish residents, being motivated by feelings of compassion and love of their fellow man, helped the Jews, even though helping Jews was punished with death without judicial process. At the beginning of the occupation, an organization called Ruch Oporu or the Opposition Movement, consisting of partisans to oppose the enemy, was created. I belonged to this organization as a chaplain. I did not use arms. At the organizational meetings, we decided on the type of warfare and assistance for the persecuted and this included the Jews. In order to save Jews, I issued [baptismal] certificates at the parish attesting they were Catholics, and thus enabling them to secure identity documents. Many of the Jews were placed with religious communities, for others we found jobs with a certain amount of security. ... There was real solidarity, solidarity and mutual aid between the Jews and the Poles ...

I recall from those days a rescued Jewish girl who, as a child, was found on the property of the Polkowski family.<sup>1506</sup> I advised them to help save this child since her parents had been killed. At night I baptized the child, recording another name for her in order to safeguard these good people who together with me, were risking their lives in the performance of this good deed. The Jewish girl now lives in London, England, under the name of Barbara Tennis. I am in contact with the Polkowski family, for whom a tree was planted in Jerusalem.<sup>1507</sup>

Eugene Winnik, one of those assisted by Rev. Gorajek, gave the following testimony:

I was born in 1933 into an affluent Jewish family in Warsaw. My father was a dentist and my early years were spent in a large home with servants and a nanny. When we were relocated to the Warsaw Ghetto, it was apparent to my father, David Winnik, that the

<sup>1504</sup> Sebastian Piątkowski, ed., *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 3: *Dystrykt lubelski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Lublin and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2020), account 146.

<sup>1505</sup> See also the entry in *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 246.

<sup>1506</sup> See also the entry in *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 630–31.

<sup>1507</sup> Rev. Gorajek's statement (in the author's possession).

only chance my mother and I had for survival was to escape. My mother was an elegant, beautiful woman who spoke perfect Polish without any identifiable accent and whose face revealed no specific nationality. ... A Christian family from Warsaw had friends in a town called Niezabitów. They did not inform these friends that my mother and I were Jews, and, one night we escaped from the Ghetto and went to live with this family. I never saw my father again.

I was expected to attend the small church in Wąwolnica. Father Józef Gorajek was the priest and he was aware that my mother and I were Jews. I attended church daily. When it came time to receive my First Communion, it was given to me by Father Gorajek. A group of villagers had begun to suspect that we were Jews and they went to the priest and said that he must not under any circumstances give me Communion because I was a Jew. The priest was very angry with the villagers. He told them that I was a Catholic, that I would continue to receive Communion and that they were never again to say such a thing. The villagers, having respect for the word of the Father, were silent throughout the years.

During the entire war, Józef Gorajek continued to protect me. My mother was deeply involved in the Polish underground and had formed a strong friendship with Stanisław Witek, the leader of the partisans in the village area. Together they spent much time away from the village and I was alone, under the protection of Father Gorajek. [Father Gorajek arranged for the young boy to care for the village's herd of cattle.] At no time did this courageous priest, who risked so much, ever encourage me to leave my faith or my people.<sup>1508</sup>

According to a further account by Winnik:

"The entire village could have been destroyed were it known he offered us protection."

Gorajek said he quieted the local townspeople after hearing rumblings that protecting was dangerous.

He said he took in other Jews during the war, placing them in convents and religious orders, and issued Christian birth certificates to Jewish babies he had never seen.

"I knew I could be executed, along with the entire village, without any question," Gorajek said. "I only meditated for a moment: Did I have a right to affect so many people?"<sup>1509</sup>

Towards the end of the war, Rev. Aleksander Zalski, the pastor of Sobieszyn, near Ryki, in Lublin voivodship, sheltered a Jewish girl whose documents identified her as Marianna Tymińska; her real name was Rachela Zonszajn (b. 1941). Cypora Zonszajn (née Jabłoń), Rachela's mother, had snuck her out of the Siedlce ghetto when she was one-year-old. Rachela was delivered to her mother's Polish friend, Irena Zawadzka, who lived with her own mother, Sabina Zawadzka.

For several months, Rachela came under the protection of the Albertine Sisters in Siedlce, her stay there having been arranged by a priest misidentified

<sup>1508</sup> In the author's possession.

<sup>1509</sup> Eugene Winnik, "Priest's 'deed of love' remembered," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, April 15, 1988.

as Rev. Szesewski (his identity has not been established.) As in other orphanages, conditions were far from ideal. The place was overcrowded, while food, medicine and clothes were in short supply. Rachela was removed from the orphanage when she fell ill.<sup>1510</sup>

Afterwards, Zofia (Olszakowska) Glazer, another Polish friend of Cypora's, took Rachela to Zakrzówek, near Kraśnik, where they stayed with Zofia's sister, Irena (Olszakowska) Egierszдорff, for about six months. In the early winter of 1944, Zofia moved with Rachela to Sobieszyn, a nearby village. The last part of their saga is related by Zofia Kubar, a Jewish woman who passed as a Catholic Pole and worked as a teacher in Sobieszyn.

To be safe and inconspicuous, we decided to teach not in the school building in Ryki but in a nearby hamlet, Sobieszyn. ...

The first Sunday after our course began, all the teachers were invited to the parish priest's house for afternoon tea. Although most of us were atheists, we accepted the invitation; it was customary for newcomers in small parishes to visit the local priest. For myself, the visit had a special meaning. For the first time in my life, I was going to meet a priest socially.

The Reverend Alexander [Aleksander] Zalski was a tall, somewhat bulky man in his forties. Although he was kind, good-humored, and hospitable, my fellow teachers—young intellectuals—immediately attacked his theological beliefs, taking full advantage of his lack of argumentative skills. ...

Suddenly we heard a child crying, "Father! Father!" A girl, about four or five years old, ran into the room. I had rarely seen a child of such beauty and natural grace. Her curly hair and eyes were raven-black. Her complexion was dark. There could be no doubt that she was Jewish. I was startled by her presence in the priest's home.

The next moment she was in his arms. Still sobbing and out of breath, she reminded him to tell the story he always told her at mealtimes. "Father" is the term by which people usually address a priest, but I felt that this child actually considered him her protector, as

<sup>1510</sup> See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 928, where the rescue efforts of several Polish women—Sabina Zawadzka, her daughter, Irena Zawadzka, Lucyna Rzewuska, Zofia Glazer-Olszakowska, and Irena Egierszдорff (the last of these women recognized in 2014)—are all acknowledged, but not those of Rev. Aleksander Zalski. See also the testimony of Irena Zawadzka, SFV, Interview code 32553; Testimony of Zofia Glazer, SFV, Interview code 33574. Zofia Glazer (née Olszakowska) requested the assistance Rev. Szesewski (?) to place Rachela in an orphanage run by the Albertine Sisters. See Amira Keidar, *Lalechka* (Israel: Amira Keidar, 2012; U.S.A.: CreateSpace, 2015), 147–49. Irena Zawadzka recalled that the decision to take in one-year-old Rachela Zonszajn in August 1942, when she was brought to their home by the child's mother, was spontaneous. "We didn't think about it. Someone we cared about had turned to us, so we had to help. We just had to figure out how." They did not take pains to conceal Rachela. "None of the guests we had were people we were afraid of. Family members and friends—they all knew about Rachela. You didn't think about fear, you thought about normal life." See The Zawadzki Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-zawadzki-family>.



she would have looked on her own father. Later I would see how he fed her, comforted her, and stayed by her bedside until she fell asleep.

During our first visit, Father Zalski seemed slightly embarrassed by the little intruder, but he did not reprove her. Solemnly he promised to tell the story later, and Marianna, happy and reassured, left the room. Afterward, he mumbled a few words of apology. Although as a priest he had no experience in raising children, he said, he had undertaken to care for this child because her parents, both dead, had been distantly related to him.

Did he realize that we knew the girl was Jewish? Was he alarmed because we had seen her? I do not think so. It seemed inconceivable that he would fear that we would denounce him. Besides, her presence at the parish must have been widely known; one could not keep such a secret in a small village. ...

I deeply admired Father Zalski's devotion to the Jewish child and his courage in harboring her. His risk was great, for the punishment meted out by the Nazis was merciless. I personally knew of seven Sisters of Charity at the orphanage of Saint Stanislaus in Warsaw who were executed for hiding Jewish children. ... The Polish priests were widely engaged in helping Jews. This was but a part of their activities in the Resistance for which they were subsequently persecuted by the Nazis. More than 4,400 Catholic priests and brothers were put into concentration camps, where half of them were killed. Of 1,100 nuns imprisoned in concentration camps, about 240 perished.

I regretted that I never had the opportunity to express my feelings to Father Zalski, but the Jewish child was not a topic to be discussed then. ...

Only recently I learned about the fate of Father Zalski and the child. Father Zalski stayed in his parish until his death in the 1960s. Little Marianna, whose real name was Rachela, survived. Her mother had taken poison in Siedlce during the deportation. An old school friend of her mother's had rescued the child. Later, after being passed from hand to hand, she was entrusted to Father Zalski's care. In 1946, with the help of Mrs. [Zofia] Glazer-Olszakowska, Marianna was sent to an uncle in Israel and was brought up in a kibbutz there. Eventually, she studied economics, married, and has two children. Mrs. Glazer-Olszakowska visited her in Israel and reported that she had become a highly respected civil servant. I never saw her after that early spring of 1944 in Father Zalski's parish house in Sobieszyn.<sup>1511</sup>

A reference to an unidentified priest in the nearby town of Ryki crops up in the rescue narrative of Leah Springer (later Fein, b. 1924).

During the German occupation, Irena Janicka (née Życka) ran her family estate in Ułęż Górny (Garwolin County, Lublin District). In 1941, Irena was contacted by a friend who had had considerable business dealings before the war with David Springer, from the city of Ryki. Through the initiative of David's son, Israel, who was later murdered, and with the assistance of the local priest, his sister, Leah (later, Fein), received a birth certificate under the name of Helen Wiśniewska. Irena Janicka was contacted by her friend, who told her that Leah was Jewish, and decided to employ her, providing her with the board, food, and clothes. Irena informed other members of her staff that Leah, who spoke impeccable Polish and regularly attended services at the church, was a young orphan girl. Irena Janicka also

<sup>1511</sup> Kubar, *Double Identity*, 154–58.

sheltered on her estate an elderly Jewish couple who used the name of Wójcicki during the war and, for shorter periods of time, other Jews from the nearby village of Żabianka. She took no financial payment for the assistance she gave to the Jews and, according to her daughter, was motivated by her desire to help people in need. After the liberation, Leah Springer left the estate and immigrated to Australia.<sup>1512</sup>

Rev. Jan Poddebniań of Krężnica Jara, near Lublin, was the chancellor of the Lublin diocesan curia. He helped a number of Jewish youths, among them Lea Bass, her sister, Sara Bass (later Frenkel), Manfred Frenkel, and Sara Kraus (later Kolkowicz). With his assistance, the Bass sisters were able to register for labour in Germany as Catholic Poles. Rev. Poddebniań corresponded with them to dispel suspicion about their Jewishness, but their lack of discretion could easily have cost him his life. He was awarded by Yad Vashem. Rev. Paweł Dziubiński, a prelate from Lublin, provided the Bass sisters with false birth and baptismal certificates.<sup>1513</sup>

In September 1942, during the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto, 20-year-old Sara Bas [Bass] and her 13-year-old sister, Lea, escaped from the ghetto after their entire family had perished. Since none of their Polish acquaintances were prepared to take them in, they roamed from village to village for about a month vainly trying to find shelter. At night they hid in abandoned ruins and in Lublin's old cemetery. In early November 1942, when they were on the verge of despair, Władysław [Władysław] Janczarek, an old acquaintance of their father's, noticed them and approached them cautiously, offering them help. Since Janczarek was unable to put the two girls up in his home, he arranged to meet with them the next day and bring them two Aryan birth certificates of relatives of the same age, so that they could register for work in Germany. The two sisters, however, continued wandering around Lublin for several months until they found work in the home of a Polish woman. Since they were well known in their hometown, the sisters feared discovery and therefore decided to ask the nuns who worked in the local hospital for help. The nuns [Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, one of whom was Sister Maria Gulbin<sup>1514</sup>] put them in touch with Jan Poddebniań [Poddebniań], a priest, who advised them to register for work in Germany. Enlisting the help of the Chief Recruitment Officer, Father Poddebniań arranged for the two sisters to be sent to Germany, where they worked in a hospital for foreign workers until the area was liberated. Father Poddebniań made a point of sending them letters to allay suspicion as to their identity.<sup>1515</sup>

<sup>1512</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 563.

<sup>1513</sup> Dąbrowska, *Światła w ciemności*, 194.

<sup>1514</sup> Testimony of Rev. Jan Poddebniań in Dąbrowska, *Światła w ciemności*, 191–94. The Bass sisters wrote postcards from Germany in which they foolishly addressed Rev. Poddebniań as “Mr. Priest,” a usage that genuine Polish Catholics would never employ, and they thanked him for what he had done for them. See also Janczarek Władysław, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-janczarek-wladyslaw>.

<sup>1515</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 296–97.

The aforementioned Sara Kraus (later Kolkowicz, b. 1929) encountered many helpful Poles after leaving her native Warsaw. She was sheltered for a brief period in the diocesan chancery in Lublin, where she worked as a housekeeper's helper. The chancery was the seat of the diocesan vicar general, Rev. Józef Kruszyński. Sara decided to return to Warsaw, and from there, she went to work in Germany posing as a Christian Pole.<sup>1516</sup>

Rev. Jan Gosek, the pastor of Kanie, near Chełm, provided false documents that enabled a Jewish woman to pass as a Pole and survive the war.

Until the war broke out, the five members of the Wagner family lived in the village of Wolka Kanska [Wólka Kańska] near the city of Chełm [Chełm], in the Lublin district, and had been friends of the Puch family. During the occupation, after the Germans began liquidating the Jews, the Wagner family tried unsuccessfully to find a place to hide in the area. By 1942, of the entire family, only the 15-year-old daughter, Gita Wagner (later Stanisława [Stanisława] Konopka), remained alive. In her despair, she arrived at the home of Antoni and Maria Puch, who, although unable to take her into their own home, did not wish to abandon her to her fate. With the help of the local priest [Rev. Jan Gosek, the pastor of Kanie<sup>1517</sup>], they arranged to have a Christian birth certificate issued to her with their own surname. Their daughter, Danuta, who was a young woman at the time, took responsibility for the care of Gita upon herself and tried to find a safer place for her to hide. Despite her young age, Danuta set out on her own at her parents' behest to distant Warsaw to the home of Janina Wroblewska [Wróblewska], an acquaintance of Jewish extraction who was living there under an assumed identity. After Wroblewska agreed to take Gita under her wing, Danuta traveled with her by train to the capital and got her a job with a dentist. Gita Wagner stayed with Wroblewska until the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944 and survived. After the war, Gita Wagner remained in Poland.<sup>1518</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Diana Topiel (later Czerska, b. 1935) and her parents made their way to All Saints Church, where they were provided with false identity documents. They were then directed to separate safe houses. Diana was sheltered by several Polish families. She was arrested in a street raid (*łapanka*) as a Pole, and was sent to the Majdanek concentration camp without exposing her Jewish identity. Her escape from Majdanek was orchestrated by the Polish underground. She was taken to the parish rectory in Urzędów, near Kraśnik, where she was passed off as the relative of a priest identified as Rev. Świetlik. She remained in his care for about two months before

<sup>1516</sup> Sara Kraus-Kolkowicz, *Dziewczynka z ulicy Miłej: Albo świadectwo czasu Holokaustu* (Lublin: Agencja Wydawniczo-Handlowa AD, 1995), 46. Surprisingly, even a moderate historian charged—falsely—that, because of its highly favourable portrayal of Poles and bad experiences with Jews, this memoir was an “antisemitic fabrication.” See Paulsson, *Secret City*, 22.

<sup>1517</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 440. See also Dąbrowska, *Światła w ciemności*, 348–50.

<sup>1518</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 649.

returning to Warsaw.<sup>1519</sup> The priest in question may have been Rev. Jan Łazicki, who was the local pastor at that time.

Irena Sznycer (later Rina Feinmesser) was just two years old when the war broke out. Before her arrest in Kraków, Irena's mother succeeded in arranging for the child's aunt in Warsaw to take custody. A Polish woman there was giving shelter. However, because of Irena's Semitic features, the Polish woman asked a nun to take the child off her hands, and Irena was placed in an orphanage. When the other children became aware of Irena's Jewish origin, her aunt decided to remove her from the orphanage. She asked an acquaintance, Ksawera Brogowska, who was working as a housekeeper in Warsaw, to help find a safe place.

With the assistance of Maria Leszczyńska, Brogowska took the child to her brother's home in the village of Bełżec, near Tomaszów Lubelski. Irena remained with Maciej and Cecylia Brogowski, who had three children of their own, for over three years. They treated her like a daughter. "I was well cared for by that lady [Cecylia Brogowska] and was not afraid of anything," Irena recalled. "Although the neighbours knew I was Jewish, this lady had no enemies so nothing [bad] could happen."<sup>1520</sup>

Irena lived there openly, and many of the villagers understood that she was Jewish. In order for the child to pass as a Pole in the event of a German inspection, the Brogowskis turned to Fr. Ireneusz (Kazimierz Kmiecik)—the administrator of the local parish and a member of the Reformed Franciscan order—to have Irena baptized. After the German occupation ended, Irena was placed in a Jewish orphanage and later settled in Israel.<sup>1521</sup>

Remarkably, Irena Sznycer was not the only Jew to survive the occupation within sight of the notorious Bełżec death camp. Julia Pępiak sheltered Salomea Helman, her former neighbour and friend, and Salomea's young daughter Bro-

<sup>1519</sup> Testimony of Diana (Topiel) Czerska, YVA, file 0.33/1310 (Item 3555462); Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 244.

<sup>1520</sup> Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu—Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35 (1993): 104, based on the testimony of Irena Schnitzer (Sznycer), JHI, record group 301, no. 4638.

<sup>1521</sup> The rescuers of Irena Sznycer, Maciej and Cecylia Brogowski, were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2008; Ksawera Brogowska and Maria Leszczyńska were not recognized. See Maciej and Cecylia Brogowski, RD; The Brogowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-brogowski-family-0>; "Zagłada Żydów Biecha—Sprawiedliwi wśród Narodów Świata," Internet: <http://krzyprzy.zso4.gliwice.pl/zaglada/sprawiedliwi/sprawiedliwi.htm>; Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 113 n.205.

nia (b. 1938), a circumstance that also became widely known in the village.<sup>1522</sup> Pępiak's son, Zygmunt (b. 1919), known as Fr. Sebastian, was a Reformed Franciscan priest. In regions inhabited by Germans and Austrians, no such rescues occurred in the environs of concentration camps or, indeed, in any German or Austrian village. This contrast deserves emphasis.

Rev. Leon Janczewski, the pastor of Narol, near Tomaszów Lubelski, provided false birth and baptismal certificates to some Jewish women from the nearby village of Łówcza. After this had come to the attention of the German authorities, the priest fled for his life. He found refuge in Lwów, first in a monastery of Catholic priests of the Armenian rite and later in that of the Reformed Franciscans. In 1943, after the danger had apparently subsided, Rev. Janczewski returned to Narol.<sup>1523</sup>

Lucia Grinszpán (later Rotman) was thirteen years old when she travelled from Lwów to Lubaczów to join her sister, Miriam. She asked her brother-in-law, Meir Szenker, to get Aryan papers for her, so he turned to Zofia Pomorska, the Polish woman with whom they were staying: "... she had pity upon us, and she sees it as necessary to save us. She succeeded in obtaining a document for me from the local priest, in the name of a Polish girl who was exiled to Russia, since her father was a Polish sergeant."

Lucia then travelled to Przemyśl, where the woman's sister "greeted me nicely. She had already expected my arrival, and was ready to help me." Under her new identity of Janina Kogut, Lucia volunteered for labour in Germany, where she survived the war, passing as a Christian Pole. It is noteworthy that the town's "greatest anti-Semite," Zofia Pomorska, played a critical role in the Szenkers' survival.<sup>1524</sup>

<sup>1522</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 597; Zuzanna Schnepf-Kolacz, "Pomoc Polaków dla Żydów na wsi w czasie okupacji niemieckiej: Próba opisu na przykładzie Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata," in Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Zarys krajobrazu: Wiek polski wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), 236; Karolina Dzieciołowska, "I forgot about the terror, the fear and the consequences." The Story of Julia Pępiak," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/i-forgot-about-terror-fear-and-consequences-story-julia-pepiak>.

<sup>1523</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 286; Henryk Wolańczyk, "Narolski proboszcz," *Kresowiak Galicyjski*, no. 4 (161) (April 2010): 6.

<sup>1524</sup> Lucia Rotman-Greenspan, "A Nine Year Old Girl Bears the Burden of the Generation," Chaim Rabin, ed., *Lizhensk: Sefer zikaron le-kedoshei Lizhensk she-nispu be-shoat ha-natsim* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Leżajsk in Israel, 1970), 54 ff., translated as *Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Leżajsk Who Perished in the Holocaust*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lezajsk/Lezajsk.html>; Zofia Pomorska, RD.

According to Polish sources, the priests from the Lubaczów parish gave assistance, especially food, to Jews who had escaped from the ghetto.<sup>1525</sup>

Ludwik Ehrlich, a renowned jurist from the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów and a convert to Catholicism, was sheltered by a number of Poles including Rev. Wojciech Wanielista, the pastor of Bieliny, near Nisko, where he was active in the Home Army's Bureau of Information and Propaganda. After his capture by the Germans, Ehrlich was freed from the jail in Biłgoraj on September 24, 1943, along with 72 other prisoners, by a Home Army unit under the command of Major Tadeusz Sztumberk-Rychter. Subsequently, Ehrlich joined the Podkowa Home Army unit stationed in Puszcza Solska (Sól forest), where he monitored radio broadcasts.<sup>1526</sup> For a short time, Ehrlich found refuge at the Franciscan (Bernardine) monastery in Radecznica, near Zamość.<sup>1527</sup>

Regina (Rivka) Sznajderman (later Tauber, b. 1917) survived the war by moving from place to place, assuming the identity of a Christian woman and taking on various jobs. For a period of several weeks, she was hidden in the parish rectory in Chodel, near Opole Lubelskie, by Rev. Antoni Biernacki's housekeeper, Kasia, with the priest's knowledge. Since Chodel was her hometown, Regina could not venture out of the rectory, which made remaining there very difficult for her. Polish friends helped her to find employment in distant locations.<sup>1528</sup>

The immediate reaction of Jews who witnessed the liquidation of the ghettos is a troubling matter. In October 1942, during the liquidation of the ghetto in Opole Lubelskie, two young Jews escaped and arrived unexpectedly at the home of the vicar, Rev. Władysław Krawczyk.

<sup>1525</sup> Wincenty Urban, *Droga Krzyżowa Archidiecezji Lwowskiej w latach II wojny światowej 1939–1945* (Wrocław: Fundacja "Semper Fidelis," 1983), 120.

<sup>1526</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 1st ed., 459; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1029, 1034. Ludwik Ehrlich's daughter, Konstancja (Constance) Krystyna, became an Ursuline nun (of the Roman Union) known as Sister Emilia, and worked under Pope John Paul II at the Vatican. Konstancja Ehrlich (b. 1924 to an American Episcopalian mother) was raised as a Catholic and attended an Ursuline convent school. She too had a tumultuous wartime experience. While living in Warsaw under the care of Maria Jezierska, she was caught in a street round-up and imprisoned in Majdanek. Her release was secured through a bribe. She returned to Warsaw, enrolled in an Ursuline school, took part in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising as a Home Army nurse, and was deported to the Bietigheim slave labour camp near Stuttgart. See Aleksandra Klich, "Papież i zakonnica," *Gazeta Wyborcza. Magazyn Świąteczny*, April 26, 2011.

<sup>1527</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 478.

<sup>1528</sup> Testimony of Regina Tauber, SFV, Interview code 26587.



When the ghetto in Opole Lubelskie, in the county of Puławy, was being finished off in 1942, I had the misfortune of seeing from the church tower the market square of the ghetto which was covered with corpses and blood. They [the Jews] had all turned toward the church when they were being shot at. A few days earlier some had visited the church and said that this was their nemesis for having once called out: “His blood be on us, and on our children.” [Matthew 27:25—Ed.]. The Schupo, dressed in green, shot them. Our police, dressed in navy, refused to do so. The dean, who had also ascended the tower, almost fainted. I held on to the frame of the window. We descended quickly but awkwardly since I had to hold up the dean.

It is difficult not to have a great deal of sympathy for that nation and it is entirely understandable that one would have wanted to protect them from that historical nemesis and hatred. That day, the 23rd of October 1942, when they were being liquidated, two young Jews managed to arrive at my home. I had only one room. The office of the Gestapo was next door and a [German] commander occupied the dwelling above mine. The building was well guarded. The punishment for hiding a Jew was death. Despite this, I fed them, gave them provisions, and around midnight led them across some fields to a forest about three kilometres away. [Polish] partisans were already there, among them the son of the local rabbi.<sup>1529</sup>

Here is another eyewitness testimony—that of Maria Bill-Bajorkowa of Wieliczka:

Beaten, kicked, shot, fainting, the Jews fall to the ground. They cry, they scream, we hear their voices: “Jesus Christ, since our Jehovah has forsaken us, take pity on me and I will convert to Your faith.” Others cry out: “If there was a Jehovah he would not have allowed what they are doing to us happen. There is no Jehovah, there is no God. We perish and no one helps us. Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.”<sup>1530</sup>

The reaction of rabbis was more steadfast. When the Jews of Brańsk were being rounded up for annihilation at Treblinka on November 7, 1942, that town’s chief rabbi, Itzhak Zev Cukerman, addressed the crowds with the following words: “The judgment was passed in Heaven. We have to die. But I believe that those who survive will inform the world of our suffering.”<sup>1531</sup> Similarly, in the face of imminent death, Rabbi Shimon Rozovsky was reported to have said to the Jewish community leaders of Ejszyski: “Jews, you see our end is

<sup>1529</sup> Władysław Krawczyk, “Żydzi zwracali się ku kościołowi,” *Opoka* [London], no. 11 (July 1975): 83.

<sup>1530</sup> Shmuel Meiri, ed., *The Jewish Community of Wieliczka: A Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: The Wieliczka Association in Israel, 1980), 75.

<sup>1531</sup> *The Story of Two Shtetls, Brańsk and Ejszyski: An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Northeastern Poland during World War II*, Part 2 (Toronto: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1998), 78.

approaching rapidly ... God did not want us to be saved. Our destiny has been decided, and we must accept this.”<sup>1532</sup>

Rabbi Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira, a prominent Hasidic leader, wrote in the Warsaw ghetto: “We must persist in our belief that whatever God does is exactly what must be done.”<sup>1533</sup> A Jewish survivor, now an American sociologist, writes:

During the tragic moments in the Bobowa ghetto [near Gorlice], the rabbis had one standard answer. All the rabbis I ever met or saw said the same thing: “Children, go and pray because the day will come when the Messiah will appear and he will protect us. The Lord knows what he is doing. He will help us.” There wasn’t one rabbi or other leader I know of who said to his people: “Children, let’s take up arms. Let’s train ourselves. Let’s fight. Let’s barricade ourselves and save our lives. Let’s not obey the German laws any longer.”<sup>1534</sup>

As one scholar has observed, “There are many such stories in the literature, describing rabbis who encouraged their followers on the way to execution by singing, reciting psalms, even dancing, so as to prepare themselves spiritually for the great honour and privilege that God had given them—to die for *kidush hashem*.”<sup>1535</sup>

The theological ramifications of accepting the tragedy that befell the Jews as the will of God—something that strikes one as particularly harsh and glaring in retrospect—are explained from the traditional Judeo-Christian vantage point by Leon Wells, a Jewish survivor from Lwów.

I read the Lubavitch in ’43, ’44—it’s not proper to mention—Soloveitchik and all the others, they said the Holocaust was sent from heaven and did good because it is the time of the coming of the Messiah. Even the Lubavitch in ’43, I have here the document where he said enjoy, enjoy, because the Messiah is coming. And he said that Haman does not come by himself. He’s sent by God. I said to a major Jewish theologian recently, “Why are you only condemning the Pope? Or about what Cardinal O’Connor in New York said about the Holocaust?” I said, “Didn’t the Lubavitch and others say the same, that it’s God’s will and we should believe it? It is only cleansing, because of our sins. God threw us out from our land because of our sins.” And he said, “Yes, if you are a religious man and if I would be the Pope, I couldn’t behave differently because I cannot say it’s not God’s will because he can stop everything.” I said, “Fine. So why don’t you as a leading Jewish theologian come out

<sup>1532</sup> Perets Alufi and Shaul Kaleko (Barkeli), eds., *Eishishok, koroteha ve-hurbanah: pirke zikhronot ve-eduyot (be-tseruf temunot)/liker* (Jerusalem: Committee of the Survivors of Eishishok in Israel, 1950), translated into English by Shoshanna Gavish, “*Aishishuk*”; *Its History and Its Destruction: Documentaries, Memories and Illustrations* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1980), 62.

<sup>1533</sup> Rabbi Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira, *Sacred Fire: Torah from the Years of Fury 1939–1942* (Northvale, New Jersey and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 2000), 306.

<sup>1534</sup> Samuel P. Oliner, *Restless Memories: Recollections of the Holocaust Years* (Berkeley, California: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1986), 98.

<sup>1535</sup> Jonathan Webber, “Jewish Identities in the Holocaust: Martyrdom as a Representative Category,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13 (2000), 140.

and ask why are we jumping so much about the Pope and all?" He said, "What should I do? It is the people, it is their will. They know what they want to hear and I know what I want." And I said to myself, it is theological, they have no other choice. There is no other choice. If you believe in a God, then it's the will of God. We'd have to change the whole religious outlook in order to see it differently. But as of the moment, we believe in God's will.<sup>1536</sup>

Rabbis throughout Poland were inclined to attribute the calamities that befell the Jews to Divine punishment: "it was the process of the abandonment of religion that had caused all the current disasters of the Jews. Some rabbis explicitly claimed that the wartime reality was punishment for the community's sins, while many others believed that the Jewish community's return to and strengthening of religion would lead directly to an improvement in the situation."<sup>1537</sup> The views of Rabbi Hirsh Melekh Talmud of Lublin, in endeavouring to comprehend how God could allow His "Chosen People" to be punished to the point of destruction, are less optimistic.<sup>1538</sup>

While confined in the Wilno ghetto, Zelig Kalmanovich, the wartime voice of the Orthodox community, kept a diary that is replete with scriptural and rabbinical quotations. Why, Kalmanovich asks, did God allow the Jews of Wilno to be destroyed? Because the destruction would serve as a sign (1) that what was once a proud Jewish community was already rotting, crumbling from within, and (2) that future generations—unaware of this decay and left only with the detritus of the external destruction—would have something useful, even inspiring, to remember. According to cultural historian David Roskies:

God's purpose in destroying the community of Vilna [Wilno] was perhaps to hasten the redemption, to alert whomsoever might still be alerted that there is neither refuge nor hope for life in the Exile. ...

But if we take a hard look we can see that it was necessary for the destruction to come from without. The fortress had already been destroyed and laid waste from within. Vilna had put up no resistance to the assimilation and the obliteration of the Jewish character, had not stood up to the spiritual destruction decreed by the Red conquerors. ...

And these undesecrated stones will serve as a memorial to our Exile, for their merit was not to have been desecrated through the hands of their own children, by those who

<sup>1536</sup> Harry James Cargas, *Voices from the Holocaust* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 91–92.

<sup>1537</sup> Havi Dreifuss, "'The Work of My Hands is Drowning in the Sea, and You Would Offer Me Song?!': Orthodox Behavior and Leadership in Warsaw during the Holocaust," in Dynner and Guesnet, *Warsaw*, 486.

<sup>1538</sup> Gershon Greenberg, "The Theological Letters of Rabbi Talmud of Lublin (Summer–Fall 1942)," in Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, *Ghettos 1939–1945: New Research and Perspectives on Definition, Daily Life, and Survival. Symposium Presentations* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2005), 113–27.

had once built the walls, but rather, through the hands of a savage nation, acting as the emissary of God.<sup>1539</sup>

Writing in 1962, Rabbi Avigdor Miller asserted that Polish Jews were punished, through the Holocaust, for their apostasy and self-atheization.

... on the upsurge of the greatest defection from the Torah in history, which was expressed in Poland by materialism, virulent anti-Torah nationalism, and Bundism (radical anti-religious socialism), G-d's plan finally relieved them of all Free Will and sent Hitler's demons to end the existence of these communities before they deteriorated entirely.<sup>1540</sup>

Many commentators misunderstand the collective nature of Divine punishment, asking, for instance, why God would punish a religious Jew alongside an atheist Jew for the apostasy of the latter. Miller clarifies this, "When the destroyer is let loose, he does not discriminate between the righteous and the sinners (Mechilta, Shmos 12:22)."<sup>1541</sup>

The late Satmarer Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Moshe Teitelbaum ...

is clear and unambiguous. ... he decides that the Zionists were responsible for the tragedy of the six million. The arrogance of nationalistic self-determination in trying to build a Jewish state caused the great destruction. The fact that so many Zionists were secularists, nonbelievers, only made matters worse. They violated the injunction to remain passive, refrain from interfering in the divinely preordained plans of redemption, and to await the miraculous coming of the Messiah. Hence, the Zionists were guilty, and all the Jewish people suffered because of their sins.<sup>1542</sup>

Rabbi Elazar Menachem Schach, in 1991, concurred: The Holocaust was God's punishment of the Jews for their sins in the last few centuries.<sup>1543</sup> Such views are still held by some Jewish religious leaders today.

Many Haredi rabbis, for example, assert that the Holocaust, including most particularly the deaths of one-and-a-half million Jewish children, was a well-deserved divine punishment, not only for all the sins of modernity and faith renunciation by many Jews, but also for the decline of Talmudic study in Europe. The Haredim and their traditional Jewish followers attribute the death of every Jew, including each innocent child, not to natural causes but

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<sup>1539</sup> David G. Roskies, "Jewish Cultural Life in the Vilna Ghetto," in Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, *Lithuania and the Jews: The Holocaust Chapter. Symposium Presentations* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 36–38.

<sup>1540</sup> Avigdor Miller, *Rejoice o Youth! An Integrated Jewish Ideology* (New York: n.p., 1962), 279.

<sup>1541</sup> Miller, *Rejoice o Youth!*, 263.

<sup>1542</sup> Bernhard H. Rosenberg and Fred Heuman, eds., *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV, 1992), 121.

<sup>1543</sup> Dina Porat, *Israeli Society, the Holocaust and Its Survivors* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 372–73.

to direct action of God. The Haredim believe that God punishes each Jew for his or her sins and sometimes punishes the entire Jewish community, including many who are innocent, because of the sins committed by other Jews.<sup>1544</sup>

Some religious Jews also continue to share those views. A woman who was rescued by Poles in Volhynia described the following experience:

I have two boys. One lives in New York, he's a religious Jew, very religious. ... their idea about the Holocaust is enough to ... upset you. ... My grandson in New York called and asked me if it would be too hard for him to tell him some things. He had to write it for one of his yeshiva classes. And I was really surprised that ... they believe the Holocaust ... happened because we didn't follow God.<sup>1545</sup>

Religious Poles who witnessed this cataclysm also endeavoured to find an explanation for the horrific and unimaginable events occurring around them. As historian Andrzej Bryk explains, their “rationalization” had little, if anything, to do with actual malice toward the Jewish victims, nor was it an acceptance of the violence directed at the Jews. According to Bryk,

For the average Polish peasant, Jews were an integral part of the landscape, like the things of nature, the sky above, and himself. He might not have liked them, might have maintained only the most superficial trading relations with them, but their disappearance was unimaginable. They were part of God's universe, even if an inferior part, viewed with suspicion.<sup>1546</sup>

<sup>1544</sup> Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, New edition (London and Ann Arbor, Michigan: Pluto Press, 2004), 31.

<sup>1545</sup> Testimony of Peppy Rosenthal, July 1, 2009, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/rosenthal/>.

<sup>1546</sup> This was, essentially, the mirror image of traditional Jewish attitudes toward Christian Poles, a matter that is strenuously avoided in most discussions of Polish-Jewish relations. Albert Marrin, former head of the history department at Yeshiva University in New York City, writes candidly about how Jews traditionally viewed Poles. “Many traditional Jews held stereotypical views of the Poles—that is, opinions that were overly simplified and prejudiced. Thus, on the basis of limited experience, traditional Jews might make unfair, negative generalizations about Poles as a group. The Yiddish word *goy* (plural, *goyim*), for example, meant more than ‘a gentile person.’ It implied ignorance, coarseness, and sinfulness. ‘What do they know, these goyim?’ a Hasid asked. ‘A goy knows nothing, a goy does not think, the only thing he knows how to do is beat up Jews.’ A young male goy, called a *sheygetz*, was allegedly a brute who thought with his fists. This mythical Pole guzzled vodka until he became so shiker (drunk) that he lost his senses. A Yiddish folk song put it this way: *Shiker iz a goy—Shiker iz er—trinken miz er—vayl er iz a goy* (‘A goy is a dunkard—but drink he must—because he is a goy’). Similarly, the term *shikse* meant more than ‘a young gentile woman’; it also implied immodesty and sexual ‘looseness.’ Apart from the belief in one God, traditional Jews saw nothing in common between their religion and Christianity. To them, Christianity mimicked paganism, worshipping ‘idols’—statues

and paintings of God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. In their view, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and the Resurrection were mere ‘superstitions.’ Traditional Jews showed their disdain in various ways. For example, at many rural crossroads in Poland, travelers would see a crucifix—a cross with the figure of the crucified Christ on it—signifying divine protection. Jews refused to look at this ‘graven image.’ Author Elie Wiesel, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, was born in Romania, but his attitudes mirrored those of Polish Jews. ‘[Christian] rituals,’ Wiesel recalled, ‘had no interest for me; quite the contrary, I turned away from them. Whenever I met a priest ... I would avert my gaze and think of something else. Rather than walk in front of a church with its pointed and threatening belfry, I would cross the street. ... Christians were more present in my imagination than in my life. What did a Christian do when he was alone? What were his dreams made of? How did he use his time when he was not plotting against me?’ For many traditional Jews, marrying a Christian amounted to a betrayal of everything Jewish. The scandal stained the entire family in its own eyes and in the eyes of the community. Traditional Jews disowned the offending daughter or son. Parents tore their clothes in shame and despair, as if mourning the death of a family member. When, for instance, the daughter of a rabbi converted to Catholicism and married a Polish policeman, her parents could not contain their grief. ‘[They] followed the carriage, crying and screaming and beating their heads to a bloody pulp on the sides of the wagon pleading with their daughter. ... After this shameful tragedy, the [bride’s] ... three sisters never married, neither did their cousins in the nearby town. Nobody would marry them.’ Such behavior troubled Isaac Bashevis Singer. A character in his novel *The Manor* asks: ‘How can anyone move into someone else’s home, live there in total isolation, and expect not to suffer by it? When you despise your host’s god as a tin image, shun his wine as forbidden, condemn his daughter as unclean, aren’t you asking to be treated as an unwelcome outsider? [It’s] as simple as that.’” See Albert Marrin, *A Light in the Darkness: Janusz Korczak, His Orphans, and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), 41–44.

Jewish scholar Moshe Rosman writes in a similar vein: “Alongside the belief in the non-Jews’ demonic nature and the fear and mistrust of Gentile society, some of these [Hasidic] tales hint at a very different evaluation of the theological-moral standing of the non-Jews. According to Jacob Katz, given the religious rivalry between Judaism and Christianity, the members of each group adopted a double standard of morality towards each other. There was no religious rationale for treating outsiders according to ethical norms. Jews frowned on mistreating or cheating non-Jews not on moral grounds but from enlightened self-interest: such behaviour would bring Jews into disrepute and result in sanctions or even violence being brought to bear against them.” See Moshe Rosman, “A Minority Views the Majority: Jewish Attitudes Towards the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth and Interaction with Poles,” *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 4 (1989): 37.

“An American Pickle,” a 2020 American comedy-drama film, inadvertently underscores the persistence of these attitudes and beliefs. Herschel Greenbaum tells Ben that he, Ben, may be “stupider than a Polish person and they are THE stupidest.” Herschel later refers to Mary, Jesus’ mother, as a prostitute who made up the story of the Immaculate Conception to cover for her whoring: “I don’t think I’m saying anything controversial when I say everybody know Jesus Christ mother was prostitute. And she invent story of Christianity to cover up the fact that she prostitute. So if you believe in Jesus, you stupid idiot.”

To the (minimal) extent that such depictions raise eyebrows (this one did not), the pat response is one proffered by Anne Roiphe: it was merely reciprocal, i.e., provoked entirely



The complete extermination of his neighbours in a small town or villagewas for that peasant not only a crime in human terms but a fundamental violation of the universal order, of God's order. It was such a monstrous and absurd deed, that it could have been possible only through the will of God himself. Had he not, after all, been taught that Jews were guilty for the death of Jesus, the death of God? So, perhaps, this was the sentence for that deed? Hence the fatalism in perceiving the Holocaust, a certain self-defence through rationalisation against the madness of a deed equal only to the anger of God. Of a deed which must have been inspired by some hidden logic. The extermination was so terrible, surpassing human imagination to such an extent, that there had to be some hidden meaning in it.<sup>1547</sup>

Some Poles embraced the same sort of theological explanations to rationalize their own fate. A Jewish woman recalled the response she received from an elderly peasant woman when asked, "Are the Germans giving you much trouble?" The Polish woman replied, "It's the Anti-Christ! He's come to punish us for our sins."<sup>1548</sup> In the final days or hours before their execution, priests often spoke of their acceptance of the will of God. The conservative Catholic author Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, a co-founder of Żegota, the wartime Council for Aid to Jews, wrote in her postwar diary that the suffering and humiliation of Polish women that she witnessed as a prisoner in Auschwitz was God's punishment for having enjoyed themselves before the war, for wearing lipstick and silk stockings.<sup>1549</sup>

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by "anti-Semitic" Poles, and benign. "It is true that Jews in the privacy of their houses have for centuries *taken revenge* on the anti-Semitism of their neighbors by portraying them as dumb. Jews have long thought of Poles as less intelligent." See Anne Roiphe, *A Season for Healing: Reflections on the Holocaust* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 117. For a similar take by a Jewish-American academic, see Robert Michael, *A History of Catholic Antisemitism: The Dark Side of the Church* (New York and Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 248: "Some powerless Jews responded to anti-Semitism by stereotyping Gentile Poles as 'dangerous, demonic, and devilish'; most Jews felt ambivalent toward Poles."

Surprisingly, the stereotype of the "stupid" Pole even surfaced when Poles put their lives at risk to shelter Jews during the war. As could be expected, living in close quarters could lead to occasional flare-ups between the charges and rescuers. Teresa Prekerowa, who was active in the Żegota organization, recalls: "It was often that Jews told Poles, 'We are more intelligent than you,' and it made the Poles crazy. It was a very difficult situation." See Lawrence N. Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, The Holocaust, and David Duke's Louisiana* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 261.

<sup>1547</sup> Andrzej Bryk, "The Struggles for Poland," *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 4 (1989): 378.

<sup>1548</sup> Küchler-Silberman, *My Hundred Children*, 17.

<sup>1549</sup> Władysław T. Bartoszewski, *The Convent in Auschwitz* (London: The Bowerdean Press, 1990), 19.

Occasionally one encounters charges that priests urged the faithful not to provide assistance to Jews or even incited the populace against them. These charges are almost always based on second or third-hand accounts. Priests in rural areas were ordered by German officials to read—at Sunday masses—official notices regarding matters such as the delivery of mandatory agricultural quotas imposed on farmers and warnings not to assist partisans and Jews under penalty of death. Not to do so would not only have put the delinquent priest personally at risk, but also would have subjected him to the moral dilemma of withholding from his parishioners information about the serious risks that such activities could entail for them and their families.

An example of such a notice is the circular issued to local pastors by the reeve of the village of Zakrzówek near Kraśnik, pursuant to instructions from the *Kreishauptmann* (German county head), dated December 4, 1942, which reads: “In accordance with the orders of the Kreishauptmann of October 10, 1942, ... all residents and their neighbours will be punished by death for sheltering Jews, providing them with food or assisting them in escaping, in particular anyone who allows Jews to use their carts.”<sup>1550</sup> In some regions of Poland, there was considerable resistance on the part of priests to reading German notices in church.<sup>1551</sup>

Hearsay accounts have led uninformed Jews and Holocaust historians to accuse priests of preaching against the Jews when all they were doing in fact was reading such notices. It is telling that no credible, first-hand accounts of priests’ “sermons” that allegedly urged Poles not to help—or even worse to turn in or murder Jews—have come to light, even though many Jews who passed as Christians attended church services throughout occupied Poland.<sup>1552</sup>

<sup>1550</sup> The circular is reproduced in Chodakiewicz, *Polacy i Żydzi 1918–1955*, 185.

<sup>1551</sup> See, e.g., Marian Matysik, Małgorzata Rudnicka, and Zdzisław Świsłak, *Kościół katolicki w Jasielskiem 1939–1945* (Przemyśl, Brzozów and Stalowa Wola: Biblioteczka Przemyska, Muzeum Regionalne PTTK [Polskiego Towarzystwa Turystyczno-Krajoznawczego] im. Adama Fastnachta, and Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski—Filia, 1991), 19, 88, 103, 211–12; Jerzy Adamski, Mieczysław Ligonowski, Franciszek Oberc, and Tadeusz Śliwa, *Kościół katolicki w Brzozowskim i Sanockiem 1939–1945* (Brzozów and Przemyśl, 1992), 202; Witold Jemielity, “Diecezja łomżyńska,” in Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 74.

<sup>1552</sup> The closest we can find to a credible example of a priest inciting churchgoers against Jews is Symba Hampel’s account of his experience passing as a Pole in Niehcice, near Kamieńsk, where he resided from September 1943. Hampel claims that every [sic] Sunday, Rev. Feliks Grela, the local priest, would rail against the Jews and express his gratitude because they could no longer steer Polish youth in the wrong direction. Based on this, Hampel glibly extrapolates: Priests “often discussed the Jews from the pulpit and thanked God heartily that these parasites were gone once and for all,” and that priests “were grateful to Hitler for having done that dirty work” for them (“Ksiądz z ambony niejednokrotnie mówił o Żydach i gorąco dziękował Panu Bogu za to, że pozbawił nas raz na zawsze od tych pasożytów. Wdzięczni byli Hitlerowi za tę brudną robotę.”) However, Hampel had

lived previously in Pieńki and attended Sunday mass in Rozprza on a regular basis, yet he makes no mention of this problem in those other venues. Thus, despite an ample field of observation, he provides but the flimsiest evidence for this sweeping and about Polish priests. Crude generalizations of this nature pepper his memoir: "Already from the cradle the (Polish) youth was poisoned by the venom of anti-Semitism. The entire Polish society is to be blamed, and the Polish clergy most of all. Poland is probably the only country in the world where practically the whole society betrayed and handed over to the Germans every hidden Jew. ... People at large are happy that Hitler got rid of Poland's Jews. ... [the Poles] collaborated with the Germans and turned over Jews at every step. ... in other European countries the clergy and society sheltered [Jewish] children, but in Poland it was just the opposite."

A tell-tale and concrete measure of Hampel's bias is the contrast he draws between the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943, which he views as valiant ("the Jews gave the first example and died courageously on the battlefield"), with the not-so-valiant Warsaw uprising of 1944, in which he alleges, "the Poles did not defend themselves for long" ("Polacy nie bronili się długo"). The former, which lasted a few weeks, took the lives of a score of German soldiers; the latter, which lasted 63 days and left 200,000 dead, resulted in thousands of German casualties. See Symcha Hampel, "Życie pod knutem okupanta: 1 września 1939 r.–16 stycznia 1945 r.," YVA, file O.33/950. Hampel's jaundiced views have entered Holocaust historiography as valid and credible observations about wartime conditions. See, e.g., Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 133; Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 4–5.

An egregious example of falsely attributing to a Catholic priest from Kowel, Volhynia, an alleged vituperative sermon attacking Jews is found in Anthony J. Sciolino, *The Holocaust, the Church, and the Law of Unintended Consequences: How Christian Anti-Judaism Spawned Nazi Anti-Semitism: A Judge's Verdict* (Bloomington, Indiana: iUniverse, 2012), 163. Sciolino does not provide a source for his reference to that priest, but it appears to be based on Ben-Zion Sher's article "Thus the City Was Destroyed," in Eliezer Leoni-Zopperfin, ed., *Kowel: Sefer edut ve-zikaron le-kehilatenu she-ala aleha ha-koret* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kowel in Israel, 1957), translated as *Kowel: Testimony and Memorial Book of Our Destroyed Community*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/kovel1/kovel1.html>. Note, however, that the priest in question is not identified in that memorial book (at p. 416) as a Catholic priest. Allegedly, this was a Ukrainian Orthodox priest preaching to Ukrainian villagers.

Another vivid, "first-hand" account of a priest—actually, a fictitious bishop—delivering anti-Jewish sermons is found in the pseudo-memoir of Henry Gribou (Haim Grzybowier). Gribou describes at length the exploits of a lecherous, anti-Semitic bishop named Taranski, who resided in the village of Dobre (which conveniently, and ironically, happens to translate as "good") outside Warsaw, and was "at the very heart of the Church." Yet no bishop or priest by that name ever existed. The bishop's fictitious entourage consisted of other immoral priests who raped teenage girls and had them undergo abortions. Gribou uses this lurid tale as a prop for the "moral" of his story, namely, the condemnation of the Catholic Church: "So that was the story of Halina's mother and the bishop. That, apparently, was the way people lived at the highest levels of the Catholic Church in Poland." Of course, as could be expected, the bishop, who allegedly had a Ph.D. in theology from Rome, was anti-Semitic to the core, both publicly and privately: "The bishop was getting worked up, his face flushed, his fist pounding the air, his heavily robed vehemence out of

proportion to the little country church. I could tell this was not an act—he really believed this. And his passion was infectious, with the congregation murmuring in assent. Even I came under the spell. Yes, I thought, I hate those Jews he’s talking about. My head was spinning. ... The bishop thundered on. ‘And God will punish the Jews, he will send them all to hell for what they did to Jesus. He will send them all to hell!’ I discovered soon enough that I had only gotten a hint of the bishop’s hatred of Jews. One afternoon, after lunch, I was walking with him in the garden, and the talk turned to the Warsaw ghetto. I made some remark—with a detachment in my voice that amazed me when I heard myself—about how none of the Jews in there would probably survive. ‘Good riddance,’ he said in a frighteningly flat voice—as if he were talking about exterminating rats. Then, warming to the topic, he turned to me and said intently, ‘Do you know what those Jews do? Do you know how they make that, that bread of theirs—what do they call it, matzoh?’ ‘I don’t know,’ I said. ‘They make it,’ he said, pausing to make sure the message was clear, with Christian blood!’ ... ‘Yes,’ he went on, ‘the Jews mix the bread dough in large vats. And in the sides of the vats, nails stick through toward the dough. Then they hire Christians to mix the dough, and as they stir it, the Christians’ fingers are cut and their blood spills into the mixture.’ Near the end, I was in Dobre, standing at night with the bishop outside his house, looking toward the city [of Warsaw]. The sky was lit up so bright with the flames from the burning ghetto that you could have read a newspaper: ‘This is for killing our Jesus,’ the bishop said in solemn tones.” See Henry G. Gribou, *Hunted in Warsaw: A Memoir of Resistance and Survival in the Holocaust* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2012), 144, 146–55, 159–61, 179. If such events were genuine, why is it that the only known story that was recorded “first hand” (by Gribou) is pure fiction? After all, hundreds, if not thousands, of Jewish survivors had interacted with Catholic priests during the war. Gribou also claims that “Cardinal Wysinski” [sic] was a frequent visitor at Dobre, and that he [Gribou] held himself out as the cardinal’s nephew in order to enhance his assumed Christian identity: “Cardinal Wysinski, after all, was the archbishop of Poland.” Ibid., 194–95. It is trite knowledge that, at the time, Stefan Wyszyński was a little-known priest. He was appointed bishop of Lublin in 1946. He became the archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw, and thus Primate of Poland, in November 1948, after the death of Cardinal August Hlond. He was created a cardinal in 1953. His wartime efforts on behalf of Jews are described in this publication. (Gribou is described as a retired chemist who held various executive positions in multinational chemical companies in the United States and Europe.)

Another such account is attributed to a Jewish prisoner of Auschwitz. Adam “Krawecki,” described as a former student steeped in Jewish philosophy, joined the State Security Office after the war and became the chief interrogator in the notorious Gliwice prison. He claimed to have had the following conversation—steeped in folkloric myth—with an elderly Catholic bishop in Auschwitz, even though no such bishop was ever imprisoned in that camp. “‘Why do the gentiles hate the Jews?’ Adam asked. ‘It’s this way,’ the bishop said. ‘A lion is lying in the woods, gluttoned and gorged, and a deer comes along. The lion isn’t hungry, and the deer isn’t going to harm him. But still the lion pounces on it.’ ‘But why?’ ‘The lion has a bestial instinct, you see, an instinct that tells it to kill that deer. The same with the gentile against the Jew. The Jew isn’t going to harm him, but the gentile still calls him a *Schweinhund Jude*. He has this instinct against the Jew.’ ‘But where does the instinct come from?’ ‘Maybe,’ the bishop continued, ‘the gentile receives it when he receives his mother’s milk. He hears from the day he’s born that if you don’t eat, the Jew

In some Jewish accounts, readings in Polish from the New Testament during Holy Week, and even prayers or intercessions said in Latin (especially on Palm Sunday and Good Friday), which were part of the universal Catholic liturgy mandated by Rome, are also represented as “sermons” delivered by priests to incite Poles against the Jews. (Given the length of the Good Friday liturgy, the afternoon service that day generally did not have a sermon.) However, putting all of that reasoning aside, in this context it is noteworthy that Jewish teachings about Christians were, and had long been, genuinely problematic.<sup>1553</sup>

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will get you, that if you don't sleep, the Jew will get you. Maybe that.” See John Sack, *An Eye for an Eye* (New York: Basic Books/HarperCollins, 1993), 28.

For another fictitious account involving a priest, see Yitzchok Perlow's book, *The Partizaner* (New York: Award Books, 1968), reprinted in Isaac Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945*, vol. 3 (Brooklyn, New York: Jewish Combatants Publishers House, 1986), 298–310. Oddly enough, the priest of the ominously named village of Świńska Wola (Pigs Settlement), unlike the primitive villagers, is cast in a favourable light. Be that as it may, fictitious “literary” accounts of Christian-inspired mistreatment of Jews—part of a long tradition, for which there is apparently a market—are by no means rare. See, e.g., Iyov Ha-Giben (pseud.), *Willow Weep For Me* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1991), 162–71, where a Jewish boy, a hunchback, is lured to a gathering of Poles by his neighbour, a Polish officer—“a confirmed anti-Semite, and one of the leaders of the Endeks”—and subjected to a series of relentless humiliations and physical abuse, culminating in a mock crucifixion of this hapless victim. A 2002 “Passion play” titled “Rebbe” by Artists For Israel International, which casts Polish priests as the instigators of the death of a rabbi—a Jesus figure—in the Warsaw ghetto. See Internet: <https://afi.org/rebbe.txt> (reproduced at the end of this compilation).

<sup>1553</sup> Here is a representative source to that effect. A Jew from Chełm recalled what it was like growing up among Christians and what he was taught about them in his yeshiva, a religious school for teenagers: “Our relations with the non-Jewish population were never very good ... There were the Polish-speaking Gentiles who were Roman Catholics, some more pious than others. We were most afraid of them. We considered them idol worshipers. My parents were proud to point out to me that they taught their children to consider the images on their walls as gods. There was not a home without at least three images: one of Jesus, with His heart showing; one of the *matka boska*, the ‘mother of God’; and one of Joseph, the husband of Mary. The priest would come to the village at times and bring the ‘transubstantiated’ wafer, which they believed became the flesh and blood of the Messiah. But at that time the priest’s coming only hardened our hearts. We knew we worshipped the only true God, and not priests and images. ... In these early years I had few contacts of any sort with Christianity. At about this time I learned the stories of Jesus from the Jewish point of view. They are given in the infamous book of legends composed in the Middle Ages and entitled *Toledot Yeshu* (*The History of Jesus*). Some of the material is already embodied in the Talmud: that Jesus was born an illegitimate child and He forced Mary His mother to admit it; how He learned sorcery in Egypt; how He made Himself fly up into the sky by sewing the ineffable name of Jehovah into the skin of his leg, but a famous rabbi did the same and brought Jesus down! ... Thus in the yeshiva, the Talmud reigned supreme. The Old Testament Bible could be used only for reference and there were no secular studies whatsoever. I had no contacts with Christianity at all. On the

Fifteen members of the extended family of Isaac and Leah Gamss were hidden from 1942 to 1944 in the attic of a farmhouse belonging to Stanisław and Maria Grocholski in the vicinity of Urzejowice, near Przeworsk. The villagers knew the Grocholskis were hiding Jews because some of these Jews called on a number of villagers to ask for food and, tellingly, it was the only house that in the winter did not have snow on the roof. A priest urged a villager who had accepted some property from Jews for safekeeping to return it to them. Leslie Gilbert-Lurie, the daughter of one of the hidden Jews, states: “I would say it took a whole village of people for my mother’s family to survive.”

At the earliest opportunity, on the next moonless night, Aunt Tsvia and Uncle Libish snuck back to their neighbor’s home, several miles away, to retrieve the leather coat. They tapped on her rear window, and when she appeared, they explained their plight. But she did not take pity on them. To their shock, she said no. The war was not over, so they could not have their coat. Thinking on her feet, Aunt Tsvia said that without the coat, our family would be killed and the blood would be on this neighbour’s hands. As my aunt had hoped, this

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way to school we passed a Roman Catholic church and a Russian Orthodox church, and we spat, pronouncing the words found in Deuteronomy 7:26, ‘... thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing.’ I said it halfheartedly because of my previous favorable contact with Christianity and because some questions were beginning to creep into my mind. Why should we say such horrible words? The people looked pious. They came from surrounding villages to worship, and they never bothered us. As I continued studying the Talmud, I came to a passage that told of a cruel punishment for that Sinner of Israel, meaning Jesus. For one sin of deriding the rabbis, He was punished forever and ever with cruelty as to be ‘judged in boiling excrement.’ I did not like this story at all. Did it really mean what it said? Could I possibly be in full agreement with this? Did not I also have doubts about the rabbis’ claims that their teachings were given to Moses on Mount Sinai? What then would *my* punishment be? It was many years before I dared to proclaim these doubts openly.” See Rachmiel Frydland, *When Being Jewish Was a Crime* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 17, 51, 54–55.

These teachings were also common in heders or cheders (primary religious schools), which many, if not most, Jewish children in Poland attended for some period of time. The authenticity of the *Toledot Yeshu* (*The Life Story of Jesus*) is beyond question among serious scholars. It was written by Jews, most likely in the 8th century, as an internal Jewish response to the Gospels and Jesus, and is unambiguously anti-Christian. The anti-Christian motifs within it go back at least to the time of the Babylonian Talmud—to a time and place (Sassanid and later Islamic Iraq), where Christians were in no position to persecute Jews, thus refuting the exculpatory argument that Jewish polemics against Christianity only developed when Christians were persecuting Jews. Some of the Talmudic themes in *Toledot Yeshu* include: Bavli Shabbat 104b—Jesus, the sorcerer, the son of Miriam (a hairdresser and adulterous woman), and Jesus the illegitimate Son of Pandera (Ben Pandera); Bavli Sanhedrin 43a—the death of Jesus Christ, vicariously by stoning, at the hands of the Jews; Bavli Gittin 56b–57a—Jesus is forced to spend eternity in hell in boiling excrement. See Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson, and Yaacov Deutsch, eds., *Toledot Yeshu* (“*The Life Story of Jesus*”) *Revisited: A Princeton Conference* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).



troubled the neighbour, a devout Catholic, and she went to talk to her priest the following day. He encouraged her to give up the coat and whatever else she could. When Tsivia and Libish returned a few nights later, the coat was left for them, along with milk and bread. ...

My father [Isaac Gamss] and uncles began taking turns sneaking out at night in search of food. In the summer, they stole plums, apples, and pears from neighbors' gardens. And they went into fields to gather carrots, radishes, tomatoes, and onions—vegetables that could be eaten raw.

Besides what they picked outside, they also gathered food that sympathetic neighbors left out for them on doorsteps. Because they knew that as Jews we kept kosher, neighbors mostly set out potatoes, beans, or bread. From time to time, my father and uncles chanced knocking on the doors of casual acquaintances. Often they were turned away with angry replies, which was not surprising. Even if they were not anti-Semitic, Poles were terrified of being caught helping a Jew. ...

"I had many friends in our village," Uncle Max said proudly, "including Stashik [Staszek] Grajolski [Grocholski]. While we had grown up near each other, we became good friends in the army. That's why, when he agreed to hide my brother's and sister's families, he asked me to come as well, to act as a liaison." ...

"I spent my days and nights in the attic worrying about how to feed my beautiful family ... You and I are the only ones who know the gentiles in the community," Uncle Max told his eldest brother, Isaac. "Since I am single, I should be the one to sneak out."

To avoid being seen, Uncle Max picked the darkest nights, with the worst weather. From time to time, neighbors prepared small bundles of food that they either left out for him on their doorstep, or handed him when he tapped on the door.

"Here's some beans and bread," a kind neighbor would whisper, opening the door just wide enough to pass the package through.

"This is for the children," another villager told Uncle Max, handing him a bag with bread and fruit. "We pray for you each night," he added.

"Once, a friend gave me a ham sandwich, but I couldn't eat it because it was not kosher," Uncle Max said.<sup>1554</sup>

Rev. Henryk Uchman, the pastor of Sieniawa near Przeworsk, assisted in the rescue of six Jews: Emil Tamme, Izrael Bant, Helman Mechel, Jakub Posascher, Samuel Zins, and Helman Landau. These persons were presented as witnesses on Rev. Uchman's behalf when he was put on trial after the war by the Communist authorities for his continued support of the anti-Communist underground.<sup>1555</sup>

Rev. Józef Ulanowski, the pastor of Nowosielce near Przeworsk, assisted in the rescue of Felicja and Tadeusz Wilder of Lwów, who were sheltered by

<sup>1554</sup> Leslie Gilbert-Lurie and Rita Lurie, *Bending Toward the Sun: A Mother and Daughter Memoir* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 46–47, 58, 293.

<sup>1555</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 77, 146; Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 172–73.

his niece, Henryka Ulanowska in Nowosielce. Henryka acquired the birth and marriage certificates of her brother and sister-in-law, Tadeusz and Felicja Mazurek, which her charges used to pass as Polish Catholics. They were joined by Felicja Wilder's sister, Cecylia Motyl, who passed as Ziuta Górna. While in hiding, Felicja gave birth to a son, Andrzej, who was baptized by Rev. Ulanowski and provided with a birth and baptismal certificate. The Jewish charges remained in the house until the arrival of the Soviet army in July 1944.<sup>1556</sup>

Frank Morgens (then Mieczysław Morgenstern) took refuge in Olsztyn, a small town near Częstochowa, with his wife and children. Although the family was suspected of being Jewish, they survived under the protection of local Poles, as did several other Jewish families passing as Poles.<sup>1557</sup> The solicitous attitude of Rev. Józef Michałowski was described by Morgens in his memoirs.

Mrs. Michalska, a young woman with a boy of about seven. ... He had a light complexion, his features were Semitic and our suspicion that they were Jews in hiding proved later to be correct. ... When the war ended, we learned through the grapevine that Mrs. Michalska's husband had also survived in Olsztyn and that the entire family had emigrated to America. ...

The name of Judge Horski was uttered with respect, but always with a sort of knowing look which we did not comprehend at first. ... It was obvious he, too, was Jewish. His wife and daughter were Semitic-looking as well. The Horskis had moved to Olsztyn from Cracow [Kraków] at the beginning of 1941, a fact that was vastly reassuring to us. That a man with such a face could pass for a Pole and not be denounced to the Germans by those who suspected him of being Jewish, made us feel much safer.

The village of Olsztyn, only 8 miles from Częstochowa [Częstochowa], and having a population of under 2,000, could not possibly sustain a dentist, and yet there was one. The minute we opened the door of Dr. Nawrot's office on Villa Row, we knew that we were with one of our own. Dr. Nawrot was of medium height, his hair was dark, his face though not typically Jewish, was not Slavic either. His short, plump, dark-complexioned wife would never have survived a confrontation with the Gestapo, and neither would their young son. Yet Dr. Nawrot had been practicing in town for about two years without incident. This, too, reinforced our belief that we had settled in the right place. So far, I could count four Jewish families casting their lot with the Poles of Olsztyn.

But the greatest influence on the people and the tranquility of the village was exerted by the parish priest, Father Józef Michałowski [Józef Michałowski]. About 60 years old, of medium height, slim and bespectacled, he evoked reverence when walking in the street and gently greeting his parishioners. His sermons preached love and humaneness, and during the crucial period of 1942–1944 his urging to save lives and not to betray fellow citizens gave us fortitude and courage to go on with our fight for survival. A denunciation

<sup>1556</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 389–90 (Henryka Kowalska-Ulanowska); Ulanowska Family, RD.

<sup>1557</sup> See also Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 211; Frank M. [Morgens] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1294), FVA.

to the Gestapo about this kind of sermon would have meant deportation, at least, for Father Michalowski, but he was fearless and steadfast in his activities, as dictated by his conscience and his faith.<sup>1558</sup>

The misconduct of one person could frustrate a rescue effort supported by others. Beyond that, however, it could also trigger a sequence of disastrous events. Yehudis Pshenitse (Judith Pszenica), a young girl from Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, near Warsaw, turned to the local priest for assistance. He provided her with false identity documents and shelter. Although tortured by the Germans, the priest did not divulge her whereabouts. Here is how she testified.

I went to see the priest, who had known me as a small child, when I used to go into the church with our Christian maid. I wept and begged the priest to save me. I told him what had happened to my parents. He calmed me and promised me that he would give me as much help as he could. He hid me in his cellar. Every day I went to church with him, and I became one of the best singers in the church choir. After a time he gave me false papers, with my name listed as Kristina Pavlovna [Krystyna Pawłowska]. I began to feel like a genuine, born Christian.

That didn't last long, however. One day, when I was walking to church, a Christian stopped me on the street and said, "What are you doing here?" I ran away in terror. When I told the priest, he calmed me, telling me to go back into the cellar and be as quiet as possible.

The same day two Germans went to the priest, demanding that he surrender the Jewish girl whom he had hidden. He denied that there was anyone in his house. They threatened to shoot him, but he continued to insist that he was hiding no one.

The Germans tortured him in various ways, but he continued to refuse to give me up until he fell to the ground covered with blood. His body was pierced in several places, and his face was unrecognizable. Then the Germans left him as he was and went away. Before he died, the priest asked his housekeeper to take me out of my hiding place and bring me to him because he wanted to bless me.

When she led me to him, all I saw was a pool of blood and the priest's body, torn into pieces. I fainted. When I came to, he raised his crushed and broken hand and caressed me. Finally he told his housekeeper to give me over to trustworthy people, to behave toward me like a mother so that no one would suspect I was Jewish. Thus, leaning against him, I felt his body grow cold.

Once again he asked that I be hidden in a safe place, and then he died. I can't remember the priest's name. He was a parish priest in Nowy Dwór [Nowy Dwór].

The housekeeper led me away from the priest and cleansed me of his blood. She changed my clothes, and at five in the morning she led me to Modlin. She left me there and disappeared.<sup>1559</sup>

<sup>1558</sup> Frank Morgens, *Years at the Edge of Existence: War Memoirs, 1939–1945* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1996), 97, 99.

<sup>1559</sup> This testimony from the Nowy Dwór Memorial book is reproduced in Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, eds., *From A Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry* (New

William (Wolf) Ungar had taken refuge in the town of Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, north of Warsaw, in territory incorporated into the Reich, where he lived with the family of his Jewish friend. He decided to leave that town and return to Lwów, when it appeared that the ghetto in Nowy Dwór was about to be evacuated. In March 1943, Ungar approached a Polish smuggler who agreed to take him and another Jew, who had a very bad appearance, across the border to the General Government. The smuggler directed Ungar to an unidentified priest in Warsaw for assistance.

We waited as the chief smuggler talked to the fisherman. When he finished he came over to me and said, "You shouldn't stay here. It's not safe. ... This man here,"—gesturing toward the fisherman—"can take you to the other side. There's a railroad station not too far off. You can get a train there for Warsaw."

"Okay," I said, "that's what we'll do. We want to thank you for your help."

"One more thing," he said. "Take this." He gave me a piece of paper. "It's the address of a priest in Warsaw who can help you get train tickets. You might not be able to do so yourselves."

The fisherman had a rowboat tied to a little pier that jutted into the river. We climbed in and two minutes later we were on the other side. There the fisherman led us to a path. "Follow this a mile or so," he said, "and it'll take you right to the railroad station."

... At the station the ticket window was already opened and I bought two tickets for Warsaw while my friend hung in the background keeping out of the ticketmaster's view. ...

I Warsaw we found our way to the priest's address the smuggler had given us. My impression was that this priest was probably working for the Polish underground. He didn't ask a single question, he just did what he could to help. He gave us food, then went out and bought us train tickets to Lvov [Lwów]. With hindsight, I guessed he was part of the organization that was working with the Jewish underground, helping Jews acquire arms, or escape, or putting children into monasteries and other safe places. There were networks that did such things, as I learned later on, and more than a few Catholic priests were involved.<sup>1560</sup>

With the assistance of Polish friends, Jola Hoffman (b. 1931) and her parents, refugees from Germany, were able to escape from the Warsaw ghetto shortly before the start of the uprising in April 1943. Their friends, who worked with the Polish underground, led them to hiding places. An unidentified priest who worked with the underground provided the names of deceased persons which were used to obtain false identity documents.<sup>1561</sup>

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York: Schoken Books, 1983), 177–78; 2nd expanded ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 204–6. The identity of this priest has not been established.

<sup>1560</sup> Ungar and Chanoff, *Destined to Live*, 235–36.

<sup>1561</sup> Testimony of Jola Hoffman, November 3, 1987, Oral History Interview of the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Centre, USHMM, Accession no. 1993.A.0088.74, RG-50.002.0074.

Several Jewish testimonies portray the attitude of Polish priests in Grodno. Genia Kotler-Nakdimon, Hillel Brojde and Łukasz Sienkiewicz all attest to having received help from priests.<sup>1562</sup>

Historian Philip Friedman mentions (though not by name) Rev. Albin Jaroszewicz, the dean of the Grodno, and Fr. Dionizy (Michał Klimczak), the prior of the Conventual Franciscan monastery.<sup>1563</sup> Doubtless, these priests provided some form of assistance to Jews. However, Friedman is incorrect in claiming that they were executed in Łomża in the autumn of 1943 for rescuing Jews.

Fr. Dionizy was arrested at least twice. He was executed on the day of his last arrest—July 15, 1943—outside of Grodno, along with two other priests, Rev. Justyn Skokowski and Rev. Kazimierz Szypiłło, as well as other Polish residents of Grodno, in the Sonderaktion that targeted the Polish intelligentsia.

Although arrested by the Germans twice, Rev. Jaroszewicz survived the war. He was arrested by the Soviets in 1945, tried, and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. He perished in a concentration camp in July 1946.<sup>1564</sup>

Anna Kovitzka (later Kaletska, b. 1912) escaped from Grodno during a German Aktion. Complete strangers gave her assistance as she fled the city. She remained in the countryside for several weeks until things quieted down and she was able to return. An unidentified priest sheltered Anna, made enquiries about her husband, and drove her part of the way home in his cart.<sup>1565</sup>

The Germans were grabbing the people and dragging them to work in Germany. I wanted to return to the ghetto. Then a thousand Jews were deported that day. The ghetto was surrounded. One couldn't get in, nor could one get out. Part were going to Treblinka, and to get in one also didn't know how. I ran into a Christian—he was a working man. I told him I am a Jewess—"I can't get into the ghetto." And he said, "Get out of the city. You do not look Jewish. Go where ever you can, but don't remain here. You see here it burns." And so I departed alone, without papers, into the woods. I did not know the roads. Through the woods, into a Russian village. [N.B. There were no Russian villages in that area. The population was mostly Polish, with some Belorussians.—Ed.] I entered. "Give me some water." If one is alive, one has to drink water. And sometimes one has to eat. Everybody gave me something. I did not look Jewish, but they knew—what else could be driving me in the snow through the woods? Everyone kept me for one night.

The Christians—I can't complain. Everybody gave me warm water to wash myself. They gave me food, so that I should have strength to wander farther. And there was a preacher—A Christian, a Catholic. He hid me "for strength" for eight days. But he drove me back to Grodno to find out what was going on. The priest encountered some Jews that

<sup>1562</sup> Their respective testimonies are found in the YVA, files O.33/302, O.33/303, and O.33/305.

<sup>1563</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 126.

<sup>1564</sup> Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 150, 154, 156, 230; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 202–3, 574.

<sup>1565</sup> Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds*, 208.

were going to work. She he asked them: “Do you know whether Jack Kovitzki is there?” So they said: “He is there, he has remained alive.” Three thousand Jews were still in Grodno. So he said, “Tell him that his wife is alive—that she does not want to remain among us. She wants to go back, and in a few days she will be back.” The next week he took me out part of the way in a cart—to go further, he was afraid. And I went alone towards Grodno—I can’t remember how many kilometers. I arrived in Grodno. It’s the same story again—how does one get in—into the ghetto? And then it occurred to me that my father had a chauffeur, a Christian, a decent man.

He was a good business man; so he had an automobile and a driver—a very decent person. He lives now in the yard of the house that once belonged to my father-in-law. So I went to him. He didn’t know me, but I gave the name of Meyer Kovitzki, and he said: “Don’t be afraid. You can be with me as long as you want.” But he had a wife and a child, and I did not want to cause him anxiety. So I went down to the cellar, and he went to the ghetto to find out about things, and Friday morning his own wife went with me through the streets, and she led me to the ghetto. Then another Pole helped me to get in. But before I went in, he told me: “You know where you are going?” And I said, “Where is my man, and where is my place?” That was on Friday noon.<sup>1566</sup>

**D**r. Antoni Docha, a deeply religious man, figures in several rescue stories. Together with his wife, Janina, also a doctor, he ran a medical practice in the village of Indura, about 25 kilometres south of Grodno, where they lived with their three daughters. Dr. Docha arranged escape from the Grodno ghetto and found hiding places for professional acquaintances and their families.<sup>1567</sup>

Helena Szewach (later Bibliowicz) was a complete stranger who arrived unexpectedly at Dr. Docha’s doorstep with her friend, Fania Halpern (or Galpern, later Lubitch), after escaping from the ghetto in Grodno. Helena was directed there by a priest, Rev. Jan Kunicki, the pastor of Indura, a friend of her family in Grodno from before the war. Rev. Kunicki had promised to help Helena in her time of need. Dr. Docha placed the two young women with the Strzałkowski family in the village of Boryski and assisted with their upkeep.<sup>1568</sup>

<sup>1566</sup> Account of Anna Kovitzka, *Voices of the Holocaust*, Internet: [https://voices.library.iit.edu/interview/kaletskaA?search\\_api\\_fulltext=kaletska](https://voices.library.iit.edu/interview/kaletskaA?search_api_fulltext=kaletska).

<sup>1567</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 180–81; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 55–57; The Docha Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-docha-family>.

<sup>1568</sup> Testimony of Helena Bibliowicz, SFV, Interview code 6485; Testimony of Helena Bibliowicz, YVA, file O.3/7017 (Item item 5339450); Margaria Fichtner, “‘I Shall Not Die’: From Holocaust Horror to an ‘Impossible’ Reunion,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 12, 1988. According to her Shoah Foundation testimony, Helena Bibliowicz’s parents’ house was adjacent to a Catholic church and convent on Brygidzka Street in Grodno. They formed a close friendship with Rev. Jan Kunicki, an elderly priest, and with the nuns who resided there. The church in question is the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the



Another heart-rending case is that of Dana Kuroczycka-Rusiecka, the Polish Catholic wife of Dr. Aron Rusiecki. The couple married in Wilno in the fall of 1939. After the Germans invaded this region in the summer of 1941, they moved to Raduń with their newborn son. Although a Jew, Dr. Rusiecki was employed at the military hospital. The German commander urged Dana to leave her husband, but she steadfastly refused. After learning that Dr. Rusiecki was treating an injured Jewish girl at the hospital, the German commander ordered the execution of Dana and her son as punishment, but he kept Dr. Rusiecki on because surgeons were in short supply.

Dana's son was killed, but somehow Dana managed to survive her gunshot wounds. The villagers who were ordered to bury the victims decided to hide Dana. She was taken in by Rev. Czesław Sztejn, the local pastor, who cared for her during the next several months. The local Polish police commander warned the priest that the German authorities were looking for Dana, and he brought her to his own home. Afterwards, he placed Dana with Rev. Sykstus Hanusowski, the pastor of Ossowo, with whom she stayed for about one month. She was then transferred from one villager to another until the arrival of the Soviet army. Dr. Rusiecki managed to escape from the hospital. He joined up with Soviet partisans but was killed shortly before the German retreat.<sup>1569</sup>

Several priests in this area are credited with coming to the assistance of Jews, including an unidentified priest from Raduń, who provided food to Jews.<sup>1570</sup>

After escaping from an execution site in the forest near Werenowo, Czesława Żołnierczyk (then Kagan) hid with various farmers. Assisted by a Polish farmer in 1944, she became the housekeeper of a priest whose name she could not recall. On November 18, 1944, the priest baptized her, issuing a certificate from the parish of Pielasa, near Raduń. At that time, the pastor of Pielasa was Rev. Jan Wieniożyndzis. She remained with the priest until the end of the war.<sup>1571</sup>

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nuns were Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. For several years, Helena attended a Catholic school where she says she was treated very well.

<sup>1569</sup> Tamara Omeljančuk, "Smutna historia miłosna," *Nasz Czas* [Vilnius], no. 9 (2005). There is also mention of a helpful priest from Ossowo who was allegedly executed, in Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 33.

<sup>1570</sup> Yaffa Eliach, *There Once Was a World: A Nine-Hundred-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1998), 599.

<sup>1571</sup> Bejze and Galiński, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa polskiego 1939–1956*, 205, based on the testimony of Czesława Żołnierczyk; Larysa Mikhailik (Larysa Michajlik), *Kościół katolicki na Grodzieńszczyźnie 1939–1956* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN; Rytm, 2008), 153.

Rev. Paweł Dabulewicz, the pastor of Nacza, is also credited with helping Jews.<sup>1572</sup>

Jewish accounts mention the selfless deeds of a priest from Dziewieniszki, located between Lida and Wilno; he intervened on behalf of abused Jews, safeguarded their possessions, placed at least one Jew with a parishioner, and provided Jews with false identity documents. The local pastor at the time was Rev. Antoni Weryk, who also served as a chaplain for the Home Army.

[Eliahu Blyakher:] One day, a German group appeared in town seeking entertainment. They gathered the town's youth in the marketplace square, facing the church, and forced them to perform exercise tasks. They then forced them to run around the marketplace, followed by more tasks. After a few hours of torture, one German made a wild anti-Semitic speech, and the Germans got excited. Thanks to the priest who came out and pleaded for us, sacrifices were then avoided.<sup>1573</sup>

[Kalmen Kartshmer:] After that, the wandering from village to village and from peasant to peasant began again, and to each one I gave some of the belongings I had left with Lodvik [Ludwik]. Once, a peasant demanded goose feathers. I sent a woman to the town priest and he informed the peasant that I had deposited with him 20 kilograms of feathers and that he would give the woman the feathers. Thanks to that I stayed with the peasant for a long while. Whenever I felt the situation was worsening and I was in danger, I would escape to Lodvik and he would shelter me for a few weeks until the storm passed. I want to emphasize that I remained alive only thanks to Lodvik.<sup>1574</sup>

[Pinkhas Lipkunski:] A young man named Shalom [Sorenzon] arrived to our house and asked to reside with us. We welcomed him as a family member. The town's priest, who visited us, saw the young man and asked who he was. We told him the matter, and on the spot he expressed his willingness to save his life under the condition that he would convert. After the war he would be able to return to the fold of Judaism. The young man agreed—and then he disappeared without a trace.

When we arrived to Israel and settled in Ramot Remez in Haifa, we became friendly with our neighbors who were former residents of Vilne [Wilno]. Once, on Rosh Hashanah, we found a Jew at their home whose leg was amputated after being wounded at the front. He recounted the whole story before me: The priest got him a job as a laborer in a farm near Divenishok [Dziewieniszki]. When the Russians arrived, he returned to Judaism

<sup>1572</sup> Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (Pavel Babulevič), based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum.

<sup>1573</sup> Eliahu Blyakher, "A Partisan's Story," 175 ff. in David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Divenishok: Yad vashem le-ayara yehudit* (Israel: Divenishok Societies in Israel and the United States, 1977), translated as *Devenishki Book: Memorial Book*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dieveniskes/dieveniskes.html>. See also Zelig Rogol, "In Battle Against the Nazi Enemy," *ibid.*, 169 ff.

<sup>1574</sup> Kalmen Kartshmer, "In the Claws of the Nazi Beast," in Shtokfish, *Sefer Divenishok*, 162 ff.

and volunteered to the Red Army. He was wounded in action and his leg was amputated. He was among the ma'apilim [illegal immigrants] in Cyprus and now he lives in Ashdod.<sup>1575</sup>

After escaping from the mass murder pit in Ponary, Shalom Sorenzon made his way farther into the countryside. It is not clear from his own testimony that he underwent conversion. He was provided with false documents, which enabled him to conceal his identity. After some time, however, Sorenzon relocated to Subačius, near Panevėžys, where he and seven other Jews were sheltered by the Markevičius family (awarded by Yad Vashem).<sup>1576</sup>

Rev. Borys Kaminski, an Orthodox priest from Głowsiewiczze, near Słonim, writes: “During my visits to Lida I remember seeing groups of Jews, herded to work by members of the Gestapo, collectively removing their hats in respect, at the appearance of a Polish Catholic priest.”<sup>1577</sup>

Adolf Lewinson, a medical doctor from Lida, entrusted his daughter, Lea (b. 1939), via Zygmunt and Janina Skurczyński, into the care of Czesława Bętkowska, Janina's sister, who formally adopted the child. The Skurczyńskis obtained from Rev. Alfons Rotkiewicz, the birth and baptismal certificate of a deceased child, which was used as the basis for the adoption. Lea became Lucyna Bętkowska. Czesława Bętkowska and Lucyna lived with the Skurczyńskis in Lida. Lucyna survived the war and became a medical doctor in Poland. Her parents did not survive.<sup>1578</sup>

Sometimes, Christian benefactors were put at risk because of internal rivalries and bickering within the Jewish community. Presumably, the cleric in Lida (below) was Orthodox.<sup>1579</sup>

<sup>1575</sup> Pinkhas Lipkunski, “The Story of an 11-Year Old Boy,” in Shtokfish, *Sefer Divenishok*, 242 ff. This account probably refers to Shalom Sorenzon.

<sup>1576</sup> Testimony of Shalom Shorenzon, SFV, Interview code 9887; Testimony of Shalom Shurenson, YVA, file O.33/330. Sorenzon remained with the Markevičius family for about two months and then moved on. See also Markevičius Family, RD.

<sup>1577</sup> Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 33–34.

<sup>1578</sup> Testimony of Lucyna Betkowska-Krata, SFV, Interview code 42582.

<sup>1579</sup> Another version of the story is that the Jews who broke into the Orthodox church and stabbed the priest when he confronted them were a family of thieves named Zimleich who stole horses from “the goyim.” The Germans ordered the Jewish council to turn the burglars over, but the three of them escaped from Lida. Instead, the council handed over some refugees who were acquainted with the criminals. In an effort to save themselves, they revealed to the Germans that the council issued false documents to Jewish refugees. See Chaim Basist, *The Story of the House of Plotnik-Monco-Basist*, December 2008, Internet: <http://museumoffamilyhistory.com/wims-basist-02.htm>. See also Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps*,

In December 1941, all the Jews of Lida were concentrated in a ghetto ... At this time Aktionen were being carried out in Vilna [Wilno], and a few hundred Jewish survivors fled from there to Lida. By paying off Polish municipal clerks, the Judenrat was able to obtain residence permits for the refugees. However, not long afterward a group of Jews was caught while trying to steal the Jewish property that had been left for safekeeping with the local [Orthodox] priest. The thieves were taken to prison. Their wives demanded that the Judenrat intercede to obtain their release. When the Judenrat refused to act, the detainees told the authorities about the permits the Judenrat had arranged for the Vilna refugees and promised to disclose the identity of the latter as well. On March 1, 1942, all the town's Jews were assembled in the square next to the new post office. They were then made to walk through a narrow passage, where one of the thieves identified five people. They were immediately arrested and two days later were shot in the prison courtyard. Some 200 sick and elderly Jews who could not get to the site were murdered in their lodgings. A week later a number of the Judenrat's senior figures, including the chairman, Lichtman, were arrested, tortured, and murdered.<sup>1580</sup>

Eliahu Damesek describes these events in the Lida memorial book as follows:

One day, a party of Jewish thieves made an attempt on the life of a Russian [Belorussian] clergyman in the town and tried to rob him of the property which the Jews of Lida entrusted to him. The attempt did not succeed and some of the attackers were arrested. The wives of the thieves appealed to the Judenrat for assistance in obtaining the release of their husbands. The Judenrat could not take upon themselves their request and turned them down. Upon the thieves being informed of this fact, they decided to revenge themselves upon the Judenrat.

They then approached the Nazi authorities offering them cooperation in finding out the Jews of Vilno [Wilno] who had infiltrated into Lida.

The Nazis chose a day in March 1942 for the betrayal of the Jews from Vilno. ... all the Jews were driven from their homes and ... were led to a square opposite the new post office. There they were lined up in the snow and cold and forced to enter a narrow passage so that the thieves could point them out. Fifty Jews were arrested and shot shortly thereafter in the courtyard of the prison. ... All the children whose parents had left them at home due to the intense cold, and all the aged, the sick, and the dying who did not go out to the identification parade, were found lying in their own blood ... In this manner, on that day, over 200 souls were murdered.

A week after the betrayal by the Jewish thieves, the heads of the Judenrat were arrested ... These people were tortured and met a violent death.<sup>1581</sup>

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1939–1944 (New Haven and London: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and Yale University Press, 2002), 235–36, 610.

<sup>1580</sup> Shmuel Spector, ed., *Lost Jewish Worlds: The Communities of Grodno, Lida, Olkieniki, Vishay* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), 212–13.

<sup>1581</sup> Alexander Manor, Itzhak Ganusovitch, and Aba Lando, eds., *Sefer Lida* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Lida in Israel and the Committee of Lida Jews in U.S.A., 1970), viii ff.

Two Pallottine Sisters (Missionary Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate) who worked in the hospital in Nowogródek—Celina Bławat and Jadwiga Kaczowska—gave shelter to five Jewish doctors, their co-workers, during the first large Aktion of December 8, 1941. Those doctors later escaped from Nowogródek and joined Soviet partisan groups operating in the vicinity.

The head doctor, Dr. Zenon Limon, asked the nuns to shelter his wife, a Polish woman from Lida named Wanda (née Gierasimowicz), and their young son, Henryk. They were transferred for safety to the order's mother house in the nearby village of Rajca, where they remained until the spring of 1943, when they rejoined Dr. Limon. All three survived the war and settled in the Gdańsk area.<sup>1582</sup>

Herzl and Tina Bencjanowski (Benson) placed their one-year-old daughter in a convent, probably with the Pallottine Sisters, with the help of Mrs. Bencjanowski's sister, who was married to a Christian.<sup>1583</sup>

Sister Irena Przybysz sheltered several Jewish children in the children's home run by the Pallottine Sisters. The nuns also provided food to the ghetto from 1941 until its liquidation in 1943.<sup>1584</sup>

The Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin Mary of Mariówka sheltered a number of Jewish children at their convent and orphanage in Łomża.<sup>1585</sup> One of the Jewish girls rescued there was Chana Kuperman (later Siloni, b. 1938), who was dropped off in front of the nuns' residence without any prior notice by her family's former servant. Although the child was thought to be Jewish, the nuns did not hesitate to take her under their roof. The local authorities were notified because all children living in orphanages had to be properly registered, and it was next to impossible to simply hide away a child of Chana's age. Chana became Halina Koperska and remained with the nuns until after the war. Eventually, she settled in Israel.<sup>1586</sup>

<sup>1582</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1022; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 406–7; Zofia Kaperczak, "Siostry Misjonarki Apostolstwa Katolickiego," in *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947*, vol. 8 (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1995), 77–110, at p. 96.

<sup>1583</sup> George Lubow, *Escape: Against All Odds: A Survivor's Story* (New York: iUniverse, 2004), 45.

<sup>1584</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 407; Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 145.

<sup>1585</sup> Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 155; Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 130–31.

<sup>1586</sup> Gita and Mendel Kuperman, Photograph no. 09195, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1178220>.

There was a young couple in Zambrow [Zambrów], Mendl Kopperman, a tailor, and his wife Gutsheh [Gita]. In the year 1941, the Germans murdered both of them. However, they had the presence of mind, before death, to hand over their only daughter Chana, almost five years old, to an elderly Christian woman Leszczynska [Leszczyńska] who had worked for them, and this Christian woman secretly raised the child. The parents saw fit to give the Christian woman the address of the mother's brother in America ...

The Christian woman hid the child for about a half year, until she no longer could. The ghetto had been liquidated, and she didn't know what further to do. Contact with America had been cut. So she came up with a plan, that she would surreptitiously leave the little girl at an orphanage, and they would be forced to take her in. So she rehearsed the little girl, who spoke Polish, that she should only say that she is a Christian child. She put on a crucifix around her neck and traveled with her to Lomza [Łomża].

At night, in the middle of a snowstorm, when not a living soul could be seen in the street, the elderly woman put the little girl into a sack, told her that she must keep still, and under no circumstances reveal who it was that left her there, and where she is from, and she left the sack by the door of the orphanage on the Ostrolenka [Ostrołęcka] Gasse. The old lady hid herself in a yard somewhere close by, and watched from a distance through a slit in the fence to see what would happen... a few minutes after this, the dog in the yard of the orphanage began to bark, and tried to tear himself from his chain. It became irritating to the Headmistress of the orphanage—a good, pious woman, who secretly worked against the Germans—and she went out onto the doorstep to see what was happening: why is the dog barking like that? She then saw the sack with the little girl in it... she immediately brought the sack into the house, and the elderly gentile woman left immediately, and on the following day she went off to the Zambrow Road late in the night.

Even before they had begun to ask her anything, the girl, out of fright, immediately began to cry and say: I am not Jewish, I am Catholic, see the crucifix around my neck... the Headmistress understood only too well, what it was she had in front of her, but she feigned ignorance, calmed the child, gave her food and drink, washed her and put her to bed. In the morning, she went with her to the municipal office to present her. First, however, she learned what to say and what not to say. She gave her the name Halina Koperska and rehearsed this name many times. The Headmistress and Governess Julia, prepared her well for her "examination," and came with her to the municipal office. A Polish-speaking German received them, and continued to shout that she was a Jewish girl, from the liquidated ghettos, and she needs to be taken away... to her parents. The little girl, however, held her ground: I am a Christian!... soon we will know the whole truth, the employee threatened: I will call in the big dog: If you are Jewish, he will tear you to pieces, he hates Jews. So the little girl burst into tears: he will not tear me to pieces, because I am a Christian girl... the interview lasted for three hours... and she remained in the orphanage as a Christian girl until the year 1949—seven years.<sup>1587</sup>

<sup>1587</sup> "Chana Kopperman," in Y. T. [Yom-Tov] Lewinsky, ed., *Sefer Zambrow: Zambrove* (Tel Aviv: The Zambrover Societies in USA, Argentina, and Israel, 1963), 211–14, translated as *The Zambrów Yizkor Book*, Internet: <https://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/z/zyb-08.htm>.



Hundreds of Jews jumped from trains headed to the Treblinka death camp, and a small number of Jews—perhaps as many as 250 according to historian Chad Gibbs—managed to escape from the camp itself. Many of these fugitives—most often destitute—received assistance from Polish villagers (numerous examples of such help are set out in the penultimate appendix). Sometimes, these Jewish fugitives knocked on the doors of parish rectories, seeking assistance. As historian Philip Friedman noted, “A number of priests in the neighborhood of the death camp at Treblinka gave food and shelter to Jews escaping from transports on the way to the camp.”<sup>1588</sup>

Among the priests who came to the assistance of Jews who escaped from Treblinka, and of others who jumped from the trains that were headed there, was Rev. Sergiusz Góralczuk, the acting pastor of Ugoszcz, north of Węgrów. Rev. Góralczuk hid, in the parish rectory, two young Jewish men who had escaped from Treblinka during the August 1943 revolt. He provided temporary shelter and food to several other Jews, some of whom later moved on in order to get away from the vicinity of the camp.<sup>1589</sup>

After escaping from Treblinka, Henryk Kompanijec, a native of Voronezh, was sheltered by Rev. Kazimierz Czarkowski, the pastor of Węgrów. Kompanijec remained in Węgrów after the war.<sup>1590</sup>

The following account pertains to a Jew from Warsaw who managed to escape from Treblinka on a transport train. Injured, he entered a random church where a sympathetic priest provided him with the necessities he needed to return to Warsaw.

... they took him and his wife to Treblinka. They were ordered to throw all their valuables, jewellery, dollars onto a sheet—death if you didn’t. Everyone did, but Grandpa thought to himself, they’ll kill my anyway, but what if I survive? So he bent down as though he were throwing, and picked things up again and again. Then, they selected several stronger men, put them back in the train, and Grandpa was one of the chosen. As they rode at night, they managed to push out the bars of the window. The German shot, but missed him. Cut and bruised, he dragged himself to a settlement where he saw a church. The priest gave him clothes and money for the train, because he couldn’t pay in dollars. When he got back to Warsaw, his friends said: “We’ll introduce you to Jędrzej Korczak of the HA [Home Army] who is hiding in the Ujazdów [military] hospital.” In this way, Grandpa became one of General Horodyński’s charges. [Witold Horodyński was head of the surgical department—Ed.] ... the colonel on the officer’s ward is a Jew, a pharmacist who’d studied along with Horodyński. And the major is also a Jew, a music teacher. And the quiet, devout soldier with

<sup>1588</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers*, 126.

<sup>1589</sup> Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 301, 328–29.

<sup>1590</sup> Małgorzata Piórkowska, *Sprawiedliwi i ocaleni: Mieszkańcy Węgrowa i okolic, pomagający Żydom w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Węgrów: Towarzystwo Miłośników Ziemi Węgrowskiej; Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna im. A. Cieszkowskiego w Węgrowie, 2012), 119.

the bamboo walking-stick who wears a crucifix on top of his pajamas. And that rheumatic lady who claims that we're suited to each other, Grandpa knew her well in Kraków. Even poor Lieutenant Doliński had a Jewish mother.<sup>1591</sup>

**C**atholic priests in the vicinity of Treblinka are known to have stood up to malfeasants who harassed and robbed Jewish fugitives.

Jentel Kita [Kitaj] recounts the following incident which occurred in the village of Lachow [Łochów], Wysokie Mazowieckie county. Several villagers assaulted a rather well-dressed woman, trying to strip her of her clothes. A priest suddenly appeared, approaching the attackers and asking them why they were harassing a lone woman. They told him that she was a Jewess who had jumped out of a Treblinka-destined train. Upon hearing that, the priest demanded that they leave her alone: he told them that she had suffered enough. The victim of the assault took advantage of his intercession and of the ensuing argument to withdraw speedily. Then the priest also walked swiftly away.<sup>1592</sup>

A priest in Sokołów Podlaski, in his Sunday sermon, admonished the shameful behaviour of some Catholics who had pillaged the bodies of Jews who had jumped from transport trains headed to Treblinka.<sup>1593</sup>

**J**oseph S. Kutrzeba, then known as Arie Fajwiszys, recalled the assistance he received from several priests in the vicinity of Brańsk. In particular, Rev. Stanisław Falkowski, who was awarded by Yad Vashem, played a key role in the rescue of this 14-year-old boy from the Warsaw ghetto who had jumped from a train headed for Treblinka.

After wandering in the countryside for several months, hiding in forests, fields and barns, the boy asked farmers to give him work and shelter. He turned to a priest in Hodyszewo, Rev. Józef Perkowski, to whom he disclosed his identity. That priest referred him to Rev. Falkowski, a young vicar who was posted in the nearby village of Piekuty Nowe (or Nowe Piekuty). The boy knocked on his door in the dead of night. Rev. Falkowski gave him a warm reception and tended to his wounds. Since the Germans had taken over the parish rectory, the small premises Rev. Falkowski had to rent for himself were not conducive to rescue. He arranged a hiding place for the boy in the courtyard near the church. Joseph stayed for four months. Rev. Falkowski then arranged for the boy to work for Polish farmers in the area, among them Trzeszczkowski and Stanisław Olędzki.

Rev. Roch Modzelewski, the pastor, was aware of Joseph's true identity and assisted in the rescue effort. The boy also received help from another young vicar, Rev. Janiecki, who visited Rev. Falkowski, and from a priest in a nearby

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<sup>1591</sup> Grynberg, *Drohobycz, Drohobycz and Other Stories*, 151–52.

<sup>1592</sup> Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 245, based on the Czyżew Memorial Book.

<sup>1593</sup> Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous*, 215.

village who was a homeopath. Bishop Stanisław Łukomski of Łomża,<sup>1594</sup> who had been taken into confidence, consented to the boy's wish to be baptized in the spring of 1943. Through Stanisław Olędzki, the village head of Szepietowo, Rev. Falkowski arranged for Aryan papers for Joseph under his new identity, as Kutrzeba. This enabled him to register for work in Germany. Rev. Falkowski kept in touch with Joseph the whole time while he worked in a factory, writing him letters to keep up his spirits and sending him food parcels. Rev. Falkowski also helped other Jews, which Joseph was not aware of at the time.<sup>1595</sup>

Joseph Kutrzeba wrote the following statement in May 1994.

During the first days of September 1942, at the age of 14, I jumped out of a moving train destined for Treblinka, through an opening (window) of a cattle car loaded to capacity with Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto.

Wandering over fields, forests and villages, at first in the vicinity of Wołomin, and later of Zambrów, I found myself, in late November, in the area of Hodyszewo (at the time district Łomża).

Throughout my wandering, the peasants for the most part were amenable to put me up for the night and to feed me—some either suspecting my origins or pressing me to admit it.

I am the son of the well-known musician, composer, professor and conductor, Izrael Fajwizys, and of Malka Hakman, murdered by the German Nazis together with my sister Rela.

Generally, I was aiming to reach the forests of Lublin as I'd heard within the resistance movement in the Warsaw Ghetto, Hashomer Hatzair, to which I belonged (and whose leader was Mordechai Anielewicz) that a Jewish partisan unit of that movement was being formed there. The peasants were afraid to shelter me longer than overnight since an officially announced death penalty had been decreed by the German occupiers for any assistance rendered to Jewish escapees.

Several times I was advised to seek out "a priest" who, as the peasants believed, could baptize me and thus to "save" me. While still in the area of Wołomin, I looked up a pastor (whose name I don't remember). He had handed me a prayer book advising me to somehow take care of myself and to learn the basic prayers etc., and to look him up again after

<sup>1594</sup> For information about Bishop Stanisław Łukomski's (unsuccessful) interventions with the German authorities on behalf of both Poles and Jews and his pleas for support for Jews directed to the faithful, see Ryszard Bender, et al., ed., *Słownik biograficzny katolicyzmu społecznego w Polsce*, vol. 2 (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1994), 103; Białous, *Biskup Stanisław Kostka Łukomski (1874–1948)*, 232–33, 239; Damian Bednarski, "I vescovi polacchi e la salvaguardia degli ebrei," in Mikrut, *La Chiesa cattolica in Europa centro-orientale di fronte al Nazionalsocialismo 1939–1945*, 753–54.

<sup>1595</sup> See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 211–12; Anna Pyżewska, "Pomoc dla ludności żydowskiej w Okręgu Białystok w latach okupacji niemieckiej," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 955–56; Joseph S. Kutrzeba, *The Contract: A Life for a Life* (New York: iUniverse, 2009), 59–60, 80–164, 197–98, 203, 207, 217–18; Zbigniew Romaniuk, *Słownik historyczny miejscowości i postaci z terenu gminy Nowe Piekuty* (Nowe Piekuty: Urząd Gminy Nowe Piekuty, 2014), 169–70, 197, 208.

I have mastered the prayers. Then “we’ll see,” he said. Because, as he stated, he was afraid to shelter me. I never saw him again.

But at the end of November 1942, when heavy snow covered the ground, I followed the advice of a peasant who suggested that I look up, as it turned out, the parish priest (canon) Józef Perkowski in the church at Hodyszewo (housing the Miraculous Image of the Virgin Mary), the post-war rector of the Catholic Seminary in Łomża, with whom I corresponded after the war. Rev. Perkowski, having fed me, suggested that I repair at night, over heavy snow, to find a young vicar, Rev. Stanisław Falkowski, in the village of Piekuty Nowe, near Szepietowo.

Rev. Perkowski maintained that German gendarmes were constantly milling about in Hodyszewo and thus it would be difficult for him to hide or shelter me. However, as he put it, Piekuty Nowe was a small village, out of the way (as it turned out, there was also a gendarmerie post there), and that Rev. Falkowski was a “young idealist” who might agree to help me.

Father Falkowski opened the door for me on a dark evening, asking me to come into his one-room dwelling unit where, as a young vicar, he’d found a locum with a family, since the parish house in Piekuty Nowe had been requisitioned by the Germans, and the parish priest, Father Roch Modzelewski, had had to move into the house of the organist.

At first, Father Falkowski had put me up in his only room where I slept on the sofa. I had been covered with lice and with sores over my body. Father Falkowski fed me, arranged to clean me up, boiled my clothes, somehow coming up with an ointment for my sores. At the same time, we held many conversations evenings, rising at five in the morning to attend dawn Mass during Advent (December 1942).

From the start, Father Falkowski’s superior, pastor Modzelewski, had been fully taken into confidence (I often visited him—a short walk) and fully cooperated in assisting me. Both priests resolved that it was most important that I learn the catechism and the basic Catholic teachings—that is because that, if they would eventually attempt to place me with a peasant as a “working hand,” or to tend the cows—due to my “good” appearance and Polish speech—I would not give myself away with regard to my origins.

Over time, as I learned later, the bishop of Łomża, Stanisław Łukomski, had been taken into confidence; also, when the time came, in the spring of 1943, he had also granted permission to Father Falkowski to baptize me. When I took ill with jaundice, Father Modzelewski took me by sleighs to another village where a well-known homeopathist-priest cured me with herbs.

Another young vicar [Father Janiecki<sup>1596</sup>], a friend of Father Falkowski, had also visited us several times; he’d brought over a violin which he and I both played. He, too, was taken into confidence. However, active assistance was rendered to me mainly by Father Falkowski and Father Modzelewski including the subsequent placements with several peasants, as a Catholic, and later even with the head of a cluster of villages (wójt).

Father Falkowski suggested a new last name for me—Kutrzeba (the first name remained as at my birth)—and that for two reasons: 1) it had a very “Polish” ring to it, and 2) to honor Gen. Kutrzeba who resisted the German invasion to the last moment.

<sup>1596</sup> See Kutrzeba, *The Contract*, 95–102.

When, during a particular stay with a peasant, things began to get “uncomfortable”—either owing to very hard work ... or due to gradually emerging suspicions which I’d promptly report to Father Falkowski, the priests would move me to yet another peasant—usually located at an isolated homestead, away from the main village where I would not be regarded with suspicion by passers-by or by visitors.

Over time, steeped in prayers, I began to cling to them, as they became my only inner refuge and a spiritual nourishment, especially while co-existing with simple people with whom I shared very little, nor could I share anything about myself or about my past in order to alleviate some of my inner torment. Owing to much hard work and security reasons, I was allowed to visit Father Falkowski and Father Modzelewski solely after church on Sundays or holidays where I wouldn’t attract much attention among throngs of people. (After the war I learned that the housekeeper of Father Modzelewski whom I got to know well, was also a Jewess, and that Father Falkowski also helped to shelter several other Jews.)

These visits meant spiritual rescue for me. As time went by, Father Falkowski became my only source of survival and hope, spiritually and otherwise. When, at one point, he proposed baptism to me, I agreed. Now, recalling my mental state of the time, I believe that: 1) I came to believe in Christ in whose name Father Falkowski had extended to me an unequivocal love of one’s neighbor, constantly risking his life in the name of his ideals; 2) to a certain extent, I felt neither could I disappoint my benefactor whom I came to love; and 3) it seemed to offer a better chance for survival. In addition, I recall as how Father Falkowski expressing it with some levity perhaps, added the conversion of souls was not only a priest’s mission, but that it would also put him “in good stead” with his bishop (I remember also that I had to write a formal letter to Bishop Łukomski stating my reason for my desire to be baptized, in order to receive his permission therefor.) I felt that I could not disappoint him, although he’d assured me that even if I should eschew baptism, he would still care for me.

When, toward the end of summer, things started to get “hot” (as I was almost found out by a certain mason—a “wiseguy” from Warsaw who worked there), Father Falkowski took me in again and, together with the parish priests, put together the following scenario:

The plan was for me to report to the general population registration, then in progress in the German-occupied Białystok voivodship, where new identity cards were being issued; with the partial cooperation of the village elder (who had to verify my identity, based on the priest’s assurance—not being aware of my true origin), I was granted a new identity card (Polish Catholic).

With it in hand, I “volunteered” for civilian labor in East Prussia, as the Germans, in addition to forcibly deporting young people for labor, were also conducting a broad propaganda campaign to recruit volunteers.

With tears in my eyes, I took leave of Father Falkowski who felt that my only chance to survive would be “in the lion’s den,” since the Germans embarked on a wild hunt for Jewish escapees, and a death penalty—often on the spot—was meted out to those assisting them.

I was received by the German Amtskommissar in Szebietowo who dispatched me by train for labor in a factory in Insterburg, in East Prussia.

From September 1943 to January 1945 I worked there, all along corresponding with Father Falkowski. Because nourishment was very scarce, Father Falkowski would continuously

provide me with packages containing bread loaves; inside the bread, in a hollowed-out cavity, I usually found a ring of kielbasa [sausage], which, by the way, was strictly against the law (the remittance of meat products during the war-time food rationing). In the event that I would be found out (as four other Poles were employed in that same factory), without doubt it would have caused a tragic end for my friend.

Moved to Germany proper, where I was liberated by the American Army (in the city of Erfurt), I reestablished contact with Father Falkowski. Since then, allowing for some interruptions, we've been in constant touch for over 50 years: twice I brought him to the United States for visits, and to Israel (where he received the highest honors); I visited him in Poland a number of times. Currently he is retired, following two heart surgeries, at age 78, residing in the village of Klukowo, district Łomża. ... Throughout his entire life he displayed great dedication in restoring churches, in furthering education, especially among children (he was imprisoned for two years in Białystok under Stalin), and always leaving parishes behind in an improved state. ... (As far as I know, he also assisted, and possibly sheltered, the well-known deceased writer, Paweł Jasienica.)

Leaving him, en route to East Prussia, I had been asking him how I would ever repay him (taught by my parents that one should not take from others without intending to give). He replied, I remember, "don't even try, only pass it on to others." ... Fifty years later, from a present perspective, I asked him, among others, whether he'd received any instructions from his Church superiors with regard to aiding or sheltering escapees or Jews. He answered: "I didn't need any, for I had my instructions from Christ—'Love thy neighbor' or 'I am my brother's keeper.'"

In the course of our long conversations when I was under the care of Father Falkowski (1942–43), I was asking him, among others—as a 15-year-old boy, why were we being persecuted and murdered. His answer then, apparently the product of his state of mind at the time, or else his scope of "knowledge" acquired in the seminary, or in the environment, expressed itself thusly: "The Lord Christ told the Jews: 'My blood will fall upon you and your offspring.' (I am not able to quote directly but such was the content.) And this has to be fulfilled." When I questioned that—"but why upon us, the innocent?" "Father, you have imbued me with the love of one's neighbor as the foundation of Christianity, and the Germans are a Christian nation ..." He would reply: "Certainly, every Christian has the duty to realize these principles of faith, but apparently, in order to fulfill the prophecy of Christ, the Lord, in ways incomprehensible to us, is using Hitler as His Attila's whip." In addition, he told me that one could attain salvation solely through Christ and through a belief in Him.

These days he does not recall having said the former, and as for the latter, he maintains that such an approach is undergoing changes in the philosophy of the modern-day Church—many roads can, apparently, lead to salvation.<sup>1597</sup>

<sup>1597</sup> In the author's possession (written by Joseph Kutrzeba for Rev. Zygmunt Zieliński).



Rev. Stanisław Falkowski penned the following account about the rescue of Joseph Kutrzeba.

During Advent in 1942, when I was vicar in the parish of Piekuty, Wysokie Mazowieckie County, a young boy of 16 came to me one evening, asking me to help and save him. He introduced himself as the son of Professor Fajwiszes [Izrael Sruł Fajwiszys] of Łódź, director of synagogue choirs in Poland before 1939. While being transferred from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka the boy had jumped out of a window of the train and then had wandered from ghetto to ghetto in small provincial towns, frequently slipping out of the hands of the Germans until he came to Father [Józef] Perkowski, then curate in Hodyszewo and now rector of the Theological Seminary in Łomża. Father Perkowski concealed him for a short time in the home of a parishioner and when there was danger of discovery he sent the boy to me, in the neighbouring parish of Piekuty.

I hid him in my room for a couple of weeks, conversing with him for hours on end, teaching him the foundations of the Catholic religion, so that he could more easily adapt himself to the Catholic milieu where I was planning to place him. At the time, I admired the rare intelligence and ability of the boy. He knew Hebrew and he delighted other people with the beautiful translations of the psalms (I had given him the Bible in Hebrew by Kittel). From memory he reproduced a musical composition for three voices composed by his father during imprisonment in a concentration camp for Jews; could write down any melody he had just heard for the first time.

After a couple of weeks of our constant association, when he had learned the prayers and catechism well, and after he had read the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament I took him to the settlement, to a parishioner, and requested a place for him to live in as one of my cousins. He was at times cross-examined by the peasants but whenever they appeared to become suspicious he always managed, by his knowledge of the religious truths and quotation of the catechism, to dispel their suspicions. But he had to change his place of residence very often. He was frequently saved by his identity card, issued in the name of Józef Kutrzeba (he still bears this name today), that he had received while still living with me. On 25, March 1943, I baptized him in the church of Piekuty parish, giving him the Christian name he had since birth—Józef. The parish curate, Father Roch Modzelewski, knew of all this and he helped us, displaying great courage and wisdom in helping the oppressed.

When things became truly difficult for my Józef in this parish I advised him to volunteer for work in Germany. ... We corresponded quite often. ... Later, when the front drew near in 1944, I lost track of him. Not until 1946 did I receive the first letter from him from Munich ...<sup>1598</sup>

Rev. Roch Modzelewski, the pastor of Piekuty Nowe, provided various forms of assistance to Jews. As mentioned by Kutrzeba, he engaged a Jewish woman as his housekeeper. His beneficiaries included Dr. Szejna (Zofia) Kamieniecka from Brańsk and a Jewish woman called Kasia. He also came to the assistance of Marianna Jurczuk, a convert, and her children.<sup>1599</sup> Her son, Jerzy, stated: “He was

<sup>1598</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 344–46.

<sup>1599</sup> Romaniuk, *Słownik historyczny miejscowości i postaci z terenu gminy Nowe Piekuty*, 170.

a very decent man. He helped everyone who had to hide regardless of whether he was a Jew or a Russian.”<sup>1600</sup>

The village of Lendowo, in the parish of Piekuty Nowe, is mentioned in several Jewish survivors’ accounts as a bastion of refuge for local Jews.

Liba Goldberg-Warobel [Luba Wrobel]: “This village, Landowa [Lendowo], had a good name among the Jews who were hiding in the area around Sokoly [Sokoły], and they regarded it as a paradise. Many Jews began to stream there. After two weeks, there wasn’t a house in Landowa where there weren’t three or four Jews.”<sup>1601</sup>

Tzipora Tabak-Burstein: “Finally, we came to the village of Landowa [Lendowo]. ... we knocked on the door of a house, not far from the forest. An old farmwoman brought us into the house. She gave us permission to sleep next to the warm stove. ... I remained alone with the old farmwoman. ... Over time, it became known to all of [the villagers] that I was not related to her family and that I didn’t even know how to speak Polish. The farmwoman did not hesitate to admit that she had adopted me, a Jewish girl, as her daughter. ... The farmwoman began to teach me Christian prayers, and on Sundays I went with her to church. ... The *goyim*, residents of the village who knew I was Jewish, did not hand me over to the Germans.”<sup>1602</sup>

Supported by a network of helpers, Rev. Józef Perkowski, the aforementioned pastor of Hodyszewo, helped several Jews survive the war. Dr. Szejna (Zofia) Kamieniecka stayed initially at the parish rectory with her young son, Arie (Jan). The priest’s housekeeper, Franciszka Krakówka, was also involved in the rescue, as was Adela Bińczak, a nurse from Brańsk. Afterwards, Dr. Kamieniecka and her son were sheltered separately by Polish families, among them Władysława Tomczak and her husband. Mother and son survived the war, settling eventually in the United States.

Rev. Perkowski also sheltered the five-year-old daughter of Josl Tykocki, a merchant from Brańsk. This young girl, baptized as Teresa, died not long after the war. Rev. Perkowski was also involved in the rescue of a young boy named Henry. The boy was sheltered by the Wróblewski family, who nursed him back

<sup>1600</sup> Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 956 (the surname is given as Jurczak).

<sup>1601</sup> Liba Goldberg-Warobel, “In a Struggle for Life,” in Kalisher, *Sokoly*, 188–200, translated as *Sokoly: In the Fight for Life*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokoly/sokoly.html>. See also Luba Wrobel Goldberg, *A Sparkle of Hope: An Autobiography* (Melbourne: n.p., 1998), 63: “This village Lendowo became a refuge for a lot of wandering Jews, they called this village the Garden of Eden. ... here they opened wide the doors without having any fear. Soon there were Jews in every house.”

<sup>1602</sup> Tzipora Tabka-Bustein, “The Shepherdess Returns to Her People,” in Kalisher, *Sokoly*, 201–7, translated as *Sokoly: In the Fight for Life*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokoly/sokoly.html>.

to health. Walerian Szymborski also played a role in the rescue.<sup>1603</sup> With the assistance of the Franciscan Sisters, Rev. Perkowski provided shelter and material assistance to Mina Charin (later Omer), whom he baptized as Maria Jadwiga.<sup>1604</sup>

Mina Charin, later called Omer, was 16 in 1942, when she escaped from the Warsaw ghetto and arrived in the town of Lapy [Łapy], in the Białystok [Białystok] district, where her brother [Józef or Julian Charin] worked as a doctor in the local hospital. After meeting with her brother, Mina began working in one of the estates close to the town, until one day all the Jews of the vicinity were ordered to report to the nearby police station. The owner of the estate, considering it her lawful duty to obey the German order, decided to drive the [registered] Jewish worker to the Gestapo and hand her over. When they were on their way, Mina asked her employer to stop near the home of Maria Kuzin, a practical nurse who worked with her brother, so she could say goodbye to her. Kuzin, who knew very well what fate awaited Mina, asked the owner of the estate to continue on her way and promised she herself would accompany the Jewish woman to the Gestapo. Mina was hidden in a hiding place arranged for her in the yard of Kuzin's home, where she remained for a few months. When the German searches of the houses in the vicinity became more frequent, Kuzin transferred the Jewish refugee to a nearby village, where she found shelter in the home of the local priest [Rev. Józef Perkowski], who looked after her with devotion and generosity. She remained there until her liberation in July 1944. Even while Mina was in the priest's home, Kuzin continued to visit her, to provide her with her needs and to boost her morale.<sup>1605</sup>

Rev. Perkowski also took in Stella Szczerańska, a young Jewish girl from Białystok who had been thrown out of a train on the way to the Treblinka death camp. She survived the occupation and moved to Israel.

In a separate bunker near the village Hodiszewo [Hodyszewo] was hiding Chaim Wrobel, they called him kewlaker with a nine year old girl, Stella Szczecrańska [sic]. This is her story how she came to the Bransker [Brański] group. Stella was born in Białystok [Białystok] at the polish [sic] end of town. Her father was a chemist and they talked only polish. She was on a train with her parents on the way to Treblinka gas chambers when her mother wrapped her in a towel and threw her out of a train window. Polish people were walking alongside the train where dead bodies of Jews were laying shot while jumping from ther [sic] trains. ... In between the dead they found Stella alive. The people picked her up and took her to the priest in Hoduszewo [Hodyszewo]. Haim Kewlaker came to the priest for

<sup>1603</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 829; Waldemar Monkiewicz and Józef Kowalczyk, "Pomoc Żydom w regionie białostockim podczas II wojny światowej," *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 2 (1989): 362–79, at p. 372; Romaniuk, *Słownik historyczny miejscowości i postaci z terenu gminy Nowe Piekuty*, 53–54, 223; Engelking and Grabowski, *Dalej jest noc*, vol. 1, 171.

<sup>1604</sup> Testimony of Fania Charin, August 6, 1948, JHI, record group 301, no. 3950; Testimony of Mina Omer, YVA, file O.3/2668 (Item 4026285).

<sup>1605</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 433.

food, so the priest gave him little [sic] Stela [sic] and told him to take care of her. The priest helped Chaim with food and Chaim took Stella to his bunker.<sup>1606</sup>

Dr. Józef (Julian) Charin, the brother of the previously mentioned Mina Charin, was helped by Rev. Henryk Bagiński, the pastor of Łapy, and afterwards by Rev. Feliks Zalewski, the pastor of Topczewo,<sup>1607</sup> as well as by Maria Kuzin and some other Poles.

Julian Charin, a prominent local physician and a member of the Polish Home Army (AK), received assistance from many Poles, arranged mostly by Henryk Bagiński and Feliks Zalewski, the respective heads of Roman Catholic churches in Łapy and Topczewo village. However, after another Pole betrayed Charin's hiding place, he was shot on March 18, 1943, outside of Topczewo, by members of the Topczewo [German] Gendarmerie post. The AK likely revenged his murder by executing the informant. Charin's sister, Mina (later Omer), survived the war, sheltered first by Charin's fiancée, Maria Kuzin, then by [Rev.] Zalewski, and finally by another priest in Hodyszewo village, most likely Józef Perkowski. In Łapy, [Rev.] Bagiński was determined to protect Kretowicz [Jadwiga Chinson], whose conversion to Christianity he had sponsored. He used his Sunday homilies to urge parishioners not to reveal the hiding places of Jews to authorities. She survived the war, as did the sisters Lea and Rivka Srebolov [Srebolow], sheltered by the owner of a Łapy cycle shop.<sup>1608</sup>

According to other sources, Dr. Charin last resided in the village of Sieški, where he was sheltered by the Tur family. He was discovered accidentally by German gendarmes, who shot him on March 19, 1943. Four members of the Tur family were arrested, but were miraculously released on the intervention of Rev. Zalewski, who had directed Dr. Charin to their home.<sup>1609</sup>

Rev. Bagiński, a member of the Home Army, issued birth and baptismal certificates for Jewish children whom the aforementioned Maria Kuzin placed with Polish families.<sup>1610</sup>

<sup>1606</sup> Goldberg, *A Sparkle of Hope*, 98.

<sup>1607</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 829; Waldemar Monkiewicz and Józef Kowalczyk, "Pomoc Żydom w regionie białostockim podczas II wojny światowej," *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 2 (1989): 362–79, at p. 372.

<sup>1608</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 917.

<sup>1609</sup> Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 321–22. See also A. [Alter] Trus and J. [Julius] Cohen, eds. *Bransk: Sefer hazikaron* (New York: Brainsker Relief Committee of New York, 1948), 370, translated as *Bransk: Book of Memories*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Bransk/Bransk.html>.

<sup>1610</sup> "Łapy—ks. Henryk Bagiński," Społeczne Muzeum Żydów Białegostoku i regionu, Internet: <https://www.jewishbialystok.pl/%C5%81apy--ks.-Henryk-Bagi%C5%84ski-i-Maria--Berta-Kuzin,5472,2822>.

In her Yad Vashem testimony, the aforementioned Mina Charin (Omer) identified Rev. Jan Idźkowski, the pastor of Poświętne near Łapy, as having helped her and several other Jews including Zalman Sukman and his two daughters from the nearby village of Pietkowo, as well as a ten-year boy from Bydgoszcz.<sup>1611</sup> Zalman Sukman recorded that he turned to priests, whom he did not identify by name, while hiding in the countryside with his two daughters. “Sometimes I would go to Christian friends, even priests who were among my friends, and [from them] I received bread and other food. Without this, we would have died of hunger.”<sup>1612</sup>

Several testimonies from the Sokoły area, near Białystok, mention the help of Catholic clergy. Most, however, do not identify the priests and nuns who assisted Jews. A priest in Sokoły condemned those who preyed on Jewish fugitives.<sup>1613</sup> Rev. Leon Ostalczyk, the pastor of Waniewo, did likewise. He encouraged his parishioners to help Jews, and he provided food to Jews living in nearby forests.<sup>1614</sup>

Joshua Olshin recalled his survival as a partisan and the help he received from the Catholic clergy.

I survived partly because I worked with the partisans and partly thanks to the help of a priest and a Franciscan nun. When the Russians came back to Białystok [Bialystok] in the summer of 1944, we Jewish survivors organized a Jewish Committee of sixty persons, of which I became the president. We searched the surrounding villages for Jewish children who had survived the war. By 1945, thanks to my contacts with the priest of our locality, we had gathered a total of forty-eight Jewish children.<sup>1615</sup>

The Sokoły memorial book also refers to a priest from the village of Jabłonka who “endangered his own life and property and hid a number of pregnant Jewish women in his home, who gave birth there.”<sup>1616</sup> It is not clear whether this refers to the parish priest of Jabłonka Kościelna (to the west of Wysokie

<sup>1611</sup> Testimony of Mina Omer, YVA, file O.3/2668 (Item 4026285).

<sup>1612</sup> Zalman Sukman, “In the Village of Pietkowo,” *Sokoly: In the Fight for Life*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokoly/sokoly.html>, translation of Kalisher, *Sokoly*, 221–23.

<sup>1613</sup> Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 109.

<sup>1614</sup> Testimony of Jerzy Śliwowski, Społeczne Muzeum Żydów Białegostoku i regionu, Internet: <https://www.jewishbialystok.pl/Soko%C5%82y--Izaak-Wac%C5%82aw-Kornblum,5485,6782>; Testimony of Izaak Wacek Kornblum, Centropa, 2005, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/izaak-wacek-kornblum>.

<sup>1615</sup> David Kranzler, *Holocaust Hero: The Untold Story and Vignettes of Solomon Schonfeld, an Extraordinary British Orthodox Rabbi Who Rescued 4000 Jews During the Holocaust* (Jersey City, New Jersey: KTAV, 2004), 211.

<sup>1616</sup> “Preface,” *Sokoly: In the Fight for Life*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokoly/sokoly.html>.

Mazowieckie) or perhaps the parish priest of Jabłoń Kościelna (to the east of Wysokie Mazowieckie). The evidence below suggests the latter.

After surviving an execution by German gendarmes in which her three children were killed, the wounded and destitute Zelda Kaczerewicz made her way to the village of Jabłoń Kościelna, near her hometown of Wysokie Mazowieckie. She was nursed back to health by Rev. Adolf Kruszewski, the local pastor, who had helped her in the past, and by Antonina Jabłońska, the priest's housekeeper, and her daughter, Helena Pluszkiewicz. Several months later, wounds now healed, Zelda found shelter with Maria Drągowska and her husband in the nearby village of Jabłoń-Zarzeckie.

Two Jewish children were left in the village of Jabłoń Kościelna by their mothers. A Jewish infant girl was found on the doorstep of the parish rectory in December 1942. Rev. Kruszewski entrusted the child to his housekeeper, Antonina, who looked after her for more than two years. A Jewish woman, the wife of a mill owner from Sokoły, abandoned her nine-month-old son, Józik Żółty, along with a note requesting that he be raised as a Christian. The child was found by the teenaged sisters Janina and Stefania Grabowska. After staying with the Grabowski family for a time, the boy was taken in by the Jankowski family, and then by Teresa Jabłońska. In order to protect this child, the village head registered him as a Polish foundling, and Rev. Kruszewski baptized him. He was given the name of Józef Jabłoński. Both these children survived the war and were sent to a Jewish children's home in Chorzów. After settling in Israel, the boy was known as Józef Gedali Wanger. For a time, Rev. Kruszewski and his housekeeper provided food to an elderly Jew from Sokoły named Arko and his two sons. However, the Germans later shot Arko and his elder son.<sup>1617</sup> Rev. Kruszewski was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2020.

The above reference to Józef Gedali Wanger, however, appears to be inaccurate (due to a confusion of various accounts). After jumping from a train headed to Treblinka, Gedalia Wander (b. 1933) wandered from village to village in the vicinity of Wysokie Mazowieckie. Jan Jabłoński, the village headman of Śliwowo, in the parish of Jabłoń Kościelna, took him on as a farm hand. Gedalia took up his rescuer's suggestion to undergo baptism, though that was not a prerequisite for continuing to help the boy. After the area was liberated, Gedalia met a Jewish

<sup>1617</sup> Testimony of Zelda Kaczerewicz, JHI, record group 301, no. 2246; Testimony of Zelda Kaczarewicz [sic], YVA, file M.11/376 (Item 3714522); Szymon Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1968), 57; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 738–39; Waldemar Monkiewicz and Józef Kowalczyk, "Pomoc Żydom w regionie białostockim podczas II wojny światowej," *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 2 (1989): 362–79, at p. 372; Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 173–75; Romaniuk, *Słownik historyczny miejscowości i postaci z terenu gminy Nowe Piekuty*, 83–84; *Historia wsi Jabłoń Kościelna*, Internet: [http://www.jablon.nowepiekuty.pl/obrazki\\_tresc/Historia.doc](http://www.jablon.nowepiekuty.pl/obrazki_tresc/Historia.doc).



couple to whom he revealed that he had converted to Christianity. They took him away. Gedalia then moved to Germany before leaving for Palestine.<sup>1618</sup>

The following rescue account from Jabłoń-Zarzeckie, which lies in the parish of Jabłoń Kościelna, doubtless refers to Rev. Kruszewski. It exemplifies his attitude towards the rescue of Jews.

Paweł [Paweł] and Władysława [Władysława] Kalisiewicz lived with their five children in the village of Jablon Zarzecka [Jabłoń-Zarzeckie], in the county of Wysokie Mazowieckie, Białystok [Białystok] district. In November 1942, five Jewish women—Perl Weisenberg, her daughters Yaffa and Nechama, and her two sisters, who had fled from the Wysokie Mazowieckie ghetto, arrived in the village. The Kalisiewczes were the only ones who agreed to shelter the five refugees. For the 22 months until the liberation, the Kalisiewiczzes, at great personal risk, hid the five refugees in a small storehouse. Despite their straitened circumstances, Władysława came each day to the hiding place to bring the refugees food. In their subsequent testimony, the survivors described their saviors' warm and humane attitude toward them throughout their stay, despite the terrible tragedies they were experiencing at the time: Their son Waclaw [Wacław] was murdered by the Germans during a raid in the village while another son died of an illness. In her anguish, Władysława turned to the local priest, asking him if the tragedies were a punishment for hiding Jews in her home. The priest reassured her that, on the contrary, God would reward her and her family for saving Jews. The Kalisiewiczzes' adult sons, Józef [Józef] and Waclaw, also took an active part in the rescue operation. During one of the raids, the Germans ordered their nine-year-old son, Mieczysław [Mieczysław], at gunpoint to reveal the Jews' hiding place, but the little boy refused to be intimidated. Later, one of the survivors wrote: "Despite their great suffering, they did not abandon us, and we never heard a sharp word from them. They shared what little food they had with us, and watched out for our safety..." After the war, the survivors immigrated to Israel.<sup>1619</sup>

At least two other families—Harasimiuk and Kobosko—rescued Jews in Jabłoń-Zarzeckie, among them the Nosko and Kopytowski families.<sup>1620</sup> Thus, the presence of Jews in that village, as in Jabłoń Kościelna, was widely known among the villagers.

Jewish sources also mention the helpfulness of Rev. Henryk Betto, the rector of the seminary in Łomża, who took up residence in Jabłoń Kościelna after the seminary was closed by the Soviets in 1939. Rev. Betto was active in the Home Army.

In the village of Jablonna [Jabłoń], where the priest lived during the war, he had 11 Jews whom he saved in various ways under his protection in a dark chamber in a masked bed in a tree in the forest to whom he himself brought food. Among them was a child whom

<sup>1618</sup> Testimony of Gedalia Vender, YVA, file O.3/12746 (Item 5603065); Jan Jabłoński, RD.

<sup>1619</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 328–29.

<sup>1620</sup> Romaniuk, *Słownik historyczny miejscowości i postaci z terenu gminy Nowe Piekuty*, 84.

he gave to a trusted Christian woman. Later he gave it to a *kibbutz* [collective community] in Lodz [Łódź]. Today [the child] is certainly in Israel.

[Rev. Betto:] Chanale, a shame she is not now here ... in 1941 we found her on a frosty morning sitting on our threshold. “What is your name?” I asked her. She looked with such sorrowful eyes and answered: “Chanale!” I understood everything and did not ask her anything more. A Jewish child already was with me and I gave her to one of my friends. She wanted [me] to convert her, but her husband did not permit this. Perhaps her parents would survive the war and come for her. She remained Jewish and today she writes letters to them from Israel. She married ...<sup>1621</sup>

In his Yad Vashem testimony, Alter Trus mentions the sermons of Rev. Bolesław Czarkowski, the pastor of Brańsk, imploring his parishioners to help those in need (understood to mean the Jews). Trus mentions as well the assistance provided by Rev. Czarkowski’s vicar, Rev. Józef Chwalko.<sup>1622</sup>

After their escape from the ghetto, six Jews—the Szapiro brothers, Fajwel and Lejb, their parents, Lejb’s fiancée, Mina Wasser, and Sonia Weinstein-Rubin—were sheltered in town for about a week by the pharmacist Janina Woińska. Rev. Chwalko then found them hiding places with the Popławski family in the nearby village of Oleksin and continued to assist the Jewish fugitives.<sup>1623</sup>

Rev. Henryk Opiatowski, another vicar, was also involved in rescue efforts on behalf of Jews and escaped Soviet prisoners-of-war, which resulted in his arrest and execution by the Germans on July 15, 1943.<sup>1624</sup>

The disposition of priests from Brańsk, in the Podlasie region, has been registered in several accounts.

One night early that month [i.e., November 1942], someone jumped over the ghetto fence and ran into the pharmacy. It was Lejb Shapiro [Leon Szapiro], the pharmacy’s prewar owner. He told [Janina] Woińska that the ghetto was surrounded, and nobody knew what was going to happen. He wanted to hide with his wife, his two sons, and his brother’s fiancée in the basement of the pharmacy. Woińska, and the two other women living in the building, decided that this was a suicidal plan: the pharmacy was right in the ghetto, and frequented by Germans and Poles. Instead, it was agreed that the Shapiros should go

<sup>1621</sup> I. Dawidowicz, “Czyzewo Jews? Where Are They? A Visit with the Czyzewo Priest in the Year 1960,” in Shimon Kanc, ed., *Sefer Zikaron Czyzewo* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Czyzewo in Israel and the USA, 1961), cols. 1135–42, at 1139–40, translated as *Czyzewo Memorial Book*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/czyzew/Czyzew.html>. See also Betto Henryk, *600-lecie miasta Łomża*, Internet: <https://600.lomza.pl/2017/12/26/betto-henryk-ks/>.

<sup>1622</sup> Testimony of Alter Trus, YVA, file M.11/374 (Item 3714520); Testimony of Alter Trus, JHI, record group 301, no. 2113.

<sup>1623</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 633, 880.

<sup>1624</sup> Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 174; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 315.

to another building, close by but outside the ghetto area. There, Woińska made a hiding place behind the piles of lumber. Together with the two other women, she brought the fugitives food for the next few days. ...

Her sense of danger was sharpened, however, after a close call with the Gestapo, who came to the pharmacy a few days later and ordered a search. By that time, with the help of a young priest [Rev. Józef Chwalko], the Shapiros had gone on to another, safer place outside Brańsk. The Gestapo found their suitcases, left behind in the pharmacy's attic. ...

... As it happened, the whole "aristocracy" of Brańsk had gathered in the pharmacy, including a doctor, a priest, and a teacher. They all knew about the hiding place. No one said a word.

During the search, another Gestapo man started hitting a peasant quite viciously. ... He ordered the pharmacy cordoned off more securely from the ghetto.

"It's a miracle we survived," Woińska says. ...

The young priest who arranged for the Shapiros' second hiding place, and who escorted them on their short but hazardous journey, was Vicar Józef Chwalko. His superior, Rector Bolesław Czarkowski, reiterated in his sermons that "one must help people" who were in need. A priestly word, a priestly example, carried enormous moral authority in a congregation such as Brańsk's ...

... the Nazis announced a hunt for the hidden Jews. The Catholic priest, to his credit, preached a sermon in which he told people to "wash their hands" of such murderous activity, and enjoined them to help those in need. ...

... in July 1943 a priest named Henryk Opiatowski, who was a member of the Home Army, was executed for helping Jews and Soviet deserters from labor camps. ...

The forest partisans continued to function and even to grow, adding people who escaped from Białystok after the liquidation of the ghetto and even from the train transports to Treblinka. From 1943 on, there were more than eighty Jews trying to survive in this way. They organized themselves into a unit, consisting of a "family camp," which sheltered those who could not use weapons, and a defense camp. Their supply of arms was replenished by "intelligent Poles," who were sympathetic to their plight and who included schoolteachers and a priest.<sup>1625</sup>

During the war, Janina Wońska [Woińska] lived in Bransk [Brańsk] in the district of Białystok [Białystok]. She was a pharmacist and the owner of the only pharmacy in the town and Poles and Jews were her regular customers. The pharmacy was located on the border of the ghetto. When the liquidation of the ghetto began, Leibko (Leon) Szapiro turned to Janina and asked her for help and shelter. Janina set up a hideout in a service building and Leibko and his brother, Faivel (Filip), as well as Leibko's fiancée, Mina Waser, moved wood that was stored there and created space that resembled a room. Janina delivered food to the hideout and after a week a priest [Rev. Józef Chalko], who knew Janina, arranged a new hiding place for the Szapiros with the Poplawski [Popławski] family. The Szapiros left Janina but stayed in touch with her and also received medicines from her.<sup>1626</sup>

<sup>1625</sup> Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 205–8, 224, 232, 235.

<sup>1626</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 880.

After her husband was executed by the Germans, Eugenia Wirszubska and her daughters Regina (later Szymańska, b. 1931) and Adela (later Boddy, b. 1935) escaped from the ghetto in Prużana. They survived with the help of a number of Poles. They moved to Wysokie Litewskie, where they obtained Aryan papers from a family friend, Lidka Lichnowska, the daughter of the prewar mayor. In the fall of 1942, Wirszubska and her daughters relocated to the village of Narew, southeast of Białystok, where they were extended protection by two priests. Rev. Stanisław Łukaszewicz, the local pastor, provided them with additional church documents. Rev. Henryk Kardasz arranged lodging for them with his mother.<sup>1627</sup>

Just before the establishment of a ghetto in Wysokie Litewskie (one was created there as well), thanks to the intensified effort by Lidka Lichnowska, we obtained Aryan papers. We could then leave for Narew. It was Lidka Lichnowska, I believe, who brought us the news that a ghetto would be created. Her father, who was the prewar mayor, continued to carry out his duties during the war. His attitude toward us remained very friendly. ...

I think that people did not treat us any differently as Jews in Wysokie Litewskie, because of our assimilation and the type of life my parents led.

During the war, on two occasions, we managed to escape virtually “from under the knife,” once, from the ghetto in Próżana [Prużana], the day before its liquidation, and afterward, from Wysokie just before a ghetto was established there. From Wysokie we found our way first to Bielsko [Bielsk Podlaski]. We stayed with friends of Lidka Lichnowska, physicians. We were there for two or three nights. From there, equipped with letters of recommendation, we went to Narew, where we spent the rest of the occupation. We were helped by a Catholic priest [Rev. Stanisław Łukaszewicz] to whom we were referred by Mrs. Lichnowska. It is difficult to say whether the townspeople knew we were Jews.

My mama was very likeable, pleasant, hardworking, and very obliging. We did not go to school. We played practically the whole time with the local children. My sister, in spite of having very dark brown hair, had a snub nose and never looked Jewish. Therefore, she could move around freely. With me, it was different; I have a long nose and chestnut-colored hair. During the entire occupation, Mama kept me hidden and bleached my hair with peroxide. My hair was so damaged by these treatments that I had to wear a white crocheted beret the whole time. Mama told everyone that I had bad sinuses, and that is why I had to be shielded from the sun. I think that people might have suspected the truth; however, they were tolerant.

We lived through the rest of the occupation relatively peacefully. ...

<sup>1627</sup> Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 293; Testimony of Regina Szymańska, SFV, Interview code 28361. Regina Wirszubska Szymańska misidentifies the local pastor as Jakubowski, which was the name of his relatives with whom her family also interacted. See also Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 928, 979, which repeats the misinformation and provides an incorrect Interview code (28351). The testimony of Adela Wirszubska Boddy (Interview code 45233), the younger sister, is far less reliable given her age at the time.

Later, Mama was offered a tiny room in exchange for her cleaning. We lived there until the end of the occupation. ... The landlady was the mother of a priest [Rev. Henryk Kardasz]. She was a very decent old woman, who embraced us warmly. She later arranged for a better job for Mama, cooking dinners for the clerks in the community office. Such a job made it possible to always get something to eat.<sup>1628</sup>

In Białystok, an unidentified priest called on his congregation to show compassion toward the Jews and to assist them.<sup>1629</sup> Rev. Canon Aleksander Chodyko, the dean of Białystok and pastor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish, who was mentioned earlier, provided Jews with baptismal certificates.<sup>1630</sup> Although arrested by the Germans at one point, he was not deterred in his mission to help those in need.

Rev. Franciszek Pieściuk, pastor in the nearby town of Choroszcz, sent food to the family of Jakub Lichtensztejn in the Białystok ghetto.<sup>1631</sup>

After being issued a pass to leave the Białystok ghetto for a few hours, Józef Zeligman encountered a priest who had taught religion at the private high school where Zeligman was once the principal. The priest took Zeligman, who

<sup>1628</sup> Account of Regina Szymańska, "Fear and Dread," in Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 2, 301–2.

<sup>1629</sup> Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 3, 129, 131; Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem*, 417–18. It is alleged that this same priest gave sermons against Bolsheviks and Jews under Soviet rule. However, that appears to be a bald claim, as such public pronouncements would have surely led to the priest's incarceration.

<sup>1630</sup> Daniel Boćkowski, Ewa Rogalewska, and Joanna Sadowska, *Kres świata białostockich Żydów* (Białystok: Muzeum Wojska w Białymstoku; Galeria Śledzińskich w Białymstoku, 2013), 43; Szymon Datner, "Materiały z dziedziny ratownictwa Żydów w Polsce w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 73 (January–March 1970): 133–38, at p. 133.

<sup>1631</sup> Anatol Leszczyński, "Zagłada ludności żydowskiej miasta Choroszczy," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 79 (September 1971): 49–67, at p. 50. After a Soviet lieutenant was shot in Choroszcz on June 24, 1941, then under Soviet occupation, Rev. Franciszek Pieściuk was arrested by the Soviets, who claimed, falsely, that the shots were fired from the church tower. Although summarily sentenced to death, Rev. Pieściuk's life was, for some reason, spared by the Soviet soldier assigned to execute him. When Rev. Pieściuk knelt and asked permission to pray, the soldier shot in the air and receded. However, three residents who went to intervene on Rev. Pieściuk's behalf with the Soviet staff—Dr. Izaak Friedman (a Jew) and the orderlies, Jankiel Sidrański (a Jew) and Henryk Klimowicz (a Catholic)—were brutally massacred outside the town, having been stabbed with bayonets, their eyes plucked out and their tongues cut off. Suppressed by the Communist authorities, the memory of this event is now preserved in a monument at the execution site. See Krzysztof Bielawski, "They Gave Their Lives for a Priest," Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/cms/story/1175,they-gave-their-lives-for-a-priest/-/>.

wore a Star of David, by the arm and escorted him along the road to his destination.<sup>1632</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in January 1943, Henia, who had a pronounced Jewish appearance, went to a parish with her six-year-old son, Marek, and requested birth and baptismal certificates, which the priest provided. He also offered to shelter her son, but she declined. Henia and Marek lived on the outskirts of Białystok, passing as Christians. They survived the war.<sup>1633</sup>

Rev. Adam Abramowicz, the pastor of St. Roch's parish in Białystok, found shelters for Jews and provided them with false documents.<sup>1634</sup> A rabbi from a nearby town, who was acquainted with Rev. Abramowicz, directed Jakub Sławiński (then Hirszy) to the priest for assistance. Sławiński obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate and a school certificate which enabled him to get a job.<sup>1635</sup> Several children also survived with documents from St. Roch's parish.

During the occupation, Tadeusz Strzelczyk lived in the city of Białystok. He was married to a Jewish woman named Maria (née Józefowicz). In the same home lived his sister, Helena [née Strzelczyk] with her husband, Michał Kempinski [Michał Kępiński, who was a Jew]. In June 1941, upon the Nazi invasion of Białystok, the two families lived within the ghetto borders. However, in mid-1942, both families managed to escape to the Aryan side of the city. Soon afterwards, Maria Strzelczyk (née Józefowicz) received a request from Mrs. Kaplan to save her daughter, Pola (later Anna Brinstein), then three years old. Tadeusz and Maria agreed to help, but it was Michał Kempinski who fetched the child and brought her to Tadeusz Strzelczyk. Tadeusz took the girl into his home, arranged a secure shelter for his wife and the child and managed to acquire forged documents for them as well. [The forged birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Anna Strzelczyk was obtained by Stanisława Horodko from St. Roch's parish.<sup>1636</sup>] "Three weeks later, my sister-in-law, who had Aryan papers, as Helena Strzelczyk, née Woźniak, with her daughter, Anna Strzelczyk, were brought to the village of Kowale, about 40 kilometers away. The child had lung disease and the doctors recommended a change of climate," wrote Michał Kempinski in his testimony to Yad Vashem. "The foster-mother and the child survived safely there." After

<sup>1632</sup> Gustaw Kerszman, *Jak ginąć, to razem* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2003), 151; translated as *If Perish We Must, Let It Be Together* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, 2014). Zeligman perished in Majdanek in 1943.

<sup>1633</sup> Grubowska, *Haneczko, musisz przeżyć*, 37, 44, 75–76.

<sup>1634</sup> Boćkowski, Rogalewska, and Sadowska, *Kres świata białostockich Żydów*, 42–43; Szymon Datner, "Materiały z dziedziny ratownictwa Żydów w Polsce w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 73 (January–March 1970): 133–38, at p. 133.

<sup>1635</sup> *Polacy ratujący Żydów w latach II wojny światowej: Materiały dla nauczyciela* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2008), card 42.

<sup>1636</sup> Tadeusz Strzelczyk, RD; Anna Cheszes Papers, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn523472>; Rogalewska, *Getto białostockie*, 50.



the war, the Strzelczyks, along with Anna, moved to Lodz [Łódź] and brought up Anna as if she were their own daughter.<sup>1637</sup>

The Missionary Sisters of the Holy Family worked closely with Rev. Abramowicz, providing food and other forms of assistance to Jews.<sup>1638</sup> Rev. Abramowicz was arrested by the Germans at one point but was not deterred in his mission to help the downtrodden.

After escaping from Treblinka, Avrom-Leyzer Rubin, a 35-year-old blacksmith from Goniądz, made his way to Białystok, where he hid in the crypt of St. Roch's Church for more than a month. Afterwards he was sheltered in the home Ada Liskowska, a Polish woman. A Polish cobbler put him in touch with Jewish underground liaisons who brought him to partisans in the forest.<sup>1639</sup>

Maryla Różycka, a liaison officer and courier for the Jewish underground in Białystok, acknowledged the help Rev. Abramowicz extended to Jews.<sup>1640</sup> On missions between Białystok and Nowogródek, Różycka would stay at Catholic parishes.<sup>1641</sup> She recounted how a Jewish child was taken from the ghetto in Białystok to a parish rectory outside the city.<sup>1642</sup>

Mira Kwasowicer (then Glikfeld, later Becker) was 21 years old when she and her husband were taken out of the Białystok ghetto in the summer of 1943 and put on a transport headed to Treblinka. They jumped off the train. Her husband was shot dead, but Mira managed to escape and began walking back to Białystok.

With the help of several random Poles she happened on along the way, Mira eventually arrived at the house of Marianna Kazuczyk, a prewar acquaintance who agreed to shelter her in a hideout in her attic. (Mira was not the only Jew that Marianna sheltered or otherwise helped.) Marianna, a widow with a teenage son named Zygmunt, was involved in the black market with some German soldiers,

<sup>1637</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 761–62.

<sup>1638</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 1st ed., 165–66; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 48–49, 51–52, 55; Maria Halina Horn, *A Tragic Victory* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1988), 82.

<sup>1639</sup> Chaika Grossman, *The Underground Army: Fighters of the Białystok Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1987), 331; Moshe Shlomo Ben-Meir (Treshansky) and A. L. Fayans, *Our Hometown Goniądz* (Tel Aviv: The Committee of Goniądz Association in U.S.A. and in Israel, 1960), 701 ff.

<sup>1640</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Ksiądz prałat Adam Abramowicz," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 154 (February 2003).

<sup>1641</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 653.

<sup>1642</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 654.

so it was risky to keep Mira in her home. After several weeks, Marianna decided to transfer her charge to her sister-in-law, Maria Kazuczyk, a widow who lived alone in a small house on the edge of the village of Janowicze, near Białystok.

Maria was a tertiary, a lay person affiliated to a religious order who lived outside an organized religious community. Maria knew full well that hiding a Jew was punishable by death. In her Yad Vashem testimony, Mira described Maria, “as a devout and pious old lady who had a heart of gold. She could not read or write, and was extremely poor: her only assets were a few chickens and a pig. There was just one pot in the house: the pig ate first, then the two women.”

Villagers became aware of Mira’s presence, but no one betrayed them. The village headman, who was responsible for registering all residents under pain of death, feared for the lives of his villagers and wanted Mira to leave. Maria appealed to the local pastor, Rev. Walerian Sześciuk, in the nearby village of Juchnowiec Kościelny. He stood up for Maria, protected her charge, and the arrangement was allowed to persist.

One day, German soldiers arrived in the village with dogs. They searched every house looking for partisans. Mira hid inside an old stove, and Maria locked the door and went to church to pray for Mira’s safety. Fortunately, the Germans passed her house. After the area was liberated, Mira returned to Białystok. She left for Germany and later immigrated to the United States.<sup>1643</sup>

The parish rectory in Tykocin, near Białystok, was the local hub of Polish underground activity. Both the pastor, Rev. Julian Łosiewski, and his vicar, Rev. Czesław Bruliński, were members of the Home Army. With the knowledge of the pastor, the parish organist, Jan Smółko, also a Home Army member, accessed church documents and records to issue false birth and baptismal certificates, which were then used to obtain Kennkarten for Jews. These activities were carried out under the nose of the commander of the local German gendarmerie, who was billeted in the rectory. Together with his wife, Jan Smółko rescued the Turek brothers and four members of the Goldzin family.<sup>1644</sup>

During the occupation, Jan and Władysława [Władysława] Smolko [Smółko] were AK [Home Army] activists who lived in the town of Tykocin in the Białystok [Białystok] district. In his official capacity as organist and registrar at the local church, Smolko had access to the birth and death registries. In January 1943, before the first Aktion in the Białystok ghetto, Michael Turek and his brother, Menachem, were smuggled out of the ghetto by a Polish acquaintance who hid them temporarily in his home. The Smolkos, after being approached

<sup>1643</sup> Kazuczyk Family, RD; Testimony of Mira Kwasowicer-Glikfeld, JHI, record group 301, no. 2007; Marianna Kazuczyk, *Memory and Identity*, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/marianna-kazuczyk-her-husband-son-zygmunt-maria-kazuczyk>.

<sup>1644</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 497; Rogalewska, *Getto białostockie*, 190.

by the acquaintance, took the Turek brothers in, provided them with Aryan papers, and supported them financially for about a year and a half, until the liberation.<sup>1645</sup>

Rev. Łosiewski encouraged Bronisława Chwiesińska, a parishioner who turned to him for guidance, to shelter Pejsach (Henryk) Zdrojewicz, whom the priest had befriended earlier. Zdrojewicz and Bella Białostocka remained in the care of Bronisława and her sons, Eugeniusz and Ludwik, until the arrival of the Soviet army.<sup>1646</sup>

After escaping from Tykocin, Szmuł (Shmuel) Ismach (b. 1932) moved about in the vicinity passing as a Catholic Pole and working as a farmhand. While residing with the Wnorowski family in Makowo, in the parish of Kobylin, his employer took him to church to make his confession at Eastertime, a religious duty. The boy didn't know what to say to the priest, and waited for the priest to question him. All went well. After the war, he was reunited with his mother and brother.<sup>1647</sup>

Two Jewish girls from Knyszyn, Szulamit (Shulamit) Pitluk and Perla Choroszucha, both born in 1941, survived the war under false identities, in the care of Polish families. The children's Jewish origin was widely known or suspected, as they lived openly with their new families.

Szulamit Pitluk (later Sharon Silver) became Anna, the daughter of Regina and Czesław Ostrowski. Szulamit had been brought to the local police station as an abandoned child, and then taken in by the Ostrowskis. She was baptized by Rev. Kazimierz Cyganek, the vicar of Knyszyn. After the war, Szulamit was kidnapped by her uncle during the night and brought to the United States.

Perla Choroszucha became Regina, the daughter of Bronisława and Stanisław Jaromiński (Jeromiński) of the village of Chobotki. Several Polish famers were involved in her rescue, with the acquiescence of local officials. She too was baptized by a priest in Knyszyn for the sake of her cover.<sup>1648</sup>

<sup>1645</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 727–28.

<sup>1646</sup> Tykocin—Kolonie Rowki, Społeczne Muzeum Żydów Białegostoku i regionu (Museum of the Jews of Białystok and the Region), Internet: <https://www.jewishbialystok.pl/Tykocin-kolonie-Rowki,5540,7574>; Testimony of Małgorzata Finkiel-Zdrojewicz, Institute of National Remembrance Jedwabne investigation, July 21, 2001.

<sup>1647</sup> Testimony of Szmuł Ismach, JHI, record group 301, number 2735; Testimony of Shmuel Ismach, SFV, Interview code 7800.

<sup>1648</sup> Testimony of Stanisław Jaromiński, JHI, record group 301, no. 1468; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 738; Krzysztof Bagiński, "Wystawa 'Polacy ratujący Żydów,'" *Nowy Goniec Knyszyński*, no. 4 (142) (April 2016); "Sharon Pitluk Silver's Memories," April 1, 2018, Internet: <https://www.knyszyn.pl/asp/sharon-pitluk>

In his Sunday sermons, an unidentified priest in Grajewo, a small town northeast of Łomża, appealed to his parishioners to come to the aid of children—among them Jewish children—in the orphanage in nearby Szczuczyn. The priest in question may have been Rev. Aleksander Peża, mentioned earlier.

In response to the appeal, Franciszek and Regina Blaszkowski took in four-year-old Benjamin Katz, whom they had baptized as Remigiusz. In 1947, they surrendered the boy to the Jewish Committee in Kraków.<sup>1649</sup>

The Catholic priest in Ostryna, a town northeast of Grodno, counselled the faithful at mass not to participate in the German persecution of Jews. He smuggled food into the ghetto.<sup>1650</sup> The pastor at the time was Rev. Józef Plewa.

Similarly, the Catholic pastor of Holszany, near Oszmiana—Rev. Józef Chomski, a Home Army chaplain—publicly rebuked those who wanted to plunder Jewish property. In his sermons, he condemned the killing of Jews and urged his parishioners not to harm Jews. He arranged shelter for Jews in the convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Family located near the church.<sup>1651</sup>

Shoshana Feigelson lived in Wilno until 1941. After the German conquest, she hid in a convent as a Polish woman for six months. In 1942, she left the convent and married a Christian. In 1944, she gave birth to a daughter named Anna in Holszany. Her Polish husband was conscripted into the Soviet Army and fell in battle. Shoshana moved inside the redrawn borders of Poland in 1946 and lived with her husband's family. She placed her daughter, Anna, in a Jewish children's home in Łódź. Their subsequent fate is not clear.<sup>1652</sup>

Fr. Andrew of Jesus (Andrzej od Jezusa, actually, Franciszek Gdowski) was the superior of the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Wilno and the pastor of

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silver8217s-memories,239,artykul,172,999; JoAnne Viviano, "Families Recount 'Incredible Scars' of Holocaust at Statehouse Commemoration," *The Columbus Dispatch*, April 10, 2013.

<sup>1649</sup> Righteous Medal Award Ceremony, May 28, 2019, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/ceremonia-sprawiedliwych-w-lazienkach-krolewskich-w-warszawie>.

<sup>1650</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 932.

<sup>1651</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part B, 1057; Shepsl Kaplan, "The Outbreak of World War II," in Shabtai Kaplan and Meir Shli [Shely], eds., *The Life and Destruction of Olshan* (New York: JewishGen, 2016), 131; Testimony of Szabtaj Kaplan, YVA, file O.3/1828 (Item 3739737); Cyprian Wilanowski, *Konspiracyjna działalność duchowieństwa katolickiego na Wileńszczyźnie w latach 1939–1944* (Warsaw: Pax, 2000), 98. There were two priests by the name of Chomski residing in Holszany: Józef Chomski was the pastor; the other was Antoni Chomski. Jewish sources refer to the priest only by his surname.

<sup>1652</sup> Anna Feigelson, Ghetto Fighters House Archives (Israel), catalog no. 3135, registry no. 11478R"M.

St. Teresa of Avila Church, adjacent to the ancient city gate (Ostra Brama) which housed the chapel and revered icon of Our Lady of Ostra Brama.

Fr. Gdowski hid a number of Jews in the monastery. He tended to their spiritual needs by setting aside a well-camouflaged room which his “guests” used as a synagogue.<sup>1653</sup> Fr. Gdowski collaborated with Anton Schmid, an Austrian sergeant (Feldwebel) of the German army stationed in Wilno, who was in charge of a workshop that employed about one hundred Jews. Schmid helped a number of Jews to escape from the ghetto. Fr. Gdowski supplied false birth and baptismal certificates to some of those Jews, among them Hermann Adler, his wife, Anita Distler, a Viennese opera singer, and Luisa Emais.

A refugee from Germany, Adler fled to Czechoslovakia, then to Poland, arriving in Wilno when it was under Lithuanian rule. Following the German invasion of June 1941, Adler was confined in the ghetto. Like other Jews, he was conscripted for labour duties outside the ghetto. One day, finding himself outside the ghetto past the curfew for Jewish workers, he had nowhere to go. He decided to put his fate in the hands of unknown priests. According to his testimony:

I heard the bells ring. It was the end of the mass at St. Theresa church. My legs carried me there. I rang the bell at the presbytery door. The older man introduced himself: the parish priest Andrzej Gdowski.

The church of St. Theresa, as well as the Chapel of the Gates of Dawn [Ostra Brama], belonged to the Monastery of the Discalced Carmelites at the time. There were other premises of the monastery next to the former defence wall of the city: cells of the brothers Carmelites, the library, the refectory and a beer house. The Discalced Carmelites looked after single elderly people, orphans, and served the parish of more than a dozen thousand church-goers.

Parish priest Andrzej (called Franciszek) Gdowski was not only a Christian of noble and humane soul. He had studies at Linz University, was consecrated as Father Andrzej at the Győr (Hungary) Discalced Carmelite Monastery, and he had supervised Carmelite fraternities ...

Ostra Brama Monastery with the Black Madonna [Mother of Mercy] Chapel was famous in the entire Polish speaking region to which Vilnius [Wilno] City belonged for quite a while. Then I, with no rights, persecuted fugitive of the ghetto, became friends with parish priest Andrzej Gdowski, who, risking his life would hide me in the times of danger.

Adler’s first-person narrative switches at this point to the third person:

Herman Adler used to receive shelter frequently at the Discalced Carmelite Monastery. To avoid being caught and locked in the ghetto he would rush to the Carmelite brothers and would often sleep in the monastery and it was there he started writing his poetry and prose books. However, for Anita the doors of the male monastery were closed. Hermann decided

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<sup>1653</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers’ Keepers*, 125–26.

to look for a place to hide his wife. Father Andrzej referred him to sergeant Anton Schmid, the head of the Wehrmacht distribution point. The parish priest had no doubts that Schmid would help. Quite recently Anton had visited the parish priest asking to issue a baptism certificate to one girl who had escaped from the ghetto. Anton Schmid was not German, he was Austrian, from Vienna. He hated the Nazis and would arrange a good certificate for Hermann too. Actually, Schmid gave much more: he let the Adler couple stay in his official three-room-flat. Father Gdowski got them the documents. These were the passports of the members of the parish [who had] died and [were] secretly buried, which relatives agreed to give to the persecuted ghetto fugitives. When living in Schmid's flat, Hermann used to visit the Discalced Carmelite Monastery. He was not the only guest there. Other fugitives found shelter in the monastery, next to the railway. It was a group of Jews who managed to escape from a train of people deported on 14 June 1941. Here they believed better times would come when the deportations were over. However, better times did not come, the Germans occupied the city and the fugitives had to stay in the cellars of the monastery.

When living in the flat of the head of the distribution point, Hermann and Anita were safe but they also tried to help other ghetto prisoners. They persuaded Anton Schmid to transport the groups of prisoners to other towns where the liquidations were not taking place yet. Anton Schmid transported about 300 people from the ghetto with a government truck from Vilnius to Voronovo [Werenowo] or Bialystok [Białystok] to work in factories.

However, Anton Schmid was turned in by somebody and in the middle of January 1942 he was arrested by the Gestapo. During the search, the Adler couple were in the back room and managed to escape through another entrance. Once again the road led them to Father Andrzej. "Gdowski told us the addresses of his friends in Warsaw and provided us with the documents and we left."

Their way back to the West was probably even more agonizing than their escape to the East. The Adler couple were the witnesses and participants of the Warsaw rebellion. After Warsaw they were imprisoned in Hungary, [then] in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany ... However, they both survived ...<sup>1654</sup>

The Gestapo arrested all of the Carmelites, including Fr. Gdowski, in March 1942. They suffered in prisons and concentration camps for the duration of the war. Schmid was put on military trial and sentenced to death. He was executed by firing squad on April 13, 1942. Adler wrote about the heroic deeds of Schmid and Fr. Gdowski in his memoir *Ostra Brama: Legende aus der Zeit des großen Untergangs* (Zürich: Helios, 1945), and paid tribute to their heroism. Schmid was recognized by Yad Vashem, but Fr. Gdowski was not.

Fr. Gdowski is also credited with rescuing Jewish children at the Carmelite boarding school in Wilno. One of the Jewish charges at this institution was Michael Stołowicki (Stolowitzky), who had settled in Wilno at the beginning of the war, after fleeing from Warsaw with his mother, Lydia, and his Catholic

<sup>1654</sup> Dalija Epšteinaitė, "Gates of Dawn Miracle," in Danutė Selčinskaja, ed., *Gyvybę ir duoną nešančios rankos / Hands Bringing Life and Bread*, vol. 4 (Vilnius: Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, 2009), 66–71.



nanny, Getruda Babilińska. His mother died shortly after their arrival in Wilno. The young boy was cared for by his Polish nanny, who passed him off as her own.

After the Germans occupied Wilno in the summer of 1941, Babilińska had to seek protection for young Michael, who not only was circumcised but also lacked proper identity documents. She confided in Fr. Gdowski, who agreed to take him into the church boarding school without charge. Fr. Gdowski was known to preach sermons about the importance of helping one's neighbour.

She [Getruda Babilińska] concluded that the church could be their only refuge. Michael remembered the first day he went there with Getruda. In a blend of fear and embarrassment, he followed her into the big hall of the Ostra Brama Church. The cement arches supporting the ceiling, the paintings of the crucified Jesus, and the gilded altar stirred mixed feelings in him. It didn't take Getruda long to make him understand why he had to go with her. He understood very well that, for the outside world, he was the son of a Christian mother, and the pretense he had to adopt was a pledge for his life. ...

The church was full of local residents and a group of German soldiers and officers who came to Sunday mass. The priest, Andras Gedovsky [Andrzej Gdowski], passed among the worshippers, nodding to people he knew. Michael looked at him with curiosity, examined his kind face and his white robe as he moved like an angel hovering toward the altar and sank down in prayer. ...

Father Gedovsky mounted the pulpit and preached a sermon about the importance of helping your neighbor, quoting the appropriate passages from the New Testament. ...

After mass, the priest stood in the door of the church, smiling, shaking hands with the worshippers, and exchanging a few polite words with everyone. ...

Getruda waited until everyone had gone and then went to the priest, who looked at her affectionately. Ever since Lydia's death, Getruda had come to church with Michael almost every Sunday.

"Father," she murmured, "can I talk with you in private?"

The priest looked at her gently, "Of course, my child."

She asked Michael to wait for her on a bench in the church, and let the priest lead her to the office. Once inside, the priest closed the door. His eyes looked at the woman's face lined with distress and anxiety. Out the window, the day turned grey and long shadows crept into the room.

Getruda wanted to speak, but tears choked her voice. Uncontrollable weeping racked her body. The priest put his warm hand on her shoulder.

"How can I help, my child?" His voice soothed her.

"I don't know what to do, Father," she said at last. "I don't know who to turn to."

He waited patiently for her to tell him her distress. ...

"It's about my child," said Getruda.

"The sweet child with the blue eyes sitting there outside?"

"Yes."

Fear of what she was to reveal in this room nailed her to the spot. Her body was shaking, but she knew she had to go on. The priest was the only person she could pour her heart out to, the only one she could trust.

She told him the truth and he looked at her with eyes opened wide in surprise.

"I didn't realize that the child was a Jew," he said.

She called Michael.

"Do you know who Jesus was?" asked the priest.

"The man everybody prays to," replied the child. He remembered the prayers he had heard in church.

"And what is the Holy Trinity?"

Michael frowned and repeated what Gertruda had recited to him: "The Father ... the Son ... the Holy Spirit."

The priest sprinkled holy water on him and said a prayer.

"From now on, you're a Christian like all of us," he said. "Tomorrow morning you'll start attending the church school."

"But," she stammered, "I don't have money to pay."

"I'm not worried," he said. "God will reward me."

The priest sat Michael on his lap and stroked his hair.

"You want to hear a story?" he asked.

"Yes."

"In chapter two of the book of Daniel, there's a story of a king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, who woke up one night in panic after a horrible dream. In his dream, the king saw a statue with a head of gold. A big stone suddenly smashed the statue into slivers. The king called the sages of Babylon and asked them to interpret his dream. None of them could. When the prophet Daniel learned of this, he came to the king and interpreted. The statue, he said, is your kingdom. The stone symbolizes the kingdom of Heaven that decided to smash your kingdom to dust."

A slight smile hovered over the priest's lips.

"You know what is the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar?" he asked.

Gertruda nodded. The comparison with the Nazis was obvious.

"I promise you," said the priest, "that the end of the wicked will be as the end of Nebuchadnezzar's statue."

She left with Michael and hurried home. The child was saved, at least for the time being, and that was what was most important. She wasn't worried about his Christian baptism. She was sure that, just as Michael was born a Jew, he would go back to being a Jew when the war was over.

On the morning Michael was about to enter the school of Ostra Brama Church, Gertruda dressed him in his best clothes, packed up his belongings in a small suitcase, and went with him to Father Gedovsky's office, where they were greeted warmly.

"Leave the boy here and go in peace," he said. "Here he'll be protected from every evil."

Gertruda kissed Michael's sad eyes.

"Don't worry," she said. "I'll come to visit you often."

The priest went with Michael to the school building next to the church, showed him his bed in one of the dormitory rooms, and then put him in class. The children looked at him with curiosity and at recess tried to size him up. He said what Gertruda taught him to say: that his mother was the widow of a Polish officer and that he was her only son. ...

Despite the strict studies and the fear that accompanied Michael day and night, life in the boarding school was rather comfortable. There was enough food, he had his own bed, and Father Gedovsky kept an eye on him. The children in the boarding school were

divided, as always, into better and worse. Some wanted to be his friend. Other looked for his weak points and teased him a lot. He was glad to make friends with children he was fond of, and avoided responding to the teasing from the others.<sup>1655</sup>

Stolowitzky recalled that he even became an altar boy.

I grew up as Gertrude's son. We lived together in an apartment in Vilnius [Wilno] very near the Vilnius ghetto. I used to see how they took Jews from the ghetto. I was outside it thanks to her. There was this very large sign outside our house that said, If you are caught hiding a Jew you will be executed without a trial.

Just outside the ghetto was the main church of Vilnius. Gertrude was Catholic, and she enlisted the priest's help in hiding me. I became an altar boy. Every Sunday, there I was, dressed in a white gown with a red apron.<sup>1656</sup>

The following account appears in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*:

At the outbreak of war, Mr. Stolowicki [Stołowicki] was living in Paris. When the Germans occupied the city of Warsaw, Mrs. Stolowicka decided to escape with her four-year-old son, Michael, and his nanny, Gertruda Babilinska [Babilińska], a teacher by profession and a native of Gdańsk [Gdańsk] (Danzig). The three made their way to Vilna [Wilno], Lithuania, en route to Paris. When, however, the mother discovered that her husband had died, she suffered a stroke and, realizing that her days were numbered, asked Babilinska to do all she could to take her son to Israel. After Stolowicka died, Babilinska continued looking after Michael. After she informed some priests that the boy was Jewish, they took Michael on as an acolyte in a church in Vilna. Although the Germans were in the habit of conducting impromptu raids on the apartments of the refugees from Warsaw, Babilinska continued to look after Michael and care for his needs. Babilinska, who was fluent in German, worked as an amanuensis, writing petitions to the authorities on behalf of local farmers, for which she received eggs, dairy products which she used to smuggle into the ghetto for her friends. After the war, Babilinska returned with Michael to Gdansk to take leave of her family. Although her family tried to persuade her to stay, she stood by her promise to Michael's mother and took him to the displaced persons camps in Germany, and a passage was arranged for them on the SS Exodus. Despite assurances by members of the Hagana that they would look after the boy and make sure he reached Israel safely, Babilinska insisted on coming with him, declaring her willingness to throw in her lot with the other clandestine immigrants. Babilinska and Michael endured hardships on the journey to Israel, until the ship was ordered back to Hamburg. Undaunted, Babilinska embarked with Michael on the SS Transylvania, reaching the shores of Israel in 1948. Babilinska settled

<sup>1655</sup> Ram Oren, *Gertruda's Oath: A Child, a Promise, and a Heroic Escape During World War II* (New York: Doubleday/Random House, 2009), 188–93.

<sup>1656</sup> Leora Kahn and Rachel Hager, eds., “When They Came to Take My Father”: *Voices of the Holocaust* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 150. This rescue is also described in Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous*, 227, and in Gay Block and Malka Drucker, *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1992), 166–69.

in Israel, where she raised Michael as her son, and was awarded Israeli citizenship. She passed away in Israel at a ripe old age.<sup>1657</sup>

The Redemptorist Congregation, among them Fathers Franciszek Świątek and Leon Fraś, were engaged in rescue activities in Wilno, issuing birth and baptismal certificates, preparing for baptism Jews who wanted to convert, and providing hiding places and material assistance. Among those helped was the family of Rabbi Salit, who were sheltered by a Polish family, and a woman known as Mrs. Mościcka and her daughter. Unfortunately, the latter were denounced by a Jewish relative. Although tortured by the Gestapo, Mrs. Mościcka's daughter divulged no information about Rev. Świątek. Mrs. Mościcka and her daughter were executed. Warned about their fate, Rev. Świątek went into hiding.<sup>1658</sup>

Isaac Kowalski, who was active in the Jewish underground in Wilno, described the assistance provided by a number of priests, among them Rev. Bolesław Sperski, the pastor of All Saints Church on Rudnicka Street, near the ghetto. Rev. Sperski counselled parishioners to help Jews and was known for his caring attitude toward the Jews. He permitted a tunnel to be dug from the ghetto to the church, by which Jews escaped from the ghetto.

There were occasions when priests met Jewish workers on the street and encouraged them by telling them that they would soon be free.

Our friend, the old Masha, told me one day, when she met me on the way to the ghetto from work, that her Pastor [Rev. Bolesław Sperski] from the “Wszystkich Świętych” [All Saints] church which was located only a few feet from the ghetto gates, advised her during confession that she should help us with everything possible.

The Jews in the ghetto knew about his [i.e., Rev. Sperski's] human attitude to our suffering people and dug a tunnel from the ghetto to the church. A few escaped on the day of the liquidation of the ghetto through the church to the city and then to the woods.<sup>1659</sup>

According to another report, Rev. Sperski sheltered a Jew in a crypt of the church for eight months.<sup>1660</sup>

<sup>1657</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 65–66.

<sup>1658</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 717; Maciej Sadow-ski, *Redemptoryści polscy w latach 1939–1945* (Kraków: Homo Dei, 2005), 325; Marian Brudzisz, “Redemptorist Ministry among the Polish in the Soviet Socialist Republics of Lithuania and Byelorussia, 1939–1990,” *Spicilegium Historicum Congregationis SSmi Redemptoris*, vol. 61 (2013): 57–121, at pp. 79–80, 94.

<sup>1659</sup> Isaac Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe: The Story of a Jewish United Partisan Orga-nization* (New York: Central Guide Publishers, 1969), 217.

<sup>1660</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 385, based on J.M. [Józef Mackiewicz], “Ghetto wileńskie,” *Lwów i Wilno*, no. 17 (1947). This Jewish man survived the war and left for Italy. Stanislo-vas Rubinovas (b. 1930 as Aron Rubinov, or Rubinow) presents a rather odd attribution to

Pola Wawer, a young Jewish doctor from Wilno, mentions the assistance of Rev. Julian Jankowski, a vicar at All Saints Church, who obtained for her a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Zofia Januszkiewicz from the parish in Podbrodzie.<sup>1661</sup> Rev. Witold Pietkun, another vicar at All Saints Church, helped his brother, Jan Pietkun, who was hiding three Jews, and then took the Jews in when they had to leave that hideout for their safety.<sup>1662</sup>

Isaac Kowalski mentions rescuers from a cross-section of Wilno's Christian population:

Professors [Aleksander] Januszkiewicz and Michaida [Kornel Michejda]<sup>1663</sup> helped their friends who were Jewish doctors.

... [Rev.] Dr Jazas Sztakauskas [Juozas Stakauskas], director of the government archives, together with a Lithuanian teacher Zemajtis and the Polish [Benedictine] nun Milkulska [Maria Mikulska], hid 12 Jews: Dr. Alexander Libo with wife and daughter, Grigori Jaszunski and wife, Engineer Jacob with wife and daughter, Miss Ester Jafe, Mrs. Bak and her son, the young artist Zalman [Samuel].

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Rev. Bolesław Sperski—as perceived by an 11 or 12-year-old boy—that is out of keeping with other accounts. In July 1941, Rubinovas's mother approached Rev. Julian Jankowski (misidentified as the pastor), asking to be baptized together with her son. After passing the test on religion, they were christened by Rev. Witold Pietkun. Rubinovas became an altar boy and his mother was employed as a housekeeper at the rectory. Several months later, Rev. Jankowski told her to leave because the canon, apparently referring to Rev. Sperski, learned of their presence and disapproved. Allegedly, Rev. Sperski told Mrs. Rubinov to surrender herself to the Gestapo or he would denounce them. Mrs. Rubinov and her son wandered in the countryside for the duration of the occupation, passing as Poles and begging for food and shelter. See the testimony of Stanislovas Rubinovas, SFV, Interview code 13165; Stanislovas Rubinas, *Miške ir scenoje* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2013). Rev. Sperski was arrested twice by the Germans, in the fall of 1941 and March 1942, and by the Soviets in December 1946. He was sentenced to five years in a labour camp, where he died in April 1951.

<sup>1661</sup> Pola Wawer, *Poza gettem i obozem* (Warsaw: Volumen, 1993), 17–18, 83–84. Roza Fartus also mentions the helpfulness of an unidentified priest from All Saints Church. After learning of her predicament, the priest allowed her to remain in the church until evening and provided her with a yellow patch that enabled her to join a group of Jewish workers returning to the ghetto. See the testimony of Roza Fartus, JHI, record group 301, no. 5589.

<sup>1662</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 657; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 334. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 607 (entry for Jan Pietkun).

<sup>1663</sup> On Kornel Michejda see *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 511–12. Doctors Kornel Michejda and Aleksander Januszkiewicz performed operations for Jews in the Wilno ghetto. Dr. Michejda collected a large sum of money from Poles to assist with the contribution that the Germans imposed on the Jews. See Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 22, 314.

Profesor Aka [Jan Oko], Professor Czizowski [Tadeusz Czeżowski],<sup>1664</sup> Professor Petruszewicz [Kazimierz Petruszewicz], lawyer Josef Czelecki [Józef Cielecki]<sup>1665</sup> helped hide some Jewish acquaintances. Merila [Maryla] Abramowicz-Wolska<sup>1666</sup> made counterfeit papers for Jews. At 16 Puhulanka [Pohulanka] Street she hid tens of Jewish people and helped them with food and money. Mrs. Wiktoria Grzmilewska [Grzmielewska]<sup>1667</sup> hid scores of Jews in every apartment and showed friendliness to them. It is in place here to mention Mrs. Maria Fedeka [Fedeka],<sup>1668</sup> who saved a lot of Jews from death, by helping them to run from the ghetto. The above women carried out their mission from pure human motives.

A great many Aryan domestics showed human feelings for their employers, by helping them with food and in some cases, even hid them. Aryan governesses hid Jewish children, whom they helped to raise. Some help for Jews came from Catholic priests. Markowicz [Rev. Tadeusz Makarewicz, pastor of St. John the Baptist church], a Pole, and Lipniunas [Alfonsas Lipniūnas] had spoken to their people to give back Jewish property. Lipniunas was arrested. Father Krupowicius [Mykolas Krupavičius], who showed sympathy to the Jews was sent away to a German concentration camp, Tilzit [Tilsit]. Father Waltkaus [Mykolas Vaitkus] hid the Trupianski child in a Catholic orphanage, and helped save other Jewish children.<sup>1669</sup> ...

Eta Lipenholc tells about Leokadia Piechowska and others. ... “We were 24 people saved at this place called Tuskulany farm. ... The Polish people who kept us for a whole year until the liberation, were Mrs. Stankiewicz and Mrs. Gieda.”

Dr. Anthony Panski [Antoni Pański], the Social Democrat, helped the writer Herman Kruk financially. ...

In his book Balberiszki [Balberyszski]<sup>1670</sup> describes a neighbor, Kozłowska [Zofia Kozłowska], who returned golden valuables even after the Balberiszki had been in the ghetto for quite some time and thus helped them to overcome hunger and need.

<sup>1664</sup> On the Czeżowski family see *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 160. On the rescue activities of Professor Tadeusz Czeżowski, Dr. Jan Janowicz, and Maria Fedeka, see the account of Alexander Libo in Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 320.

<sup>1665</sup> On Józef and Maria Cielecki see *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 146; Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 176–77.

<sup>1666</sup> On Maryla and Feliks Wolski see Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 466; Wawer, *Poza gettem i obozem*, 42–43.

<sup>1667</sup> On Wiktoria Grzmielewska see Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 211, 466; Wawer, *Poza gettem i obozem*, 42–43. Grzmielewska helped in the rescue of Szmerke Kacerginski, who was sheltered by Maryla and Feliks Wolski, as well as Adolf and Lena Smilg. She was recognized by Yad Yashem in 2018.

<sup>1668</sup> On Maria Fedeka see *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 212; Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 194.

<sup>1669</sup> The archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum in Vilnius identify additional Lithuanian clerics (who came to Wilno after that city was given over to Lithuania in 1939) as rescuers of Jews: Vincentas Dvaranauskas, Klemensas Razminas, Norbertas Skurskis, Juozas Vaičiūnas, Stasys Valiukėnas, and Jonas Žemaitis. See Viktorija Sakaitė, “Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai,” *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32.

<sup>1670</sup> Mendel Balberyszski, *Stronger Than Iron: The Destruction of Vilna Jewry 1941–1945: An Eyewitness Account* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2010).



Victoria Nazmiewski [Wiktoria Grzmielewska], Maria Fedecki [Fedecka] ... Maria Wolski [Maryla Wolska], at one time or other, helped the partisan-poet Szmerke Kaczerginski and other Jews. ...

Jadzia [Janina] Dudziec was a practicing Catholic. She was in contact with the Scheinbaum-group and supplied them with small arms. She perished August 13, 1944.

Irena Adamowicz was also a devoted Catholic. She was a very active scout-leader and very friendly with some Chaluz-leaders. Irena volunteered to be a courier for the Hechalutz and travelled many times to various ghettos in Poland and Lithuania. ...

In the last days before Vilna [Wilno] was liberated, Esther Geler, wounded by a bullet, Robotnik and Feiga Itkin, the last survivors of the H.K.P., managed to escape. They came to a Polish woman in the Antokol section of Siostry Miłosierdza [Miłosierdzia—Sisters of Charity] Street, where Mrs. Guriono let them sleep in the basement and gave them food, until the liberation of the city. ...

It is also worthwhile commenting those nationals who, although they did not proffer any direct help, yet they made believe they did not see the Jew, disguised as an Aryan, when they met him in the street; they did not run as informers to the authorities ...<sup>1671</sup>

The aforementioned Kornel Michejda, who was recognized by Yad Vashem, sheltered two colleagues from the Stefan Batory University, Michał Reicher and Ignacy Abramowicz, in his summer cottage in Gulbiny, near Rzesza, outside of Wilno. Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski entrusted them to the care of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, who relocated to Gulbiny after their convent in Wilno had been shut down by the Germans.<sup>1672</sup>

Kornel Michejda, a professor in the Stefan Bathory [Batory] University in Vilna [Wilno], was known before the war for his liberal views and as a friend of the Jews. When the Germans occupied Vilna in June 1941, Professor Michejda gave asylum to his friends Professor Michał [Michał] Reicher and Professor Ignacy Abramowicz, moving them to a hiding place on his summer estate in the nearby village of Gulbiny. In order to keep the presence of the two Jewish fugitives secret, Professor Michejda handed the estate over to nuns who had nowhere to live after the Soviet authorities, which had ruled Vilna until the German occupation, drove them out of the convent that had been their home. Paid by Michejda to do so, the nuns were required to care for and safeguard the two Jewish fugitives and provide for their every need. Reicher and Abramowicz remained in their hiding place under the protection of Professor Michejda until their liberation in September 1944. After the war, they remained in Poland, earning reputations as outstanding men of science.<sup>1673</sup>

Herman Kruk, the chronicler of the Wilno ghetto, describes the reaction of the largely Polish population of Wilno to events set in motion by the ghettoization of the Jews in September 1941.

<sup>1671</sup> Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe*, 216–25.

<sup>1672</sup> Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 44–45. Michał Reicher became the deputy head of the medical corps of the Wilno District of the Home Army.

<sup>1673</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 511–12.

Today [September 8, 1941], at Ostra Brama [a chapel, located above this ancient gate, housed the icon of the revered Madonna of Ostra Brama—Ed.], there was a prayer in honor of the martyrdom of the Jews. People say that Jews are now bringing in full bundles, which they got in the city as gifts from Christians in the street.

In the street, at a Maistas [meat cooperative established by the Soviet authorities], masses of Christians brought packages of meat and distributed them to the Jewish workers marching to the ghetto.

The sympathy of the Christian population, more precisely of the Polish population, is extraordinary.

[September 15th] Christians come to the ghetto. People say that Christian friends and acquaintances often come. Today a priest came to me, looking for his Jewish friends.

[May 6, 1942] From Vilna [Wilno] and the whole area, masses of young men are being taken for work in Germany. Yesterday one of those groups was led through Szawelska Street and a lot of Jews saw them. In the street, guarded by Lithuanians, they stormily sang the national battle song [actually, the Polish national anthem], “Poland Is Not Yet Lost,” and as they approached the Jewish ghetto, they shouted slogans:

“Long live the Jews!...”

A mood I only want to note here.<sup>1674</sup>

**R**aizel Medlinski (later Nachimowicz, b. 1908), a widowed school teacher, and her daughter Batia (b. 1938), managed to escape from the Wilno ghetto and survived the war in the countryside with the help of a number of Poles, including two priests. Rev. Hieronim Olszewski, the vicar of St. Teresa’s Church (adjoining Ostra Brama), provided her with a false birth and baptismal certificate, and Rev. Aleksander Łukaszewicz, pastor of Konwaliszki, extended his protection.

We were in the ghetto on the Gaon Street, near the main gate. Real troubles began. There was no food to eat, but I was always a vigorous woman. I got a connection with Polish people, who sent me packages from the lofts tied to a rope. ... I thought all the time about how to escape from the ghetto. ... Another day, when I lay with my daughter, a Polish man appeared. This was probably the doorkeeper of the building. They sent him to check and to report if Jews were left in the building. I told him that I was a teacher; and I worked not far from there. He understood our situation and had pity on us. He went away; I didn’t even notice when. He came back with some bread and milk. He told me that if I want to survive, I have to come to the same place and he will take us to a wide road. I learned that they used to put a ladder to the loft; and the corridor led to a tailor shop, where Jewish tailors worked for the Germans.

I went back to the ghetto early in the morning. I found my mother-in-law in the ghetto. She was an old woman; I couldn’t escape together with her. I already thought of leaving the ghetto. Sunday, before the action, before the liquidation of the second ghetto, I went to the loft, keeping my daughter by hand, I knocked. The doorkeeper came and took us through the ladder to a wide street. I didn’t have an exact plan but I wanted to go to Lipówka.

<sup>1674</sup> Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 109–10, 112, 280–81.

I knew some people there. It was a suburb of Vilna [Wilno]. I knew a Polish woman there, who worked in my house. They received us in a friendly way. We spent a few weeks there, with my daughter, but the neighbors began to look and understand that Grisha is hiding a Jewish woman with a child. I had a feeling that we had stayed there long enough and had to leave the place. One nice day, early in the morning, I took my girl and went to the town. I knew that our ghetto was already liquidated. Nobody survived. I didn't know what to do. ... My plan was to leave my daughter in an orphanage and escape Vilna. I went to Rase [Rossa Street]. A cloister [of the Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary] was there, full of priests. A priest was coming toward me. I saw him for the first time in my life. I asked him who was in charge of the orphanage. ... I spoke to him Polish and I told him that I am a teacher and he was a teacher too. He pitied us and took us to his room. I cry out there all the bitterness of my heart. He already planned how to save me. He told me to come back in a few days. When I came back, he asked me what I want to be called. He probably kept stamps, so I got a birth certificate for me and my daughter. When I got the documents, I went back to Lipówka, to my Pole. People from the neighborhood used to visit him. One of them took my daughter and me to Wielkie Soleczniki [a town distant 45 km from Wilno]. We came to the governor [reeve?]. He already had the information from my Pole, that I am not entirely "kosher" in spite of speaking not bad the Polish language and having Catholic papers. One must run the risk a little. We learned that the Goy didn't want to take a risk. He was afraid to lose his head. He often declared that he can't keep me any more. He told me that not far from him, just a few kilometers away, is a big forest. In the forest lived a forester, a very good man. He would be able to hide me for some time. So I went to meet the forester. For the time being, I left my girl there, in Wielkie Soleczniki. When I came to the forester, he told me that he could not take such a risk, but that not far from there, I don't remember how many kilometers, I could find a property named Umiastów with a very good priest and an orphanage. They would receive me there. I came to Umiastów and found no priest living there. He lived in a town named Konwaliszki and had some influence over the orphanage. So, I went to the priest from Konwaliszki [Rev. Aleksander Łukaszewicz] and told him all the truth about me, who I was and who gave me the papers. He took out a book with the addresses of all priests and saw that I was not lying. He wanted to help me. He went to the orphanage in Umiastów and asked the woman-master of the house to take me with the child into the property. ... She didn't want to accept me in the house in any terms. It was Sunday. The priest [Rev. Łukaszewicz] received me very well with good food on the table. I don't remember his name, but the other priest, who provided me the papers, was named Olszewski [Rev. Hieronim Olszewski]. He used to pray in Ostrobrama [Ostra Brama]. When the priest from Konwaliszki didn't obtain anything, I sat with him and asked for advice on what to do next. We decided, both of us, that I had to visit Umiastów once again and beg the orphanage master to let us join the house. I went alone. I left the child behind. Her first question was: "Why did you come again? I already spoke to the priest. I can't accept you. I don't have enough maintenance for the children." I told her: "Listen to me. You are still a religious woman, a Catholic. You go each time to the priest to confess and when you see a woman being drawn down, you don't want to help."

After a long discussion, after many ups and downs, she finally allowed me to stay the first few weeks in Konwaliszki. I took my daughter with me; and we stayed there three to

four weeks. After that, I couldn't stay any longer in Konwaliszki. I got a connection with one teacher from the area, who advised me to go to Dziewieniszki to find a teacher who was now a village head. His name was Kucharski. "Go to him; show him your documents; and ask him to book you in." One morning, I went to Dziewieniszki. I didn't tell him the truth. I showed him the certificate of birth and he asked me about the other documents, but he understood everything. He quoted the sentence of the Polish poet Słowacki: "Shall the living not lose hope." He took my document, went out to his office and told to his secretary Stieszka: "Take her document from the woman and book her on the list of our village." To Stieszka came many people from the area; and he turned to Kucharski, the head of the village in these words: "I will not do it! How do you know who the woman is?" The head of the village answered nothing, opened the door in silence and stepped in into his office. The secretary booked me in temporarily in Umiastów. During the time, when I was in the property of Umiastów. I worked as a nurse, but most important, I didn't have to appear as a Jew. When Christmas came, I knew all the Christmas carols, which I learned years ago in the Polish teacher's seminary. I joined in the Christmas carols with them. I used to sit with all the children, about 40–50 orphans, on my knees, together with my daughter, making the sign of the Cross, praying all the right prayers, and going to the church from time to time. My daughter was exceptionally religious. She used to sit at night near the bed on her knees and pray all the prayers. One day two young and pretty girls came to visit us, Zosia and Wanda. Zosia told Wanda not to say who she is. But when I looked at Wanda. I recognized her as one of my students from school, a Jewish girl, probably a member of Arkin family. They owned a bonbon factory in Vilna. She was a cousin to them.

Wanda, of course couldn't tell that she doesn't know me. Silently, they used to say that a Jewish community grows up here. But from where did the girls come? Kucharski knew all my secrets. The girls worked near Vilna, in a place with an aerodrome; and one day a German said to them: "Dear children, run away from here. They are going to get rid of you. At the end of the war, I will know where to find you." They were young and pretty girls ... Kucharski knew my secret; and he let them stay here for a while. Meanwhile this event happened: a Polish woman, whose two sons were with us in Umiastów, informed [the authorities in Lida], that Kucharski employed Jews and she, the former wife of an officer, can't get a job there. Finally, came a complaint against Kucharski. They sent a German Commission to find the truth. When the Germans came, the girls hid themselves. I walked around with a kerchief on the head. They didn't even notice that I am Jewish and went away. After this, the girls couldn't stay with us one minute longer. The Polish woman who informed Lida was shot as a black market dealer. ... In 1943, when they changed our master, a Lithuanian came to replace her. This was a time when some Belarus regions became a part of Lithuania. All the benefits went to the Lithuanians. Then, the Lithuanian government came and sent us a Lithuanian master. The old woman master knew all my secrets. She went to meet the priest who said: "Let her still stay here." It seems that the priest did for others what he did for me, so they caught him and shot him. ...

I had a feeling that the earth is burning under my feet; and I wanted to run away from there. But at this time, our master was still a Pole, Wołkowski. He told me: "Everybody knows everything about you here and nobody will hurt you. ..." This held me back and thanks to this, I could stand it. Sometimes, we had to hide in the fields and in the woods.

I stood it until 1944, before the end of the war. I saw Vilna in flames. I was 65 kilometers from Vilna. It was a terrible fire. We saw a big part of Vilna houses burned out.<sup>1675</sup>

Many priests of the archdiocese of Wilno, in northeastern Poland, are known to have extended help to Jews. According to Polish sources, Rev. Mieczysław Akrejć, the dean and pastor of Brasław, together with his sister who resided in the rectory, cared for a young Jewish girl that had been left behind in an orphanage when Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941.<sup>1676</sup> According to a Jewish testimony, the Brasław priest sheltered and fed Jews.<sup>1677</sup>

A Jewish memorial book catalogues the assistance provided by a number of priests from Brasław and the surrounding area:<sup>1678</sup>

- Rev. Akrejć of Brasław, who had generously contributed to the levy imposed on the Jewish community by the Germans, died of apoplexy on June 25, 1942, when a group of Jews took refuge on his property on the day the Germans were liquidating the ghetto in that town.<sup>1679</sup>

<sup>1675</sup> Testimony of Szoszana Roza (Medlinski) Gerszuni Nachimowicz, YVA, file O.3/3956 (Item 3558370).

<sup>1676</sup> Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 67.

<sup>1677</sup> Testimony of Khenā Bokman, SFV, Interview code 24088. Bokman's brother, Shakhna Bandt, stayed at the priest's rectory for two days when he ventured out of the Brasław ghetto.

<sup>1678</sup> Ariel Machnes and Rina Klinov, eds., *Darkness and Desolation: In Memory of the Communities of Brasław, Dubene, Jaisi, Jod, Kisłowszczizna, Okmienic, Opsa, Plusy, Rimszan, Slobodka, Zamosz, Zaracz* (Tel Aviv: Association of Brasław and Surroundings in Israel and America, and Ghetto Fighters' House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1986), 124 ff., 259, 571–72, 575, 595–96.

<sup>1679</sup> This version is based on the memorial book, *Darkness and Desolation*, where Yitzchak Reichel related, at p. 259: "After this, I had no chance of returning to our bunker. I ran toward the lake. I wanted to swim to the other shore, but unfortunately on that side were Germans with machine guns, and they shot anyone who succeeded in approaching. I stayed close to the ground, lacking strength. Recovering slightly, I raised my head and saw Jews running toward the priest's yard. I too began to crawl toward his house. A large group of Jews had gathered there, even though the Germans were shooting at us. I entered one of the buildings near the priest's house and went up to the attic. Above I saw an opening, through which it was possible to go down into the granary, which was locked on the outside. I entered and dug myself into a pile of straw. After a number of hours the Germans arrived, accompanied by local police, and they opened fire on the Jews who were hiding in the priest's buildings. With the first shots, the priest, a good-hearted man, came out and saw the scale of the tragedy befalling the Jews of his town. He became very upset, suffered a heart attack and died immediately. In those hours, the killers didn't enter the granary where I was hiding. I stayed there for three days."

According to another version, Rev. Mieczysław Akrejć was shot by the Germans for trying to help Jews who had fled while taken for execution. See Tadeusz Krahel, "Ks. Mieczysław Akrejć—dziekan brasławski," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 12 (December 2001); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 126, 195;

- Catholic priests, such as the one in Słobódka, provided encouragement to peasants who confided that they were harbouring Jews.<sup>1680</sup>
- A Catholic priest supplied David of Bizne (?) and a young boy with crucifixes to wear round their necks to help them pose as Christians.
- After sheltering the five-member Barkan family of converts in Krāslava, Latvia, near the Polish border, for a time, that priest turned to a priest in Plusy (also known by the older spelling of Plussy), on the Polish side of the border, identified as Bilcher, but probably Rev. Franciszek Bilsza, the local pastor, who found the Barkans a safe home with the family of Michał Kiżło in Szemielki (Szemelki) and later provided medicine when the charges fell ill.<sup>1681</sup>
- A priest named Petro from Belmont and priests from the villages of Prozoroki (given as “Prysaroki”) and Ikażń (given as “Ikaznia”).
- An unidentified priest, probably Rev. Jan Michał Skardyński, helped Józefa Sawicka in sheltering Rachel Gurewicz and her two daughters, Hanka and Riwetka, in the village and parish of Urbany, near Braślów.

There is more information about some of these rescues later in the text.

According to Jewish sources, Catholic priests from Braślów—Szlenik, Kowalski, and Wasilewski (their exact identities have not been established; Wasilewski may have been an Orthodox priest)—“gave some material and spiritual help to the Jewish population” and “reprimanded those involved in excesses committed against the Jews.”<sup>1682</sup>

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Tadeusz Krahel, “Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell’arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944,” in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at pp. 656–57.

<sup>1680</sup> Testimony of Boris Berkman in Machnes and Klinov, *Darkness and Desolation*, 445 ff.: “After few nights of walking, I arrived to the village of Berkovyszyzna [Borkowszczyzna] and to Mylkavitz [Milkiewicz], the peasant who was one of our family friends. ... I told him what had happened to the Jews and to our family and asked him for a place to hide. For my delightfulness, he agreed immediately. At the same day, Mylkavitz and his boys, which were about the same age as I was, prepared me a place to hide in the barn. I stayed here for an extended time. During one of the days, the boys of Mylkavitz told me that their father had already discussed with the priest in Słobódka [Słobódka] the fact that he provided me with a shelter in his house. The priest told him that it is a great righteousness to save a hunted Jew, even if a strong element of danger is embedded in it. That man was known for his good treatment of the Jews.”

The pastor of Słobódka during the German occupation was Rev. Stanisław Kuderewski. Rev. Bolesław Zajęc served as vicar from 1943 to 1945.

<sup>1681</sup> Testimony of Anna (Niuta) Zelikman in Machnes and Klinov, *Darkness and Desolation*, 124 ff.; Entry for “Kizhlo” under Belarus in *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 8. Rev. Pēteris Rudzītis was the dean of Krāslava from 1940 to 1946.

<sup>1682</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part B, 1170.



During the liquidation of the Brasław ghetto in June 1942, Avraham Biliak and his family turned to a priest named Petro in the nearby village of Belmont. According to Polish sources, the prewar pastor of the parish was Rev. Wincenty Bujnowski, who died in 1946.

We knew our shelter was just temporary; we had to flee. Even before the massacre, my father had gone to speak with farmers from the neighboring villages. They showed a willingness to help us when needed. One of them was our friend Petro—the priest from the Belmont church [Belmont was about seven kilometers southeast of Brasław]. On Friday night [June 5], we decided to try our luck. We went out: Father, my sister Masha and her husband Yankel [Glazer], my sister Libka, my brother Tevka and me. Mother remained in the hiding place with her two grandchildren—Masha's children. With them also was my sister Gutka [Sara-Gutka], who didn't want to leave mother alone with the children. We decided: We'll find a safe place, then come back and take them with us.

At the entrance to Belmont, there was a large bridge, well guarded by the Germans, so it was necessary to go around it. We asked for help from an acquaintance who lived near the bridge. After midnight he put us all into a boat, made a big detour far from the bridge and brought us into Belmont. The priest was surprised to see us and happy that we'd come. He'd thought for sure that we'd been killed. He received us with food, drink and tears in his eyes, and promised to help us survive. First, he took us into the church and locked it. To his congregation he said, "It's better for the church to be locked and not used as a hiding place by undesirables who are passing through." On Sundays, he'd return us to his house and open the gates of the church to the worshippers.

A number of days after the massacre, the oppressors passed through Braslav and announced on loudspeakers that all those who were hiding could come out; nothing bad would happen to them. My mother, my sister, the children and many others with them who had survived believed the announcements and went outside. All of them were gathered into the yard of the Judenrat and some days later they were all taken to the pits; their end was like those who'd gone before them.

Yankel, Masha's husband, decided to return to Braslav and bring the children, mother and my sister. We didn't yet know that they'd already surrendered themselves and been killed. When he reached Braslav, he was caught; they beat him and killed him. The priest [in Belmont] began to look for safer places for us. He took Masha to a farmer in the village Zaravtzi [Ozierawce], where they hid her under a large Russian stove; the chickens were also kept there. Father, me, Tevka and Libka he brought to the village Piatoshki [Pietuszeki] to two brothers who weren't married. They hid us in the cellar under the cowshed, and at night we'd go up in the attic, where we had a lot of air and a larger living space than in the cellar. We paid them generously for all of their kindnesses: the lodgings and the food, the communication between us and the goodness of their hearts. For just one thing was compensation impossible—the fear. Whoever hid a Jew lived in constant fear. The villagers were warned continuously not to hide Jews, and woe to the person who had a hidden Jew found in his house. His fate, the fate of his family and his possessions, was sealed. The house and its contents would be burned, the animals taken, and the entire family would be killed. Once the brothers hinted to us that a few of us would have to find another place [to hide]. We heard that in Opsa [18 kilometers southwest of Braslav] a ghetto still existed; we had acquaintances there. We decided to separate: Father and my sister Libka would

stay where they were, my sister Masha would move to a neighboring village, and I and Tevka would go to Opsa. We said our goodbyes, and we parted from the brothers who'd put their lives in danger because of us. They told us how to go on the roads and paths, through the forests and villages. On the way, villagers helped us. All the time, we faced dangerous threats; we were afraid but continued onward.<sup>1683</sup>

A priest in Dryświaty warned Nachum Kasimow of the impending deportation of Jews to Brasław, where they were being killed. Nachum, his wife Musia Levine, and their young three children (Rita, Miriam, and Harold) were sheltered by various Polish farmers, among them “Vlatsky.” They survived the war. Nachum and Musia recalled in 1945, “Many peasants were shot for harboring Jews (e.g., the peasant Zapoz).”<sup>1684</sup> The pastor of Dryświaty at the time was Rev. Edward Godlewski.

[Harold] Kasimow, his parents, and his two sisters spent 19 months and 5 days hiding from the Nazis in a hole dug in the floor of a cattle barn, covered over with boards and straw. He was 4 years old when they went into hiding in the hole. They called it the grub, which means hole. Sometimes, they even called it the keyver—the Yiddish word for grave. “We were already buried there,” Kasimow says. “If something happened, that could have been our grave.” ...

Kasimow was born in a small village about a hundred miles north of Vilnius [Wilno], which is now the capital of Lithuania. At that time, it was part of Poland. His father, Norman [Nachum], was a fisherman and a prosperous businessman who owned houses in two villages, one in Turmantas [Turmont], which is now in Lithuania, and the other in Drysviaty [Dryświaty], which is now in Belarus. He was well known and liked in the area. “He treated people with dignity,” Kasimow says.

“My father was quite a heroic figure, actually,” Kasimow continues. “He had very good relations with the people in the surrounding area, including non-Jews, many of whom were willing to risk their lives to help him.”

Kasimow's family was one of only five Jewish families left in the village after the first year of German occupation. All the others had been transported to concentration camps or killed on the spot. ...

In April 1942, the local priest came to warn Kasimow's father that they should hide or run; he had learned that the Nazis planned to finish off the last few Jews in the area. Eventually, 95 percent of the Jews who had lived in that area of Poland before the war were killed. Virtually no children survived. The few who did survive did so with the help of Polish Catholics, Kasimow says.<sup>1685</sup>

<sup>1683</sup> Testimony of Avraham Biliak in Machnes and Klinov, *Darkness and Desolation*, 241–42; Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Braslaw/Braslaw.html>.

<sup>1684</sup> Rita Kasimow Brown, *Portrait of a Holocaust Child: Memories and Reflections* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2010), xvi, 9, 17.

<sup>1685</sup> Jackie Hartling Stolze, “Defying the Darkness: Three Children Who Survived the Holocaust,” *The Grinnell Magazine*, Summer 2008, Internet: <https://www.grinnell.edu/news/defying-darkness>.

Examples of assistance by village priests in the vicinity of Głębokie, in north-eastern Poland, are described in the following passage from a Jewish memoir.

We were taken to the main jail [in Głębokie]. In front of the building a police commander motioned to the guard to take us to the basement. In this two storey building the basement held all those who were condemned to death. ... As we descended the steps to the basement two Belorussian guards welcomed us with a severe beating. We were told to sing Russian songs and dance. Each time we were struck by their rifle butts until both of us collapsed bleeding and unconscious on the cement floor.

When we regained consciousness we were lying on wooden boards covered with straw. Two Roman Catholic priests had dragged us into the room and lifted our bodies onto the boards. They were sitting by us as we awoke. The priests had been arrested by the Germans and condemned to die. One was from Prozaroki [Prozoroki] and the other was from Ikażń [Ikaźń]. They knew from their training how to speak to people near death and they tried to give us moral support. The other prisoners were escaped Russian prisoners of war. They all knew we had only hours to live.

When my mother heard we had been arrested and we were to be shot she ran directly to the Judenrat (Jewish Council). Her screams and tears caused a great commotion and forced the council to take steps to try and save us. Within hours a large amount of gold coins and jewelry were collected. The Judenrat had a connection with the Gestapo, a Jewish girl named Peske. She was young, extremely good looking and intelligent. She had developed an intimate relationship with the captain of the Gestapo and we found her in his office when we were escorted to see him. The gold had been used to arrange our release. Peske understood that the only way she could save our lives was by claiming she knew us well and that we had worked for the Germans in Głębokie [Głębokie] for a long time. ...

Several days later we discovered that all the prisoners in the basement had been taken to Barock [Borek forest near Berezewcz] and shot. The actual executions were performed by the local collaborator police under the supervision of the Żandarmeria (Gendarmarie) and German police. The two priests were in that group. ... Later, when we met Jewish survivors from the vicinity of Prozaroke [Prozoroki] in the forest, we discovered more about the priest. He had been personally friendly towards Jews. In his Sunday sermons he had urged his congregation to keep their hands clean of the slaughter of Jews and to aid them where possible.<sup>1686</sup>

According to Polish sources, Rev. Władysław Maćkowiak was the pastor of Ikażń, and his vicar was Rev. Stanisław Pyrtek. They were arrested in December 1941 for their ardent preaching and for illegally teaching religion to children. They were detained in the jail in Brasław before being transferred to the jail in Głębokie,

<sup>1686</sup> Peter Silverman, David Smuschkowitz, and Peter Smuszkowicz, *From Victims to Victors* (Concord, Ontario: The Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, 1992), 246–47. When Peter Silverman, his two brothers, Jack and Genya, and his cousin, David Smuschkowitz were sheltered by the Lahun family, Agnieszka Lahun confided in her priest in Borodzienicze, who offered encouragement. *Ibid.*, 132; Written statement of Peter (Pejsach) Smuszkowicz, November 18, 1993 (in the author's possession).

together with Rev. Mieczysław Bohatkiewicz, who was arrested in the border town of Dryssa in January 1942. All three of these priests were taken by German gendarmes and Belorussian policemen on March 4, 1942, to Borek forest, near Berezwezc, outside Głębokie, where they were executed.<sup>1687</sup> The pastor of Prozoroki at the time was Rev. Czesław Matusiewicz, who continued to work in this area for the duration of the war.<sup>1688</sup>

Rev. Józef Kowalczyk sheltered and protected two Jewish children, Mikhail and Galina Lekago, at his rectory in Zadoroże and in the hamlet of Hajduszowo. When the police found out about the rescue, the children were transferred to a Soviet partisan unit.<sup>1689</sup>

The following account refers to assistance provided to Jews by priests in Duniłowicze and Wołkołata, near Głębokie, as related in another memoir.

I know of heroism also among the village priests in White Russia [prewar Eastern Poland] during the years of Nazi occupation. The parish priests of Dunilowicze [Duniłowicze] and Wolkołaty [Wołkołata] were feeding and sheltering Jews along with escaped Russian prisoners of war in their parsonages. When the Gestapo found out that the priest of Wolkołaty [Rev. Romuald Dronicz] was hiding Jews, they sent a local policeman to arrest him. The policeman, however, felt uneasy about arresting a man of God.

"I can't arrest you, Father," he said to the priest. "Why don't you ask your guests to leave your parsonage and then go underground yourself?" The priest, for his part, did not want to endanger the policeman's life and insisted that the policeman carry out his orders. When this valiant priest arrived at Gestapo head-quarters, he was shot at once.<sup>1690</sup>

In fact, Rev. Romuald Dronicz, the pastor of Wołkołata, was arrested by the Gestapo in June 1942, imprisoned in Głębokie, and executed in Berezwezc together

<sup>1687</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 38–39, 58; Walerian M. Moroz and Andrzej Datko, eds., *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945: Duchowni i świeccy z ziem polskich, którzy prześladowani przez nazizm hitlerowski dali Chrystusowi ofiarę życia świadectwo miłości* (Marki-Struga: Michalineum, 1996), 9–18; Tadeusz Krahel, "Nasi Męczennicy," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, May 1999; Tadeusz Krahel, "Błogosławieni Męczennicy z Berezwezcza," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 131 (March 2001); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 185–86, 210–11, 227–28.

<sup>1688</sup> Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem*, 84–85.

<sup>1689</sup> Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 118; Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 657. Based on Iarmusik, *Katolicheskii kostel v Belorussii v gody vtoroi mirovoi voiny (1939–1945)*, 105. The priest is misidentified as Bernard Kowalewski in these sources.

<sup>1690</sup> Joseph Riwash, *Resistance and Revenge, 1939–1945* (Montreal: n.p., 1981), 144.

with four other Polish priests on July 4, 1942.<sup>1691</sup> The pastor of Duniłowicze at the time was Rev. Czesław Kardel.

The rescue activities of Rev. Kazimierz Doroszkiewicz, the pastor of Dołhinów, northeast of Wilejka, are mentioned in several sources. Rev. Doroszkiewicz intervened on behalf of Jews who were arrested by the Germans on their entry in June 1941, he provided large quantities of food to the local ghetto, and he sheltered Jews in the church attic and parish rectory. After the war, he was held in great esteem by Jewish survivors.<sup>1692</sup> The town's memorial book includes the following account by Leyb Dimenshteyn.

The 22nd [June] 1941 the Nazi storm began. With shattering power the German armies attacked Soviet Russia from all sides. By the time we arrived at a decision by the third or fourth day the German units had already captured our town.

There was nowhere to hide—not in our houses or other hiding places.

Three days after they entered our town, 36 Jews were arrested—young and old—and were confined to a certain shop at the marketplace, accused of being Communists. If the Communists would not surrender all the prisoners would be shot. The families and relatives of those arrested tried everything to free them. They tried everything they could.

They even went to the Holy Ark in the synagogue, visited graves at the cemetery and finally asked the Polish priest to intervene—a very good, liberal man and a friend of the Jews.

At the time there were German officers in the priest's house. His intervention actually helped; the officers received 4 bicycles, 2 pairs of boots and 3 watches. The prisoners were freed—after they were arrested they were beaten without stop for 24 hours. By 10 o'clock at night these unhappy people went home.

<sup>1691</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Ks. Romuald Dronicz," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 123 (July 2000); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 195.

<sup>1692</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Ksiądz Kazimierz Doroszkiewicz," *Drogi Miłosierdzia*, no. 25 (September 2012); Tadeusz Krahel, "Ksiądz Kazimierz Doroszkiewicz z Dołhinowa," *Drogi Miłosierdzia*, no. 124 (December 2020); Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 656. See also Arye-Leybl Falant, "My Life's Struggle and Survival in Horrific Dark Years," in Josef Chrust and Matityahu Bar-Razon, eds., *Esh tamid-yizkor le-Dolhinow: Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Dolhinow ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Society of Dolhinow Emigrants in Israel, 1984), 330–31, translated as *Eternal Flame: In Memory of Dolhinow*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dolginovo/Dolginovo.html>, where Falant states: "The German headquarters were at the Catholic priest's; this is where they brought me and put me in a cell near the church. My aunt—Keleh Fufman had a good relationship with the priest. She came running and intervened with him and others to set me free. The priest also got involved and tried to help. Unfortunately this was fruitless! It did not help. I was imprisoned and held in order to be shot ..."

Beginning of March 1942 another group of Nazis arrived with an order to the “Judenrat.” The Jews must place all of their fine furniture in the marketplace. At the same time they had to bring 500 eggs and 50 chickens. In the event this will not be delivered, there will be severe consequences. What was to be done? Jews brought out a bit of furniture and ran to the Polish priest. He helped provide the eggs because by now the Jews had none. The murderers left this time too.<sup>1693</sup>

During the liquidation of the ghetto in Łyntupy, near Święciany, by Lithuanian police, Irene Mauber Skibinski, then a young girl of about six, and her mother escaped and took shelter with Rev. Józef Pakalnis, the local parish priest, who instructed his housekeeper to hide them in the cellar of the rectory. They remained there for about ten days before moving on. They survived the occupation with the help of a number of Polish peasant families.<sup>1694</sup>

My mother crawled through the window and fell on the ice. She lost her shoes on the way. She pulled me out and we ran. People were peeking through windows and quickly hiding behind the curtains. My mother ran to the local priest, whose name was Father Pakalnis. We knocked at the door. His housekeeper opened the door and told us to leave immediately, but Father Pakalnis overheard our voices and asked us to come in. He was happy to see us alive. He told my mother he owed his life to her because my mother had protected him from being sent to Siberia by the Russians. He told his housekeeper to take us to the cellar and keep us there until things quieted down.

We stayed in the cellar for about ten days. ...

It was time for us to leave. Father Pakalnis gave my mother his old boots. We had to find other clothes for me to wear, since it was a small town and people could easily recognize me just from my clothing. My mother always dressed me in the finest clothes she could get. At that time my coat and hat were of a blue color, and my mother wanted me to be less conspicuous.

And so we left. We walked in the snow, and once in a while villagers gave us rides. Most of the villagers knew my family because they had worked for my father, transporting wood from the forest to the processing place at the railroad station. When we asked for shelter, they refused, saying they could not keep us, but they said they would not report us to the police because my parents had treated them well.

With no place to hide, my mother decided to go to the Svenciany [Święciany] ghetto. I do not remember much about life there. We had a corner of the floor in a very crowded room. There was no food. Our former housekeeper Amelia, who lived in Svenciany with her sister, found out we were in the ghetto. She started bringing bread whenever she could and passing it to us through barbed wire. ...

When we saw the first Red Army unit, we felt free. In Pabradzie [Podbrodzie], we met some Jewish families. We did not stay long, because we were anxious to get to Łyntupy. ...

<sup>1693</sup> Chrust and Bar-Razon, *Esh tamid-yizkor le-Dolhinow*, 330–31, 613–14, 617, translated as *Eternal Flame: In Memory of Dolhinow*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dolginovo/Dolginovo.html>.

<sup>1694</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part B, 1088.



We went to see Father Pakalinis, the priest who helped us at the moment of extreme danger. My mother did not coach me, she did not have to. I understood quite well I owed my life to him and many other kind people. I buried my face in his kind hands and cried.<sup>1695</sup>

Pola Wawer, a young Jewish doctor who escaped from the Wilno ghetto with her parents, recalled a Catholic priest who worked closely with a rabbi in Łyntupy to provide material assistance to refugees from other towns, including her family.<sup>1696</sup> Rev. Kazimierz Mitka, the pastor of Balingródek, near Święciany, rescued J. Szapiro and L. Orman from Podbrodzie.<sup>1697</sup>

Chana Mirski (later Hana Shachar) was born at the end of 1939 or in early 1940. Her paternal grandfather, Nathan Mirski, entrusted her for safekeeping to his acquaintance, Stanisław Świetlikowski, who smuggled her out of the Podbrodzie ghetto, northeast of Wilno, in September 1941. (Chana had been brought to Podbrodzie in early 1940, following her mother's death in Głębokie soon after she was born.) Stanisław and his wife, Katarzyna, had the child, now called Anna, baptized as if she were their own. Given her age at the time, it would have been apparent to the priest, even if he had not been told, that the child was probably Jewish. The resulting birth and baptismal certificate greatly facilitated the cover-up. Likewise, the Świetlikowskis' neighbours would have also figured out that the sudden new addition to their family was a Jewish child. Nobody denounced them.

In 1946, the Świetlikowski family resettled within the new Polish state borders. Chana was transferred to a Jewish children's home in Łódź in 1947. In 1948, she was reunited in Palestine with her father, who had settled there shortly before the war broke out.

Chana Shachar (née Mirski) was born in 1940 in the town of Głębokie. Her father had immigrated to Palestine in 1939. Her pregnant mother was supposed to follow him, but then war broke out, and she could not leave the country. In her despair at finding herself alone with a young baby during wartime, she took her own life. The baby was put in the care of her paternal grandparents, in the town of Podbrodzie. In June 1941 the German army

<sup>1695</sup> Irene Mauber Skibinski, "Through the Eyes of a Child—My Childhood in Łyntupy," in Kanc, *Svinzian Region*, col. 1446.

<sup>1696</sup> Wawer, *Poza gettem i obozem*, 36.

<sup>1697</sup> Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 118; Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 653. These sources are based on J. Marinow, "Dać świadectwo," *Czerwony Sztandar* [Vilnius], May 21, 1987. For confirmation of Rev. Kazimierz Mitka's rescue activities (providing false documents and finding shelters) based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, see Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32.

invaded the area. All Jews were ordered to move to the ghetto, and rumors about mass murders in neighboring towns started to spread. Understanding that they were all in mortal danger, Chana's grandfather decided to try to save her. He contacted an acquaintance of his, Stanisław Świetlikowski, and asked him to take the little girl.

Stanisław Świetlikowski and his wife, Katarzyna, were poor farmers who lived with their three children—Jan, Maria, and Piotr—in a nearby village. Chana, a toddler not yet two years old, was handed over to Świetlikowski, along with her grandparents' milking cow to help provide for the child. The rescuers' daughter Maria recalled in her testimony that "one day, when we returned from school, there was a little girl in the house who could not yet walk and did not speak but three words. Father said, 'We have this child, and we need to respect her, love her, and watch out for her, so no harm will come to her.'" The Świetlikowskis had Chana baptized and registered as their fourth child. They were constantly concerned about a possible denouncement by the neighbors, who figured out that the sudden new addition to the "Świetlikowski family was a Jewish girl. This, however, did not stop the Świetlikowskis from caring for her. From the moment she arrived at their home, they treated her as a member of the family, a beloved youngest child. "They were a very loving family," wrote Chana in her testimony, "and I was the apple of my mother's eye. I never forgot them, never will, and I will carry them in my heart for the rest of my life."

Zvi Mirski, Chana's uncle, was long acquainted with the Świetlikowski. He was hiding in forests in the area of Podbrodzie after jumping off a train that was taking him to Ponar [Ponary, a mass execution site on the outskirts of Wilno]. He took it upon himself to watch over little Chana, and from time to time he came to visit her. He would come at night, and the Świetlikowskis would leave a window open so he could enter without anyone noticing. After the war Zvi returned to Podbrodzie. A single man without any means, however, he could not care for his little niece, so she stayed with the Świetlikowskis. Maria would bring Chana to visit her uncle, until he immigrated to Palestine in 1945. In 1947 a man from the Jewish Coordinating Committee arrived at the Świetlikowskis wanting to take Chana. Stanisław Świetlikowski fiercely objected to being parted from the girl he had raised as his own for six years. He refused offers of money and was only finally convinced by the argument that Chana had a father waiting for her in Palestine and that there she would receive an education he could not afford to give her.

In 1948 Chana arrived in Israel and was united with the biological father she had never met. For the first few years, she kept in touch with the Świetlikowskis, exchanging letters and packages with the help of her uncle Zvi, as she could not read or write Polish herself, but this connection was cut off at some point. Chana never forgot her adoptive family and never gave up on reconnecting with them. In 2005 she finally managed to locate Maria, the only member of the Świetlikowski family still alive. In 2006 Maria came to Israel for a visit and the three—Chana, Zvi, and Maria—were finally reunited, 60 years after they had all last met in Podbrodzie.<sup>1698</sup>

After fleeing from their hometown of Podbrodzie, Ethel Engelson (then Engelczyn) and her two young sons, Irving (b. 1930) and Morris (b. 1935),

<sup>1698</sup> Świetlikowski Family, RD.

made their way to the home of a Polish woman. Their stay there was interrupted when a Lithuanian policeman came around searching for Jews on the run. The woman's teenage son ferried them across a river to help them escape. They eventually spotted the steeple of a church and decided to approach it. The exact locality and priest are not identified; Church historian Tadeusz Krahel has established that it was probably the village of Korkożyszki, whose pastor was Rev. Wacław Grabowski. Here is Morris Engelson's account:

Suddenly, way, way in the distance, there is a spire—there is a very tall building, and the tip of the building can just be seen between the trees. It turned out that this spire was the top of a church. My mother followed the direction of this building that we could see, and after a while we came out in a clearing. There was a village there, and in the village there is a church with a very tall spire or steeple ...

My mother just came to the church and knocked on the door. She had no choice. A woman came out. She was the housekeeper. She explained that the priest was not there. He had heard that the Jews were being killed, and he went in to see if he could help in some way. I doubt that he could help, but anyway he went. But he had given her instructions what to do if Jews should happen to show up, if Jews had escaped and they happened to come to the church. And she said what we needed to do was go to a certain place, to a certain house, to a certain individual, tell him that the priest had sent us, and he would help us. So that's about all she said. And she gave instructions, she gave directions to my mother where in the village to go and find this person.

So we went. We got to this house, and the individual happened to be in. He came out. My mother explained that the priest said that he could help us, and he said yes he could. ...

It turns out that he was one of a whole range of individuals that were part of a smuggler gang, or a smuggler group. ... The priest knew who he was and everything was just fine. It was OK to do it, apparently. And this fellow was called an honorable smuggler. He was not out to kill the Jews or anything else. He could have gotten a good bounty by handing us over.<sup>1699</sup>

The smuggler took the Engelsons to the ghetto in Soły, where Ethel's sister resided and where Ethel's husband, Wolf, later found them. With the help of two Polish brothers Adam and Bronisław Sienkiewicz, Wolf brought the Engelsons to the Sienkiewicz family's farm near Podbrodzie. Later, the Engelsons stayed in the barn of the Bogdanowskis (or Bogdanowicz), a large and very poor

<sup>1699</sup> Morris Engelson, "The Story of My Survival," 2009, Internet: [http://www.kesserisrael.org/pdfs/Morris\\_Transcript.pdf](http://www.kesserisrael.org/pdfs/Morris_Transcript.pdf). Irving Engelson states that the church they approached was in Podbrodzie, but this does not match the topographical description provided by his brother, Morris. See Irving Engelson, "Podbrodz—As I Remember," Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Pabrade/pab000.html>.

Polish family; subsequently, they moved in with yet another family. All four of them survived the war.<sup>1700</sup>

In another interview, Morris Engelson, who was just a boy of six to nine years when this story unfolded, proffers extremely crude and demonstrably baseless charges against priests: “Many of the priests in that area were illiterate priests; they were peasants themselves. And they were very anti-Semitic.”<sup>1701</sup> Obviously parroting views picked up from his parents or milieu, Engelson demonstrates that even among highly educated Jews anti-Catholic sentiments can be as ignorant, prejudicial and deeply imbedded as anti-Semitism.

It is trite knowledge that priests were among the most educated groups in Polish society. They had to attend seminary for at least several years before ordination; they had to read and know the Bible thoroughly. Even someone unfamiliar with the clergy’s schooling could not help but notice that priests read the gospel every Sunday. His blanket condemnation of priests as “very anti-Semitic” is also questionable. Jews who actually had dealings with priests in the interwar period present a very different picture. While priests were undoubtedly influenced by theological biases, as were rabbis, day-to-day relations with Jews were generally proper.<sup>1702</sup>

<sup>1700</sup> Oral history interview with Morris Engelson, March 26, 1990, USHMM, Accession no. 1990.427.1, RG-50.030.0068; Testimony of Morris Engelson, SFV, Interview code 48155; Irving Engelson, “Podbrodz—As I Remember,” Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Pabrade/pab000.html>.

<sup>1701</sup> Testimony of Morris Engelson, Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, Internet: <https://www.ojmche.org/oral-history-people/morris-engelson/>.

<sup>1702</sup> There are many favourable references in Jewish accounts regarding the Catholic clergy during the interwar period. The Zionist daily *Nasz Przegląd* published a number of articles that mention priests who came to the assistance of poor and unemployed Jews and who spoke out against anti-Jewish excesses. Accounts by Jewish students also contain many favourable references to priests who were catechists at schools. See Anna Landau-Czajka, “Polacy w oczach ‘Naszego Przeglądu,’” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 4 (2011): 491–506. The following accounts corroborate our observation that—stereotypes to the contrary notwithstanding—moderate Jewish opinion viewed the Polish Catholic clergy with considerable respect and even appreciation. Were it the opposite, the phenomenon of significant numbers of conversions, especially among highly educated Jews, would not have existed. The list below, which includes many provincial settings, is far from exhaustive.

- Moshe Shlomo Ben-Meir (Idel Treshansky), ed., *Sefer yizkor Goniadz* (Tel Aviv: The Committee of Goniadz Association in the USA and in Israel, 1960), 475–76, translated as *Our Hometown Goniadz*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/goniadz/goniadz.html> (a priest in Goniadz);
- Mendl Gelbart, ed., *Sefer ha-zikaron: Sokolow-Podlask* (Tel Aviv: Residents of Sokolow-Podlask in Israel and in the USA, 1962), 197, translated as *Memorial Book Sokolow-Podlask*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokolowa\\_podlaski/Sokolowa\\_Podlaski.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokolowa_podlaski/Sokolowa_Podlaski.html) (ignoring picketers, a priest shopped in a Jewish store in Sokołów Podlaski);

- Kanc, *Svinzian Region: Memorial Book of 23 Jewish Communities*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/svencionys/svencionys.html>, translation of *Sefer zikaron le-esrim ve-shalosh kehillot she-nehrevu be-ezor Svintsian*, col. 1159 (Rev. Piotr Pruński of Połusze);
- I. M. Lask, ed., *The Kalish Book* (Tel Aviv: Societies of Former Residents of Kalish and the Vicinity in Israel and U.S.A., 1968), 88–89 (a priest in Błaszki calmed agitated crowds of Poles);
- Shtokfish, *Sefer Drohiczyn*, 5 ff. (English section) (a priest in Drohiczyn);
- Damian S. Wandycz, ed., *Studies in Polish Civilization: Selected Papers Presented at the First Congress at the Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences in America, November 25, 26, 27, 1966 in New York* (New York: Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University; and The Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences in America, 1970), 391 (Rev. Wontorek, a catechist at a high school in a small town);
- Bachrach, *Sefer zikaron kehillat Proshnits*, translated as *Memorial Book to the Community of Przasnysz*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/przasnysz/przasnysz.html>. (Rev. Józef Piekut, the local pastor, was a good friend of Yitzhak Perzhentsavsky, the last rabbi of Przasnysz);
- “Jeżów” in *Pinkas ha-kehillot: Polin*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976), 81–84, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pol1\\_00133.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol1_00133.html) (at the time of the town fire in 1931, the priest and local Poles hastened to save Jewish children and property from the flames);
- Haskell Nordon, *The Education of a Polish Jew: A Physician's War Memoirs* (New York: D. Grossman Press, 1982), 90–91 (a priest who taught religion at a provincial high school in central Poland);
- Bruno Shatyn, *A Private War: Surviving in Poland on False Papers, 1941–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1985), xx–xxi, 62–64 (Rev. Jakób Szypuła, a catechist at a high school in Jarosław);
- Samuil Manski, *With God's Help* (Madison, Wisconsin: Charles F. Manski, 1990), 26 (the rector of the Piarist high school in Lida);
- Rachela and Sam Walshaw, *From out of the Firestorm: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1991), 7–8 (priests in Wąchock);
- Alice Birnhak, *Next Year, God Willing* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1992), 73 (a catechist at a school in Kielce);
- Feldenkreis-Grinbal, *Eth Ezkera—Whenever I Remember*, 542 (Rev. Adam Szymański, the rector of the diocesan seminary in Sandomierz);
- Agata Tuszyńska, “Uczniowie Schulza,” *Kultura* [Paris], no. 4 (1993): 39 (priests in Drohobycz);
- Alina Cała, “The Social Consciousness of Young Jews in Interwar Poland,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): 48 (a catechist in Krasne);
- Szyja Bronsztejn, “Polish-Jewish Relations as Reflected in Memoirs of the Interwar Period,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 8 (1994): 78–79 (Rev. Józef Niemczyński of Kraków);
- Faye Schulman, *A Partisan's Memoir: Woman of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1995), 24 (a priest in Łunin, in Polesia);
- Sam Halpern, *Darkness and Hope* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1996), 31 (priests in the vicinity of Chorostków);

- Samuel Honig, *From Poland to Russia and Back, 1939–1946: Surviving the Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Windsor, Ontario: Black Moss Press, 1996), 233 (a priest in the Dębniaki district of Kraków);
- Michał Rudawski, *Mój obcy kraj?* (Warsaw: TU, 1996), 32 (Rev. Aleksander Zaremba of Jeziorzany, near Kock);
- Darcy O'Brien, *The Hidden Pope: The Untold Story of a Lifelong Friendship That Is Changing the Relationship between Catholics and Jews: The Personal Journey of John Paul II and Jerzy Kluger* (New York: Daybreak Books/Rodale Books, 1998), 53, 72 (Rev. Leonard Prochownik of Wadowice);
- Henry Zagdanski, *It Must Never Happen Again: The Memoirs of Henry Zagdanski* (Toronto: Colombo, 1998) (a catechist in Radom);
- Marek Urban, *Polska... Polska...* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy, 1998), 20–23 (Rev. Błaszczuk, a catechist in Lubartów), 30–31 (Rev. Borowski, a catechist in Lublin);
- Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorrussia during World War II*, 278; Interview with Norbert Kransnosielski, USHMM, Accession number 2009.322, RG-50.030.0644 (Rev. Jan Grodis of Nieśwież);
- Entries for “Tomaszow Lubelski” and “Szczebrzeszyn” in *Pinkas ha-kehilot: Polin*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 237–41 (Rev. Julian Bogatek of Tomaszów Lubelski), 577–80 (Rev. Jan Grabowski of Szczebrzeszyn), and Shuval, *The Szczebrzeszyn Memorial Book*, 32 (Rev. Jan Grabowski of Szczebrzeszyn);
- Naomi Samson, *Hide: A Child's View of the Holocaust* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 45–46, 147 (a priest in Goraj);
- *Dereczin*, 325 (a priest in Dereczyn);
- Ungar and Chanoff, *Destined to Live*, 66–67 (Rev. Hankiewicz and Rev. Leszczyński in Krasne, near Skałat);
- Marcus David Leuchter, “Reflections on the Holocaust,” *The Sarmatian Review* [Houston, Texas], vol. 20, no. 3 (September 2000) (a village priest near Tarnów);
- Rosa Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence: Poles and Jews in a Small Galician Town* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 98 (Rev. Walerian Rapała of Jaślika and Rev. Paweł Smoczeński of Królik Polski, two villages near Krosno);
- George Lucius Salton, *The 23rd Psalm: A Holocaust Memoir* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 7 (a priest in Tyczyn, near Rzeszów);
- Krzysztof Dawid Majus, *Wielkie Oczy* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 2002) (a priest in Wielkie Oczy);
- Lena Allen-Shore, *Building Bridges: Pope John Paul II and the Horizon of Life* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2004), 114–15 (three Polish priests who taught or visited the author's high school for girls in the town of Jasło—Rev. Józef Gayda, Rev. Eweryst Dębicki, and Rev. Jan Pasek);
- Sandberg-Mesner, *Light From the Shadows*, 30 (Rev. Józef Adamski of Zaleszczyki);
- Lindeman, *Shards of Memory*, 75–76 (a priest in Radom);
- Ziobroń, *Dzieje Gminy Żydowskiej w Radomyślu Wielkim*, 177 (Szymon Leibowicz of Radomyśl Wielki, near Tarnów, recalled Rev. Jan Curyło, the local pastor, as his father's friend); Testimony of Jack Honig, SFV, Interview code 18869 (Rev. Curyło was on friendly terms with the Jewish community);
- Artur Szyndler, “A Rabbi Comes to a Priest,” *Oś—Oświęcim, People, History, Culture*, no. 35 (November 2011), 6–7 (Rev. Jan Skarbek, the pastor of the Catholic parish in Oświęcim, developed a close friendship with Eliyahu Bombach, the town's chief rabbi);



- Diane Wyshogrod, *Hiding Places: A Mother, a Daughter, an Uncovered Life* (Albany: State University of New York Press–Excelsior Editions, 2012), 271 (a priest in Żółkiew, north of Lwów);
- Mizgalski and Sielski, *The Jews of Częstochowa*, 371 (the Pauline monastery in Częstochowa used the services of a Jewish printing press);
- Testimony of Irene Skolnick, Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh and Irene R. Skolnick, *In the Shadow of Majdanek: Hiding in Full Sight: A Holocaust Survival Story* (Sanibel, Florida: Stella 15 LLC, 2013) (priests and nuns in Przemyśl);
- Goldenberg, *Before All Memory Is Lost*, 173–74 (a priest in Bodzanów near Płock);
- Dina Drori and Erez Grinboim, *Dina, Surviving Undercover: From the Darkness of the Holocaust to the Light of the Future* (Lexington, Kentucky: CreateSpace, 2018), chapter 1 (the rabbi of Koszyce, near Kraków, struck up a friendship with the local priest);
- Majuk, *Shtetl Routes*, 113 (a priest in Wojślawice);
- Testimony of Sender Apfelbaum, YVA, file O.3/2882 (Item 3557420) (Rev. Dominik Wawrzynowicz, the pastor of Włodzimierzec in Volhynia);
- Interview with Abraham Kolski, March 29, 1990, USHMM, Accession no. 1990.368.1, RG-50.030.0113 (the pastor of Izbica Kujawska);
- Interview with Felix Horn, July 19, 1994, USHMM, RG-50.030.0294 (priests at a largely Catholic high school in Lublin);
- Interview with Sonia Heidocovsky Zissman, May 25, 1995, USHMM, RG-50.030.0332 (a priest in Zdzięcioł, in Polesia);
- Interview with Herman Taube, USHMM, Accession number 2010.92, RG-50.106.0182 (Rev. Jagła of Łódź helped Taube professionally);
- Testimony of Michal Friedman, 2004, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/michal-friedman> (Rev. Feliks Sznarbachowski of Kowel);
- Testimony of Aleksander Ziemny, January–May 2004, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/aleksander-ziemny> (Rev. Jan Kanty Surowiak of Rabka);
- Testimony of Lejba Solowiejczyk, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/leon-solowiejczyk> (a priest in Dzisna);
- Testimony of Salomea Gemrot, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/salomea-gemrot> (Rev. Józef Cieślik of Rzeszów; the parish priest of Przybyszówka near Rzeszów; a priest in Gorlice);
- Testimony of Ewa S. (Stapp), September 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org> (Rev. Konieczny of Lwów);
- Testimony of Helena Bibliowicz, SFV, Interview code 6485 (Rev. Jan Kunicki of Grodno);
- Testimony of Louis Hofman, SFV, Interview code 13655 (a priest in Konstantynów near Biała Podlaska);
- Testimony of Sol Glick, SFV, Interview code 15900 (a priest in Błonie near Warsaw);
- “Chaja Estera Stein (Teresa Tucholska-Körner): The First Child of Irena Sendler,” PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/chaja-estera-stein-teresa-tucholska-korner-first-child-irena-sendler> (Referring to Rev. Franciszek Fijałkowski of Cegłów, near Mińsk Mazowiecki, Aron Stein’s daughter recalled, “It was pleasant to watch my father, wearing his gabardine and a long beard, strolling along with the priest in a cassock at his side.”);
- The Dobkowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-dobkowski-family> (Izrael Lewin, a Jewish tailor in Wizna, sewed cassocks for priests and uniforms for Polish soldiers);

Engelson's views are by no means isolated. Bernard Schuster, another Jewish survivor, states, with an air of presumed authority, that priests were "by and large, uneducated drunkards."<sup>1703</sup> Shtetl folklore like this often had little to do with reality. (Such entrenched attitudes have undoubtedly coloured the unfavourable opinions regarding the wartime behaviour of the Polish Catholic clergy.)

Rev. Witold Szymczukiewicz, the vicar of Rukojnie parish, near Wilno, was instrumental in saving the lives of several Jews by furnishing them with false documents and finding shelters for them. When they were being deported by the Germans, the Jews of Rukojnie requested that Rev. Szymczukiewicz say a mass for them. In 1966 he was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile for rescuing his high school friend, Faiga Reznik, and her son, Jonatan.

Witold Szymczukiewicz, a priest, lived in Rudomino, near Vilna [Wilno], during the war. One day an old acquaintance of his told him that she had recently been in Lida where she bumped into Faiga Reznik [later Zipora Berkovitch Barkai], a high school friend of Witold [from Drohiczyn]. Faiga asked her to relay a message to the priest that she needed help in getting Aryan papers for her and her son [Jonatan, b. 1937]. "Obtaining such documents was not a hard task for me. Therefore, I sent the documents that Mrs. Reznik and her son needed via an acquaintance. I was glad that I could help them and save someone from death. I did this not as a priest, but as a human being," wrote Szymczukiewicz in his testimony to Yad Vashem. Witold "took us out of the Lida ghetto, brought us to his home and later to Vilna, where we stayed [with Jadwiga Romanowska, a trusted parishioner] under the cover of being 'Christians' until the end of the war," wrote Jonatan Barkai, Faiga's son.

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- Testimony of Tzipora Gross, Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://sztetl.org.pl> (a priest in Sarnaki, near Łosice, engaged Jewish workers to milk cows and prepare Kosher dairy products for Jews).

Here is a sampling of favourable references to members of the Catholic Church's hierarchy in the interwar period:

- Rudawski, *Mój obcy kraj?*, 43 (Bishop Henryk Przeździecki of Siedlce);
- Aleksy Petrani, "Ks. Kazimierz Bukraba biskup ordynariusz piński (1885–1946)," *Nasza Przyszłość: Studia z Dziejów Kościoła i Kultury Katolickiej w Polsce* [Kraków], vol. 37 (1972): 209–42, at pp. 213, 215 (Bishop Kazimierz Bukraba of Pińsk);
- Lehmann, *Symbiosis and Ambivalence*, 103, 112 (the bishop of Przemyśl);
- Leo Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle: The Poles, the Holocaust and Beyond* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), 63 (Bishop Adolf Szczępek of Łuck);
- Aleksandra Klich, "Teodor Kubina: Czerwony biskup od Żydów," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 1, 2008 (Bishop Teodor Kubina of Częstochowa);
- Sitarek, Trębacz, and Wiatr, *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, 24, and Bronowski, *They Were Few*, 3 (Bishop Marian Leon Fulman of Lublin);
- Testimony of Henryk Prajs, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/henryk-prajs> (Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski, archbishop of Warsaw).

<sup>1703</sup> Testimony of Bernard Schuster, SFV, Interview code 7458.

He added that Witold also arranged papers for another friend of the Rezniks, Jadwiga [Edzia] Szejniuk Bergman, and helped other Jews as well.<sup>1704</sup>

Szymczukiewicz took his refugees to the house of Jadwiga Romanowska in Vilna [Wilno]. Romanowska, who worked at the local hospital, looked after the refugees and saw to all their needs. When it became clear that the neighbors were suspicious about her tenants, Romanowska found an alternative hiding place for the Rezniks, but continued to provide them with food and other necessities.<sup>1705</sup>

Rev. Giedymin Pilecki, the pastor of Hermaniszki and chaplain of the Nowogródek region of the Home Army, sheltered two Jewish women from Wilno in his rectory. He provided a birth and baptismal certificate to Dawid Lipnicki, whom he baptized as Andrzej, and placed him in the home of his sexton, Wacław Misiuro. Rev. Pilecki also supplied food to the Wilno ghetto.<sup>1706</sup>

According to a Jewish woman from Nowogródek, Rev. Michał Dalecki, the local pastor, spoke out for Jews.<sup>1707</sup> Jewish historian Leonid Smilovitskii (Smilovitsky) attributes Rev. Dalecki's execution by the Germans to his pro-Jewish activities. He was among sixty prominent Poles arrested in the Polenaktion of June 1942. Another victim of that mass execution was Rev. Józef Kuczyński, the pastor of Wsielub, near Nowogródek, whose arrest Smilovitskii also attributes to the help he extended to Jews.<sup>1708</sup>

Brocha Bernan escaped from the Wilno ghetto with her three young sons in the fall of 1941. They made their way to the vicinity of Porudomino, south of Wilno, where they hid in the forest. They survived by begging for food from local farmers. Brocha decided to entrust her two youngest sons to two Polish families. Kazriel Bernan was taken in by Apolonia (Polina) Tarasewicz and her husband, a childless couple. Samuel Bernan was taken in by Monika and Ludwik Koszyc. In order to pass as Poles, the boys were baptized, most probably at the Catholic church in Porudomino, and secured birth and baptismal certificates in the names of Antoni Kasiński and Michał Kasiński, respectively. The administrator of the parish at the time was Rev. Florian Markowski. Both boys survived the war. Their mother and oldest brother disappeared.

<sup>1704</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 807. See also Fayga Reznik, "My Savior Was a Catholic Priest," in Shtokfish, *Sefer Drohiczyn*, 484–90; Testimony of Zipora Feiga (Reznik) Berkowicz Barkai and Jonatan Berkovicz Barkai, YVA, file O.3/2827 (Item 3560228); Tadeusz Krahel, "Kapłani wśród 'Sprawiedliwych...,'" *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 161 (September 2003).

<sup>1705</sup> Jadwiga Romanowska, RD.

<sup>1706</sup> Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 337.

<sup>1707</sup> Testimony of Sulia Rubin, SFV, Interview code 5799.

<sup>1708</sup> Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.*, 132.

Tragedy also befell Apolonia. While her husband was away, she learned that someone had denounced her. Warned of a police raid, she told Kazriel to hide in the forest. When the police arrived, they found children's clothes, seized Apolonia, and set fire to the farm buildings. Apolonia was beaten and then shot to death on January 1, 1943. She was recognized as Righteous among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 2013, under the name of Polina Tarasevich, at the behest of Kazriel Bernan, now Anatolii Kasinskii.<sup>1709</sup>

After her escape from the Wilno ghetto in the summer of 1942, Joanna Malberg made her way to the home of Wincenty and Jadwiga Antonowicz, casual acquaintances from before the German occupation who lived in the village of Gowstany. The Antonowiczes gave her a warm welcome and prepared a hiding place for her behind a closet in their daughter's bedroom. Later, when the Germans began rounding up local Jews, Malberg was sent to Wincenty's mother's home, where their daughter, Lucyna, took care of her.

In the winter of 1943, the Antonowiczes obtained Aryan papers for Malberg, under the name of Bronisława Malinowska, from the local village head (*wójt*) and Rev. Witold Banczer, the pastor of Niemenczyn. Malberg was then able to live openly in the nearby town of Niemenczyn, where she worked as a private French teacher until the Germans were driven out of the area in July 1944. Since Malberg had a marked Semitic appearance, she was widely suspected of being Jewish. The Antonowiczes assisted in the rescue of 24 other Jews, all of them fugitives from the HKP labour camp (Heereskraftfahrpark or Army Motor Vehicle Repair Park) in Wilno.<sup>1710</sup>

During the liquidation of the Wilno ghetto in the autumn of 1943, the sisters Genia Cichanowska and Lea Letman escaped and appeared unexpectedly on the doorstep of Eleonora Paszkowska, a widow who lived with her two daughters, Genowefa and Irena, on a small farm near Głębokie. Two weeks later, Moshe Lewin (Morris Levin), the sisters' brother, arrived at the farm with his wife, Miriam, who was pregnant. When Miriam gave birth to a baby girl, the residents became very anxious because the child would not stop crying. The child was left by her father with a note saying that she was not christened and Jewish. The woman who found the infant took her in and had her baptized. The priest announced in church that the foundling was Jewish. After the Soviet entry, the

<sup>1709</sup> Teresa Worobieć, "Nie ma większej miłości....: Wojenna historia mieszkanki Porudomina," *Tygodnik Wileńszczyzny*, November 20–26, 2014.

<sup>1710</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 58–59; Antonowicz Family, RD; Testimony of Wacława Dobrzyńska, JHI, record group 301, no. 5427.

child was reclaimed by her father but died soon after. Another source of danger for the rescuers was Lewin's habit of praying very loudly.<sup>1711</sup>

Rev. Jan Sielewicz, the pastor of Worniany, near Wilno, helped a number of Jews by organizing hideouts for them with parishioners in the surrounding villages. He was assisted in this undertaking by the vicar, Rev. Hipolit Chruściel.<sup>1712</sup> Rev. Sielewicz was awarded by Yad Vashem in 2000. He was nominated by Zvi Borodo, formerly Hirsz Borodowski, who escaped from the ghetto in Wilno with his mother.

In June 1942, after the father, Avraham Borodowski, and son, Arie, were murdered at the Ponary murder site near Wilno (today Vilnius, Lithuania), the mother, Genia-Szeina (née Lurie), with her 13-year-old son Hirsz (later, Zvi Borodo) fled the Vilna [Wilno] ghetto for the surrounding villages in order to seek safety. A Polish acquaintance in one of the villages sent them to the priest Jan Sielewicz in the town of Worniany (Vilnius-Troki County, Wilno District), telling them that he was helping Jews and would also assist them. The priest Sielewicz indeed took them under his protection and sent them to farm families in the surrounding towns and villages who needed working hands in exchange for food and lodging. Their employers did not know that they were Jews. However, when they were asked to register at the local police [as they were required to do], both returned to Father Sielewicz for a temporary hiding place until he could find them work and secure lodging elsewhere. In 1943, while a new hiding place was being sought for Genia and her son Hirsz, they learned that the priest had died. The mother and her small son returned to wandering through villages and towns until the liberation by the Red Army in the summer of 1944. When he grew up, Hirsz Borodowski became a well-known opera singer in Israel, under the name of Zvi Borodo.<sup>1713</sup>

Borodo recalled:

We wandered in the forests for a long time before we reached the village of Worniany. Here we learned that the Catholic priest Jan Sielewicz was helping helped rescue Jews. The priest placed people like us in distant colonies (hamlets) in the vicinity of Worniany and Świr. They were poor farmers who fed us country bread and soup. It seemed to us then that there was nothing more delicious on earth. And we helped out with their work. And thus, thanks to the truly saintly man Jan Sielewicz, my mother and I survived.<sup>1714</sup>

<sup>1711</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 588; Paszkowski Family: Interview with Genowefa Jankowska, PRP, Internet: <<https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/historie-pomocy/wywiad-z-genowefa-jankowska>>.

<sup>1712</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part B, 1153; Tadeusz Krahel, "Kapłani wśród 'Sprawiedliwych...'," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 161 (September 2003); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 101, 111, 115, 123; Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 650.

<sup>1713</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 614.

<sup>1714</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Kapłani wśród 'Sprawiedliwych...'," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 161 (September 2003).

Some of the Jews that Rev. Sielewicz placed with his parishioners had been directed, and sometimes transported personally, to the countryside by Rev. Michał Sopoćko, professor of theology at the Stefan Batory University in interwar Wilno. Rev. Sopoćko was the spiritual advisor of the recently canonized Sister Faustina (Faustyna Kowalska). His rescue activities included providing Jews with birth and baptismal certificates (some of the Jews underwent conversion voluntarily), sheltering Jews temporarily, and finding hiding places for them with Poles in the countryside. One member of a Jewish couple helped by Rev. Sopoćko wrote:

Rev. Sopoćko was deeply concerned about the fate of the Jews who were already suffering repression, and helped many of them. Some of these persons underwent baptism, which he prepared us for. ... At the beginning of September [1941], a ghetto was created in Wilno. Thanks to Rev. Sopoćko, who furnished us with fictitious documents and placed us under the care of [Rev. Jan Sielewicz], the dean of Worniany, we were able to get by until the spring of 1942. Afterwards, we managed on our own ... Rev. Sopoćko was highly respected in Wilno, and helped many people at the risk of his own safety. Our salvation and survival in those years is thanks to the help of many people, but at the beginning of that chain stood Rev. Sopoćko.<sup>1715</sup>

Among those Rev. Sopoćko assisted were Dr. Aleksander Sztajnberg, who assumed the name Sawicki, and his wife, Franciszka Wanda (née Berggrün); Dr. Erdman, who became Benedykt Szymański, his wife, and their daughter; and Dr. Juliusz Genzel and his wife.<sup>1716</sup> The following account attests to Rev. Sopoćko's dedication to rescuing Jews.<sup>1717</sup>

On the eve of the German occupation, Franciszka-Wanda Sawicka (née Berggruen) lived with her husband, a doctor, in Vilna [Wilno]. After the occupation, before the establishment of the ghetto, the Sawickis decided to go into hiding. Polish acquaintances of theirs referred them to a priest [Rev. Michał Sopoćko], who agreed to help them. In September 1941, the priest found a separate shelter for each of them with friends of his. Franciszka-Wanda Sawicka was sent to Anna Dolinska [Dolińska], who gave her a warm welcome although she was a stranger and saw to all her needs, without expecting anything in return. After Dolinska, an activist in the Polish underground, obtained Aryan papers for Sawicka and

<sup>1715</sup> Tadeusz Krahel, "Ratowanie Żydów przez bł. ks. Michała Sopoćkę," *W Służbie Miłosierdzia* [Białystok], no. 11 (November 2008).

<sup>1716</sup> Dr. Juliusz Genzel was sheltered in Wilno by the Sisters of the Angels, and survived. See Agata Mirek, "Udział siostr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 154.

<sup>1717</sup> Supplemented by information from YVA, file M.31/8361; Anna Dolińska, RD; Tadeusz Krahel, "Ratowanie Żydów przez bł. ks. Michała Sopoćkę," *W Służbie Miłosierdzia* [Białystok], no. 11 (November 2008); and Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 101, 114–15; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 398.



her husband and supplied them with clothing and other necessities, the Sawickis left Vilna for [Worniany, where they were welcomed by Rev. Jan Sielewicz, and then taken by Rev. Hipolit Chruściel to the hamlet of Kuliszki near Worniany. They stayed there for several months before relocating to the hamlet of] Onzadowo [Onzadowo] near Oszmiana, where they lived as Polish refugees until the area was liberated in July 1944. While living in Onzadowo, the Sawickis occasionally went to Vilna to visit Dolinska, whom they considered their guardian angel. After the war, Dolinska was arrested by the NKVD for belonging to the AK [Armia Krajowa or Home Army] and exiled to Siberia for eight years. After her release, she moved to an area within the new Polish borders, where she renewed contact with the Sawickis, who had moved to Warsaw.<sup>1718</sup>

Sheina Steinberg (later Epstein, b. 1924) was brought to a safe house opposite a church in Wilno by a Polish woman who had taken an interest in her. She remained there for several days while being instructed in the Catholic prayers she needed to know to pass as a Pole. Rev. Sopoćko provided her with a birth and baptismal certificate under the name of Janina Kowalewska, and she was directed to a Polish family in Landwarów, not far from Wilno.<sup>1719</sup>

The Gestapo got wind of Rev. Sopoćko's activities and detained him for several days. When he learned that they were coming after him again, in March 1942, Rev. Sopoćko fled to the countryside. He hid for two years at the convent of the Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus in Czarny Bór, on the outskirts of Wilno, where he had previously directed Jews. Rev. Sopoćko assumed a false identity, working as a gardener and carpenter. Several Jewish families also hid in the convent until the Soviet army arrived.<sup>1720</sup>

Rev. Sopoćko mentions other priests who were engaged in rescue activities. Rev. Tadeusz Makarewicz, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church, and Rev. Jan Kretowicz, pastor of the Bernadine Church of the Seraphic St. Francis and St. Bernard, baptized Jews who desired to convert.<sup>1721</sup>

In her testimony, Ida Lewkowicz Kaplan states that she received forged documents from Rev. Makarewicz.<sup>1722</sup> He exhorted his parishioners to return Jewish belongings given over to them for safekeeping.<sup>1723</sup>

<sup>1718</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 182.

<sup>1719</sup> Testimony of Sheina Epstein, SFV, Interview code 8050.

<sup>1720</sup> Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 139.

<sup>1721</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 52–53, 422–23.

<sup>1722</sup> Testimony of Ida Lewkowicz Kaplan, YVA, file O.3/3643 (Item 3557228).

<sup>1723</sup> Julija Šukys, *"And I Burned with Shame": The Testimony of Ona Šimaitė, Righteous Among the Nations* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), 69. Ona Simaite states: "The Polish priest Markiewicz [sic] did a great deal to ensure the return of Jewish belongings." She mentions a sermon of his that she heard and his confronting parishioners directly.

At the request of Anastazja Bitowt, the nanny to whom Ruth (b. 1939) had been entrusted by her mother, Masza Siemiatycka (Śmiaticki), Rev. Kretowicz agreed to baptize the child, knowing that she was Jewish. Ruth assumed the identity of Irena Siemiatycka. Both she and her mother survived, passing as Polish Catholics, assisted by several Poles.<sup>1724</sup>

Stefania Dąmbrowska's family owned a manor in Orwidów Dolny, near the city of Wilno, where a number of Jews found shelter: Stefan and Natalia (Nata) Świerzewski (Świerzawski), Miriam Kurc,<sup>1725</sup> Sonia Tajc, Lusja Wajnryb, and Artur and Helena Mińkowski (who later moved to another hiding place and perished). Recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile, Dąmbrowska mentions the assistance of two priests from Wilno: the aforementioned Rev. Kretowicz and Rev. Henryk Hlebowicz (misidentified below as Chlebowski).

Rev. Hlebowicz provided a birth and baptismal certificate to Miriam Kurc, who became Maria (Marysia) Nowicka. Rev. Kretowicz provided a birth and baptismal certificate to Lusja Wajnryb, who became Helena Snarska. Lusja had escaped from a transport to the death camps. She was placed with Rev. Kretowicz's brother, Onufry Kretowicz, in Orwidów Górny.<sup>1726</sup> The Plechoć and Alejski families participated in the rescue effort in these adjoining hamlets,<sup>1727</sup> yet only Dąmbrowska was awarded by Yad Vashem.

<sup>1724</sup> Anasztazja Bitowtowa, RD; Testimony of Anastazja Bitowtowa, YVA, file O.3/2338 (Item 3556105). For confirmation of Rev. Jan Kretowicz's rescue activities based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, see Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (Kretovič).

<sup>1725</sup> Miriam Kurc's rescue is described in *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 164–65, which misspells the rescuer's surname as Dąbrowska. Her grandparents managed to smuggle three-year-old Miriam out of the Wilno ghetto and place her in the care of a Polish acquaintance who obtained Aryan papers for her. Since the Polish acquaintance was unable to look after her, she handed Miriam over to a friend, Stefania Dąmbrowska, who looked after Miriam and raised her as her daughter, without expecting anything in return. In July 1944, when Miriam's grandmother came to reclaim her, she found her granddaughter safe and sound.

<sup>1726</sup> See also Stefania Dąmbrowska, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-dambrowska-stefania>; <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-dambrowska-stefania>; Testimony of Stefania Dąmbrowska, SFV, Interview code 32872; Stefania Dąmbrowska, European Resistance Archive, Internet: [https://www.resistance-archive.org/en/testimonies/stefania-dambrowska/#/clips/BgVHtuDr1ow?\\_k=s59vv9](https://www.resistance-archive.org/en/testimonies/stefania-dambrowska/#/clips/BgVHtuDr1ow?_k=s59vv9); Stefania Dąmbrowska, European Resistance Archive, Internet: [https://www.resistance-archive.org/en/testimonies/stefania-dambrowska/#/clips/TfsMCOeGqpc?\\_k=9yzbm1](https://www.resistance-archive.org/en/testimonies/stefania-dambrowska/#/clips/TfsMCOeGqpc?_k=9yzbm1); Stefania Dąmbrowska, Internet: <http://dmst16wapo.blogspot.com/2009/04/>.

<sup>1727</sup> Leszek Augustyn Rzeźniczak, "O ratowaniu Żydów w Orwidowie koło Wilna," *Znad Wilii*, no. 4 (2018): 100–2. After the arrival of the Soviet Army, one of the Jews assisted by the Plechoć family accused them falsely of having stolen some fabric he had hidden away, and threatened them with deportation to the Gulag. The NKVD officer who accompanied

The first to come to the manor in Orwidów Dolny in the Wilno region were a pair from the Dąbrowicz family, with their goat Sabina. “They were not Jews, though I am unsure where the goat was descendent from.”

Later on there appeared: Stefan Świerzewski with his wife Nata, a Catholic from a Jewish background.

“I called together all the workers and asked: The Świerzewskis want to go to Warsaw. I am offering them the opportunity to stay, but you must decide. And everyone answered: Miss, let them stay, because if we help them here maybe someone will help our people in Russia too.”

Ms. Dąmbrowska’s mother was transported deep into Russia in 1941.

It continued like this: she went to Wilno, she stopped for a visit with the Feddecki family, they had a house and were hiding a young married couple on their veranda, the Mińkowskis. He was a lawyer from Sosnowiec and she was the daughter of a well-known dentist from Wilno. They asked if she would take them in. By all means, the house is large.

Then she was in Wilno again. “Ma’am,” someone turned to her, “you can save a child.” The girl was named Miriam [Kurc] and was three years old, she was blond and spoke only Russian, they carried her from the ghetto.

The last to come was Sonia Tajc, the granddaughter of the Nitsons, wealthy landowners [from Karoliszki near Niemenczyn]. She was 15 years old and did not speak Polish very well. What to do? She came up with an idea: Sonia [called Stasia] will herd the cattle with Janusz, so they will have to leave early in the morning and return after dusk.

But that’s not all. There were also acquaintances from the poets’ group “Po Prostu,” different Jews who stayed two or three days, and also Helena Snarska, whose real name was Lusja Wajnryb, who had jumped from a train heading to Treblinka and had somehow made it to Wilno to the priest, Father [Jan] Kretowicz, who, like Father Chlebowski [Henryk Hlebowicz], managed to obtain birth certificates for Jews.<sup>1728</sup>

**E**manuela and Stanisław Cunge, along with their son Jan (b. 1934), natives of Łódź, took refuge in Wilno at the beginning of the war. They converted to Catholicism under the guidance of Rev. Leon Puciata, a professor at Wilno’s Stefan Batory University and the archdiocesan seminary. The Cunges passed as Poles in the vicinity of Żodziszki, near Smorgonie, where they mixed in the company of many friendly and helpful Polish and Belorussian landowners and professionals, some of whom were aware of their Jewish background or suspected it. Emanuela enjoyed the protection of Rev. Paweł Czapłowski, the pastor of Żodziszki, who was executed by the Germans for his involvement with the Polish underground.<sup>1729</sup>

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this Jew rebuked him sternly: “A Pole saved your Jewish life and you want to send him to Siberia.”

<sup>1728</sup> *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2008), 45.

<sup>1729</sup> Emanuela Cunge, *Uciec przed Holocaustem* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1997), 129, 137–38, 178, 182–83, 193, 207, 234–35, 253, 261, 273, 277; Tadeusz Krahel, “Il salvataggio degli

In addition to the Cunge family, Rev. Puciata protected the Holcman family.<sup>1730</sup> He placed Helena Kac and her sister with Janina Strużanowska, who sheltered a large number of Jews in her home in Kolonia Wileńska, on the outskirts of Wilno.<sup>1731</sup> Rev. Lucjan Pereświat-Sołtan, a priest in Kolonia Wileńska, was also assisting Jews and finding safe houses for them with his parishioners.<sup>1732</sup>

After escaping from the Kaunas ghetto, Hasya Grin (or Grün, later Chasia Geselewitz, b. 1922) stayed briefly in Kaunas with her friend Ona Buzelytė. Ona was sheltering two seminarians who had escaped from Wilno, and it was getting dangerous to keep Hasya. Ona obtained a false birth and baptismal certificate for Hasya from a priest she knew and sent her to Wilno. Polish nuns at St. Casimir's convent sheltered her there.

The assistance of Rev. Puciata, referred to earlier, is also mentioned in this context. According to one version, the nuns welcomed Hasya warmly but she couldn't stay there long, because the persecution and arrests of the Polish clergy in Wilno had begun. According to another version, fearing that her true identity had been discovered, the nuns placed her with the Anužis family. In any case, Hasya survived the war, living with members of the Anužis family, Lithuanians, in Wilno and Kaunas.<sup>1733</sup>

Barbara Turkeltaub (née Gurwicz, b. 1934 in Wilno), called Basia, and her younger sister Leah (later Kalish, b. 1936), called Lusia, were smuggled out

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ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944,” in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 650; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 348.

<sup>1730</sup> Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 101; Tadeusz Krahel, “Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944,” in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 650.

<sup>1731</sup> Justyna Giedrojc, “Dwie znaczące daty Polskiego Studia Teatralnego w Wilnie,” *Kurier Wileński*, November 13, 2015, Internet: <https://kurierwilenski.lt/2015/11/13/dwie-znaczące-daty-polskiego-studia-teatralnego-w-wilnie/>; Ilona Lewandowska, *Tak teraz postępują uczeni ludzie: Polacy z Wileńszczyzny ratujący Żydów* (Vilnius: Instytut Polski, 2019), 124.

<sup>1732</sup> Aleksander Dawidowicz, “Shoah Żydów wileńskich,” in Elżbieta Feliksiak, et al., eds., *Wilno–Wileńszczyzna jako krajobraz i środowisko wielu kultur: Materiały I Międzynarodowej Konferencji, Białystok 21–24 IX 1989*, vol. 1 (Białystok: Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza, Oddział Białostocki, 1992), 267. For confirmation of Rev. Lucjan Pereświat-Sołtan's rescue activities based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, see Viktorija Sakaitė, “Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai,” *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (Peresviat-Sołtan).

<sup>1733</sup> Anužis Family, RD; Anužienė (Vilnonis) Elena, Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=908>; Testimony of Hasyah Geselevich, SFV, Interview code 45574.

of the Wilno ghetto by a Polish farmer named Kubicki. He took them to his home in Wierszuliszki, a village outside of Wilno. Since the farmer's family was going hungry and sheltering the young girls had become too dangerous (Leah had a very Semitic appearance), the girls decided to leave this home, and they hid in nearby brick factory.

One day, they heard an approaching wagon. As it drew near, the girls could see that it was driven by a priest. He suspected that the girls were Jewish. Later known to them as Fr. Jan—probably Fr. Jan Kozak, a catechist—the priest had them climb into the back of the wagon and covered them up with hay so that they would not be seen. He took them to the home of Benedictine nuns on a farm located in Ponary.

The two girls were later moved to a Benedictine convent in Wilno. They continued to live in the convent, being well treated, for two years after the war ended, until they were found by their mother, Mina Gurwicz. Mina took another Jewish girl, Halina Lewkowicz (later Brudner), who had also been sheltered by the nuns, and she reclaimed her son, Hanoach (later Henry Grant), who had been cared for by a Polish family.<sup>1734</sup>

After this incident with the buses [where children were seized from the children's center in the ghetto attended by Barbara and Leah], Barbara's father sat down and explained as much as he could about the realities of war for her Jewish family. "My father put me on a little stool and lowered himself to the same level and said, 'Basha, there is a terrible war going on. In order for us to survive we need to separate. You will go with your sister to a farmer. Mother is going to stay in the ghetto and there's a special place where she's going to hide.' She was expecting a baby then. My father and two older sisters were going to the partisans. He told me, 'Never admit that you speak Yiddish and never say your last name. Say a bomb fell on your house and you don't know where everyone is and you're lost. And you are always to take care of your sister.'" As Barbara's father said all this, her mother was standing next to her, crying, and "I was clutching to her dress and she was holding my sister and she was praying."

So Moishe and Mina [Gurwicz] made arrangements with a farmer whom Barbara and Leah were taught to call "Uncle," but whose last name may have been Switzky [Kubicki]. The family knew him because he made regular deliveries of milk to them before there was a ghetto. Switzky put them in his wagon, covered them up with hay, and slipped them past bribed ghetto guards. "We were lucky. Sometimes the Nazis would stick bayonets into wagons like this but they didn't do that this time." They went to his home in the nearby village of Wierszuliszki. The Gurwicz gave the farmer and his wife some money or jewelry to cover the costs of extra mouths to feed, and Barbara said the Switzky family probably did this more for the money than for any altruistic reason. [The risk assumed by the farmer and his family was hardly commensurate with any compensation the girls' parents had given for sheltering them.—Ed.] But, she said, Switzky "wasn't a bad person."

<sup>1734</sup> Testimony of Barbara Turkeltaub, SFV, Interview code 14190.

The Switzky family “had a whole bunch of children, like five or six kids,” Barbara said, though none of them knew that she and her sister were Jews. ...

Mrs. Switzky was a nervous woman, Barbara said, who was “afraid for her own family.” It was clear to Barbara that the woman was not happy with her husband’s decision to hide Jewish children, and she did not hide her angst well. ...

Barbara and Leah stayed with the Switzky family for just four or five months, during which time they never saw their own parents. Only later did they learn that their mother, hiding in the sewers of Vilna as the Germans were destroying the ghetto, had given birth to their brother, Henry, who Mina had tried—but failed—to abort.

Then one evening at the farm Barbara overheard Mrs. Switzky tell her husband that the next day he must go to the German authorities and turn in these Jewish children to receive the award being offered—some sugar. [This was likely done to scare the girls into leaving on their own, as those who turned in Jews whom they had sheltered risked severe punishment.—Ed.]

“So I was afraid to wait until the morning,” Barbara said. As her sister slept that night, Barbara sneaked into the pantry and cut off some bread from a large loaf. While in the pantry, she saw some jars of what she took to be honey on the shelf. So she slathered some on a piece of bread and went to wake up Leah, who always seemed to be hungry. ...

After Barbara got Leah dressed, they slipped out of the house and took off quickly down the road in the dark. “I didn’t know where to go, just down the road,” Barbara said.

The girls were cold and tired, and Leah was not happy to be running in the dark. So eventually they located the brick kiln where Father Jan found them and from which he took them to the Benedictine convent. ...

It was still dark when the clip-clop clip-clop of horse hooves awakened Barbara Gurwicz and her little sister, Leah, near the brick kiln where they had found rest and warmth. Barbara looked up and saw a priest driving a buggy. He slowed and gazed at the girls, and they at him, but then he drove on. So not knowing what else to do, Barbara (called Basha) and Leah went back to sleep. ...

An hour or so later the priest returned. “this time he looked at us, and he stopped,” ... The priest asked the girls if they were Jews. Barbara’s father had prepared this little girl well for exactly this question. No, she lied. Bombs had fallen on their family’s house, she told him, and she and her sister did not know where anyone was. They were lost. That was the story she had rehearsed and rehearsed. And she thought she told it well.

The priest nodded and smiled. Barbara later decided that the man knew right then and there that the girls were, in fact, Jews. “Would you like to come with me to a safer place?” he asked. Barbara, speaking for herself and for her younger sister, said yes.

So the priest loaded them in his buggy, hid them under some blankets, and took them to a nearby convent run by Benedictine nuns on a farm not far outside Vilna [Wilno]. The priest, known to Barbara only as Father Jan (she never knew his last name) took them to safety, to survival, to a future that many times in the war before then had nearly been cut off. ...

When Father Jan drove up to the convent with the girls in his buggy, nuns quickly emerged and rushed them inside. They were fed, bathed, and given a warm bed. In a few days they were into a routine, rising early in the morning, attending Mass, then having



breakfast, after which came quiet time. Nuns began to teach them basic reading and math, and the girls had some housekeeping chores to do, too. ...

But rarely did they have anyone to talk with except themselves. The nuns generally spoke little, except when leading the girls in their lessons. None of them, for instance, ever asked the girls if they were Jewish. Rather, they simply taught them as if they were Catholic, instructing them in traditional practices. Barbara and Leah neither saw nor heard any other children at this convent, so it was a lonely existence, but not an unhappy one—especially for Barbara, who enjoyed the peace, the security, the rhythm of life, the tender care of the nuns, and the chance to draw pictures, read, and write poetry. Barbara, in effect, created her own tightly ordered world and became attached to the convent's structured pattern of life. She was baptized, took Communion, and learned to be an obedient Catholic. She believed the theology she was learning "very, very much," she told us.

There were, of course, special rules for the children—who the nuns knew were Jewish. "We were told not to venture from the house by ourselves. I usually was a very good girl and listened."

Usually. But not always. One day Barbara wandered into the forest adjacent to the convent. As she did so, she began to hear what she described as popping sounds in the woods. Curious, she moved toward them. "I stayed behind a tree," she said. "Then I saw a group of people undressed by a huge ditch. I began to hear voices. I saw a group of women undressed. Some were holding babies in their arms. The Germans were shooting randomly and the women and babies were falling. I was so stunned I couldn't move. I was like hypnotized. Very soon afterward, somebody grabbed me and carried me from there. It was one of the older nuns."

Barbara later learned that she had inadvertently wandered into the Ponary killing fields and watched Germans murdering Jews. The memory never left her, even though she "was told not to mention that. Forget about it. Erase it from my mind." [Since the two girls were sheltered on a farm north of Wilno, it is unlikely that they wandered into Ponary, which is located south of the city. The executions at Ponary were carried out by Lithuanians.—Ed.]

The nuns decided Barbara and Leah could not stay there any more. So they fetched Father Jan again, and that same day he took them to the main convent in Vilna. Again they hid under hay in his buggy. When they got there, nuns quickly took the girls inside, fed them, bathed them, and gave them their list of rules, including an important prohibition against going beyond the small area to which they were assigned inside the building. This time, Barbara listened and obeyed. While at this convent, she occasionally heard the voices of other children but almost never saw them. It was, she decided later, a way of making sure children did not give away other hidden children if pressured by the German authorities.

At this convent, Barbara and Leah fell into the rhythm of cloistered life. Nuns continued to teach them school subjects as well as prayers and other religious practices. But the girls' contact with the outside world was so limited that news of the end of the war did not reach them until 1947, two years after the fighting stopped. That was when their mother, who had been searching for them the whole time, finally found them. She had gone door-to-door, asking people if they had seen her two girls, one blonde, one with dark hair. Finally, a woman told her that she may have seen at least the blonde girl singing in the choir at a worship service at the convent.

Mina went to Mass to see for herself. And there she saw two girls she was sure were her own. She asked to speak to the priest who celebrated Mass there, Father Jan, to tell him of her search and to ask to meet with the girls.

“He came to me,” Barbara told us, “and said there is a woman who lost her children—he didn’t tell me that she was Jewish or anything—and is looking for them. She thinks that maybe you might be one of her children. Right away I was on guard. Everything in my background I had put away, far, far, away. I never forgot my parents. I never forgot my grandmother. But I thought that being a Jew must be something really, really bad if people are killing them and doing all those awful things. And I was scared to think about it.”

So Barbara did not want to see the woman who might be her own mother. She had found comfort and security in a Catholic convent and was loathe to lose it. “But then Father Jan came again and again. I think what an angel he was. He told me the lady is crying and looking for her children, so ‘would you please reassure her that you’ll help her to look for them?’ So that’s how I said OK.”

But the woman Barbara then met with did not match the image of her mother in her memory. That image was of a tall, strikingly beautiful woman with black shiny hair and shiny eyes. By contrast, this woman was “bent down,” wore glasses, and had a babushka over her gray hair. “I did not recognize her. But I started to talk to her and I said, ‘Don’t cry. You will find your children.’ And she said, ‘My daughter, Basha. I’m your mother.’ And I recognized the voice. But then I ran away. Isn’t that something? I was so scared. I just ran to the door. And they let me run.”

A few days later Father Jan came again and asked Barbara if she was ready to see her again. “I said yes. She was sitting there smiling. I remembered her smile. And she said, ‘My daughter, my daughter.’”

Leah reunited with her mother first. Somehow she was more ready than Barbara to reconnect. “She probably forgot my mom. But by their second or third meeting she just went to her like you wouldn’t believe. My mother hugged her and kissed her and Leah was sitting on her lap. I thought to myself, how could she do that and I could not? I had so many questions I wanted to ask her. I was angry with her. Why did she leave us? Why did we separate? There was so much emotion. Where was our father? There was anger about that. But she didn’t want to tell us everything.”

Out of this anger and this questioning, Barbara made an extraordinary demand of her mother. “When the time came for us to leave, my mother had to promise me that she would come to the church and she would convert and she would be coming to the Mass.”

Her mother, in turn, indicated to Barbara that she would do that, but in fact that was just a way of gaining custody of her daughter. Her mother never did convert, and Barbara, after a short time, became an observant Jew again.<sup>1735</sup>

<sup>1735</sup> Tammeus and Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People*, 140, 144–48.

Rev. Józef Obremski, the pastor of Turgiele, southeast of Wilno, issued false birth and baptismal certificates to Jews.<sup>1736</sup> Złata Rozhanska (Złata Różańska, later Zolotareva) was rescued by Stanisław and Bronisława Wiszniewski in the village of Dubinki, near Worniany. She was able to pass as Helena Wiszniewska thanks to false documents obtained from Rev. Piotr Niemycki, the pastor of Ostrowiec.

During World War II, Stanisław Wiszniewski, a forest warden, and his wife Bronisława, a childless couple, lived with Stanisław's elderly father on a remote farm in Worniany (Wilno District). In the autumn of 1943, Stanisław came across a Jewish girl, Złata Rużańska, who had succeeded in escaping from the Vilna [Wilno] ghetto on August 23, 1943, one month before its liquidation by the Germans. As she was terribly exhausted, he brought her home and he and his wife nursed her back to health. At Stanisław's request, Jan Niemycki [Niemycki], a priest from Ostrowiec, issued her a birth certificate in the name of Helena Wiszniewska, enabling her to live in the open. She learned Christian customs and accompanied the Wiszniewskis to church on Sundays. So well did she integrate into the life of the community that the [Lithuanian] policemen who arrived to check her identity, after being alerted by an informer, suspected nothing. In the course of time, Złata took notice that Bronisława was preparing more food than the three of them needed, but only after the liberation did she learn that the Wiszniewskis had also been helping a group of Jews from Ostrowiec and Gudogai [Gudogaj] who were hiding in the forest. In June 1944, upon the arrival of the Red Army, Złata found her younger sister, Cilia, who had also hidden in the area. Their parents did not survive. After the war, Złata settled in Vilnius [Wilno] and stayed in touch with the Wiszniewskis until their death.<sup>1737</sup>

Rev. Aleksander Hanusewicz, the elderly pastor of Raków, a small town east of Wołożyn, provided food to Jews confined in the ghetto. He sent food to the local orphanage of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, under the direction of Sister Katarzyna Kral, which took in Jewish, as well as Polish and Belorussian, children. Rev. Hanusewicz also helped to place Jewish children with local farmers. After the German occupation ended, Rev. Hanusewicz asked the survivors who had returned to Raków whether there was anything he could do for them. They asked the priest to announce in the church on Sunday that those who had taken belongings from abandoned Jewish homes must return them.<sup>1738</sup>

<sup>1736</sup> Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (Obremskij), based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum.

<sup>1737</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 631.

<sup>1738</sup> Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.*, 64; "Rakov under Nazi Occupation," 141, Internet: [http://www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/rakov/rkv\\_pages/rakov\\_stories\\_occupation.html](http://www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/rakov/rkv_pages/rakov_stories_occupation.html); Frącek, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek Rodziny Marii w latach 1939–1945*, 127; Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Siostry Franciszkanek Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 182; Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 119.

The following account describes the fate of a Jewish family from Wilno by the name of Perewoski, who took refuge in an area located near the town of Gródek, or Horodek, close to the prewar Polish-Soviet border. A number of Poles, among them Home Army members, as well as the local priest, came to their assistance. The pastor of Gródek at the time was Rev. Wiktor Gogoliński.

When war broke out, Shmuel and Dora Perewoski were living in Vilna [Wilno] with their two small children, Eli (Leszek) (b. 1935) and Celina (b. 1939). The family owned a lumber business. After the first wave of killings, Shmuel realized the hopelessness of the situation and in early 1942 decided to smuggle his family out of the ghetto. Tadeusz Korsak, a prewar business acquaintance, offered to help. The first to be taken out of the ghetto was Eli. Shmuel, who was employed in forced labor outside the ghetto, took his son out of the ghetto with him in the morning, concealing him among the lines of Jews marching to their work place. The children's former nanny, a non-Jew, was waiting at a pre-appointed place on the street, and took Eli to a temporary hiding place. Soon his mother and sister joined him. Then the nanny took them in a horse-drawn cart to Korsak's home in the village of Balcery (today in Belarus). Sometime later, Shmuel escaped from the ghetto and arrived in Balcery. The reunited family lived in the basement of the Korsak home under the guise of a Polish family. Young Eli even served in the local church as altar boy.

The danger for both families—the Jews and their rescuers—was very high. In addition to possibly being detected by the Germans, they were threatened by the pervasive enmity between ethnic groups in the region as well as political struggles between the Polish national underground and the Soviet-oriented partisans. One day in the summer of 1943, Shmuel was captured by Soviet partisans. The following day his body was found in the fields, riddled with bullets. Eight-year-old Eli, his mother and Tadeusz Korsak identified the body and secretly buried it. Many years later, Eli tried in vain to relocate the burial place.

Locals began to grow more and more suspicious of the family living with the Korsaks, and the situation became very precarious. Eli and Dora escaped to the forests and joined the partisans. Three-year-old Celina stayed with the Korsaks, who promised to take good care of her until the war was over. However, the Korsak family, too, fell victim to the turbulent times. A few months after the death of Shmuel Perewoski, Tadeusz Korsak and his two daughters were also murdered by Soviet partisans. Władysława, who had lost her entire family, took Celina and fled to her relatives, Jan and Maria Michałowski, who lived in the small village of Jerozolimka. Although the Michałowskis had five children of their own, they took in Celina and cared for her until liberation, when her mother and brother came to collect her.<sup>1739</sup>

Franciszka Dynin and her two children, Jerzy (later George, b. 1925) and Aviva Marcela, natives of Łódź, arrived in Horodyszcze, north of Baranowicze, at the beginning of 1942, posing as Polish aristocrats. Franciszka secured a position as German translator for the local mayor. The Dynins had been residing on the nearby estate of Count Jan Plater-Zyberk and his wife, Halina, where Aviva Marcela freely chose to be baptized by the local parish priest. The Plater-Zyberks,

<sup>1739</sup> Korsak Family, RD.

as well as the baroness of the Czernichów estate (their relative), maintained a conspicuous friendship with the Dynins, who adopted the aristocratic sounding name of Dunin when they moved to Horodyszcze, thus bolstering their guise.

To further augment their credentials, the Dynins frequented the local Catholic church. Jerzy became an altar boy and stood on excellent terms with the priest, Rev. Stanisław Ryżko. His mother, however, fumbled through the religious rituals. Jerzy recalled, “Mother was the one who fared the worst in church. ... I would see her make mistakes in the prayers: she didn’t cross herself on time, and she forgot to kneel at the proper times.”

Given their ostensible social status, it is difficult to imagine that the priest did not see through their guise, though discretion would have prevented him from expressing suspicion. The protection of the Platers and the priest no doubt figured heavily in the Dynin family’s survival, as rumours began to circulate that they were actually Jewish. Jerzy became involved with the local branch of the Home Army, and his mother supplied intelligence, thanks to her position in the mayor’s office.<sup>1740</sup>

Rev. Antoni Mackiewicz, the pastor of Mir, is mentioned in several accounts, as are the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Resurrectionist Sisters). Rev. Mackiewicz refused the demand to identify wealthy Jews from among the 190 Jews driven to the market square by the Gestapo in July 1941.

During a German Aktion in November 1941, some 30 Jews were hidden on the grounds of the convent of the Resurrectionist Sisters, where Rev. Mackiewicz had taken up residence. During the liquidation of the ghetto in August 1942, two young Jewish women took refuge in the convent. At the request of Jews, the nuns took in some belongings for safekeeping and returned them after the war.<sup>1741</sup>

Rev. Mackiewicz was arrested in the summer of 1942, together with two dozen members of the local Polish intelligentsia. He was imprisoned in Stołpce, and then transferred to the Kołdyczewo concentration camp, where he was executed on November 14, 1942.

On the 19th of July [1941], another section of S.S. men arrived from Steibitz [Stołpce], called on all Jewish homes, and chased out all, from the age of 15 to 60 years, into the market

<sup>1740</sup> George Dynin, *Aryan Papers* (Bloomington, Indiana: Archway Publishing, 2014), chapters 5 through 8, especially at pp. 125–26.

<sup>1741</sup> Aniela Wójcik (s. Maria Euzebia CR), “Zgromadzenie Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa: Prowincja warszawska,” in *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 2002), 77; Agata Mirek, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at pp. 138–39; Monika Wiśniewska, “*Fortis mulieribus*: Zakonne sprawiedliwe wśród narodów świata,” *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 96–112, at p. 106.

place. There they demanded goods which were hard to find due to the fires, nevertheless we took pains to deliver everything. After a few hours of fear, they fired shots into the air, ordered all to disperse, and to come tomorrow with yellow patches on the chest and back. We did not sleep that night. We realized that trouble had commenced, and who can tell how it will end. The next morning, the 20th of July, again they chased the Jews into the market. Meeting the priest of Mir, Mackiewicz, they asked him: “where live the wealthy Jews?” He answered that he was only the Catholic clergyman, and did not know anyone. In the market had gathered 190 Jews. Then the S.S. ordered the same hooligans to choose victims from the ranks. Then 19 men, 10 per cent of those present, were taken out and buried alive in the Yablonovchina [Jabłonowszczyzna] forest.<sup>1742</sup>

At the very beginning, disregarding their own safety, the cantor and the rabbi’s son-in-law ran through the streets calling in suppressed, yet weeping voices, “Jews come out to your slaughter!” This was their way of warning about the imminent danger. They wanted to alert the people to the threat, hoping that somehow some will succeed in eluding the enemy. Some did. A few escaped by hiding with or without help from the Christian neighbors. Among those protected by Christian neighbors was the rabbi’s wife.

Mir had a convent of the Order of the Sisters of the Resurrection where four Polish nuns lived. During the day of destruction a number of Jews found shelter there. The frantic soldiers overlooked the place, as they did all other non-Jewish quarters.

During the Russian occupation, because of the spaciousness of the convent and the Soviet persecution of Poles, the Catholic priest, the Dean Antoni Mackiewicz, and his sister had decided to move in with the nuns. On November 9, [1941] some Jewish families came to the door of the convent. Mackiewicz let them in. Inside they pleaded: “Please have mercy on us, hide us!” “Because of my position I am not allowed to lie. If the Germans will ask me if there are Jews in my house, I will not be able to deny it. But in the yard there is a stable, a pig sty, a barn. All these places are open. I am not responsible for what is in the yard. Go out there. I don’t want to know about it.” The fugitives understood, they scattered and hid in all those places. They were spared. A few managed to survive the war.

For the rest of the onslaught Mackiewicz stood close to the window that faced the main road. Bewildered, helpless, unable to move, he watched. His eyes had a faraway strange look. As if transfixed, he seemed unaware of the silent tears that kept running down his cheeks. ...<sup>1743</sup>

Oswald Rufeisen, a native of the Żywiec area, found himself in Wilno when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. After fleeing Wilno in October 1941, Rufeisen was engaged as a farm worker by Lubomił Żukowski near Ponary. He was sheltered for a brief period in Nowa Wilejka by Rev. Stanisław

<sup>1742</sup> Miriam Swirnowski-Lieder, “The German Occupation and Liquidation of Our Little Town,” in N. [Nachman] Blumenthal, ed., *Sefer Mir* (Jerusalem: The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora, 1962), 41 (English section).

<sup>1743</sup> Nechama Tec, *In the Lion’s Den: The Life of Oswald Rufeisen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 72–73.



Miłkowski, the local pastor, who also provided refuge to a 15-year-old Jewish girl.<sup>1744</sup>

Some time later, Rufeisen was directed by Michał Sobolewski to his brother, who lived in the town of Mir. There, Rufeisen, who spoke fluent German, decided to pass as a German. He was employed as an interpreter by the Belorussian police and German gendarmerie until his cover was exposed by a Jew in August 1942.

Rufeisen took shelter briefly with a Polish family, and then in the small convent of the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Resurrectionist Sisters) in Mir. He remained with the nuns for 16 months, until December 1943, hidden in the loft of the convent's granary. To avoid detection by the Germans, he dressed as a nun when he came down from his hiding place. After the nuns were forced to leave their home and relocate to a building that held German supplies and was closely watched, Rufeisen decided to leave them for his safety and joined the Soviet partisans.

Euzebia (Władysława) Bartkowiak, the superior of the convent, was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2002.<sup>1745</sup> Three other nuns also resided at the convent, among them, Andrea Głowacka and Laurencja Domysłowska.

Since in Mir most Poles were removed from the official Nazi machinery, and because Oswald had more in common with the Poles than with the Belorussians, he decided to cultivate his relationships with Poles. ...

He also made a point of staying away from the Polish priest, Mackiewicz. ... He explains, "I did not trust the priest. I did not know him. Nor did I know that he had a positive attitude toward the Jews. This I discovered much later ..."

For the same reasons that he avoided the priest, he kept his contacts with the nuns to a bare minimum. ... Only much later the nuns served as intermediaries between Oswald and the Jews. This happened when Oswald supplied the Jews with blank document forms. Oswald had stolen these forms from his office. Such papers facilitated a move to the forbidden Christian world. He was told by his contacts that the nuns would deliver these items to the ghetto. ...

It is ironic that when the Russian occupation of Mir ended and the Nazis took over, the Polish priest, Mackiewicz, conducted a special mass thanking God for the termination of the Soviet occupation and the arrival of the Germans.

The night after Oswald saw the parked trucks, in the Mir region alone twenty-five Polish men and women, all defined by the Nazis as the intelligentsia, as leaders of their commu-

<sup>1744</sup> Halina Wężyk-Widawska, "Ksiądz Stanisław Miłkowski (1881–1961)," *Chrześcijananie*, vol. 7 (1982): 99–100; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 54; Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 117. For confirmation of Rev. Stanisław Miłkowski's rescue activities based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, see Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (listed as Milkovski and Volkovskij).

<sup>1745</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 532. See also the testimony of Oswald Józef Rufeisen, JHI, record group 301, no. 3726.

nities, were arrested. Balicki and the priest Mackiewicz were among them. In Mir only one Polish man was spared, the one who listened to Oswald's warning and ran away. In the vicinity of Nieśwież scores of other members of the Polish intelligentsia were rounded up.

Of the arrested all were taken to the prison in Stołpce, where they remained for about two months. From there they were transferred to the concentration camp in Kołdyczewo. ... In fact, these Polish arrests fit well into the overall Nazi policies that aimed at the elimination of the Polish elite. ...

This policy was put in effect for the entire country. In the [north]eastern part of Poland the Nazis tried to give the impression that moves against the Poles were not only initiated and executed by Belorussians but also motivated by Belorussian nationalists.

Eventually all the Poles arrested that night were gassed in special trucks in the Kołdyczewo concentration camp. ...

It was Sunday, August 16, 1942, five o'clock in the morning. Except for an occasional animal sound, the stillness in Mir was complete, a stillness soon interrupted by the pounding of wooden clogs against cobblestones and by a dangling of keys. The shoes and the keys belonged to Sister Nepomucena Kościuszek, who, still absorbed in her morning prayers, had come to open the convent's gate.

Suddenly through the half-opened space a man jumped into the courtyard. "Jesus Christ" escaped from the nun's lips, as her hand made the sign of the cross. She barely recaptured her composure when she recognized Oswald. She knew the authorities were looking for him. Oswald was guilty of two crimes: he was a Jew and he had betrayed the Germans. Each required a death sentence.

Confronted with this dangerous runaway, the nun quickly relocked the gate and then asked him to follow her into the house. Inside, Oswald met the Mother Superior, Euzebia Bartkowiak, and the only two other inhabitants of the convent, Andrea Głowacka and Laurencja Domysłowska. Of the four Laurencja Domysłowska, in her thirties, had as yet not taken her final vows.

Except for the Mother Superior, the rest of the women seemed frightened by the sudden appearance of this dirty, somewhat confused youth. They knew that his mere presence was endangering their lives. Speechless, they looked at their leader. The unspoken question each seemed to be raising was: "What are we going to do with him?"

"... After all, the [German] gendarmerie was right next to the convent! The threat was obvious. ... I had come to the convent with a request that they help me contact the Balicki family. ... I thought that the Balicki sisters would know about other places for me to stay at ... When I explained this to the Mother Superior she said 'no'. For the time being she forbade any outside communications, stressing that these young girls may not be able to keep a secret and thus others could learn about my whereabouts. She insisted, 'No one should know that you are here. We must pray to God to tell us what to do with you!' Then she explained that because it was a difficult and complicated situation only God can settle it. Instead of deciding by themselves they must wait for a sign from God."

But Euzebia Bartkowiak's reliance on God in no way interfered with her activities. She was enterprising, full of energy and determination. She concluded, "Until we know how to resolve this problem, we cannot send you away. You must wash, eat, and rest. After that we shall see." ...

Every Sunday during Mass the priest reads a special message from the Gospel. On that particular day he read about the good Samaritan. This is a story about a Jew who was robbed and wounded and left on the side of the road by his attackers. A priest passed next to the suffering man but did not bother to help him. Neither did a Levite. Only a traveling Samaritan took an interest in the helpless Jew. The Samaritan first attended to the man's wounds and then moved him to a nearby inn where he generously paid the innkeeper for keeping this stranger. Before the Samaritan left he assured the innkeeper that he will be coming back to check the condition of the patient. The story finishes with Jesus saying, "Go and do as he has done."

Listening to this sermon and particularly the last sentence, the two women felt that God had spoken to them. Euzebia Bartkowiak was especially convinced that God wanted them to save Oswald. Of the four nuns, two were less than enthusiastic about keeping him. They objected. But the Mother Superior would not be dissuaded. When it came to moral issues she followed her own conscience. Firmly, she overruled their opposition. ...

Conversion also led to other more concrete changes. "The two nuns, who initially opposed my stay in the convent, accepted me completely. Their approval coincided with my baptism. ... Soon not only did these nuns tolerate me but they were happy to have me there." ...

Grateful, Oswald was not surprised by the nuns' decision to shelter him. For him to shelter another human being was not extraordinary. Used to rescuing people, he had expected the nuns to do the same. Still, when he speaks about his four companions, he is full of admiration. He has a great deal of respect for their courage and is convinced that they were not concerned about the risk they were taking in sheltering him. Invariably, when referring to them he says that "they were wonderful women, they looked upon my stay there as a duty. There were no fears in that house, except during certain moments. They were definitely not scared, if they were they could not have allowed me to take my meals with them. ... They were like soldiers, for whom saving me was a duty ... they also had open tolerant attitudes toward Jews."

Actually Oswald's constant presence in the convent broke many of the house rules. When it was all over, in 1946, the Mother Superior went to the head of their order to discuss these transgressions. She wanted to know whether it was right for them to have disregarded so many established regulations. The head of the order, an old woman, said, "If we had created the Mir convent only to save this one man, we would have something to thank God for. Be assured that human life is much more important than all the rules." ...

Because the nuns were respected both by the civilians and the authorities, visits to their place were quite common. ... The presence of outsiders, however, was not always as uneventful. Among the frequent convent callers was a peasant woman, a Catholic and a Nazi-collaborator. Everyone knew that part of her income came from spying on civilians and denouncing them to the authorities. Still, they encouraged her visits, hoping that in the end they might lead her away from her sinful path.

One day, unaware that the woman was in the convent, Oswald, carrying a batch of wood, entered the living room to start a fire. When this guest noticed him, startled she stood up. She had recognized him—most local people would. It mattered little that Oswald disappeared quickly. The damage was done. In a split second, impulsively, she ran out of the house. In no time she returned, threw herself on her knees in front of the Mother

Superior, and swore she would tell no one about this dangerous encounter. Oswald feels that because of the possible peril, "right away the nuns should have asked me to leave. They did not. The Mother Superior chose to believe this untrustworthy person. She proved to be right. Although a Nazi collaborator, the woman told no one that she had seen me."

... In Mir the authorities were concerned with the safety of their official buildings. To them one obvious solution was to surround these structures with barbed wire. If done, this would transform the heart of the town into a police area. But before this plan could be put into effect the Germans had to decide what to do with the convent located in the middle of their official buildings. This decision, in turn, called for an inspection of the place.

The formal visit to the convent occurred on a Sunday, when three of the nuns, among them the Mother Superior, were away in church in Iszkoldź [Iszkoldz]. Only one nun stayed home to protect Oswald. For him, indeed, the event was memorable. "Two policemen knocked. The nun opened the door but forgot to warn me. The men began to enter into the different rooms. Soon I could hear their heavy military boots quite close to me. ... My room had the usual wash basin. In front of it was a screen that was supposed to hide anyone who was washing.

At this wash basin was a shawl, a big, black shawl. The nuns gave it to me to keep warm. When I heard the heavy boots and the loud voices, practically in my room, I quickly jumped behind the screen and threw the shawl over it. This suggested that one of the nuns might be behind it. The men came in. They stopped not far from the screen. Amused, they commented that a nun must be behind it. They chuckled. Then I heard them leave the room. When they were out of the house, the nun appeared, pale and shaking all over. All I could do was pray."

After this official visit the Nazis ordered the convent to move to Stara Miranka, a few miles away from Mir. The transfer had to take place by March 1943.

The new house consisted of four rooms and a barn attached to the main building. Because Oswald was well known in the area, he could not show his face. The actual move, therefore, had to take place in a number of steps. "As the nuns emptied the different rooms they locked me into one of them. On the last day, one of the nuns left for the new place very early in the morning, before anyone was up. That same evening, I, dressed as a nun, walked with the other three nuns to our new home."

The new convent was not only smaller but also more exposed, without a garden, without a fence. At this time the Germans were becoming more and more nervous. Night searches for partisans were common. It would have been too dangerous for Oswald to sleep in such an exposed place. The barn became Oswald's sleeping quarters. This barn, although attached to the new convent, was used by the Germans as a storage place for food confiscated from the peasants. To avert partisan attacks, at night it was guarded by policemen. Each evening another group of policemen would come and watch the barn till dawn. Because of this watch, no Germans would dream of searching inside the barn.

In principle, those buildings belonged to the parish-church of Mir, but were being used by the authorities. In a small hall opposite the entrance a ladder served as the way to the attic of the barn. Every evening the Mother Superior, Oswald dressed as a nun, and a cat would climb up this ladder behind the standing guard. As they climbed the nun spoke to the cat, pretending that she was bringing it there to keep away the mice. Since the attic contained all kinds of food, the presence of a cat protected the food from mice. And so

the guard never considered interfering with this nightly pastime. Each morning after the policeman had left, Oswald still dressed as a nun, would sneak down and into the house.

... But peace was becoming progressively more elusive. In fact, the Germans were becoming more cruel and more violent. It was as if the loss of battles created a special need for victories against vulnerable civilians. The smallest crimes, often imaginary ones, were met with severe punishment.

Thus, for example, in a nearby town [Nowogródek], twelve nuns, suspected of feeding partisans, were executed. Raids into private homes became more frequent. As the terror grew, more natives joined the partisans. Escapes into forests, in turn, led to more violent Nazi retaliations. As usual, the losers were the innocent people who had little to do with such moves.

With this increasingly threatening situation, Oswald became concerned about the nuns' safety. He was convinced that he could avert disaster by leaving the convent. But he had no place to go. ...

And so, on December 3, 1943, in the evening, dressed as a nun, Oswald left the convent in the company of the Mother Superior. In a nearby forest he took off his robe. As he handed it to the nun, she cried, saying, "Come back in case of difficulties. Be sure to come back." Too upset to speak, Oswald nodded, knowing full well that this time he wouldn't be returning.

Still crying softly the nun blessed him and left.<sup>1746</sup>

Numerous testimonies gathered by Yad Vashem describe how priests—most of whose identities have not been established—assisted the rescue efforts of fellow Poles. The entries found in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations* focus on the awarded rescuers, and the role of other helpers is often referred to without detail or overlooked entirely. The encyclopedia entries set out below that are sketchy or silent about these matters have been supplemented by other sources, where known. The entries are set out in their entirety, with parenthetical annotations, to show the context in which assistance was provided and the frequent reliance on Poles other than those recognized by Yad Vashem.

[1] Moshe and Chaviva Flechtman became acquainted with the Balul family through the mother, Wiktorja, a devout Christian in her sixties. The Baluls, who lived in Vilna [Wilno], made a living by selling food to the ghetto inmates and thereby became friendly with Moshe, who worked outside the ghetto. Wiktorja, who supplied him with free bread from time to time, offered her help if the situation deteriorated, and at the beginning of 1943 Moshe and Chaviva fled to the Baluls' home, where they were offered refuge by the parents, Wincenty and Wiktorja, and the sons, Franciszek and Antoni. Moshe stayed in Antoni's apartment and the latter supplied him with forged documents, which he used to obtain work from Polish farmers in the area. Chaviva, who was pregnant, gave birth to her eldest daughter in the Baluls' house, and they kept the baby carefully hidden. The family also helped other Jews who had fled from the ghetto by finding hideouts and obtaining Aryan document from them [with the assistance of priests<sup>1747</sup>]. Among those whose lives were

<sup>1746</sup> Tec, *In the Lion's Den*, 98–99, 163–66, 172, 173–76.

<sup>1747</sup> Testimony of Havivah Flekhtman, SFV, Interview code 19320.

saved by the Baluls was Jakow Jakubowicz, a 13-year-old boy who had escaped from the ghetto. The family received no payment for its assistance, which was motivated by purely humanitarian and religious principles.<sup>1748</sup>

[2] Helena Barcikowska lived with her two sons in the village of Wisniowiec [Wiśniowiec] in the Tarnopol district [actually, near Krzemieniec in Volhynia]. Following the Nazi invasion of the area in 1941, she found employment as an agricultural worker in the fields of a German-administered estate, where she became acquainted with two Jewish brothers from Warsaw, Adam and Michal [Michał] Gajlo [Gajło]. In 1942, when the Jews of the village were incarcerated in a ghetto, Helena decided to take the brothers into her home. Only Adam was able to take advantage of the offer, however, as Michal was bedridden. As a devout Catholic, Helena regarded the saving of human life as both a duty and a privilege. The danger of the undertaking was not lost on her, since the German and Ukrainian police were constantly searching for Jewish fugitives. The house was raided twice, and it was only owing to Helena's astuteness that her activities remained undiscovered. Adam Gajlo remained in hiding until October 1943. Helena requested no payment for sheltering him and, despite her dire financial situation, divided her meager earnings as a seamstress between her Jewish charge and her sons Tadeusz, aged 14, and Jozef [Józef], aged 13. The latter were actively involved in caring for Adam. They built a hideout for him beneath the house, brought him food, and kept the hiding place clean. At the end of 1943, Helena obtained a forged birth certificate for Adam [from the local Catholic priest<sup>1749</sup>] and, fearing the intrigues of her Ukrainian neighbors, fled westward with her children before the approaching Russian front. Adam escaped together with them, but afterwards their paths separated. Under his new name, Krzysztof Bolesław [Bolesław] Sawicki—which he also retained after the war—he moved to Lancut [Łańcut], where he remained until the liberation.<sup>1750</sup>

[3] In 1941, a Polish woman carrying a baby a few months old appeared on the doorstep of the Bombases, a poor working class couple who lived with their five children in the town of Horodenka in the Stanisławów [Stanisławów] district. The Bombases rented a room to the woman, who came from Cracow, but after a while she moved in with her brother-in-law, who lived in the neighboring village. After a short time the woman vanished, leaving the baby behind. When she heard that the woman had disappeared, Zuzanna, the Bombases' ten-year-old daughter, felt sorry for the abandoned baby. On her own initiative, she went in search of the baby and brought him home, where she managed to persuade her mother, despite the latter's misgivings, to keep the child. The Bombases knew nothing of the baby's origins, until one day a neighbor told them that the child was the son of Moshe Pilpel, a Jewish pharmacist who had disappeared without a trace. Despite the danger, Rozalia Bombas decided to continue caring for the Jewish baby, whose first name she did not even know. Bombas obtained a Christian birth certificate for the baby from the local priest, stamped in the name of Krzysztof Ryszard Chodźba [Chodźba]. The Bombases treated Krzysztof as one of the family. Zuzanna, in particular, treated him like a younger brother and spent all her free time with him. Little Krzysztof stayed with the Bombases until 1947, when a representative of the Jewish Children's Rescue Committee turned up, introducing himself as the boy's uncle and asking for the child to be handed over to him, since the child's parents had perished. Rozalia and Zuzanna, however, refused to give up

<sup>1748</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 69.

<sup>1749</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 33; Knap, "Jak ci się uda uratować, pamiętaj", 52.

<sup>1750</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 75.



Krzysztof, whom they loved and on whose behalf they had risked their own lives and that of the rest of their family. When they realized that legally they did not have a leg to stand on, they agreed. The organization paid the Bombases for Krzysztof's upkeep during the occupation. Krzysztof subsequently immigrated to Israel, where he later changed his name to Zvi Pilpel.<sup>1751</sup>

[4] Maria and Olga Brzozowicz were friendly with Stanisława [Stanisława] and Jan Pastor, with whom they had studied in the town of Sarny, in the Volhynia district. In 1940, during the Soviet annexation, the NKVD imprisoned Maria and Olga's father, who was later exiled to the far north. The Brzozowicz sisters and their mother [Antonina] subsequently moved to Lwow [Lwów], where they rented a small apartment. Some time later, Stanisława and Jan Pastor also moved to Lwow, with their mother, Ela Karmiol, who had since remarried, and the two families resumed their friendship. In 1941, when the Germans occupied Lwow, Karmiol and her children were evicted from their apartment. In desperation, they turned to Antonina Brzozowicz and her daughters, who, despite their straitened circumstances and small apartment, immediately agreed to take them in. In time, Antonina's Ukrainian neighbors began suspecting her of hiding Jews and threatened to report her to the authorities. [Antonina Brzozowicz turned to a priest for guidance and he urged her to continue hiding her charges.<sup>1752</sup>] Undeterred, the Brzozowiczes vigorously denied the allegations and continued hiding the refugees. Stanisława, Jan, and their mother, Ela, stayed with the Brzozowiczes until they were liberated in July 1944. After the war, the two families moved to an area within Poland's new borders and remained friends for many more years.<sup>1753</sup>

[5] After the German occupation of Lwow [Lwów] in the summer of 1941, 18-year-old Hana Landau escaped the anti-Jewish pogroms [carried out by Ukrainians] that erupted in the city, during which her parents and brothers were killed. She went to the local church in the nearby village of Winniki, obtained Aryan papers made out in the name of her friend Czesława [Czesława] Bandalowska and returned under an assumed identity to Lwow. As she was known to be Jewish, however, she was arrested and interned in the Janowska concentration camp, but was later released after convincing the Germans that she was Christian. Armed with her Aryan papers, Hana subsequently moved to Cracow [Kraków], where she obtained work.<sup>1754</sup>

[6] In 1940, Stanisława [Stanisława] Butkiewicz was employed by Jakov and Hana Fajnsztajn, residents of Vilna [Wilno], to look after their baby daughter, Masha. Upon the German occupation of the city, the Fajnsztajns were interned in the local ghetto. Hana was sent daily to forced labor outside the ghetto and met Stanisława each day on her way to work. One day in the autumn of 1941, Hana took Masha and handed her over to Stanisława, requesting the latter to look after her daughter if she did not return. She never came back and the infant remained with Stanisława, who cared for her faithfully and obtained an Aryan birth [and baptismal] certificate for her [from a Catholic priest<sup>1755</sup>] on which she registered the child as her daughter, Maria Butkiewicz. Fearing denunciation by suspicious

<sup>1751</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 106.

<sup>1752</sup> Account of Stanisława Wincza and Jan Pastor in Kołacińska-Gałązka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 210.

<sup>1753</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 118.

<sup>1754</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 120.

<sup>1755</sup> Schelly Talalay Dardashti, "A Tale of Three Women and a Lost Family," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 16, 2007.

neighbors, Stanisława left her apartment and moved with Masha to the home of her relatives in a distant village. Masha remained under her assumed identity with her former housemaid, who selflessly jeopardized her life to save her. After the war, when it became known that Masha's parents had perished, Stanisława did not conceal the child's Jewish identity from her, although she raised her like a daughter in every way and took care of her upbringing and education.<sup>1756</sup>

[7] In the *Aktion* which marked the end of the Minsk-Mazowiecki [Mińsk Mazowiecki] ghetto in the Warsaw district, Zyskind Berger, father of two-year old Danuta and seven-month-old Barbara, was killed. Before being deported to Treblinka, Berger's wife managed to hand over her two daughters to Apolonia Chmielewska, her former neighbor. The unexpected appearance of the two little children in the house of Apolonia, who was unmarried, aroused the neighbors' suspicions and they began intimating that she was hiding Jewish girls in her home. After being subjected to threats and extortion, Chmielewska was forced to move Danuta and Barbara from one hiding place to another. [Apolonia was also helped by a priest from the Mińsk parish who provided a false birth certificate for the younger sister under the name of Jaworska.<sup>1757</sup>] Despite the danger, she constantly saw to the girls' needs and paid for their upkeep out of her own pocket. The search for a safe shelter for the two girls ended when Chmielewska found acquaintances in Minsk-Mazowiecki who were willing to look after Barbara for payment and placed Danuta with a foster family in Warsaw. Chmielewska frequently visited her charges, making them feel they had a mother who cared for them. As the front advanced toward Warsaw, Chmielewska, fearing she might lose contact with the girls, brought them back home. Even after the war, Chmielewska continued to bring up the girls as if they were her own, but never hid from them the fact that they were Jewish.<sup>1758</sup>

[8] Rachel Kalfuss was born in September 1941, in the town of Niepolomice [Niepołomice] near Cracow. When she was eight months old, her mother perished in the Belzec [Bełżec] extermination camp, and some months later, her father, too, was killed in the Stalowa Wola labor camp. Before being sent to her death, her mother gave her baby daughter over to an acquaintance, [Florentyna Stanek or Sławek], who passed her on to [Cecylia Dudzińska, who lived with her daughter] Helena Czartoryska, who lived in Kolbuszowa, in the Rzeszow [Rzeszów] district. Czartoryska, whose husband was being held in a prisoner-of-war camp, had given birth to a baby daughter in 1939, but she had died shortly after. [Dudzińska and] Czartoryska took in the Jewish orphan, [who had been baptized in Zwierzyniec near Cracow as Maria Skrzydlewska<sup>1759</sup>]. Despite threats by suspicious neighbors, and attempts at extortion, Czartoryska, with supreme dedication, and at great personal risk, raised Rachel-Marysia as her own daughter. In risking her life to save Rachel-Marysia, Czartoryska, who came from an aristocratic family, was guided by humanitarian principles, which superseded considerations of personal safety. After the war, relatives in Israel found out

<sup>1756</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 126.

<sup>1757</sup> Chmielewska Apolonia, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org/pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-chmielewska-apolonia>; "Wojenne matki i wojenne ojcowie," *MiM*, no. 2 (292) (March–April 2021): 16–17, Internet: <https://www.minsk-maz.pl/plik,6628,mim-marzec-kwiecien-2021.pdf>. After the war, every one in Mińsk knew of the girls' background, but the girls experienced no unpleasantness.

<sup>1758</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 138.

<sup>1759</sup> Piotr Czartoryski-Sziler, "Opowiem wam o swojej babci...", *w.Poltyce.pl*, March 24, 2018.

that Rachel Kalfuss was alive, and members of the Coordination Committee traced her to Czartoryska's home. In 1947, she was brought over to Israel where she was legally adopted by relatives who, thinking they were acting in her best interests, hid her past from her. It was only years later that Kalfuss discovered how Czartoryska had saved her life. Although she got in touch with her immediately, Czartoryska died shortly thereafter.<sup>1760</sup>

[9] Lucja [Łucja] Meister, followed by her brother, Bertold, escaped from the Przemyśl [Przemyśl] ghetto, in the Rzeszów [Rzeszów] district, with the help of forged documents which their friend, 19-year-old Zofia Komperda [later Dygdała], obtained for them. Komperda arranged for Lucja to move in with her aunt, who lived in a village near the town of Przeworsk. However, when neighbors began suspecting that Lucja was Jewish, Komperda arranged for her to be transferred to a nearby village, where Lucja worked in a local school [as a teacher and lived in the parish rectory—she had converted earlier<sup>1761</sup>] until the area was liberated in 1944. Although she survived the war, Lucja dies shortly thereafter [of typhus]. Komperda also arranged for Bertold Meister, Lucja's brother, to stay with her parents. Her father, who was a picture restorer, taught Meitner the secrets of his trade, and employed him as an apprentice. Komperda also trained Meister as a land surveyor, and sent him to the nearby village of Wola Zgłobińska [Zgłobieńska], where he worked in his new profession until the area was liberated in 1944. After the war, Meister remained in Poland.<sup>1762</sup>

[10] When the Postrągs [Postrągs] and their eight-year-old daughter, Roza [Róża], were interned in the Tarnów [Tarnów] ghetto, in the Cracow [Kraków] district, Franciszka Dynowska, their former maid, endangered her life by providing them with food. In August 1943, a few days before the liquidation of the Tarnów ghetto, Dynowski provided them with forged papers [prepared on the basis of falsified baptismal certificates issued by a priest from a parish in Tarnów<sup>1763</sup>] and with the help of her son, Władysław [Władysław], smuggled them out of the ghetto. Postrag, who decided to join the partisans, was caught and shot dead. Dynowska took his wife, Regina, to her brother, who lived in the village of Plesna [Pleśna] near Tarnów, while Władysław took Roza to his uncle and aunt, Leon and Ludwika Dynowski, who lived in the nearby village of Krzyż [Krzyż], where he himself was staying. When the neighbors discovered that a Jewish woman was hiding in the village, Regina fled to Warsaw, where she registered as a Pole for work in Germany. Regina Postrag was sent to Germany, where she stayed until the liberation in April 1945. Back in Krzyż, the Dynowskis looked after young Roza devotedly, enrolling her in the local school and seeing to all her needs without expecting anything in return. Roza stayed with the Dynowskis until the area was liberated, after which she and her mother emigrated to the United States.<sup>1764</sup>

[11] In 1943, during one of the *Aktionen* in the Bedzin [Będzin] ghetto in Upper Silesia, 13-year-old Alina Potok [also Pottock] escaped from the transport and reached Warsaw. She made straight for the apartment of her parents' acquaintances whose address she had. However, after a short stay, Alina was told to leave. During her stay at the acquaintances' home, Alina got to know Leonard Gliniski [Gliński], a member of the AK [Home Army].

<sup>1760</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 157.

<sup>1761</sup> Dąbrowska, *Światła w ciemności*, 380–82.

<sup>1762</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 196–97.

<sup>1763</sup> The Dynowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-dynowski-family>.

<sup>1764</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 198.

When he heard that the acquaintance was planning to send Alina away or even hand her over to the authorities, Gliniski begged him to keep Alina for a few more days, during which time he managed to obtain Aryan papers for her, including school certificates, an identity card, and a birth certificate [from St. Casimir's Church in Lwów<sup>1765</sup>]. Since her age on these documents was 16, she was able under her assumed identity to register for work in Germany. Thanks to his ties with the underground, Gliniski arranged for her to go to Vienna, where she worked with a doctor's family with whom she stayed until the area was liberated. Throughout this time, Alina corresponded with Gliniski.<sup>1766</sup>

[12] As school friends, Irena Gwozdowicz and Ludwika Rozen, from the town of Bursztyn in the Stanisławów [Stanisławów] district, spent a lot of time in each other's homes. Before the war, the Gwozdowiczes moved to the town of Przemyśl [Przemyśl] while Ludwika and her parents remained in Bursztyn. After the German occupation, the Rozens were interned in the local ghetto and in 1942, when the Germans began liquidating the local Jewish communities, Ludwika fled from the ghetto to the Gwozdowiczes in Przemyśl, where they gave her a warm reception. [When the Gwozdowiczes had returned to Bursztyn for a visit, they brought food to the Rozens in the ghetto, left a note with their new address, and told Ludwika to seek them out if she was in danger. Ludwika reached Przemyśl on foot, exhausted, hungry and with high fever. A priest she met on her way gave her the birth certificate of Józefa Bałda, her peer who had recently died. Mrs. Matylda Gwozdowicz obtained an identity card for Ludwika in the same name.<sup>1767</sup>] ... [They] passed her off as the daughter of their maid, who, under Soviet rule, had been exiled to Siberia, and found work for her in a German soldier's [sic] club. ... Rozen stayed with the Gwozdowiczes until the area was liberated in 1944.<sup>1768</sup>

[13] In July 1942, during the large-scale *Aktion* in the Warsaw ghetto, 11-year-old Michał [Michał] Motyl and his seven-year-old sister, Regina, escaped to the Aryan side of the city. Their father, too, escaped and found a hiding place in the town of Parczew, while their mother was deported to Treblinka. After wandering through fields and villages and suffering many hardships, the two children found their way back to their native town of Golub [east of Toruń] in Pomerania, where they turned to Jozef [Józef] Matuszewski and his wife, friends of their parents. The Matuszewskis, guided by humanitarian principles, which overrode considerations of personal safety or economic hardship, took the children into their home, looked after them, and saw to all their needs. One day, the Gestapo, alerted by informers, raided the apartment. Although they did not discover the children, the Matuszewskis decided to move them to a safer hiding place. They arranged for Regina to move in with their relatives, Franciszek and Władysława [Władysława] Kaczmarek, in the town of Chełmno and found another hiding place for Michał. The Kaczmareks made Regina feel at home, and with the help of their daughter, Teresa, looked after her devotedly, introducing her to neighbors as a relative whose house had been destroyed by bombs. [Regina, known as Irena Kwiatkowska, lived openly with the Kaczmareks. Her true identity was known

<sup>1765</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 151.

<sup>1766</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 237.

<sup>1767</sup> *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady: Przywracanie pamięci / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust: Recalling Forgotten History* (Warsaw: Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland and Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2009), 69.

<sup>1768</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 263.

by a priest and by a teacher.<sup>1769</sup>] They even kept up a correspondence with her father, who later perished under unknown circumstances. In risking their lives for Regina, the Kaczmareks were prompted by love of their fellow man, which overcame considerations of safety. Regina stayed with the Kaczmareks even after the area was liberated. In 1946, her uncle found her and took her with him to Israel, where, for many years, she carried on a correspondence with Teresa Kaczmarek. Regina's brother, Michal, also survived and after the war emigrated to the United States.<sup>1770</sup>

[14] During the occupation, Janina Klein, her daughter Janina (later Dylag [Dyląg]), and her daughter and son-in-law, Halina and Tadeusz Dobrowolski lived on the fourth floor of a building in Elektoralna Street, Warsaw. The daughter, Janina, who was a member of the AK [Armia Krajowa; Home Army], and later participated in the Warsaw Uprising, worked in a jewelry shop in Warsaw, where she got to know Seweryn Ehrlich, an agent for a Swiss watch firm. In 1942, Ehrlich asked Janina if she knew of anyone who would be prepared to shelter his wife, Felicja. Janina, her mother, and sister decided to take in Felicja, even though there was a German casino in the building, and the doorkeeper was an ethnic German. After she arrived, Dobrowolski provided Felicja with "Aryan" papers [obtained from All Saints parish<sup>1771</sup>] in the name of Janina Bielarska. Halina then accompanied Felicja to the office of internal affairs, where an identity card was issued in her new name, which enabled the Kleins to pass her off as a relative. Felicja's husband remained in the ghetto while her two daughters, who had found hiding places, under assumed identities, in various apartments in Warsaw, used to visit their mother from time to time. The Klein children, who lived near the ghetto, gave food to the Jewish children who slipped out of the ghetto to the Aryan side of the city. On May 12, 1943, the Gestapo arrested Dobrowolski for providing Jews with false documents, and sent him to a concentration camp, where he perished, leaving behind a wife, and seven-month-old infant. Although the Gestapo raided the apartment twice, the Kleins continued hiding Felicja, until the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944. After the war, Felicja, whose husband perished with the Jews of Warsaw, immigrated with her daughters to the United States, where, for many years, they kept up close ties with the Kleins.<sup>1772</sup>

[15] In 1938, after Vienna's annexation to the Third Reich, Lola Holdengraeber and her daughter, Rita, left Vienna for Lwow [Lwów], Poland. In 1942, Lola and Rita left Lwow and escaped to Tarnow [Tarnów], where they turned to Mieczysław Kobylanski [Mieczysław Kobylański] and his sister, Jadwiga, former acquaintances of theirs. Despite their mother's misgivings, Kobylanski and his sister opened their door to the two Jewish refugees and sheltered them in their home without expecting anything in return. In due course, Holdengraeber, thanks to Aryan papers Kobylanski obtained for her, found employment in an SS officers' club. In late 1942, Holdengraeber and her daughter left Tarnow and moved to Warsaw. In Warsaw, the mother joined the *Gwardia Ludowa* (Peoples' Guard) and was arrested and sent to Auschwitz, where she perished. The daughter, Rita, returned to Tarnow, where Kobylanski and his sister looked after her until July 1943 [with the help of a priest,

<sup>1769</sup> "Rodzina Kaczmarków—Wywiad z Teresą Drewek," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/historie-pomocy/wywiad-z-teresa-drewek>.

<sup>1770</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 323.

<sup>1771</sup> Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 129.

<sup>1772</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 349.

Kobyłański obtained a baptismal certificate for Rita<sup>1773</sup>], after which she returned to Lwow where she stayed until the area was liberated in July 1944.<sup>1774</sup>

[16] In 1942, shortly before the liquidation of the Sandomierz ghetto, Roma Glowinska [Głowińska] and her cousin, Gucia Glowinska, fled at their parents' insistence. Because of their Aryan appearance, the two were sure their Polish acquaintances would be prepared to put them up, but much to their surprise they found that this was not the case. Ironically, salvation came from strangers. One day, in the winter of 1942, upon arriving in the town of Piastow [Piastów], near Warsaw, they knocked on the door of Andrzej and Anna Kostrzewa, a childless couple who lived in a one-room apartment. Despite the fact that Kostrzewa earned a paltry salary as a school caretaker, the Kostrzewas took the two refugees in and provided them with forged birth certificates. Despite the forged certificate, Gucia was arrested in the street and disappeared without a trace. The Kostrzewas reassured Roma, who feared a similar fate, telling her: "God will protect us." Roma stayed with the Kostrzewas, who held themselves responsible for her safety and shared their meager fare with her, until September 1945. ... In risking their lives, the Kostrzewas were inspired by deep religious faith and love of their fellow man.<sup>1775</sup>

According to the memoir of Ruth Marks (Roma Glowinski):

Gucia and Roma went to the home of a former employee of the family who arranged for them to stay with Anna and Andrzej Kostrzewa, a Polish couple who lived in Pruszkow [sic, Pruszków] near Warsaw. The Kostrzewas claimed that Roma was a distant relative whose father was a Polish officer killed by the Germans and whose mother died in the bombings in Lublin. Gucia also claimed to be a distant relative. The Kostrzewas acquired false papers for Gucia under the name Halina and a priest supplied a birth certificate for Roma under the name, Vislava Serafinska [Wisława Serafińska]. Andrzej had worked as a school concierge until the Germans closed the school. Anna supported the family by washing uniforms for German soldiers. To augment her meager wages, Gucia darned socks, and Roma did chores for neighbors. Gucia also sold food on the black market. She was arrested during one of her trips to Warsaw, and after revealing that she was Jewish, she was executed. After this incident, the Kostrzewa's neighbors began to suspect that Roma also was Jewish. However, despite the rumors and inherent danger, Roma became closer to the Kostrzewas, and Anna and Andrzej cared for Roma like their own daughter.<sup>1776</sup>

[17] Even before the establishment of the Dabrowa [Dąbrowa] Tarnowska ghetto in the Cracow [Kraków] district, Lucylla Chmura came to the aid of Ida Margulies, a widowed school friend of hers, and her son, Henryk. Chmura supplied them with Aryan papers, and advised them to move to the village of Czechow [Czechów] in the county of Pinczow [Pińczów], Kielce district. [With the help of a priest she obtained a birth certificate for

<sup>1773</sup> *Przywracanie pamięci Polakom ratującym Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Recalling Forgotten History For Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2007), 57.

<sup>1774</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 357.

<sup>1775</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 382.

<sup>1776</sup> "My Life-Story": Ruth Marks Memoir, USHMM, Accession no. 2006.242; Genia Glowinski, Photograph no. 64300, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1152699>.



Henryk in the name of Marian Jackowski which he used until the end of the war.<sup>1777</sup> In their new home, Wojciech Kowalski, Chmura's fiancé and an engineer, employed Henryk as his assistant and helped his mother financially. In early 1944, when the police became suspicious of Ida's identity, she and Henryk moved to Cracow, with the help of Chmura and Kowalski. In Cracow, members of *Zegota* [Żegota] found jobs for them and watched out for their safety until January 1945, when they were liberated.<sup>1778</sup> [The Gestapo killed the landlord who had rented to Kowalski the office which was served as the Margulies' hideout in Czechów.<sup>1779</sup>]

[18] In July 1942, a seven-month-old Jewish baby was left on the doorstep of the Leszczynski [Leszczyński] home, in the village of Rozki [Rożki near Żółkiewka] in the county of Kraszystaw, Lublin district. The Leszczynskis took the baby in and Sabina, one of the daughters, took responsibility for looking after it. Undeterred by the neighbors' assertion that the entire village would be in danger if the police discovered the baby, Sabina looked after it devotedly, showered it with motherly love, and despite her family's poverty saw to all its needs. The Jewish baby, who was christened Zygmunt Zolkiewski [Żółkiewski] in the local church, remained under Sabina's care until July 1945 [sic, 1944], when the area was liberated. Shortly after the war, Mendel and Rivka Wajc, the boy's parents, who had fled to the forests and joined the partisans, turned up at the Leszczynskis' home. For reasons that were never clarified, the parents did not claim their child. ... The Jewish child remained with Sabina and was later transferred to a Jewish children's home near Lodz [Łódź].<sup>1780</sup>

[19] At the start of the German occupation of Poland, Laib Hersz [Leon] Grynberg, his wife, Ewa, and their daughter, Hanka [Chana, later Halina], fled from Warsaw and settled in Białystok [Białystok], in Eastern Poland, which was annexed to the Soviet Union. The Germans subsequently occupied Eastern Poland in June 1941. In February 1943, Grynberg managed to smuggle his daughter out of the local ghetto and, with the help of Polish acquaintances [Michał and Jadwiga Skalski, who took Hanka in for several weeks and taught her Catholic prayers and rituals so that she could pass for a Polish orphan], transferred her to the nearby town of Suraz. Klemens and Zofia Leszczynski [Leszczyński] and their son, Jozef [Józef], agreed to take in ten-year-old Hanka without any preconditions or payment. They represented Hanka to neighbors as a Polish orphan from Warsaw, but in due course it was rumoured that the Leszczynskis were sheltering a Jewish girl. [When the Leszczyński learned that Hanka was Jewish, at first they were terrified, but after discussing the matter with their priest, they decided to continue looking after her. Hanka was secretly baptized, and then made her First Holy Communion publicly to maintain her cover.<sup>1781</sup>] They saw to all her needs and educated her as if she were their own daughter. Hanka remained in this loving atmosphere until August 1944, when the area was liberated by the Red Army. Hanka's father survived [after jumping out of a train transporting Jews to Treblinka, he made his way back to Białystok where he stayed with the Skalskis] and after the liberation

<sup>1777</sup> The Kowalski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-kowalski-family-0>.

<sup>1778</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 391.

<sup>1779</sup> The Kowalski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-kowalski-family-0>.

<sup>1780</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 452.

<sup>1781</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 183–84; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 306; Grubowska, *Haneczko, musisz przeżyć*, 62–64; Rogalewska, *Getto białostockie*, 115, 215.

turned up at the Leszczynskis' home, where his daughter was delivered to him safe and sound. Hanka and her father stayed in Poland. In risking their lives to save Hanka, the Leszczynskis were guided by compassion and humanitarian principles only.<sup>1782</sup>

[20] One night during the occupation, nine-year-old Helena Tygier knocked on the door of Rozalia Lojszczyk [Lojszczyk], who lived with her three children in the village of Bukowa Stara, some 35 kilometers from Warsaw. Exhausted and grimy, Helena related how she had left her parents in the Warsaw ghetto and, at her mothers [sic] bidding, had escaped to seek shelter with Lojszczyk's mother, an old acquaintance of hers. Since Lojszczyk's mother had already passed away, Lojszczyk took Helena into her home, where she looked after her devotedly. Helena made occasional forays into the ghetto to bring her parents food. After a tip-off to the authorities, German soldiers turned up at Lojszczyk's home in January 1944 searching for the Jewish refugee. When she saw them entering the farmyard, Lojszczyk thrust a pail of milk into Helena's hand and pushed her out of the door. The Germans took no notice of her, thinking she was a local dairymaid, and when they failed to find the girl they were looking for, they left. Since it was far too dangerous for Helena to continue staying with Lojszczyk, Lojszczyk arranged for her to stay with her brother, who lived in the neighboring village and agreed to shelter her. Lojszczyk also obtained a baptism certificate from the local priest, which enabled her to find work in the flour mill. Helena stayed with Lojszczyk's brother until January 1945, when the area was liberated.<sup>1783</sup>

[21] Immediately after the war began, Izabela Malinowska, who lived in Vilna [Wilno], rushed to the aid of the Jewish refugees who began thronging to her for help. Taking advantage of her close acquaintance with numerous officials in municipal institutions, she helped the Jewish refugees by giving them advice and guidance. Malinowska worked in a coffee house that served as a rendezvous point for Jewish refugees and it was there that she met Efraim Jakiri. The two became friends and eventually fell in love. Jakiri moved into Malinowska's house, located in a suburb of the city. When the Germans occupied Vilna [in June 1941], Jakiri tried to flee from the city with the retreating Red Army but was unsuccessful. He returned to Vilna and was confined in the ghetto set up there. All the while, Malinowska helped by supplying him with food parcels when he arrived daily at the city's military base where he worked. Thanks to her acquaintance with the local priest, Malinowska managed to procure Aryan papers for Jakiri and took him back into her home after he fled from his place of employment. His presence in her home aroused the ire of the neighbors and Malinowska was forced to find Jakiri a safer place to hide. She was helped by a friend, a member of the Polish underground, who moved Jakiri to relatives of his who lived in the village of Kobylniki, near Lake Narocz. There he was represented as a student in need of country air because of the tuberculosis from which he suffered. In 1943, Jakiri joined the partisans. He was wounded in battle and after the liberation married Malinowska and they moved to an area within the new Polish borders.<sup>1784</sup>

[22] In the summer of 1941, Olga Jospa and her parents were deported from their home town of Husiatyn, in the Tarnopol district. After much suffering and hardship, the three Jewish fugitives arrived in the ghetto of Kopyczynce [Kopyczyńce], from which they fled just before its liquidation in early 1943. While they were still in the ghetto, Aniela Malkiewicz [Małkiewicz] approached the Jospa family, for whom she had done housework from the

<sup>1782</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 452–53.

<sup>1783</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 463.

<sup>1784</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 483.

year 1928, and without asking for any payment expressed her willingness to help them in any way she could. When they left the ghetto, the Jospa family came to Malkiewicz, who at first hid them in the attic of the local church. She subsequently moved them to a number of other hiding places in the surrounding villages. Despite the danger posed to her life, Malkiewicz continued to care for the three Jewish refugees until the liberation of the area in the summer of 1944.<sup>1785</sup>

[23] In June 1941, following the pogroms by the Ukrainians and Germans against the Jews of Lwów [Lwów] Regina Fern, 18, decided to leave her parent's [sic] home and travel to Warsaw using false Aryan papers [under the name of Józefa Malec provided to her by a priest at her school<sup>1786</sup>] that she had in her possession. But because of her Jewish appearance, Fern was forced to wander from one hiding place to another, until, thanks to an advertisement in the newspaper, she arrived at the apartment of the Mankowski [Mańkowski] family, who were looking for a housemaid. Upon her arrival at the Mankowski home, Fern represented herself as a Pole; however, the members of the Mankowski household immediately realized that she was Jewish. Despite this, they received her warmly and out of concern for her fate did not allow her to go out into the street and the three Mankowski sons did the shopping instead. Fern remained under the protection of her employer-rescuers until August 1944. She joined the ranks of the rebels [i.e., Polish underground] following the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 and together with the other rebels was deported to a prisoner-of-war camp, from which she was liberated by the Allied armies. Irena Fejgin, who in 1943 was forced to leave her previous hiding place, also found asylum in the Mankowski home. The Mankowski family hid Fejgin without remuneration of any kind until they were able to find her a safer place outside the city, where she remained until the liberation in January 1945. After the war, Fern emigrated to Belgium and Fejgin remained in Poland.<sup>1787</sup>

[24] In July 1942, about three months before the final liquidation of the ghetto in the resort town of Busko-Zdrój [Zdrój] in the Kielce district, Helena Schmalholz and her two sons, Shimon and Yehoshua, fled from the ghetto. A member of the underground from the Peasants' Battalions (*Bataliony Chłopskie* [Chłopskie])—Józef Maślanka, a local commander) who had known the family before the war helped them escape from the ghetto, bringing them to the nearby village of Ruczynów [Ruczynów]. There he referred them to the farm of Wincenty and Józefa [Józefa] Misztal, local-born farmers, also active in the underground, who lived with their son, Stanisław [Stanisław]. All three members of the Misztal family received the three Jewish fugitives warmly, without asking for or receiving anything in return, considering it their patriotic duty and part of their war against the common enemy. After a short time, Józefa obtained Aryan papers for Schmalholz and her sons and represented them to their neighbors as relatives. Because of the special treatment that Schmalholz and her sons received from the Misztal family, no one in the village doubted that the mother and two sons were indeed relatives of their hosts. The three moved about freely in the village and slept and ate together with the Misztal family members, who also prepared an underground hiding place in case of a surprise search or if they should be

<sup>1785</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 485.

<sup>1786</sup> The Mańkowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/help-advertisement-story-mankowski-family> (see Zbigniew Mańkowski's second audio account).

<sup>1787</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 488.

betrayed. Schmalholz and her two sons remained in the home of the Misztal family until the liberation of the area in January 1945 and after the war left Poland.<sup>1788</sup>

According to Helena Schmalholz's testimony: "Maślanka gave me a letter for Mrs. Misztal ... with instructions that she accompany me to the local commune council administration (*gmina*). Risking her safety, she went with me to that office, and the priest and organist, who were privy to the activities of the underground, gave me papers showing me as Mrs. Misztal's sister, and on the strength of these documents I obtained employment in Busko-Zdrój."<sup>1789</sup>

[25] After the Jews of Warsaw were ordered to move into the ghetto, Abram and Felicia Gwiazda decided to seek refuge in one of the villages in the area of Otwock, near Warsaw. The situation worsened, and when Felicia Gwiazda was about to give birth, Katarzyna Monko [Mońko], the local midwife, was called in to help her. She determined that the conditions of the hideout could pose a danger to the lives of both the mother and child. Although she knew that Gwiazda was Jewish, she offered to hide her in her home, where she lived with her son and daughter-in-law, Mieczysław [Mieczysław] and Aniela. Gwiazda gave birth to a little girl in the home of the Monko family, and after it became clear that it was impossible for them to return to the hiding place, Gwiazda decided in desperation to abandon her baby in the train station. Monko expressed her firm opposition to this idea, and with the support of the local priest decided to keep the little girl and care for her until after the war. The little Jewish girl remained in the home of the Monko family, who treated her with devotion. After Monko died, her son and daughter-in-law continued to care for and raise the child. Eventually, a German soldier took the child with him to an army camp, where she was given over to a Polish woman, with the intention of bringing her to Germany. The Polish woman decided to flee from the camp and adopt the little girl as her own. However, Mieczysław and Aniela Monko kept track of the child, and after the war, when her biological parents arrived at the Monko home to reclaim their daughter, the Monkos gave them the address of the Polish woman. She refused to give them their daughter back, but thanks to the testimony in court of Mieczysław Monko and his wife, the child was finally returned to her parents. The family eventually immigrated to Israel ...<sup>1790</sup>

[26] Stanisława [Stanisława] Pacek was a teacher who lived during the occupation in the village of Prawiedniki near Lublin with her two sons, Leszek and Jerzy. After her entire family perished, 12-year-old Sara Kraus [later Kolkowicz, b. 1929] fled from the Warsaw ghetto. After much wandering, she arrived in Prawiedniki, where Pacek, a widow, took her in. She and her two sons took the girl under their wing and safeguarded her. Eventually, seven-year-old Basia Klig [later Batya Golan, b. 1925] and her mother [Chava-Chana or Hava-Hanna] also arrived at their home after fleeing from the Lublin ghetto and wandering for some time through the local countryside. In her testimony many years later, Klig would relate that Stanisława Pacek had been a wonderful woman who, motivated only by

<sup>1788</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 523.

<sup>1789</sup> Zuzanna Schnepf-Kończak, "Pomoc Polaków dla Żydów w czasie okupacji niemieckiej: Próba opisu na przykładzie Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata," in Engelking and Grabowski, *Zarys krajobrazu*, 229–30.

<sup>1790</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 526.

love of humanity and without asking for or receiving anything in return, gave the fugitives emotional and physical succour, teaching them how to preserve their human dignity even under inhuman conditions. Despite the danger to her life and the lives of her sons, Pacek persevered in her rescue efforts, doing everything in her power to help the people she had taken in. After the war, all the survivors immigrated to Israel.<sup>1791</sup>

Before arriving at the Paceks, the Kligs were helped by other Poles in the area, among them a Catholic priest in Bychawa (?) who provided medical assistance. The Pacek family also sheltered Reuben Finkelstein in their small farmhouse, after his mother's Polish benefactor had been imprisoned by the Germans for helping Jews.<sup>1792</sup>

[27] In 1941, before Irena Weksztein's parents were deported from Czeŝochowa [Częstochowa] to a forced labor camp, they found a way to make contact with Kamilla Pelc, who, motivated by her love of humanity and without asking for or receiving any remuneration, agreed to take their two-year-old daughter under her wing. Pelc, a war widow, lived with her son, Karol, and risked her life to smuggle young Irena into her apartment and obtain Aryan papers for her [from a priest who agreed to forge a birth certificate for Irena<sup>1793</sup>]. She represented Irena Weksztein to curious neighbors as her niece and cared for her as if she were her own. Over time, Irena grew very attached to Pelc and her son, looking upon them as her mother and brother. Despite the many dangers they encountered, Irena remained in their home until the liberation in January 1945. After the war, Irena's parents, who survived the war, came to take her with them. Because the young girl had become so attached to her adopted family, she refused to accept her real parents. Her refusal was so intense that they had to leave the girl with Pelc for a few more months. Irena eventually emigrated with her parents to France and kept in touch with Pelc for many years.<sup>1794</sup>

<sup>1791</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 573.

<sup>1792</sup> Testimony of Batia (Klig) Golan, YVA, file O.3 V.T/10176 (Item 8214111); The Pacek Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-pacek-family>; "Batya Golan (née Klig in 1933) About Her Life in Pruszków, Warsaw and Lublin Ghettos and the Polish Countryside," Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/pruszkow/16,accounts-memories/11032,batya-golan-nee-basia-klig-in-1933-about-her-live-in-pruszkow-warsaw-and-lublin-ghettos-and-the-polish-countryside/>. Batya Golan's husband Motke, who was 8 months old when he came to Israel from Poland, disclosed: "I have disliked Poles for many years. When Batya wanted to watch a T.V. program in Polish—I would be annoyed—I even hated the language. The change came when I agreed to visit Poland with her some years ago: I suddenly realized the deep bond between Batya and the place of her birth: she remembered places and people so accurately after the many passing years, and they remembered her. I was greatly touched. Since then I love Poland and the Polish language and encourage her to watch Polish-speaking programs on T.V."

<sup>1793</sup> "Karol Pelc: Surviving the Holocaust," *Michigan Tech News*, vol. 33, no. 19 (January 26, 2001), reprinted from *The U.P. Catholic*, January 5, 2001. See also Internet: <http://karol-pelc.blogspot.com/2019/02/memories-of-childhood.html>.

<sup>1794</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 596.

[28] In September 1942, Lea Wicner's [Leah or Lucia Weitzner] mother [Gusta] shoved the 12-year-old out of the railroad car that was transporting the Jews of Hnizdyczow [Hnizdyczów]-Kochawina [near Żydaczów] (Lwow [Lwów] district) to the Belzec [Bełżec] extermination camp. Wicner returned to her village, where she joined up with an uncle [Mundek Feldman] who had [avoided] the transport [and was hidden by the Wohański family<sup>1795</sup>]. With his assistance, she obtained Aryan papers [from a Polish priest<sup>1796</sup>] with which she was able to reach Stary Sambor, where she went to the home of Feliks and Stefania Plauszewski, who were acquainted with her family. The Plauszewskis took Wicner in like a member of the family, taking care of her and not disclosing her Jewish origin to anyone, including their children. In early 1943 [1944?], the Polish residents of Stary Sambor were expelled to the west. The Plauszewskis, together with Wicner, reached Tarnobrzeg (on the Vistula River), but since Poles from Wicner's village had also been expelled to this area, it was feared that her identity would be revealed. Thus, the Plauszewskis decided to move Wicner to the home of Stefania Gos [Goś], Felik's sister, in Sobieska Wola (Lublin district). Gos and her husband, Edward, like the Plauszewskis, treated Wicner as affectionately and devotedly as a daughter until the area was liberated in July 1944. The two Polish families risked their lives to rescue Wicner purely for humanitarian reasons, without remuneration. After the war, Lea Wicner moved to Israel and stayed in touch with her rescuers' children.<sup>1797</sup>

[29] In March 1943, after the liquidation of the Cracow [Kraków] ghetto, Mr. [Leiser] and Mrs. [Ester] Kardisz [Kardisch] continued to work in the Optima factory on the Aryan side of the city, hiding their two children, Rena [Renia, b. 1933] and Romek, in the factory as well. There, they met Rozalia Posławska [Paśławska], the wife of Bolesław Posławski [Bolesław Paśławski], a minor factory official. The Kardiszes felt that they could trust Paśławska and told her about their two children hiding in the factory. The story touched Paśławska, who had three children of her own, and she offered to hide the children in her home unconditionally. She told them she had connections with a Polish underground organization that helped Jews and if necessary could ask the organization for financial help to care for the children. Mr. and Mrs. Kardisz were eventually deported to a concentration camp and their two children remained with the Paśławski family. One day, a Polish neighbor happened to discover that the Paśławskis were hiding two Jewish children in their home and attempted to blackmail them. Paśławska refused to pay what he asked and he informed on them to the authorities. Paśławska was arrested with young Romek, but his sister, Rena, managed to escape and hide in a church. Paśławska was thrown in prison and tortured and only thanks to the confusion caused by the approaching front was she able to escape from prison and hide. Romek was murdered, but his sister, Rena, was returned to the Paśławski family by the priest who discovered her presence in the church. Of the parents, who had been deported to Bergen-Belsen, only the mother, Ester Kardisz, remained alive. ... Kardisz came to them sick and exhausted and they cared for her as if she were a member of the

<sup>1795</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 879.

<sup>1796</sup> Judy Labensohn, "A Real Survivor," *The Jerusalem Post*, May 1, 2000, Internet: <http://info.jpost.com/2000/Supplements/Holocaust/Holocaust.6023.html>: "With the help of a Polish priest who ran the local orphanage, Feldman arranged for Leah Weitzner to become Helena Lachovich [Lachowicz]." According to this article, Leah Wietzner was born in Lwów and was the only child of a judge in the Polish government who died when she was five. She grew up at her grandfather's estate in Kochawina, a village outside Lwów.

<sup>1797</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 620.



family and helped her and her daughter Rena to get back on their feet. Kardisz and her daughter eventually immigrated to Israel.<sup>1798</sup>

[30] Stefan Raczyński [Raczyński], who lived with his family in the village of Wegelina [Wiegielino] in the Vilna [Wilno] district, was superficially acquainted with Jews in the nearby town of Niemenczyn. In September 1941, after the massacre perpetrated by the Germans and Lithuanians against the local Jews, Jewish fugitives began turning up at Raczyński's home asking for help. Stefan and his family helped the Jewish refugees to the best of their ability and provided them with food and a temporary hiding place. Stefan's mother even looked after a baby whom a Jewish woman had abandoned on her doorstep. Thanks to her rescue work, her home became known as "the home of Abraham the Patriarch." In 1942, Raczyński became acquainted with Shoshana [Szoszana] Dezent, a young Jewish woman from Vilna who was hiding under an assumed identity in the surrounding villages and working in peasants' homes as a casual laborer. Dezent, who had lived in a town all her life, found it hard to adapt to village life. Fearing for her safety, Raczyński decided to protect her and whenever she was in difficulties arranged for her to stay with acquaintances of his in the nearby villages. In the spring of 1944, armed Polish nationalists, suspecting Dezent of being Jewish, attacked her and beat her almost to death. Raczyński immediately summoned the local priest, who testified that Dezent was not Jewish, thereby saving her life. Following this incident, Raczyński took Dezent home and looked after her until the area was liberated. After the war, Raczyński ... married Dezent. In 1960, the Raczyńskis immigrated to Israel with their two children.<sup>1799</sup>

The above entry contains some inaccurate information and does not do justice to the Raczyński family, only one of whom, Stefan, was recognized by Yad Vashem. Neither was this honour bestowed on any of the many other Poles who took part in this extraordinary rescue, an operation carried out by a network of people.<sup>1800</sup>

After leaving the Wilno ghetto, Shoshana Dezent went to stay briefly with a Polish family her parents were acquainted with. They in turn took her to friends who provided her with a birth and baptismal certificate. Notwithstanding Shoshana's Semitic appearance, she was passed on to another woman, who brought her to the countryside, in the vicinity of Niemenczyn, where she worked some time for the local village head. Shoshana then found a more permanent position caring for a farmer's daughter with tuberculosis. It was there that she met Stefan Raczyński, a friend of the daughter's younger brother. When this sickly young woman passed away, Stefan's parents, Adolf and Maria Raczyński, agreed to shelter Shoshana and received her warmly. Stefan's parents owned a small estate in Wiegielino, also in Niemenczyn parish, on which they farmed. The family consisted of four children: two sons, one of them Stefan, and two daughters. The

<sup>1798</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 635.

<sup>1799</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 656–57.

<sup>1800</sup> See also the account of Szoszana [sic] Raczyńska in Isakiewicz, *Harmonica*, 87–105; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 448; Rescuers Bios, "Shtetl," PBS Frontline, Internet: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shtetl/righteous/stephan.html>.

Raczyński family took in another small Jewish boy, and their home became a haven for a large number of Jews hiding in nearby forests who were also helped by the Raczyńskis' neighbours. Stefan's mother even prepared a joint Christmas and Hanukkah feast in her home, which was attended by these same Jewish fugitives.

Fearing a denunciation, Stefan found a position for Shoshana as a nanny and housekeeper with Mrs. Kosmowska, his former teacher. After Mrs. Kosmowska's home was burned down by the Lithuanian police, Stefan took Shoshana to his paternal aunt's home in a different locality, perhaps Balingródek. The aunt's home was invaded by bandits, possibly connected to a partisan group, who beat up Stefan and, suspecting Shoshana to be Jewish, wanted to do away with her. The aunt rushed to a priest who lived nearby for help. The priest vouched for Shoshana as a Catholic (even though she had never converted) and shamed the bandits. Stefan decided to transfer Shoshana to another locality, this time to his maternal uncle, where she remained until the Germans retreated from the area. Shoshana recalled:

Stefan [Raczyński] drove me to his father's sister, far away, and he said that, because the young ones were in danger, since both the Germans and Lithuanians were killing them [Lithuanian collaborators had staged raids on Polish homesteads—Ed.], he would seek shelter for both him and me.

And there was hardship again. Armed looters, some of them dressed in Polish uniforms, were attacking peasant houses and they were taking food as well as valuable things in order to have money for vodka. Such were the times, the law did not function. The war was the law.

And they caught Stefan and me. They thought it out at once that Stefan had got away from somewhere, since he wasn't from those parts, and that I was a Jewess he was protecting. They put me against the wall and wanted to shoot me, and they beat Stefan up. He kept repeating that it wasn't true that I was Jewish.

And Aunt ran to the vicar, who lived nearby, and told him that there was trouble brewing, because they wanted to shoot Stefan. The priest followed her immediately to the farm, looked at those bandits and asked, "And what are you doing here?"

"We want to cook this little yid's goose," they said.

"She's not a Jewess. I baptized her myself. And Stefan is a boy of our parish," said the priest.

And thus the priest saved our lives. Later, we learnt that those looters, who posed as freedom fighters, got into trouble, because news spread that they had attacked innocent people and that the priest had had to intervene. Their commander demoted them and they got imprisoned, or something like that.

From there we went to Stefan's mother's brother, to another parish, because we did not want to cause his aunt any more trouble. In fact Stefan had been born there, his birth certificate had been issued there.

What wonderful people they were, the uncle and his wife.<sup>1801</sup>

<sup>1801</sup> Isakiewicz, *Harmonica*, 96.

Toward the end of 1944, after the arrival of the Soviet army, Stefan Raczyński was arrested and imprisoned by the NKVD along with many other Poles in the Wilno area. Miraculously, he was released after repeated intercessions by Shoshana (whom he later married), who started a petition which some Jewish survivors whom Stefan had helped agreed to sign. The Raczyński family's property was confiscated by the Soviets, who incorporated the area into the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. Stefan and Shoshana moved to Poland in 1958, and afterwards they left for Israel.

[31] Before and during the war, Bronisław [Bronisław] Rzepecki was the municipal secretary of Olesnica [Oleśnica] in the Kielce district, using his office during the occupation to aid beleaguered Jews. In the midst of the deportation *Aktionen*, Josef Mandelman contacted him and asked for his assistance. Mandelman's family was made up of six people: Josef, his wife, Andzia, three children—Tamara, Abraham, and Ruth—and a brother-in-law, Yisrael Tarkieltaub. Rzepecki utilized his position and connections and concealed the Mandelmans with peasant families in nearby villages for various periods. Initially the fugitives paid for their upkeep and Rzepecki went out of his way to deliver their money, which had been deposited with the town priest, to the rescuers. When the money ran out, Rzepecki took a loan from his brother to continue supporting the refugees. Despite the danger, he displayed fixity of purpose in his rescue mission until the Mandelmans were liberated in January 1945. Rzepecki acted to save Jews for patriotic reasons and for no material reward.<sup>1802</sup>

[32] During the occupation, Juliusz [Bożydar] Saloni and his wife, Jadwiga [Brzezińska], subsequently Strzelecka, lived in Warsaw and remained on friendly terms with Jews who they had known from their university days. After the Warsaw ghetto was established, they turned their home [in the *Saska Kępa* suburb] into a temporary refuge for Jewish acquaintances and friends who had fled to the Aryan side, until they could find permanent hideouts. In November 1942, a Jew named Josef Dab [Józef Dąb], who left the ghetto each day as a member of a group of laborers, contacted Saloni at his place of work and asked him to help take his wife, Barbara, out of the ghetto and arrange permanent shelter for Irene, his seven-year-old daughter, who was already on the Aryan side. Saloni and his wife, to whom Dab was a total stranger, made the rescue of the Jewish family into their personal cause. Within a short time, the Salonis removed Barbara Dab from the ghetto and placed her with relatives of theirs. In February 1943, they brought Irena to their home and gave her a birth certificate and baptism certificate in the family name of Jadwiga's brother [as Irene Teresa Brzezińska]. From then on, Irena posed as Saloni's orphaned niece in the care of her aunt, which is how the Salonis treated her. Saloni and his wife registered Irena as a Polish child in the local school and continued to care for her until the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1943. [Because of Irena's appearance and her performing a Jewish dance in public, the neighbours in the apartment building in which the Salonis resided realized that the child was Jewish, but no one betrayed them.<sup>1803</sup>] In February 1943, Dab joined them on the Aryan side and the Salonis equipped him with Aryan papers with which he found

<sup>1802</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 689.

<sup>1803</sup> Juliusz Bożydar Saloni, Archiwum Historii Mówionej, Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, Internet: <https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/juliusz-bozydar-saloni,2273.html>.

work and housing. In November 1943, the Gestapo arrested Dab and placed him in Pawiak Prison. Out of concern that the Gestapo would also discover his wife, Barbara, Jadwiga contacted members of Żegota [Żegota], who moved her to a different hideout. Dab escaped from Pawiak prison [with Henry Krupnik, a Jew] and [they] made [their] way to the Salonis' home. [Along the way, being in an unkempt state and susceptible of attracting adverse attention, an unknown priest invited them into his rectory in the Powiśle district, where they washed and were fed.<sup>1804</sup>] The Salonis moved [them] to the nearby town of Grodzisk Mazowiecki, where [Dab's] wife was hiding [in the home of Stanisława Sławińska<sup>1805</sup>], and in October 1944 they were joined by their daughter and lived together until the liberation in January 1945. The Salonis also concealed 18-year-old Jurek Milejkowski for several weeks in May–June 1943 after he had escaped from a train bound for Treblinka. Milejkowski took part in the Warsaw Uprising and died in battle.<sup>1806</sup>

[33] During the occupation, Maria Sitko lived with her daughter, Wanda, in Sosnowiec (Upper Silesia). Starting in 1943, after the ghetto in the Środula [Środula] neighborhood was liquidated, the Sitkos' apartment—living room, kitchen, and half-room, with neither running water nor indoor conveniences—served as provisional shelter for five Jewish refugees. Three of them—Leon Wajntraub, Jerzy Feder, and Nechamia Mandelbaum—had escaped from the ghetto; the other two, Frymeta Feder and Felicia Kac, had slipped out of the Auschwitz prisoners' death march in January 1945. Several fugitives were housed in the half-room; the others were placed in a hideout specially prepared for them under the kitchen floor. Sitko and her daughter were prompted to aid the Jewish refugees by profound altruism stemming from their religious faith. After a priest gave their rescue operation his blessing after they disclosed it to him in confession, the Sitkos offered the fugitives even greater assistance and never sought recompense. In one case, when the Gestapo searched their house for hidden Jews, the Sitkos resourcefully concealed their wards, thereby saving their lives. The Sitkos gave the five Jewish refugees devoted and sympathetic care until the liberation in late January 1945.<sup>1807</sup>

[34] In August 1942, with the liquidation of the Jewish community of Wiszniew in the Nowogrodek [Nowogródek] district, a number of Jews, including Mina Milikowska, escaped. After many vicissitudes and on the verge of despair, she reached the estate of Bagatelka, where she met a farmer by the name of Julian Słodzinski [Słodziński]. Słodzinski, guided by humanitarian principles which overrode considerations of personal safety, led her to his house and, with his wife's consent, offered her shelter there without expecting anything in return. Milikowska stayed with Julian and Bronisława [Bronisława] Słodzinski and their daughter, Regina, until April 1943, after which she joined a Jewish partisan company operating in the nearby forest, fighting in its ranks until the area was liberated.<sup>1808</sup>

As mentioned below, the Słodziński family also assisted other Jews and secured the help of a local priest in their rescue efforts.

<sup>1804</sup> Juliusz Bożydar Saloni, Archiwum Historii Mówionej, Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, Internet: <https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/juliusz-bozydar-saloni,2273.html>.

<sup>1805</sup> Stanisława Sławińska, RD.

<sup>1806</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 694–95.

<sup>1807</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 711–12.

<sup>1808</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 724–25.

Julian Słodziński, along with his wife Bronisława, his daughter Regina and three younger children, worked on their farm in Bagatelka near Wiszniew. ... The Słodzińskis rescued Mina Milkowska [sic], one of the few Jews who managed to escape [from the ghetto in Wiszniew]. They knew Mina before World War II, when her father owned two shops and a mill. Regina shared a room with Mina. The Słodzińskis would tell their guests she was a babysitter. Mina joined a Jewish partisan group in 1943.

The Słodzińskis also rescued a Jewish woman who had escaped from the ghetto in Wilno. Regina does not remember her name. Having so-called “Aryan features,” the woman was able to openly help on the farm. After a month, a friend priest gave her a baptism certificate, and she left her shelter in Bagatelka. Her further life paths remain unknown.

Moreover, the Słodzińskis hid 6 Jews in their barn for about one month. One of them was the family’s former friend, Leon Kokin, and one was probably Mina’s brother. Regina remembers two other names: Dudman and Reiman. She never saw these Jews, as she would only bring them food and leave. However, they had contact with Julian, who would bring them food in the evenings. These Jews later joined the partisan groups.<sup>1809</sup>

[35] Before the occupation, Ela Pleszewska, an attorney, and Henryk Sosnowski, a judge in Cracow [Kraków], were colleagues. Already in September 1939, when the Germans occupied the city, Sosnowski foresaw the danger threatening the Jews and, guided by humanitarian principles, hid Pleszewska in his apartment. Since Pleszewska was known in Cracow, where she had many acquaintances and former clients, Sosnowski, fearing informers, asked his friend the priest for help. The priest, without even seeing Pleszewska, drew up an official document stating that Sosnowski and Pleszewska were husband and wife. Sosnowski and Pleszewska left Cracow, but fearing discovery despite possession of the document kept constantly on the move. Unemployed and with no fixed source of income, Sosnowski nevertheless managed to smuggle food into the Cracow ghetto for his “wife’s” family and helped some of them escape to the Aryan side of the city. Destitute, and persecuted both by the authorities and extortionists, the Sosnowskis were liberated in January 1945, after which they returned to Cracow and resumed their careers. Pleszewska died in Poland in 1965.<sup>1810</sup>

[36] Janina Straszewska and her daughter, Teresa, lived in Cracow [Kraków]. They met Ludwika Liebeskind in late 1941, when the inhabitants of the ghetto were sent to work outside the ghetto. In the summer of 1942, Liebeskind asked Straszewska to place Gizela Szwarz, her five-year-old niece, in hiding in her apartment. Straszewska agreed, sought no remuneration, and offered to shelter Liebeskind too. Straszewska provided the Jewish girl with a certificate of baptism and Liebeskind with a forged birth certificate. [They obtained the documents from a priest they knew in an outlying village.<sup>1811</sup>] After a while, Liebeskind found a way to move her mother and sister from the Plaszow [Płaszów] camp and, with Straszewska’s assistance, found them asylum in a rented apartment in town. Because her facial features left no doubt about her Jewishness, Liebeskind was arrested one day while riding the streetcar. Although she escaped and returned to the Straszewskas’ home, she was afraid to go outside from then on. Teresa, active in a Resistance movement, provided

<sup>1809</sup> The Słodziński Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-slodzinski-family>.

<sup>1810</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 741.

<sup>1811</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 516.

Liebeskind with a forged Kennkarte (identity card). Liebeskind and her niece, Szwarc, stayed in Straszewska's home until the liberation in January 1945.<sup>1812</sup>

[37] Maria Szczecińska [Szczecińska] lived in Staszow [Staszów], Kielce district during the war. She was a widow with five children. Between October 1942 (at which time the local ghetto was liquidated) and the liberation in August 1944, she hid 14 Jews in a specially designed bunker. They included Roman Segal, Rachmil Segal, Daniel Segal, Roza Goldfus (Roman's fiancée), Chaim Posmantier and his wife, Bina (also from the Segal family), Natan and Adela Band, the Wiener brothers—Nachman and Samuel—Hersh Goldberg, his wife, Tola (from the Piekarski family), their son, Efraim (Fromka), and Anna (Andzia) Piekarska. With their help, Maria dug a bunker underneath her home that was just large enough to enable people to sit or lie down. The Jews only left the hideout in the evening. All those who were hidden by Maria and her family survived until the liberation. Roman Segal and his fiancée died on their first day of freedom, the result of one of the last German bombings of the area. The rest immigrated to Israel, the United States, or Canada.<sup>1813</sup>

According to another account, Maria Szczecińska worked as a railway clerk and lived in a house near the railway station. When word reached her that the Gestapo was searching for hidden Jews, she guided her charges to a friend's farm on the edge of the nearby Goliw forest. She remained with them until it was safe to return to her house. A devout Catholic, Maria often questioned the risk to herself and her children. Eventually, she sought the advice of a priest in Kraków. The priest counselled her to continue to protect these unfortunate people.<sup>1814</sup>

[38] During the war, Jozef [Józef] and Antonina Szewc, along with their seven children and Jozef's parents, lived in the village of Niedzieliska in the Zamosc [Zamość] district, where Jozef acted as the village elder. In late 1940, following the closure of the Warsaw ghetto, Fraida Rozental (later Cukier), who was then 16, found her way to Jozef's home. She possessed papers in the name of Irena Kiel. Jozef and his family sheltered her in their home. In May 1942, Jozef obtained a birth certificate for her that was confirmed by the local priest [the pastor of Wielącza] in the name of Halina Byk. These papers enabled Frieda to work in Germany for the remainder of the war. Jozef's wife, Antonina, as well as his parents, Marcin and Zofia, were also helpful. "Marcin Szewc even mailed a couple of letters to me in Germany," wrote Fraida Cukier in her testimony to Yad Vashem. After the war, she returned to Poland and remained there.<sup>1815</sup>

[39] In November 1939, Miriam Cederbaum, who lived in Lodz [Łódź], escaped with her two-year-old daughter, Celina, to Warsaw. When the Jews of Warsaw were herded into the ghetto, Cederbaum decided to flee to Staszow [Staszów] in the Kielce district, where she was born and where she had many childhood friends. In 1942, when the Jews of Staszow were also interned in the ghetto, Cederbaum decided to escape with her daughter and hide

<sup>1812</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 756–57.

<sup>1813</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 779.

<sup>1814</sup> Jack Goldfarb, "A Kaddish Deferred," *The Kielce–Radom Special Interest Group Journal*, vol. 2, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 16.

<sup>1815</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 785.



on the Aryan side of the city. After she tried in vain to find a refuge for herself and her daughter, Anasztazja Kurowska-Szczerbic [Szczerbic], a former neighbor of hers, offered to care for the little girl. Although Kurowska-Szczerbic looked after Celina devotedly, her presence endangered the landlords, who were underground activists. After obtaining Aryan papers for Celina with the help of her underground contacts [a relative approached a young priest who provided a genuine birth and baptismal certificate of a deceased child, knowing that it was for a Jewish child<sup>1816</sup>], Kurowska-Szczerbic asked her sister, Janina Szmurło, who lived in Skarzysko[Skarżysko]-Kamienna, to take care of the little girl. Janina and her husband, Kazimierz, agreed and devotedly looked after Celina, whom they passed off as an orphaned relative. Celina stayed with the Szmurłos until the area was liberated in January 1945, after which she was returned safe and sound to her mother. Together they immigrated to Israel, where, for many years, they kept up contact with their saviors.<sup>1817</sup>

For a brief period, Celina Cederbaum stayed at the parish rectory in Rytwiany, near Staszów, whose pastor was Rev. Jan Fornalski.<sup>1818</sup>

[40] In the summer of 1942, before the ghetto of Pinczow [Pińczów] (Kielce District) was liquidated, eight-year-old Halina Fiszer's parents ordered the girl to flee to the home of Dr. Aniela Goldszmid, their acquaintance. Dr. Golszmid took her to her sister, Leonka Tarabula, who with her husband and three children lived in Miernów (Pinczow county). Despite their dire economic circumstances, the Tarabulas agreed to take in the Jewish girl, whom they had never met. ... The Tarabulas welcomed Halina as a niece in every sense and [to maintain her cover as a relative], Leonka had her baptized and equipped with a Christian birth certificate. Halina was raised lovingly and lacked for nothing ... Halina spent three years with the Tarabulas, a period that she subsequently recalled as a time of kindness that prepared her for normal life. After the war, Tarabula ... delivered Halina Fiszer to the Jewish orphanage in Cracow [Kraków], from which, along with other youngsters, she moved to Israel in 1950.<sup>1819</sup>

[41] Danuta Wolikowska (née Malinowska) was raised in Luck [Łuck] (in Volhynia), where she graduated from the Tadeusz Kosciuszki [Kościuszko] state gymnasium, where she befriended a Jewish girl named Ida Dekelbaum (later Landsberg). In early 1941, Danuta's father was deported to Siberia. On June 21, 1941, Danuta went to Lwow [Lwów] to meet Ida, who was studying there. That very day [in fact, June 22], the German-Soviet war broke out and Lwow was bombarded. The girls decided to return to their family homes. Since all communication was cut off, they started out by foot towards Volhynia. They walked for five days but did not reach their hometown. In this situation they came to the conclusion that Ida had to conceal her origins, so she tore up her papers and threw them away. Danuta and Ida then managed to get to Włodzimierz Wołyński [Włodzimierz Wołyński], where Danuta's mother was living. ... Ida went into the ghetto. Danuta, however, began to work in the regional office where she managed to get papers for Ida, which allowed her to leave the ghetto and look for a way to earn some money outside the ghetto walls. In 1942, rumors spread about the liquidation of the ghettos. Danuta decided to hide Ida in her own rented

<sup>1816</sup> Testimony of Anasztazja Kurowska-Szczerbic, SFV, Interview code 30912.

<sup>1817</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 788–89.

<sup>1818</sup> Testimony of Anasztazja Kurowska-Szczerbic, SFV, Interview code 30912.

<sup>1819</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 809.

apartment. There, she fed her friend and took care of all her needs. When the liquidation of the ghetto began, she decided to take Ida out of town altogether. One day she drove a carriage near the house dressed as a local girl. She dressed Ida in the same manner and together they drove out of town. They reached the village where Danuta's mother worked as a teacher and Danuta introduced Ida as her relative and arranged a place for her to stay, leaving her under the care of the trusted school janitor but without telling him of her real origin. Danuta visited Ida often, bringing her food and clothing; at the same time, she continued to tell the locals that Ida was her relative. She also arranged to obtain proper documents for Ida through the local priest. Towards the end of 1943, Danuta reached the conclusion that due to the anti-Polish sentiments of the local Ukrainian population, Ida should leave the village. She gave her the address of friends in the Kielce area and sent her on her way with a group of Polish refugees. Ida got to Kielce, where she safely awaited liberation while working as a teacher in a nearby village. Throughout this entire period, Danuta's messengers maintained contact with Ida.<sup>1820</sup>

[42] Regina Zajackowska [Zajackowska] lived with her son, Ryszard, and her daughters, Izabela Stasiuk and her family and Maria Janiak and her family, in Włodzimierz Wołyński [Włodzimierz Wołyński]. One day, Irena Gelman and her year-old daughter, Anna, appeared at their house. Irena had fled the Lwow [Lwów] ghetto (her husband had perished even before they entered the ghetto) and after a long journey arrived in Włodzimierz Wołyński. She represented herself to the local priest as a Polish woman whose entire family had been killed. She said she was looking for work. The priest directed her to the Stasiuk family to work as a maid and cook. Sometime afterwards, the Stasiuk family decided to move to Lublin out of fear of Ukrainian nationalists and invited Irena to come along with them. Izabela's mother, Regina Zajackowska, came to visit her daughter and advised Irena not to go to Lublin. At the same time, she offered help if Irena should have to flee Lublin in the future. Irena went with the family to Lublin but was forced to return to Włodzimierz Wołyński. She then went to Regina, who warmly welcomed her and her daughter (who was ill) into her home. ... After a few days, when Irena's daughter recovered, Irena decided to leave. She thanked Regina for her help and said that she did not wish to put her at risk anymore as, she explained, she was a Jewish escapee from the ghetto. Zajackowska smiled and told her that from the moment she first saw her and her child she knew they were not Polish, but that this did not change a thing. Regina agreed to keep Irena and her daughter with her ... Irena stayed with the Zajackowskis until the end of the war ...<sup>1821</sup>

[43] After a number of *Aktionen* launched by the Germans and Ukrainian nationalists against the Jews of Stryj, in the Stanisławów [Stanisławów] district, Shlomo and Emilia [Minka] Sztern [Stern] turned to Władysław [Władysław] and Stefania Zarzycki, friends and former neighbors of theirs, asking for help. Without any conditions, the Zarzyckis came to the aid of their Jewish acquaintances and, despite the danger, arranged a hiding place for them in their house. Their bravery was all the more outstanding in view of the fact that some neighboring Poles, who had harbored Jews, had been shot to death. The Zarzyckis, with the help of Jan, their 15-year-old son, dug a shelter under the floor of one of their rooms, where the Szterns hid until the summer of 1944, when the area was liberated. Despite their straitened circumstances, the Zarzyckis, their son, Jan, and their daughter, Stanisława [Stanisława], looked after their charges devotedly, at great personal risk, without

<sup>1820</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 890.

<sup>1821</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 917.

expecting anything in return. Guided by humanitarian principles, they shared their food with them, concerned themselves with their hygiene, and did all they could to raise their morale when they fell into despair.<sup>1822</sup>

The Zarzyckis were committed members of the Polish Home Army. The Sterns had arranged with a Polish woman for their daughter, Antonia (later Toni Rabin, b. 1940), to be left near the home of a village priest with a note saying that she was Catholic, and that her father was in a labour camp and her mother was unable to care for her. Despite this fairly transparent guise, the priest placed the child with two families, consecutively. A rumour spread that this was the priest's illegitimate child. After the arrival of the Soviet army, the child's protectors did not want to return Antonia, so her father had to kidnap her.<sup>1823</sup>

[44] Olga Zawadzka, originally from Lwow [Lwów], moved to the village of Czusow [Czuszów], Kielce district, after her marriage. Between the years 1925 and 1930, she had been a student in Jan Kazimierz University in Lwow, where she had befriended a Jewish woman named Frida Kohn, who was a mathematics student. After Olga left Lwow, the two friends lost contact. When the Germans took over Lwow, a mutual friend turned to Olga and asked her if she would hide Fela in her home. Olga, bearing in mind the fact that Fela was a Jew, told her warmly that Fela would be most welcome. Fela arrived in Czusow and Olga, with the help of friends and a priest,<sup>1824</sup> obtained a false birth certificate and *Kennkarte* for her made out in the name of Maria Zajackowska [Zajackowska]. Fela asked Olga to help a friend of hers, Klara Nachtgaist, who was spending entire days in churches, too frightened to leave. Olga welcomed her into her home as well. Klara already had Aryan papers made out in the name of Julia Nahorayska. In the summer of 1942, Olga went to Lwow again, where she agreed to bring back Nina Drucker (later Noe Levine), the seven-year-old daughter of the director of the Lwow ghetto hospital, Dr. Herman Drucker, to Czusow. Olga took Nina, who had a birth certificate in the name of Janina Witeszczak, into her home. Whenever the need arose, the child was either put up in the Sisters of St. Urszula [Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union] boarding school in Cracow [Kraków] or the Sisters of the Holy Ghost [Sisters Canonesses of the Holy Spirit de Saxia] boarding school in Busko [Busko-Zdrój]. Olga represented the fugitive child as a daughter of relatives who had died during the war.<sup>1825</sup>

[45] Henryk Zielonka was a tailor and ran an underwear factory in Czestochowa [Częstochowa]. When he married Gertruda he was already a widower and had two sons from his previous marriage. In the summer of 1943, Henryk's son brought home a five-year-old Jewish girl named Chana (later Chana Batista). Chana was born on the outskirts of Czestochowa, in

<sup>1822</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 925–26.

<sup>1823</sup> Toni R. [Rabin] and Emilia S. [Stern] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-447), FVA; Testimony of Antonia Rabin, SFV, Interview code 6567; Testimony of Emilia Stern, SFV, Interview code 6568.

<sup>1824</sup> In her account, Olga Zawadzka refers to the help of Michalina Razdro and unidentified priests in obtaining false documents for Fela Kohn. See Knap, "Jak ci się uda uratować, pamiętaj", 73.

<sup>1825</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 928–29.

Rakow [Raków]. On June 16, 1943, Chana's mother had taken her to Czystochowa<sup>1826</sup> and gave her a scrap of paper with an address written on it. Chana was told that at the said address she would find a woman who would help her. Since then she never saw her mother again. A passerby directed Chana, who was not able to read at the time, to the address, where she waited a few hours for the woman whom her mother had told her about. The woman wrote her a new note and took the girl to a church. She told her to wait for the priest and quickly disappeared herself. After mass, Chana turned to the priest and showed him the note. The priest said that he could not help her. He called in a boy and a girl and asked them to take Chana to an old age home run by nuns. In front of the home there was a big courtyard; on the bench sat a few people. They started asking Chana questions to see if she knew how to pray. Suddenly she noticed the boy coming down the stairs; it was Henryk Zielonka's son. "Aren't you ashamed to tire this girl out with questions?" he asked. He took Chana by the arm and escorted her to his parents' house. After a time, Henryk managed to get documents for Chana "proving" that she was his niece. ... "Shortly afterwards they told me to call them 'Mother' and 'Father' ... I was a difficult child, I almost didn't speak, I didn't smile, and in addition I didn't want to eat. My poor mother did what she could to make sure that I would eat something. ..." After the war, Chana started school, finished her studies, and began working. When her adoptive parents died, she ... discovered that her mother was murdered by the Germans.<sup>1827</sup>

[46] Halina Zwanska [Zwańska] and her mother, Aleksandra Gurska [Górska?], lived in Vilna [Wilno]. During the war, they rescued a five-year-old girl, Miriam Griner (later Miriam Goldin), [born in Wilno in 1939]. After the town was occupied by the German army, the Griner family—the father, Faibish, his wife, and their daughter Miriam—found themselves, like all remaining Vilna Jews, in the ghetto, and later in a camp in Vilna. Towards the end of March 1944, the Germans seized all of the children that were in the camp. Faibish managed, however, to hide his then five-year-old daughter. Aleksandra Gurska, who agreed to take the child under her care, carried her out of the camp in a big cooking pot and then later to her apartment where she lived with her already married daughter, Halina Zwanska. The two women looked after the child for four months, until the Red Army liberated the town on July 10, 1944. In his testimony to Yad Vashem, Faibish emphasized that the child spoke only Yiddish at the time, making the situation even more complicated. Miriam Goldin also added in her testimony that during her stay with Gurska and Zwanska another Jewish woman called Werszes was staying there too.<sup>1828</sup> [Her rescuers passed Miriam off

<sup>1826</sup> According to other sources, Chana or Hanna Batista (then Sara Rozen) was about five when she and her mother were compelled to leave the Albertine convent in Czystochowa, where they had found refuge under the identity of Racińska, after someone denounced them. In despair, her mother determined to drown herself by jumping from a bridge but only broke a leg. She was later captured by the Germans and killed. The story of their stay at the Albertine convent is described later. The child was later known as Eugenia Koziarska. See Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 150–51; Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 50, based on the testimony of Chana Batista, YVA, file O.3/5732 (Item 3555262); Chana Batista Papers, USHMM, Accession no. 2001.197.1.

<sup>1827</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 938.

<sup>1828</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 947.

as a Catholic and took her to church services. Her identity was known to the priest, who was supportive of the rescuers. After the war, Miriam was reunited with her parents.<sup>1829</sup>]

[47] Witold and Zofia Bohdziewicz and Grzegorz and Beata Schneider of Wilno (now Vilnius, Lithuania) knew each other even before the war, but until the Nazi occupation there was no special connection between them. The relations between these two young families, as yet without children, became closer only in the summer of 1941, after the German occupation of the city and the confinement of the Jews in the ghetto. Bohdziewicz was then working as an engineer in the Haus und Wohnung Rustungsbetrieb factory in the service of the war effort, under German supervision. [It is general knowledge that hundreds of thousands of Jews also worked in German factories and workshops, mainly in the service of the war effort, under German supervision.—Ed.] Grzegorz Schneider was a metalworker by profession and Bohdziewicz gained him employment in the factory. Thanks to his employment there, Schneider had a permit to circulate outside the ghetto. In addition, the Bohdziewicz family helped the Schneider family with food. In 1943, when rumors spread that the Germans were about to liquidate the ghetto, the Schneider family sought a way to escape outside the walls. The problem was to find a suitable hiding place for their one-year-old son, Alexander, born in 1942 in the ghetto. Schneider decided to confide in his benefactor, Bohdziewicz. The latter discussed the matter with his wife, Zofia, then pregnant with their daughter. Zofia understood the distress of the Schneider couple, and, after some hesitation, agreed to save the infant by taking him in. She was helped in her decision by the fact that the child was blond and uncircumcised. The child was smuggled out of the ghetto, and presented as abandoned on her doorstep. She told her curious neighbors that she intended to adopt him. So that there would be no suspicion that the child was Jewish she had him baptized, with the prior consent of his parents, and gave him their surname of Bohdziewicz. [The age of the child would have rendered the request for baptism suspect.—Ed.] They cared for him devotedly and lovingly as if he were their own son in every sense of the word. The infant Alexander Schneider remained with the Bohdziewicz couple until after the liberation when he was returned to his parents who had also survived. The Bohdziewiczes did not ask for any payment.<sup>1830</sup>

[48] Józef and Jadwiga Dąbrowski lived with their seven children on an isolated farmstead near the village of Kamenka [Kamionka] (Oszmiana County, Wilno District). The family's house and farm bordered on the forest and their closest neighbors lived far away. After mass killings perpetrated by Germans in the village of Woronów [Werenowo] (Lida County), Dziezieniszki [Dziezieniszki] (Oszmiana County), and Rodamina [Rudomino], near Wilno, during 1942, several young Jews who escaped the murder operations were sheltered by the Dąbrowskis. In 1943, two Jewish boys, Elchik Kushel and Haim Kozin, also came to the Dąbrowski's [sic] home seeking a place to stay for the winter months. With Józef's consent, and with his help, they dug a hideout near his farm. At some point they were joined by Charna, Elchik's sister, and her six-year-old daughter, Judith. The Dąbrowski family was a large one with many children, and it was hard for them to feed four additional people, so the Jews were forced occasionally to leave their hiding place to try to obtain food from area farms. On one such outing searching for food, they met some other Jews hiding in the forest. One of them, Sonia Kutser, who had escaped from the Vilna [Wilno] ghetto during

<sup>1829</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 516; Testimony of Miriam (Griner) Goldin, YVA, file O.3 V.T/2689 (Item 3763952).

<sup>1830</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 536.

its liquidation in September 1943, went to seek out her relatives in Rudamina. There she was informed that there were Jews hiding out in the area where the Dąbrowskis were living and that the Jews were receiving help from the Dąbrowski family. She headed for that part of the countryside to try to get help from them as well. Shortly after her arrival to the area, the brothers, Henryk and Hona Soloduch from Rudamina, who until then had been helped by another Polish farmer, arrived. One day at the end of 1943, members of the Polish underground Home Army (AK) came to the farm and by chance saw Judith as she was opening the entry hole into the shelter. The AK men stormed the farm and ordered the Jews out of the shelter. Five people emerged (that day the Soloducha [sic] brothers were elsewhere). Józef was seized and beaten in front of his wife and children, and the AK men took his horse and wagon as punishment for hiding Jews. As they were taking the Jews into the nearby forest for execution, the priest [chaplain] who accompanied them arrived and persuaded them not to shed the blood of innocent people. Having no other choice, the survivors returned to the Dąbrowskis, who took them in again. Early in 1944, most of the Jews left the Dąbrowski's farm for alternative hiding places; only Sonia Kutser remained with them until the liberation in July 1944.<sup>1831</sup>

[49] During the German occupation, Maria Hanzowa, a poor widow and devout Catholic, lived with her adult daughter, Andzia, at 4 Łyczakowska Street in Lwów (today L'viv). She rescued Zofia Akselrod (later, Garfinkel), her brother Milek and their mother Ester Akselrod. Zofia Akselrod worked in a clothing factory in Lwów on the "Aryan" side. In March 1943, she began contacting Poles she knew hoping to find a place to hide with their assistance. Her first efforts were not successful since she was only sheltered for one night in exchange for money she had received by selling a coat and was forced back to the ghetto. Maria Hanzowa had had business dealings with Zofia's parents in Przemyślany (Tarnopol District), from whom she bought butter for sale at market. She had accumulated a debt of 400 zloty [złoty] that she had not been able to pay back. Following some dreams in which Zofia's father appeared, Maria decided to find the family and help them. She asked her priest for advice and began to search for the family. Maria and Zofia met accidentally on Źródłana Street outside the ghetto. She agreed to take Zofia's mother and promised to share with her family whatever she had. Zofia sent her mother, Ester, to Maria Hanzowa and joined her after her plan to hide with a young couple fell through. The two were then joined by Milek, Zofia's brother, who managed to escape from the Janowska Camp after Zofia had sent him the address hidden in a loaf of bread. Maria informed them about the situation at the front and cared for their needs. She cooked for them, providing dairy food. She was motivated by her financial debt to the family [which was hardly sufficient to offset the risk and expenses she incurred] and hoped that they would convert, although she did not pressure them. Maria sold some gold pieces she had to help her buy food for them. Maria's daughter, Andzia, knew about the arrangement and kept the secret. Maria Hanzowa hid and cared for Zofia, her brother Milek and their mother Ester from March 1943 until June 1944. After the war, they would meet Maria while still in Lwów, providing her with extra food, but later contact was lost after Maria Hanzowa moved west to the new borders of

<sup>1831</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 544. Since the Dąbrowski family was large and could not possibly feed all these additional people, the Jewish charges would likely have had to resort to stealing food and perhaps robbing farmers in the vicinity. Word of this would have likely reached the Polish underground. The entry obscures the dynamic of retaliation under circumstances where lives were at stake in the competition for scarce food.



Poland, while the Akselrods moved first to Kraków in March 1945, then to a DP camp, and finally immigrated to the United States.<sup>1832</sup>

[50] The Jankowski family, a devout Catholic family of three, lived in the village of Maliniak (Młyniec?) near Warsaw, the parents Bolesław and Stanisława and their three-year-old daughter Halina (today, Brulińska). In 1942, after suffering the torments of wanderings and persecutions, 12-year-old Ester Rotfing (later, Livny) arrived at their home. She had been smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto with her older brother. They had tried to survive in the surrounding villages, working as shepherds for the farmers, and assuming the false identity of Polish orphans [a rather transparent guise]. After losing her brother as a result of denunciation, Ester began to work for the Jankowski family, where she was very industrious and treated in turn with warmth. One day, Bolesław asked her if she had already participated in her First Communion ceremony as required at her age and she innocently replied in the negative. Bolesław promised to include her in the Communion ceremony the next Sunday at the church. When she went as required before the ceremony to her first confession before the priest, she panicked and revealed to him that she was Jewish. As a result, the priest did not let her participate in the ceremony and he shared the secret with Bolesław. Once it was known that she was Jewish, Ester was seized by fear and sought to flee. Bolesław stopped her, calmed her down and promised that nothing would happen to her, that they would continue to treat her as a daughter in every way and take care of all her needs. He delivered on this promise and Ester stayed with the Jankowski family until the end of the war. They kept her even though many of the villagers knew that she was Jewish.<sup>1833</sup>

[51] During the war, Klara Lassoga lived in Ursus near Warsaw, where she worked in a factory for the Germans. In 1942, a good friend of hers brought Leontyna Erenbrod, a 14-year-old Jewish orphan girl from Warsaw, to Klara asking that she hide the young girl in her home. Leontyna was originally from Bukaczowce (Rohatyn County, Stanisławów District, today Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine) and her parents had been murdered a year earlier in Warsaw. Klara, who was living alone at the time, had Jewish friends in the Warsaw ghetto, such as Laiche Rozen, whom she was in touch with and tried to help as much as she could. Her willingness to help her friends in the ghetto gave the impression that she would be willing to hide a young Jewish girl in her home. Indeed, when the girl was brought to her, she agreed to take her under her wing. In 1943, Leontyna was converted to Christianity in order to get a Christian birth certificate and to appear as Klara's relative. Her new name was Ludwika Mileszczuk (later, Matias). She remained in Klara's home and under her protection until the end of the war, and their relationship was like that of real members of the family even after the war.<sup>1834</sup>

The following is based on the recognition by Yad Vashem in 2008 of the Mikszta family:

[52] Piotr and Anna Mikšta [Mikszta], born in 1902 and 1905 respectively, lived in the small town of Święciany (later Švenčionys), near Vilnius [Wilno]. Piotr worked at a medical plant

<sup>1832</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 561.

<sup>1833</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 563–64.

<sup>1834</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 586.

that continued to function during the German occupation. Anna was a housewife. In 1942, Piotr's acquaintance Saikowski [Sajkowski] brought him a five-year-old girl, Shelli Margolis, the daughter of a local Jewish family. Margolis' mother had perished by that time; her father, Samuil Margolis, had put her in Saikowski's care. However, she found it difficult to adjust, and cried and begged to be taken back to her family. The childless Mikštas had more patience for the young girl so traumatized by the war. After a while Margolis started to feel at ease in their home, and began to call her benefactors "mummy" and "daddy." The Mikštas were helped in their care by Anna's 14-year-old niece Bronisława [Bronisława Romasłowska], who would come every day to look after her, or take her to her family's farm. Devout religious Catholics, the Mikštas baptized Margolis, changed her name to Alicia [Alicja], and paid great attention to her religious education. A while later, the Mikštas were denounced, and they and their young ward were summoned for interrogation. The policeman demanded that "Alicia" tell him who her real mother was, but the girl just cried and pointed to Anna. Thanks to a bribe gathered by the extended Mikšta family, they were finally released. After the liberation of Švenčionys by the Red Army, Margolis remained with her rescuers, because all of her known relatives had been killed.<sup>1835</sup>

The following is based on the recognition by Yad Vashem in 2010 of the Brykczyński family:

[53] Feliks Sandauer was born in Lwów, Poland, on September 9, 1928 to parents Józef Henryk, a lawyer, and Franciszka, a pediatrician. In 1942, the Germans began deporting Jews en masse from Lwów to the Belżec camp. Although the Sandauers lived outside the ghetto, theirs was no easier fate: the Germans had the addresses of Jews living on the "Aryan" side, and they took away Józef Henryk, Franciszka, and Franciszka's mother, Sara Czoban. Feliks was saved by two Italian soldiers who were quartered in the apartment and hid Feliks in their bed sheets. Somehow (possibly with the help of the Italian soldiers), Feliks found himself in the home of Aleksandra Dąmbaska [Rudecka], a former friend of his mother's. ... when Feliks arrived, Aleksandra accepted him without any hesitation. However, because she herself was quite involved in the work of the Polish resistance, she hurriedly arranged for him to be sheltered in the home of her sister Maria Dąbska-Brykczyńska and her husband Marcin Brykczyński. Maria and Marcin Brykczyński lived in Skołyszyn with their four children. The couple was also playing host to a family of five Poles expelled by the Germans from their home in Poznań. Nonetheless Feliks was warmly welcomed in, under the assumed name of Feliks Sawicki, son of Marian and Franciszka, Poles ostensibly murdered by Germans. Only Maria and Marcin knew the truth of Feliks' origins. They had him baptized in secret by a friendly priest, and nobody guessed his real identity. Everyone in the family perceived him as a brother or a cousin. Feliks, in turn, felt the same—a familial closeness to the Brykczyńskis as well as to Aleksandra Dąmbaska.<sup>1836</sup> [In fact, word of this rescue spread among the villagers but no one betrayed them.<sup>1837</sup>]

<sup>1835</sup> Piotr and Anna Mikšta, RD. See also Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=8192>.

<sup>1836</sup> Brykczyński Family, RD.

<sup>1837</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 153; Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 2, 214–18.

The following is based on the recognition by Yad Vashem in 2011 of Kazimiera Demiańczuk:

[54] Eugenia Vilensky was born in 1940 in Wilno (now Vilnius) to parents Mausza (b. 1893) and Sara (b. 1905). Mausza was a construction engineer with a background in singing. Sara was a pianist and accordion player. She also helped her mother in the laundry she owned, and in 1938 opened a little shop of her own. In July 1941 the Germans came to Wilno and sent many Jewish men, including Mausza Vilensky, to forced labor in Kena, where they were all executed in September. Meanwhile, the women of the family (Eugenia, her mother, and her grandmother) were sent into the ghetto. The grandmother had a housekeeper named Maria Kalicka who came with them to the ghetto. When the *Aktionen* (mass executions) began in the ghetto, Sara started thinking of a way to save her infant daughter. Maria, who was Jewish, had somehow managed to acquire Polish identity papers and was acquainted with one of the German guards, who allowed her to go outside to buy food. In this way Maria managed to carry Eugenia out of the ghetto and give her to Kazimiera Demianczuk [Demiańczuk] (b. 1888), who lived nearby. Sara and her mother remained in the ghetto until their joint escape, but they both perished. Eugenia lived with Kazimiera until the end of the war. She called her "Auntie." Demianczuk was a very devout woman. She baptized Eugenia and took her to church often. When there were battles and explosions in the city, she would wake the girl and have her pray to God for salvation. They were near starving, and Eugenia was often ill. The only language the child knew was Polish, and she learned to read from an illustrated book in Polish. Eugenia was exposed to much suffering and peril as a very little girl, and some of the things she saw in wartime Wilno remained with her as nightmares for the rest of her life. However, due to Kazimiera's diligent care, she survived the war and remained with her "Auntie" for a while, attending kindergarten until some of her surviving Jewish relatives found her and took her to Moscow. Eugenia received a good education and became a musician and journalist. Kazimiera went to live in Poland after separating from the girl, and all contact with her was lost.<sup>1838</sup>

The following is based on the recognition by Yad Vashem in 2012 of Jadwiga Sztefec:

[55] Alexander Semyanovski was born in 1937 in Vetrino, Belarus. By the beginning of World War II, the family moved to Łuck (today Lutsk) [in Volhynia]. Alexander's father, Mikhail, was a military officer who fell in the first days of the war. His mother, Sofia Alkevitch-Semyanovska, and the two children, Alexander and Felix, were sent to the Łuck Ghetto in September 1941. They stayed there until August 1942, when a mass shooting in which 25,000 Jews were murdered took place. Right before the *Aktion* (mass execution) began, Alexander and Felix were taken away by Jadwiga Sztefec. She had been friends with Sofia before the war (Sofia worked at the post office and had many local friends and acquaintances). Jadwiga risked her life providing the Semyanovskis with food and clothing throughout their stay in the ghetto, but when an acquaintance of hers in the police told her that there was to be a mass killing, she decided to bribe a guard in the ghetto to extract the boys and save them. The spontaneous decision to save the children had dire consequences for Jadwiga.

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<sup>1838</sup> Kazimiera Demianczuk, RD.

Her Ukrainian husband left her because it was well known that the Nazis would kill their entire family if they were to find Jewish children in their home. Her acquaintances knew she had no children, so she had to keep the boys hidden in the attic. Given her circumstances, she soon realized that it was impossible to rescue two children, so she arranged for a different hideout for Felix, who survived the war tending to cattle on a farm. Jadwiga was able to get Alexander an identification card through her church, registering him as an adopted orphan. Still, when it was too dangerous to stay in the house, she had to hide him in the chimney or take him to the countryside, taking odd jobs to justify moving about. When someone reported that Jadwiga Sztefec was hiding a Jewish child, the two were saved by the same police acquaintance who had told her about the Aktion at the beginning of the war. They managed to escape again. After the war, Alexander stayed with Jadwiga until his enrollment in a military academy in 1955. He considered her his mother and treated her accordingly throughout her life. She died in 1977.<sup>1839</sup>

The following is based on the recognition by Yad Vashem in 2014 of Kazimiera Kowalska and Franciszek and Józefa Kosiński:

[56] Regina Ruskin was born in Siemiatycze, Poland, in 1931. She was 12 years old in November 1942 when the ghetto in her hometown was liquidated and she found herself on a train to Treblinka. She managed to jump off the train, joining a group of 13 people to do so, including two of her brothers. They went to the nearby villages looking for someone to help them, as the Nazis tried to hunt them down. When one of the brothers was caught and killed by a local militia, the group realized that the local farmers were too afraid to take in Jewish men. They decided at least to find shelter for the young girl who was with them, Regina. When they reached the village of Tołwin [a village near Siemiatycze], they reached out to the Kowalski family and asked them to help the girl. Kazimiera Kowalska was a devout Catholic and was prepared to help the child. She consulted with the priest [in Dziadkowice parish] and was strengthened in her resolve to rescue Regina. She placed her in the barn and kept her relatively well fed and clean. To occupy the girl, she had Regina knit, something she was good at. The conditions were not good—the girl was near starving—but Kowalska did do her best to help. The day came, however, when someone found out about the situation, and Kazimiera transferred Regina into the hands of another local family: Franciszek and Józefa Kosiński. The Kosińskis had five children and were somewhat better off than the Kowalskis, so Regina came to back herself with them. Once she was restored to health, Regina became part of the family, playing with the children and reading them books. Her older brother Meir was hiding in the forest nearby and was sometimes able to come visit her. One day, when the Kosiński parents were away, three gendarmes appeared with the intention of searching the house. Luckily, there was a small hideout in the house for just such an occasion, and Regina pushed herself into it and stayed there for the duration of the search. She was not discovered. When the Kosiński parents returned, she was overwhelmed with guilt for endangering the family and said she was leaving. Józefa vehemently opposed the idea and did not let her leave. The gendarmes had told the next-door neighbor, the village mayor, that a Jewish girl was rumored to be hiding at the Kosińskis' house and that that had been the reason for the search. When Kosińska heard that, she marched over and declared that the child was staying and that if the mayor wished to have her killed along with the entire Kosiński family, he was welcome to go right

<sup>1839</sup> Jadwiga Sztefec, RD.

to the Gestapo. The mayor, humbled by her words, promised to keep silent. In this way Regina survived with the Kosińskis until the liberation.<sup>1840</sup>

The entry in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations* for Józef and Stefania Macugowski<sup>1841</sup> neglects to mention the earlier assistance of a priest:

[57] Stefania and Józef Macugowski lived in Nowy Korczyn together with their three children. Before the war, the population of that town was around 4 thousand people with circa 3/4 of them Jewish. The Macugowskis were friends with several Jewish families.

In November 1942, the Germans transported Jews away from Nowy Korczyn, taking them, via the station in Szczucin, to the death camp in Belżec. Right before that deportation commenced, Szaindl Wainberg, a good friend of Józef, came to him asking for help. “She begged me to help her out in her difficult situation—she was hiding in the area with a priest but the people there suspected that she was Jewish and she had to flee from her hiding place,” he recalled after the war.

Macugowski agreed to take Szaindl in. After some time, she brought several other people, mostly members of her family, to him. Józef and Stefania decided that they were going to help those other people as well. They reckoned that they had nothing much to lose anyway—the punishment for helping one Jew was the same as the punishment for helping nine of them. Józef recalled: “There was a military police station around 200 metres from our house so we thought the Germans would not expect people to be hiding so close to them.”

The Macugowskis dug out a shelter in their basement. The number of people hiding there was seven and it grew to nine in 1944. They were: Sara Grynberg, Lejb and Gitla Radca and their daughters: Sara, Golda, and Miriam, Szaindl Wajnberg, Kupfer, and Mendel Grynbaum. The hiding place was small, strewn with straw, and there were plank beds inside and a bucket for waste. Its ceiling was reinforced with steel rails and covered with planks and earth to conceal it even better. The people hiding in the shelter never left it—this exerted an immense strain on their bodies and, even more so, their minds.

The shelter could be entered from the yard, via the room in which hay was stored. It was prepared in such manner as to prevent even the children of the Macugowskis from discovering the hideout. The children did not know that there were Jews in hiding at their farmstead.

The hiding Jews bore a portion of the costs of food because Stefania and Józef would not have been able to procure enough food to feed nine more people on their own. In the summer of 1944, a German family was quartered on the Macugowskis. However, their presence had no impact on the people in hiding.

The Jews saw the end of the occupation, surviving until January 1945. They emigrated to the USA and Israel after the war. It was only after a dozen or so years that they made contact with one another via phone and by mail. The Macugowski family were also invited to New York by the daughters of Lejb and Gitla Radca and they made a trip to the USA in 1986.<sup>1842</sup>

<sup>1840</sup> Kazimiera Kowalska, RD.

<sup>1841</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 475.

<sup>1842</sup> The Macugowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-macugowski-family>.

The foregoing fifty-seven examples of unidentified priests that appear in many rescue stories are not exhaustive. In the following case, described by sociologist Nechama Tec, the rescuer and her charge are given false names.

Ada Celka was deeply religious. During the war she sheltered the young Jewish girl, Danuta Brill. I interviewed Ada in Poland and Danuta in the United States. "I heard about baptism from the Jewish woman: My mother's father was a highly respected rabbi. Both Ada and her sister knew it. They wanted me to go to church like all the other children. It was safer this way. But to go to communion without being a Catholic would have been a sin. They thought that I should be baptized. Knowing that my grandfather was a rabbi they did not want to do it on their own. Because my grandfather was still alive, they turned to him for permission. He knew that they could baptize me without his consent. He wrote them a beautiful letter in which he gave them permission and his blessings. They baptized me only after that letter. Their priest knew that I was Jewish and he performed the ritual. He also taught me the Catechism. The Church made a deep impression on me. I was overwhelmed by my new religion. It became a spiritual escape and gave me strength."<sup>1843</sup>

Subsequently, Tec expanded on the story and highlighted the rescuer's self-effacement, which is especially characteristic of members of the clergy.

I interviewed Ada Celka in Poland. A governess by profession, during the war, she had shared a one-room apartment with her unmarried sister and a handicapped father. In 1942, a Jewish woman, an acquaintance, asked Ada to save her child, a girl of eight. When the girl, Danuta, came to share the one-room apartment, the neighbors were told that she was an orphaned relative. To my suggestion that keeping the Jewish girl must have entailed economic hardships, Ada reacted with a flat denial. She also failed to tell me about a few facts that would have enhanced her image.

I heard only from Danuta, whom I interviewed in the United States, that Ada had planned and almost succeeded in smuggling Danuta's parents out of a working camp and in placing them with a Polish family on a farm. This, according to the daughter, involved extraordinary efforts. Ada was not an influential person; she had few connections and no money. Her success in locating a peasant family could be ascribed to her willingness to try again and again and to her strong determination. Finally, all was ready, and detailed plans for smuggling the parents out of their working camp were set in motion. On the chosen day, Ada went to the appointed place next to the camp, but she waited in vain. Danuta's parents had already been deported to a death camp.

Ada also never bothered to tell me that when food was scarce, which it often was, she fed her handicapped invalid father first, and then Danuta. She and her sister ate only after her father and the girl had enough.<sup>1844</sup>

<sup>1843</sup> Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*, 142.

<sup>1844</sup> Nechama Tec, "Altruism and the Holocaust," Internet: <http://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/publications/se/5906/590609.html>.



Priests were known to preside over bogus religious ceremonies for the benefit of Jewish fugitives. After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Henryk Nojmark, who went by the name of Papierski, and his wife Sławka, were directed by Barbara Siwczyńska to Busko-Zdrój, where her mother, Stefania Siwczyńska, lived. In order to enhance their cover as Catholic Poles, Henryk and Sławka were married by Rev. Antoni Otremski, the local pastor.<sup>1845</sup>

In some cases, Jews who were passing as Catholics simply turned to priests for solace. It is apparent, therefore, that they did not view the Catholic clergy as a hostile element, even if they did not personally know the priest in question. One such case was that of Laura Schwarzwald, a native of Lwów, who was residing in Busko-Zdrój with her young daughter, Selma (later Sophie Turner-Zaretsky, b. 1937), both of them under false identities. Laura had become Bronisława Tymejko, a widow, and her daughter was Zofia Tymejko. They were joined there by Laura's younger sister Adela, who was living under the name Ksenia Osoba.

It was toward the end of the war, when Laura couldn't have bought a good night's sleep with a million zlotys [złotys], that an itinerant Catholic priest walked into Busko-Zdrój from who knows where and drew a crowd of faith-hungry Poles to a field outside of town. For reasons Laura herself barely understood, she stood in the chilly spring wind and listened to him.

She couldn't take her eyes off of him. With his black moth-eaten cassock and sunken dark eyes, he looked as if he had experienced his own share of suffering. He stood in the pasture with his Bible open in one palm and his other hand pointing to the sky. He told the crowd that they would overcome their suffering with hope and prayer, that Jesus had not forgotten them, and that God would punish the evildoers, and so on and so forth. So where's God been since 1939 she thought.

Laura almost never went to church on Sunday with Zofia and her class, and she couldn't even remember a single Jewish prayer, but the man's message struck some forgotten chord in her. When he finally closed the Bible and made some blessing motions and thanked everyone for coming, Laura was overcome with the desire to go right up to him and ask him to hear her confession.

"*Proszę pani* [proszę Pani], I will gladly hear your confession," the priest said, "but only in a church, if you would be so kind as to show me the way to your house of God."

She led him back across the field to St. Leonard's Church, which was empty. She sat in a pew and he took a seat in the row behind her.

"I haven't said a word to anyone for so long, and although I know I am putting my life in your hands by telling you, Father, I feel I must. I'm not even sure why, but please have mercy on me."

"Go ahead, my daughter," came the voice right behind her.

She swallowed and said, "I'm Jewish."

There was silence behind her, which she broke by explaining that she and her daughter had been living as Catholics since 1942. What am I doing? She thought. Am I sending the

<sup>1845</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 333.

two of us to our deaths after all this? After coming so far” A word from this tattered priest to the Gestapo and that would be it.

Still, there was silence, and Laura’s stomach tightened terribly.

She finally heard the priest say in a low voice, “You should not fear anyone or anything except for God. Fear God only and you will be helped and he will have mercy on you. Bless you, my daughter.”

The priest mumbles something in Latin and fell silent.

She waited, but the priest said no more. When she finally turned to look at him, he was no longer in the pew. She caught a glimpse of his long coat as he exited the church and turned. She stood up, amazed at what she had done and overcome with the unfamiliar feeling that there was a supernatural being looking out for her and Zofia. Before the war, she had been a nonbeliever, bound only by ethical principles. What sense did it make that only now, after God had abandoned the Jews, she should feel imbued with some fresh hope and renewed strength to survive? And yet she felt a presence.

She really didn’t know what to think. She had been the beneficiary of more than her share of sheer luck, but she didn’t believe she had been chosen. She didn’t believe she had earned it. She and Zofia had escaped deportation several times. Why? Because she was pretty? Because she spoke perfect German? Because her daughter was blond?

She had lived undetected among the Nazis. Why? Because she did the Polish officer and his family a favour? Because the landlady had given her a Christian prayer book and a good piece of advice?<sup>1846</sup>

Throughout German-occupied Poland nuns took up the call to shelter Jews, especially children, in their convents, orphanages, and boarding schools. Many of these benefactors remain anonymous, as the following testimonies illustrate, gathered from *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*. The encyclopedia entries set out below have been supplemented by other sources by way of annotations in parentheses.

[1] One day in the autumn of 1942, two men approached Janina Choromanska [Choromańska] in Warsaw, representing themselves as Poles who were interested in renting a room. Although they had Aryan papers, Choromanska realized that they were Jewish refugees and, stirred by their plight, invited them to stay with her. Shamaï Zylberman and Jakub Gurfein took up her offer and stayed with her for several months, during which time Choromanska looked after them and helped them with their preparations for crossing the border into Hungary. Before they left, the fugitives passed on her address to Meir Gliksman and Tuvya Firer, whom Choromanska also sheltered in her home. Gliksman later also crossed the border into Hungary. When Firer informed Choromanska that his niece, who was hiding in a convent near Cracow [Kraków], was in danger, Choromanska, in a heroic operation, traveled to the convent and brought her back with her. Uncle and niece stayed

<sup>1846</sup> R.D. Rosen, *Such Good Girls: The Journey of the Holocaust’s Hidden Child Survivors* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 42–43.

in her apartment in Warsaw for several months. After the war, Zylberman, Gurfein, and Gliksman immigrated to Israel. Tuvya and his niece perished in unknown circumstances.<sup>1847</sup>

[2] Early on in the occupation, Romualda and Feliks Ciesielski, who lived in Bydgoszcz with their nine-year-old son, were deported to Cracow [Kraków], where they were assigned a shop and apartment that had been confiscated from their Jewish owners. Although they had no say in the matter, the Ciesielskis felt sorry for the Jews and decided they would do all they could to help them. In addition to distributing food and clothing among needy Jews, the Ciesielskis let their shop be used as a temporary shelter for Jews until they found a more permanent hiding place. Among the Jews helped by the Ciesielskis were Dr. Edmund Fiszler and his wife, Leonora, who stayed with them for several weeks. The four members of the Horowicz family also found temporary shelter with the Ciesielskis. At Romualda's suggestion, the Horowicz's daughter, Zofia, was hidden in a convent. In 1942, the Gestapo, alerted by informers, arrested the Ciesielskis. Romualda was interrogated, tortured, and sent to Auschwitz, where she continued helping Jewish prisoners. Her husband was interned in the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he perished.<sup>1848</sup>

[3] One day in 1942, Władysław [Władysław] Dobrodziej, a member of the Polish underground, entered the Warsaw ghetto dressed as a Polish policeman to get his friends Maria and Henryk Angielczyk out of the ghetto. After he succeeded in his mission, a shelter was arranged for the Angielczyks in the town of Piastów [Piastów], near Warsaw. During the rescue operation, Dobrodziej gave his address to Barbara Groszlik, who lived in the same apartment as the Angielczyks, together with her young daughter, Elżbieta [Elżbieta]. That same year, Groszlik escaped with her daughter and moved into a rented apartment on the Aryan side of the city. When the German police got wind of their whereabouts, Groszlik turned to Dobrodziej, who helped her out, as he had promised. After placing Elżbieta in an institution for abandoned children run by nuns, Krystyna, his wife, took Groszlik to her mother, Helena-Maria Bunin, who lived in Międzyzlesie [Międzyzlesie], near Warsaw. The Dobrodziejs continued with their efforts to rescue Jews, helping Władysław Gorzyski [Władysław Gorzyński] escape from the ghetto. Thanks to the Aryan papers in his possession, Gorzyski was sent to work in Germany, where he remained until the liberation. The Dobrodziejs were also instrumental in smuggling Zygmunt Rudnianski [Rudniański], an engineer; his wife; his brother, Adam Neuman; and a woman named Roza [Róża] Bukiet out of the ghetto and hiding them in a house they rented in Piastów. The Dobrodziejs considered saving Jews part of the struggle against a common enemy and never expected anything in return. Władysław Dobrodziej was killed while carrying out an underground assignment.<sup>1849</sup>

[4] In early 1943, Lea Russak and her relative, Aron Moszkowicz, left their hiding place in the Carpathian Mountains and moved to Otwock near Warsaw. Equipped with forged papers, the two turned up on the Fiejkas' doorstep, asking to rent a room in their house. Helena and Bolesław [Bolesław] Fiejka, realizing they were Jewish, agreed to hide them in their home against payment, which was willingly provided. The Fiejkas prepared a well-camouflaged shelter for the Jewish refugees under the floor of Fiejka's carpentry shop. In time, the Grynszpans and their ten-year-old daughter joined them. Despite the danger, Helena Fiejka looked after the five Jewish refugees, cooked for them, washed their clothes, and

<sup>1847</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 144.

<sup>1848</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 148.

<sup>1849</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 177.

removed their bodily wastes, even after they were no longer able to pay. One day, however, Boleslaw Fiejka ordered the refugees out. After days and nights of wandering through villages and fields without finding shelter, Russak and Moszkowicz, in desperation, returned to the Fiejkas. This time, Helena managed to persuade her husband, Boleslaw, to let the Jewish refugees stay. The three Grynszpans also returned to the Fiejkas' home and stayed there until they were liberated. While at the Fiejkas, Russak fell ill and required medical attention. She was persuaded by Sister Teresa, a nun, to leave her hiding place and move in with relatives of Sister Teresa who lived in the town of Piastow [Piastów], near Warsaw. Russak stayed in Piastow until the area was liberated in January 1945 and after the war emigrated to Israel, while the Grynszpans moved to Canada. After the liberation, Moszkowicz joined the Red Army and fell fighting for Poland.<sup>1850</sup>

[5a] During the occupation, Franciszek and Maria Kielan lived in Warsaw with their daughters, Krystyna and Zofia. One day in 1942, Krystyna got to know Janina Prot, a new girl in her class. In due course, as the two became friends, Janina told Krystyna that she was Jewish and that she had left her parents, who were hiding in a nearby town, and had come to Warsaw on her own, believing that she had a greater chance of surviving there. Stirred by her friend's plight, Krystyna and her sister, Zofia, decided to ask their parents to shelter Janina. Despite the danger, the parents agreed and took Janina into their home without expecting anything in return. Later, the Kielans arranged for Janina to stay with acquaintances in a village, where she helped with the housework, but she was soon sent back to the Kielans after the village authorities became suspicious of her true identity. One day in 1942, Prot was joined by Romana Laks, who also turned up on the Kielans' doorstep after her hiding on the Aryan side of the city became too dangerous. For several months, the Kielans and their two daughters sheltered both Janina and Romana until Romana found a place in a convent near Warsaw, where she remained until the area was liberated by the Red Army. After suffering terrible hardships during the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1942, Prot stayed with the Kielans until the area was liberated. After the war, the two survivors emigrated to the United States ...<sup>1851</sup>

[5b] Bronislaw [Bronisław] and Katarzyna Miskiewicz [Miśkiewicz] lived in Warsaw with their daughter, Barbara, who was four years old when the occupation began. Bronislaw worked in the Adamczewski & Co. soap factory where Hilary Laks, a Jewish chemical engineer, worked for the first few years of the occupation. Hilary, his wife, Janina (Tola), and their daughter, Romana, who was born in 1934, lived in the ghetto. In 1942, Bronislaw took Romana out of the ghetto to a convent, where she stayed until the end of the war. At the same time, he and his wife offered Hilary shelter in their apartment and he stayed there for 20 months while his wife hid elsewhere, also outside the ghetto. Hilary stayed in a small room at the back of the apartment, where he arranged a hiding place in a closet into which he disappeared in times of danger. No one knew about Hilary except Katarzyna and a couple of their close friends. "During the whole time I was hiding here, they never asked for any money or reward," Hilary wrote in his testimony. Bronislaw died in Warsaw in 1960. His daughter emigrated to the United States and was joined by her mother in 1982. Hilary Laks, his wife, and daughter all survived and emigrated to the United States.<sup>1852</sup>

<sup>1850</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 214.

<sup>1851</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 345–46.

<sup>1852</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 522.

[6] Giga Kochanowska, a spinster who lived in Warsaw, was indebted to her Jewish friends who, before the war, had helped her through periods of economic hardship. During the occupation, when several of these friends were interned in the local ghetto, Kochanowska repaid their kindness by risking her life to save them. In early 1942, Kochanowska helped her friend Estera Marber escape from the ghetto and put her up in her small apartment, where she looked after her devotedly, without expecting anything in return. She also entered the ghetto, at great personal risk, to bring food to her friends Moshe and Estera Borten and their baby daughter, Julia, who was born in the ghetto. In December 1942, when the Bortens asked Kochanowska to help them escape, she devised a daring plan which entailed crawling through a sewer to the Aryan side of the city. As soon as they arrived, Kochanowska provided them with Aryan papers and rented accommodations for them. When, some two months later, the landlord refused to extend the lease, Kochanowska, with considerable ingenuity, found the Bortens two separate apartments on the eastern side of the city and arranged for the baby to be sent to an institution outside Warsaw run by nuns. In late summer 1944, after the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising, Kochanowska and Marber were driven out of Warsaw and, after suffering much privation, were liberated in January 1945. The Bortens were liberated in September 1944 and after the war immigrated to Israel [with their daughter, Julia]. Marber later emigrated to France.<sup>1853</sup>

[7] After returning to Warsaw from the front in 1939, Antoni-Stefan Koper, knowing that he would not find work in his chosen profession (journalism), took an office job with the municipal tax authorities, which allowed him to enter the ghetto. On his visits to the ghetto, Koper brought with him documents forged in an underground printing press with the help of a friend and distributed them among Jews, enabling them to escape to the Aryan side of the city. In the summer of 1942, after the large-scale *Aktion* in the ghetto, Koper offered to shelter his friend, Fanny Margulies, whose entire family had been deported to Treblinka, in his apartment in central Warsaw. After helping her escape, Koper brought Margulies to his apartment where, to her amazement, she discovered that Koper was already sheltering Bronislawa [Bronisława] and Henryk Finkelstein and Dr. Maksymilian Ciesielski, also fugitives from the ghetto. Between 1942 and 1944, a number of Jews passed through Koper's apartment for various periods, including children who were later placed in Catholic orphanages. Despite the danger, threats, and attempted extortion, Koper continued with his humanitarian activities. With the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, all the Jewish refugees fled with the rest of Warsaw's population and survived until the liberation.<sup>1854</sup>

[8] As underground activists, Wanda and Ludwik Krepy [Krepa] came to the aid of their Jewish acquaintances who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto to the Aryan side of the city, offered them shelter and food, and provided them with Aryan papers. Even after the refugees moved on, the Krepys continued to take an interest in them, found them new hiding places when necessary, protected them from blackmailers, and helped them find sources of income. In risking their lives to help Jews, the Krepys were guided by humanitarian principles only and never expected anything in return. Their apartment, which was already a center for underground activity, also served as a temporary shelter for refugees until they found a permanent place or obtained Aryan papers enabling them to leave Warsaw and find work. Among those helped by the Krepys were Estera Freiburger and her four-year-

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<sup>1853</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 358.

<sup>1854</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 370.

-old son, Henryk. After putting them up for a short while in their apartment, the Krepys arranged for them to stay with a farmer in the village of Choszczówka [Choszczówka], near Warsaw. When Freiburger and her son had to leave the village, the Krepys arranged for them to move in with Krepy's mother in Czeszochowa until alternative accommodation was found in the village of Olesnik, where they stayed until the liberation. Adam and Maria Gasior [Gąsior] also owed their lives to the Krepys, who obtained Aryan papers for them and found them a place of work and a permanent shelter. [Maria Gąsior worked as an orderly at a hospital in Warsaw run by the Sisters of St. Elizabeth.<sup>1855</sup>] During the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, the Krepys moved to a monastery in Zalesie together with the Gąsior's until the liberation in January 1945.<sup>1856</sup>

[9] In November 1942, during the liquidation of the Jews in Chełm [Chełm] in the Lublin district, Perla Horn managed to escape from the *Aktion* with her three-year-old daughter, Estera [later Maria Ochlewska]. For a whole year, mother and daughter wandered through local villages, spending the night in farm-buildings, living off scraps of food that kindly villagers offered them, and spending the summer in the forest together with other Jewish refugees. One day in November 1943, Horn left her daughter with a peasant family, [the Struś family in the village of Plawanice near Chełm], promising to return for her later that day. When Horn, however, was shot dead [by the Germans], the [impoverished Struś] family, [who lived in a one room hut with only a dirt floor], ... [several months later] handed her over to their acquaintance, Leokadia Wojtkiewicz, who agreed to take responsibility for the girl. After sheltering her for a few days in her home in Chełm, Wojtkiewicz took Estera [then called Marysia] to Warsaw to stay with her sister and brother-in-law, Joanna and Karol Kulesza, who, despite the danger, agreed to take her in, without expecting anything in return. The Kuleszas provided Estera, who was passed off as Wojtkiewicz's illegitimate daughter, with a birth certificate under an assumed identity. Despite their strained circumstances, the Kuleszas looked after Estera devotedly and kept her identity hidden even from their own two children. Even after the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, when the Kuleszas were driven out of Warsaw, they took Estera with them. When Estera fell ill, they arranged for her to be looked after by nuns in [Laski near Warsaw, from where she was later transferred to an orphanage<sup>1857</sup>] in Kraków.<sup>1858</sup>

[10] In the 1930s, Stanisław [Stanisław] Mazur, who had been born and bred on a farm, met Jews for the first time as a student at the University of Warsaw. ... Stanisław Mazur and his wife, Krystyna, helped Jews imprisoned in the Warsaw ghetto. The Mazurs' address was known to Jews fleeing from the ghetto, and, disregarding the risk to their lives, the Mazurs took them into their home, provided them with false papers, and helped them find other places to hide, mostly outside of Warsaw. Of the 30 Jewish fugitives helped by the Mazurs, only 20 survived the war ...<sup>1859</sup> [Stanisław Mazur took several children out of the

<sup>1855</sup> The Krępa Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-krępa-family>.

<sup>1856</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 402.

<sup>1857</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 285–87. This is the source of all of the supplementary information.

<sup>1858</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 421.

<sup>1859</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 502.



ghetto, among them the six-year-old daughter of a lawyer named Goldman and another girl of a similar age. Both girls were taken in by nuns.<sup>1860</sup>

[11] One day in 1942, Maria Niemiec showed up in her tiny apartment in Przemyśl [Przemyśl] with six-year-old Teresa [actually, Irena Licht, who assumed the identity of Teresa Krystyna Urban]. She then told her four children that Teresa was now their sister. Teresa was the only child of Shimon and Dziunia Licht, who knew Niemiec as the daughter of a woman who had worked in their household before the war. After they gave her their daughter, the Lichts used false papers to reach Warsaw. Teresa was received warmly by the Niemiec family, who, despite their impoverished circumstances and overcrowded home, cared for her with warmth and kindness, telling neighbors that she was a relative. A friend of Niemiec, who lived nearby, was at the same time hiding a seven-year-old cousin of Teresa's. The little boy [Olek Licht] carelessly revealed he was Jewish and the Germans took him away. Following the boy's arrest, the Germans discovered his parents' hiding place in Przemyśl and murdered them all. Fearing that Teresa's identity would also be discovered, Maria Niemiec took her to Warsaw and, using connections her parents had, placed her in a convent, where she remained until the liberation.<sup>1861</sup> Niemiec remained in Warsaw throughout the entire period and without asking for or receiving anything in return served as a go-between for Teresa and her parents. Only after the war ended did Niemiec return home to her husband and children.<sup>1862</sup>

[12] Before the war, Witold Rothenburg-Rosciszewski [Rościszewski], an attorney from Warsaw, was known for his anti-Jewish views, but after the German occupation his attitude toward Jews underwent a radical change. He severed his ties with the antisemitic circles he had been involved with before the war, devoted himself to underground activity, and became an AK officer. Together with his wife, Anna, he helped Jewish refugees hide on the Aryan side of the city and provided them with forged documents. The Rothenburg-Rosciszewskis supported needy Jews materially, found them hiding places, and saved them from the hands of various extortionists. Among the Jews who were helped by the Rothenburg-Rosciszewskis were Waclaw [Wacław] Tajtbaum, an attorney, and Helena Kuligowska. Thanks to Witold's underground activity and his familiarity with entrances and exits to and from, the ghetto via the law court in Leszno Street, Irena Sendler, a *Zegota* [Żegota] activist, was able to smuggle out Jewish children to the Aryan side of the city. In her subsequent testimony, Sendler testified that Witold arranged for Jewish children to be sent to the Chotomow [Chotomów] convent near Warsaw [run by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś)] as well as to acquaintances of his, and paid for their upkeep. In April 1943, the Germans arrested Rothenburg-Rosciszewski and he was executed for his underground activities.<sup>1863</sup>

<sup>1860</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 340.

<sup>1861</sup> Irena Licht (b. 1936 in Lwów) describes, in her memoir, her stay at a convent and orphanage on Belwederska Street, possibly run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. The mother superior, at least, was aware of her Jewish origin. She remained there some two-and-a-half years until the Warsaw uprising in August 1944, when she was reunited with her parents. See Cahn-Tober, *Hide and Seek*, 57–85, 196–97. With her parents' consent, a priest baptized her in a Warsaw church so that she could make her First Holy Communion at the convent with the other girls. *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>1862</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 545–46.

<sup>1863</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 677–78.

[13] During the occupation, Władysław [Władysław] Sala ran an institution for teenagers that was sponsored by the social department of the Municipality of Warsaw. The institution had a farm, and before the large-scale *Aktion* against the Jews of Warsaw in the summer of 1942, Władysław Sala obtained a permit from the German authorities to employ some 20 Jewish laborers there. The laborers, listed by name, were brought from the ghetto each working day and Sala was in charge of bringing them back at the end of the day. As time passed, Sala, actively aided by his wife, Janina, transformed this procedure into a means of escape from the ghetto. On most days, more workers set out from the ghetto to the farm than were needed, and at the end of the day only the twenty who appeared on the list were sent back. The Salas helped the others obtain Aryan papers and in some cases found them hideouts on the Aryan side of the city. The Jews who were saved in this fashion included the famous pediatrician Zofia Rozenblum [Szymańska], Janina Kaniewska, and Anna Wyszyńska-Seidens [Wyszyńska-Seidens], whom the Salas concealed in their own apartment and, until they were moved to hiding places in convents, provided with clothing and Aryan papers.<sup>1864</sup>

[14] Before the occupation, Michał [Michał] and Jadwiga Skalski, who lived with their little daughter in an isolated house in Białystok [Białystok], were on good terms with their Jewish neighbors. Even after the closure of the ghetto, Skalski and his wife kept up contact with their Jewish acquaintances, whom they met at their places of work outside the ghetto, and helped them to the best of their ability. Skalski used his job as a clerk at the municipality in charge of distributing ration cards to help his Jewish friends. In early 1943, when a number of Jews turned to the Skalskis asking for shelter, the Skalskis prepared a well-hidden shelter for them under their house. Among those who hid in the shelter in the course of 1943 were Leon Grunberg [Grynberg] and his daughter, Halina [Hana] (who later moved to the nearby village [with the Leszczyński family]), Aleksander Brener and his daughter, Ida, Aniela [and Szlama] Kapinska [Kępiński], Jakub Weisfeld, Felicja Bagon, and Jakub and Fruma Rozen. The Skalskis helped support their charges, even selling their belongings to buy them food. They also helped other Jews who were hiding in the vicinity. The Skalskis, who were fearful of discovery, insisted on complete secrecy, refusing even to inform their relatives of what they were doing. When Bagon gave birth in hiding, Skalski, fearing that the baby's presence would endanger the refugees, took the baby to a nearby convent [an orphanage in Białystok run by nuns<sup>1865</sup>], claiming it was a foundling. The baby and the refugees under the Skalskis' care survived until the area was liberated. ... After the war, some of the survivors immigrated to Israel and Brazil while others stayed on in Poland.<sup>1866</sup>

[15] During the war, Genowefa Starczewska was living in Częstochowa [Częstochowa]. In 1943, Zygmund Berkowicz asked Genowefa to help save his four-year-old daughter, Celina. Frightened by the imminent liquidation of the so-called "small ghetto," Zygmund told Genowefa about his plans to escape. When he fled the ghetto, he placed his child in Genowefa's care. Genowefa's husband had been murdered earlier by the Nazis and she was a widow bringing up her ten- and 12-year-old daughters alone. Since she could not possibly support three children, Genowefa put them all into an orphanage in Częstochowa that was managed by nuns. She brought the children back into her home on weekends and on holidays; and her daughters, Wanda and Teresa, knew that Celina was Jewish but

<sup>1864</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 693–94.

<sup>1865</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 487.

<sup>1866</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 713.

nevertheless treated her like a blood sister. In early July 1944, Genowefa was compelled to go into hiding because her neighbors began to suspect that Celina was Jewish. For six months, until the liberation of Czechochowa in January 1945, Genowefa never spent more than one night in the same place. After the liberation, Zygmund's brother, Jack Berkowicz, and his wife, Sophie, who had spent the occupation interned in the Hasag camp in Czechochowa, found Genowefa (later Mrs. Korczak). Celina's parents, Guta and Zygmund und, had perished in 1943, and they wished to be the child's guardians. Initially, Celina did not want to part with Genowefa. "She loved her Polish protector and her daughters and did not want to leave them," wrote Jack and Sophie in their testimony to Yad Vashem. "In April 1945, we succeeded in taking her with us," We brought her up as our own daughter." Some time later, Jack, Sophie, and Celina emigrated to the United States, from where they maintained contact with Genowefa and her daughters.<sup>1867</sup>

[16] Waclaw [Waclaw] and Irena Szyszkowski lived in Warsaw during the war. They had three young children. Waclaw was a lawyer but hardly ever practiced law because he was active in the AK [Home Army]. In the summer of 1942, a prewar friend, Jozef [Józef] Zysman (also a lawyer, who was murdered a year later), approached Waclaw and asked for help in saving his son Piotr (born 1939). Soon afterwards, Jozef's sister-in-law fled the ghetto through the sewage system along with her daughter and Piotr. She met up with Irena in a prearranged spot and handed over Piotr. Because the Szyszkowskis had three children of their own, they were not able to keep Piotr for very long. Eventually they put him up in a monastery [an institution run by nuns near Warsaw<sup>1868</sup>] and later moved him to different hiding places. (After the war, Piotr's mother, Teodora Zysman, found him in a monastery.) ... Teodora stated in her testimony that the Szyszkowskis saved two other girls [Małgorzata and Irena], the daughters of a Warsaw lawyer named Roman Frydman Mirski [who were placed with the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Płudy, as described earlier].<sup>1869</sup>

[17] In the spring of 1942, Helena Rosenberg and her two-year-old daughter, Gita, had to leave the apartment on the Aryan side of Warsaw where they had taken shelter after escaping from the local ghetto. With the help of a Polish acquaintance, Rosenberg managed to find another apartment for herself, but the landlady adamantly refused to take in Gita, who looked Jewish. Nineteen-year-old Wanda Tazbir, a friend of the landlady, came to the rescue by asking her parents to take little Gita into their apartment. After they received a warning from a neighbor, Tazbir's parents had to look for another hiding place for Gita. Stanislaw [Stanisław] Tazbir, Wanda's father, an inspector of Polish orphanages in Warsaw, found a place for Gita in one of the orphanages without revealing Gita's true identity to the head of the orphanage. In due course, Gita was transferred to a children's institution in a convent far from Warsaw, where she remained until January 1945, when the area was liberated. After the war, Gita and her mother, who survived, emigrated to the United States, where, for many years, they kept up contact with Stanislaw Tazbir and his daughter.<sup>1870</sup>

[18] Marta and Feliks Widy-Wirski lived with their two children in Warsaw. At the end of 1941, Marta met a friend on the street who had told her that Janina Poswolska, a friend from the days of her pharmaceutical studies in Poznan [Poznań], was in the ghetto with

<sup>1867</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 748.

<sup>1868</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 555.

<sup>1869</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 808.

<sup>1870</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 814.

her husband, Henryk, and their son, Andrzej. Marta subsequently bribed an officer of the Blue Police with a large amount of money and he in turn brought Janina and the child back to her home. Janina and her son settled in with Marta and Feliks, Janina pretending to be their maid. ... In 1943, Janina's son was placed under the care of nuns outside Warsaw, since the landlady warned Marta that the other occupants of the building suspected her and her husband of hiding Jews. "For safety's sake, we all moved to Sulejówek [Sulejów] and later, for similar reasons, to Podkowa Lesna [Leśna]," wrote Marta in her testimony. Shortly before the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, a man appeared at the Widy-Wirskis' home telling them that Henryk Poswolski was lying wounded in the cowshed. Marta and Feliks brought the wounded Henryk (who was wounded while escaping from Treblinka) to Podkowa, where they were able to get him medical attention. After the liberation, the Poswolski family emigrated to Brazil.<sup>1871</sup>

[19] Kazimiera Żulawska [Żuławska], a doctor of philosophy and the widow of the well-known Polish poet and author Jerzy Żulawski [Żuławski], lived prior to the war and during the German occupation with her son Wawrzyniec, in Warsaw. In their home on Marszałkowska [Marszałkowska] Street, they regularly hid eight to ten Jews, mainly cultural figures. Among those who found shelter in their apartment were Roza [Róża] Wittlin, Stefania Dąbrowska [Dąbrowska, née Abzug], and Leonia Jabłonkowska [Jabłonkowska]. The outbreak of the war found Roza Wittlin in Lwów [Lwów]. In 1943, she left Lwów and traveled to Warsaw, where she did not know anyone. Furthermore, she could not speak any Polish since she had been brought up in Germany. After a few weeks of hiding in basements and abandoned stores, she met Kazimiera, who invited her to her apartment. Kazimiera did not know Roza but had heard about her difficult situation through mutual friends. Roza moved to Kazimiera's apartment in November 1943 and stayed there for three months without paying for her accommodation or upkeep. ... Stefania Dąbrowska also arrived in Warsaw after leaving Lwów. In Warsaw, she met a schoolmate who directed her to Kazimiera. Kazimiera and her son, Wawrzyniec, helped not only Stefania but also her parents<sup>1872</sup> [Stanisław and Adela Abzug-Malewski] and her sister Margaret (Rita) Mayer [née Abzug, who was placed in convents<sup>1873</sup>].

[20] In December 1941, after one of the killing operations perpetrated against the Jews of Radom, Bracha Wakszlak (later, Bergman), 14, and her younger sister, Ester [later Shelvi], were rescued from the ghetto by their cousin, Teofila (Tośka) Wakszlak. She took them to Warsaw, where she was living under an assumed name with "Aryan" papers. For half a year she moved the two girls from one Polish family to another, supporting them financially but unable to find them a satisfactory haven. Finally, she placed the younger girl [Ester] in a convent [on the outskirts of Warsaw<sup>1874</sup>], while Bracha, the elder sister, aided by [Marszak] an acquaintance of her father, reached the Bart family. She did not know them, but they were willing to hide her in their home under an assumed name. The Bart household consisted of Jerzy and Zofia Bart, and their two children, aged five and six, and the grandparents. A patriotic Polish family, they had connections with the Polish underground

<sup>1871</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 863.

<sup>1872</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 946.

<sup>1873</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 210; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 645.

<sup>1874</sup> Isakiewicz, *Harmonica*, 174, 176, 179; Isakiewicz, *Ustna harmonijka*, 159–60, 163; Testimony of Brakhah Bergman, SFV, Interview code 39033.

Home Army (AK). Jerzy, an electrical engineer by profession, worked for the Germans for his living, but he also worked with the underground, preserving the cultural treasures of the National Museum. The Barts made Bracha feel at home, like one of the family, and she lived with them in safety for a year, until Zofia and Jerzy were arrested by the Gestapo on April 7, 1944 [along with another Jewish family they were sheltering], and thrown into Pawiak, the central prison, located in the ghetto area. The underground was able to ransom Zofia, but Jerzy never returned. While both parents were incarcerated, Bracha looked after both the two children and the grandmother. Henryk, the grandfather, had been executed, probably due to his activities in the underground. Despite the suffering the family endured, Zofia agreed to go on sheltering Bracha. The most difficult trial came during and after the Warsaw Uprising in the summer and fall of 1944 when the Barts were forced to abandon their home and became fugitives, wandering from one village to another in search of a place to stay and means of subsistence. Yet even under those trying conditions they did not abandon Bracha but kept her with them and continued to treat her like a full-fledged member of the family. She stayed with them until liberation in January 1945.<sup>1875</sup>

[21] During the German occupation of Poland, Fryderyk and Maria Czerwień, and their two children, Ryszard and Stanisława, lived in Rawa Ruska (Lwów District). From 1941 until the summer of 1944, they hid 12 Jews in a shelter they built especially for this purpose under their home, and provided for their needs. The rescued Jews were: Herman and Róża Graf; Mosze and Helen Lewin and their four-year-old son, Dawid; and Abisz and Efraim Post—all families that had made their living as furriers—as well as the teachers, Abraham and Róża Klang; Łazar and Helena Diller; and Mendel Hoch, a merchant. Years after the liberation, the survivors continued to correspond with the Czerwieńs, viewing them as members of the family: “I feel that I am writing to father and mother and to my brothers who understand me,” Abraham Klang wrote in 1952 from Melbourne. At a certain stage, the Czerwieńs arranged a place for Helen Lewin and her son in a Christian orphanage. Immediately after the liberation, the Czerwieńs left Rawa Ruska and settled in Wojcieszów (Lower Silesia).<sup>1876</sup>

The story of the Szostak family has only recently come to light:

[22] One day in August 1942, a woman appeared at the modest apartment of Ludwika and Zygmunt Szostak inquiring about a notice the couple had put in the paper regarding renting a room in their apartment. The Szostaks were an elderly couple that lived in the Żoliborz suburb of Warsaw and in order to ease their tough financial situation, decided to rent out the extra room in their house. It quickly became apparent that the woman who came to rent the room, Dora Agatstein, was Jewish. She and her 7-year-old daughter, Karolina, had escaped the Lvov [Lwów] ghetto just one month before the Great Deportation. Despite their initial concern over housing the mother and daughter, the Szostak couple welcomed them in their home and took care of them. Even as the rent money Dora paid to the couple began to run out, the good relationship between her and the Szostaks only grew stronger. Since the room where Dora and Karolina slept was not heated, the Szostak couple decided

<sup>1875</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 531–32.

<sup>1876</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 542–43. The Albertine Sisters had an orphanage in Rawa Ruska, as described later in the text. It is not clear whether Helen Lewin and her son were placed there.

to let them sleep in their bedroom which had a heater and together they passed the cold days of winter. After running out of money for food, Ludwika and Dora began to work from the apartment by wrapping homemade candies. Even little Karolina, who due to the situation was forbidden to leave the house and play with neighboring kids in the yard, helped out in this endeavor. Dora also began to give private lessons to some children in the neighborhood allowing her a little income. When the achievements by her students began to stick out in school, a nun who managed the institution came to visit Dora, offering her a teaching job. The visit by the nun and Dora's teaching position at the school helped to lower the suspicions and worries of the neighbors towards Dora and her young daughter. Karolina was enrolled in a kindergarden that was run under the patronage of the AK, the Polish resistance's Home Army in Nazi-occupied Poland, and was walked to and from school by Ludwika. With the breakout of the Polish Uprising in August 1944, the Żoliborz suburb was hit hard by the heavy fighting between the Soviets [sic, Poles] and Germans. Residents, including both the Szostaks and Agatsteins, were loaded on trains and taken to southern Poland where they lived as refugees. Zygmunt, Ludwika, Dora, and Karolina found themselves living with a poor farming family. The four joined in the hard agricultural work, including picking potatoes and Dora continued to earn a little by teaching lessons until the area was liberated by the Soviet army in April 1945.<sup>1877</sup>

**B**ronisława and Antoni Supłat took under their care a little Jewish girl with the assumed name of Basia, who had been abandoned in 1942 near an orphanage in Bronowice, a suburb of Kraków. The nuns took the child in. From the orphanage, she was taken by the Supłats, who treated her as their own daughter. They spread a false story that the child had been born to Antoni out of wedlock. Although the neighbours doubted this story, everyone kept the secret. The biological parents of Basia (Batia Rehes, later Batia Kfir) found her several years after the war and then left with her for Israel.<sup>1878</sup>

Basia Kfir was born circa 1939. At age 4 she was abandoned near a monastery kindergarten in Bronowicze [Bronowice], in the Kraków district. The nuns picked her up, but the arrival of a small child aroused the suspicion of the authorities.

Antoni Supłat, a Polish butcher, provided food to the kindergarten as a donation for the children. During one of his visits, he spotted Basia. He and his wife, Bronisława, had no children and decided to adopt Basia. The child was happy to believe that they were her real parents and that they had temporarily lost her during the war—the story they told her to spare her feelings.

In the neighborhood the rumor spread that Basia was Antoni's illegitimate child, which meant that her Jewish origins were not discovered. Basia, now Batya Kfir, wrote in her letter to Yad Vashem: "For two years I received from them warmth and kindness. They showered me with love and provided for all my needs."

<sup>1877</sup> "Polish Righteous Among the Nations Honored at Yad Vashem," May 13, 2013, YVA, Internet: <https://www.yadvashem.org/press-release/09-may-2013-14-46.html>.

<sup>1878</sup> "Righteous Honoured in Kraków," August 2, 2013, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/righteous-honoured-krakow-0>.



As Basia grew in this loving family, she sincerely believed herself to be their real daughter, a Catholic by birth. After the war, however, Basia's parents returned to find her, and the Suplats were forced to part with her. They later adopted another child, a Polish boy.

Basia's family went to live in Israel in 1949. They kept in touch initially, but later the connection waned.<sup>1879</sup>

Stays at convents were sometimes cut short as a result of unanticipated occurrences. After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto with her parents, Eugenia Szulc (later Rosen, b. 1936) was placed in a convent outside of Warsaw as Dzidzia Jankowska. Her stay there was interrupted soon after the Gestapo burst into the orphanage searching for Jewish children. Since they threatened to return, Eugenia had to leave the convent. She was taken in by a married couple, the Umerskis (Umirski), pretending to be their niece. After the war, she was reunited with her parents, Lucjan and Felicja Szulc (Schulz), who survived in hiding.

Eugenia Rosen was an only child born to a wealthy family in Warsaw. She was three years old in 1939 and her earliest memory was in the Warsaw Ghetto. She is scared to think and remember what happened to her. Her parents taught her Polish prayers and not to admit she was a Jew.

Along with her tall, blond Aryan looking mother, Mrs. Rosen left the Warsaw Ghetto with a group of people. She was frightened by the German soldier and his dog. They crossed to the Aryan side. Her mother taught Mrs. Rosen her that new name was now Giga Jankowska and to call her mother "Aunt Sofia" (widow of a high ranking German general).

Her mother took her to a convent with other little girls. One day while in the convent, she heard the Gestapo, clicking of heels and voices. Her fear was indescribable and she ran to hide in the toilet. The Gestapo found one Jewish girl and told the nun that they'd return again for all the other Jewish children.

The nun told her mother to take her daughter out of the convent because the Gestapo was returning. Her mother took her to see her father who was also in hiding. Her parents said, "when the war will end, meet at 59 Stalowa [Stołowa] Street."

Eventually Mrs. Rosen's mother took her to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Umirski where she assumed the identity of their niece in Berlin. They had no children of their own and they were very nice to her. She was now close to eight years old.

As the war was ending the couple was returning to Germany. They couldn't locate Mrs. Rosen's mother and decided to leave her with their sister.<sup>1880</sup>

<sup>1879</sup> Suplat Family, RD.

<sup>1880</sup> Eugenia Rosen, Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills, Michigan, Internet: <https://www.holocaustcenter.org/visit/library-archive/oral-history-department/rosen-eugenia/>. See also Eugenia Schulz Rosen, "A Vignette," Tarjan, *Children Who Survived the Final Solution*, 219–21.

The Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (Nazarene Sisters) (*Zgromadzenie Sióstr Najświętszej Rodziny z Nazaretu*, commonly known as *nazaretanki*) provided shelter and other forms of assistance to Jews in a number of convents throughout Poland: Częstochowa, Gulbiny (near Wilno), Komańcza (near Sanok), Kraków, Olsztyn (near Częstochowa), Nowogródek, and Warsaw. Nine Jewish children and youths were sheltered at the convent and high school on Czerniakowska Street in Warsaw. The high school, like all such institutions of learning, had been officially shut down.

Though they were explicitly authorized to operate a sewing school, the nuns taught the academic curriculum clandestinely. The Jewish charges included Ewa Herman (later Grzybowska, b. 1925), passing as Ewa Czermak, and Irma Windisch, passing as Irena Wiśniewska.<sup>1881</sup> Halina Szumacher (later Steinberg, b. 1931) arrived at the convent school, having moved about from one family to another after leaving the Warsaw ghetto. At one point, she had stayed briefly at a shelter near the ghetto, where she was comforted by a priest.<sup>1882</sup>

Danuta Perelman (later Wocial, b. 1934), the daughter of a Jewish father and Polish Catholic mother, was taken under the wing of Sister Emanuela Rypsztajn, a nun of Jewish origin. Danuta's mother visited her from time to time, but her father, who had a marked Semitic appearance, had to go into hiding. Danuta was reunited with her parents after the war.<sup>1883</sup> Another charge was brought to the convent by Teresa Preker (Prekerowa), who was recognized by Yad Vashem for her rescue efforts.

Alina Wolman knew Teresa Dobrska, later Prekerowa, a young woman who lived with her parents in Warsaw. The two girls became very close friends and Dobrska helped Wolman's family as best she could. After the Wolman family was imprisoned in the Warsaw ghetto, Dobrska would smuggle food into the ghetto for them. At a fairly early stage, Dobrska convinced Alina to escape to the Aryan side of the city and arranged a job and a place to live for her. At the beginning of the large-scale deportation from the ghetto, Dobrska and other friends smuggled Alina's brother and parents out of the ghetto and until the war ended kept in touch with Alina and came to her assistance when she needed help. In September 1941, Dobrska found a little abandoned Jewish child crying on her doorstep. She took the child in and cared for her in her parents' home, and after dressing her and teaching her how to act like a Polish child brought her to a convent [of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth on Czerniakowska Street in Warsaw, where the girl survived the

<sup>1881</sup> Testimony of Ewa Grybowska, SFV, Interview code 26199.

<sup>1882</sup> Testimony of Halina Steinberg, SFV, Interview code 55562. Halina Steinberg was wounded when the convent came under fire during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Afterwards, she was deported to Germany.

<sup>1883</sup> Testimony of Danusia Wocial, SFV, Interview code 22245. When the convent was displaced because of the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, Danuta Wocial joined a group of children under the care of a priest near Karowa Street in Warsaw.

occupation<sup>1884</sup>]. During the war, Dobrska married Mieczysław [Mieczysław] Preker and moved to the Skolimów [Skolimów] estate near Warsaw, where she hid a Jewish man named Jan Zielinski [Zieliński] from January until August 1944. Everything Prekerowa did to save Jews was motivated purely by altruism, for which she neither asked for nor received anything in return.<sup>1885</sup>

Several Jewish children were taken in by Sister Alojza Konieczna, the superior of the convent of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in Częstochowa.<sup>1886</sup> One of them was Aliza Asch (Elżbieta Asz), the granddaughter of Nachum Asch (Asz), the former chief rabbi of Częstochowa.

In 1942, Dr. Tadeusz Ferens, with his wife's [Wanda's] consent, helped his friend Ruth (Justa) Asz and her baby daughter escape from the Częstochowa [Częstochowa] ghetto. Dr. Ferens exploited his position as a doctor in the municipal hospital to place Asz's daughter in an orphanage [run by the Sisters of the Family of Nazareth], where the baby was baptized and christened Elżbieta [Elżbieta] (later Elizabeth). In order to save the mother, Dr. Ferens admitted her to the hospital where he worked. In due course he obtained forged documents for her and found her work in Austria. Asz later moved from Austria to Switzerland and her daughter, who was adopted by a Polish couple [the Urbańczyks], was returned to her after the war.<sup>1887</sup>

In the autumn of 1942, Ruth (Justa) and Shimon Asz tried to escape from the Częstochowa [Częstochowa] ghetto with their two-year-old daughter, Elżbieta [Elżbieta] (Elizabeth). After Shimon was shot and killed, his wife and daughter made their way to Dr. Tadeusz Ferens, a Polish doctor. Ferens provided the mother with Aryan papers, which enabled her to volunteer for work in Austria, and arranged for little Elizabeth to stay in a Catholic orphanage run by nuns [Sisters of the Family of Nazareth] in Częstochowa. Shortly thereafter, Marian and Wiktoria Urbanczyk [Urbańczyk] adopted Elizabeth, without knowing she was Jewish. Her true identity came to light, however, when after being washed, her blonde hair suddenly turned black. Although shocked by the discovery, the Urbanczyks, overcome by compassion, decided to keep Elizabeth and passed her off as a Polish orphan who had been driven out of the Zamość [Zamość] area in the Lublin district. Even after they had to pay hush money to suspicious neighbors who threatened to report them to the Gestapo, the Urbanczyks did not change their minds. Elizabeth stayed on with the Urbanczyks after the war, since Elizabeth's mother, who survived, was unable to trace her

<sup>1884</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 431.

<sup>1885</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 639. Irma Windisch was three or four years old and spoke only Yiddish. Teresa Prekerowa taught her how to make the sign of the cross and the first words of the prayer "Our Father," as well as some everyday Polish words. The fact that this was a Jewish child would have been readily apparent to the nuns who accepted her. See Marta Kalabinska, "Teresa Prekerowa: Going Against the Grain," *Eastern European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, vol. 34, no. 2 (May 2020): 400–22, at pp. 410–11. According to another source, at the time of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, Irma and her nine-year-old cousin were transferred to the order's convent in Kielce. See Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 692.

<sup>1886</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 177–79.

<sup>1887</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 213.

daughter. In 1947, Dr. Ferens succeeded in tracing her and, with a heavy heart, Marian and Wiktoria handed Elizabeth over to her mother, who emigrated with her to Venezuela.<sup>1888</sup>

The blackmailers who extorted money from the Urbańczyks were in fact bandits who terrorized others who were hiding Jews as well. Marian Urbańczyk reported them to his superiors in the Home Army, and they were shot dead not far from the Urbańczyks home.<sup>1889</sup> Their young charge, Aliza (Elżbieta), was just two when she was smuggled out of the ghetto in a sack. Her story—Elizabeth Zielinski de Mundlak, “Black Roots in the Hair of a Blond Cherub”—is recorded in more detail in her own words.

My maiden name that I have used for as long as I can remember is Elzbieta Zielinska [Elżbieta Zielińska]. But when I was born my name was Aliza Ash [Asch]. All my life I thought that my mother's was Justa, but at the time of her birth she was named Ruth. What has not changed since the day I was born? Only the date and place of my birth: Cze-stochowa [Częstochowa], the town where my ancestors had lived. But this is a lot to start with! Recently, it allowed me to find documents about my true identity. The procedure was long.—How can you prove that a certain can you prove that a certain sixty-year old woman exists, if there is no birth certificate in her name, Elzbieta Zielinska? The nuns, who sheltered me after I was taken in a garbage sack from the Ghetto in Cze-stochowa, gave me my first name. That was before almost the entire Jewish population of that ghetto was taken to Treblinka, the infamous death camp.

Tadeusz Ferens was a gentile doctor who arranged my escape from certain death. My mother was also able [to] escape. With her newly acquired identity as Jozefa Zielinska [Józefa Zielińska], she was able to reach Austria, where she was a slave labourer, a cleaning woman at the Hotel Post in Bludenz, in Vorarlberg province. All the rest of my immediate family, including my father, Shimon Asz, perished in the Holocaust.

The doctor brought me to the orphanage of the Sisters of Nazareth in Cze-stochowa, as a child whom he found at the train station. There were many, many displaced and orphaned gentile children as a result of the steady bombing of certain parts of Poland. It was easy for the good doctor to convince the nuns that I was one of those children. No one wanted to hear the truth! Poland was the only country during the war, where the penalty for helping Jews was nothing less than death.

It was my good fortune that a Polish family came to the orphanage to adopt a little girl. They already had a 10-year old son, but his mother, Victoria [Wiktoria], could not have any more children. She had lost her first child as an infant, but her heart was full of love that she wanted to give to a little orphan girl. I was lucky: my new parents were very loving. My big brother used to carry me up the stairs on his shoulders after I had been running around the yard with my little friends. We were a weird couple. He was tall, strong and blond, and I was a tiny little girl with dark curls ...

<sup>1888</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 837.

<sup>1889</sup> Magdalena Rigamonti, “Moja wojenna siostra: Rozmowa z Andrzejem Urbańczykiem,” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, March 9–11, 2018.

Dark hair... I had curly blond hair when my adopted parents took me from the orphanage. With my blue eyes I must have looked like a cherub. They fell in love with that little beauty. However, a big surprise was awaiting them after a few days.

One day, my new mother was washing my hair when she discovered some "dirt" on my skull that would not go away. She was surprised, but ignored it for the moment. A couple of days later the answer became obvious. Black hair began to grow fast on my little head. It was a big shock when my parents understood that they were sheltering a Jewish child. They became terribly scared. Their only child, their precious son was as much in danger as themselves in case the Germans would find out about me.

Victoria and Marian [Urbańczyk] summoned their son, Andrew [Andrzej], for a family meeting. Jointly they decided that no matter what, they would not return me to the orphanage. The years ahead were not easy for the family. ...

We lived through many instances of high drama during those long years of German occupation in Czeŝochowa.<sup>1890</sup>

**T**ragedy struck the convent of the Sisters of Holy Family of Nazareth in Olsztyn, near Czeŝochowa. The parents of Janeczka Kapral, a young Jewish girl who was sheltered there, were caught by the Germans and revealed the whereabouts of their daughter and the Polish woman, a school teacher by the name of Kita, who had brought her to the convent. The young girl was seized by the Gestapo and the teacher was also arrested and killed. The nuns dispersed to avoid arrest.<sup>1891</sup>

**T**he Sisters of Holy Family of Nazareth ran a sanatorium in Komańcza, near Sanok, where they sheltered several Jews, including some children.<sup>1892</sup> A Jewish girl by the name of Wanda was transferred there from the convent in Czeŝochowa for safety reasons.<sup>1893</sup> Another Jewish girl, Chana Grabina, was transferred out for safety reasons.

In the summer of 1942, Zofia Landowska obtained a forged pass enabling her to enter the Warsaw ghetto and smuggle six-year-old Chana Grabina out to the Aryan side of the city. For some weeks, Zofia hid the little girl in the apartment she shared with her husband, Jozef [Józef]. The Landowskis, who were underground activists, obtained Aryan papers for Chana and looked after her. When Chana's presence was discovered by neighbors, the Landowskis quickly transferred her to a home for abandoned children run by Nazarene nuns (Siostry Nazaretanki) in Komańcza [Komańcza] in the county of Sanok (Rzeszów) [Rzeszów] district. Since the home was not too safe either [because of Ukrainian partisan attacks], Landowski, at the nuns' advice, took Chana to stay with his sister, Agnieszka

<sup>1890</sup> Tarjan, *Children Who Survived the Final Solution*, 205–6.

<sup>1891</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 84, 178–79.

<sup>1892</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 128; Zych, *Diecezja przemyska obrzadku łacińskiego w warunkach okupacji niemieckiej i sowieckiej 1939–1944/1945*, 472.

<sup>1893</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 177–78, 245.

Gorecka [Górecka], who lived with her husband, Piotr, and their daughter, Jadwiga, in the town of Chojnice in Pomerania. The Goreckis gave Chana a warm reception and passed her off as a relative. ... Chana Grabina (alias Anna Mackowicz) stayed with the Goreckis until 1951 and went on to become a doctor of Polish philology in Poland.<sup>1894</sup>

Mordechai (Mietek) Koplewicz (later Michel Capelle), stayed at the sanatorium for about two years, passing as Jan Wojnar. He claims that the nuns were not aware of his Jewish origin.<sup>1895</sup>

The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary sheltered a number of Jewish children as well as some adults in their convents in Zamość and in nearby Łabunie. The latter convent was later evacuated to the Franciscan monastery in Radecznica. The Sisters also provided food to Jews.<sup>1896</sup> The Rotter family was sheltered by the nuns in Zamość; Lea Reisner (later Bialowitz), an escapee from the Sobibór extermination camp, was sheltered in Radecznica.<sup>1897</sup> Zygmunt Friedrych's daughter, Elsa, who used the name Elżunia, was sheltered at the orphanage in Zamość,<sup>1898</sup> as were Judyta Joseph (later Judith Kachel, b. 1934), under the name of Franciszka Koniak,<sup>1899</sup> and Margalit Blass (later Tamara or Tami Lavee, b. 1939). Margalit recalled the nuns at the convent as being very good to her.<sup>1900</sup> After the war, she was adopted by a Polish family, from which she was taken by the Jewish Coordination Committee.

Blas [Chaja or Hanka Blass, then going by the name of Wanda Czarniecka<sup>1901</sup>], a Jewish woman, managed to escape from the Zamosc [Zamość] ghetto in the Lublin district, carrying her two-year-old daughter in her arms. She came to the home of a Polish acquaintance, Maria Pawelec, who agreed to take the Jewish child [who passed as her niece]. After someone informed the authorities, German policemen visited Pawelec's home and, fearing the child's

<sup>1894</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 248.

<sup>1895</sup> Testimony of Michel Koplewicz, SFV, Interview code 11791.

<sup>1896</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 127; Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 175–77, 244. The rescue activities are also described in Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu*, 193–94.

<sup>1897</sup> Miriam Novitch, ed., *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt: Documents and Testimonies* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 102. Symcha Bialowitz, another escapee from Sobibór, may also have been sheltered in Radecznica with Lea Reisner (whom he later married). See Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu*, 194.

<sup>1898</sup> Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu*, 194.

<sup>1899</sup> School certificates and nun's letter pertaining to Judyta Joseph, YVA, file O.6/1160 (Item 9301720).

<sup>1900</sup> Oral history interview with Tami Lavee, USHMM, Accession no. 2007.187.35, RG-50.582.0035.

<sup>1901</sup> "A note written by a Christian woman (Maria Dawelec [sic]) who saved Tammy Lavee by placing her, at age two and a half, along with this note and a cross, in the backyard of a monastery," Photograph no. 04971, USHMM, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa31229>.



identity might be discovered, she placed her in a basket, tied a small bag with a cross on it around her neck, and added a note bearing the name Wanda and stating that she had been baptized. Pawelec left the basket at the gate of the local convent, where there was also a home for orphans and foundlings. The nuns took in the baby. The nun, Zofia-Bogumiła [Bogumiła] Makowska, who knew the child was Jewish, never revealed her true identity to anyone, and looked after her until the end of the war. When the staff of the Coordination Committee learned the whereabouts of the child, they moved her to a Jewish institution and she later immigrated to Israel.<sup>1902</sup>

Sister Bogumiła (Zofia Makowska), the director of the orphanage in Łabunie, was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile in 1993.<sup>1903</sup> She provided the following testimony:

During the war there was a swarm of children at our home. Anyone—policemen, neighbors—who met a child on the street or on the road brought the child to us. We had a house on Zdanowski [Żdanowska] St. in Zamosc [Zamość]. There came a time when even our hallways were overflowing with children. We had a rather large chapel in the old building we used, so finally we converted it to sleeping quarters for the children. We made the chapel so small that we had to hear Mass in the hallway. All this was not enough, and finally we occupied a school on Lukasinski [Łukasińskiego] St. Not being enough to house all the children even there, we began to give them, if possible, to Polish families.

I worked at this school on Lukasinski St. Those were very hard times. I was in charge of the infants and the infirmary. There were three groups of children. I worked day and night. No one was paid. The women who peeled the potatoes got a bowl of soup. We did not get any subsidies for the children.

We collected contributions. Our entire treasure was the children.

Our mother superior was an Irish woman, Katherine Crowley. She trembled in fear for the children. We accepted everyone. We never thought about whether a child was German or Jewish or anything else. Our only consideration was that it was a child and we took in children.<sup>1904</sup>

The homes in Zamość, Łabunie and Radecznica were all overcrowded with children displaced during the mass deportation of Poles from the Zamość area. The biggest challenge for the nuns was securing food for their charges. The nuns would go into the villages begging for food from farmers, who were themselves destitute. Since the convents' horses had been seized by the Germans, the nuns used dogs to pull the carts carrying the food they had collected.<sup>1905</sup>

<sup>1902</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 480.

<sup>1903</sup> A fuller version of Sister Zofia Makowska's testimony can be found in Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 175–77.

<sup>1904</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 161.

<sup>1905</sup> Czesław Galek, "Klasztor był im ocaleniem," *Niedziela* [Zamość–Lubaczów], no. 19–20 (2001).

The Felician Sisters sheltered some 40 Jewish children in their convent and orphanage in Lwów. Among them were Rebecca (Marysia) Litowicz from Sandomierz and Fela or Felka Meisel (later Felicja Mikołajczyk) from Lwów, who were placed there by the Lwów branch of the Council of Aid for Jews (Żegota). Fela, who was sheltered in eighteen different places during the German occupation (later, with the Magdalene Sisters in Lwów, as recounted earlier), was reunited with her parents, Dr. Henryk and Paula Meisel, after the war.<sup>1906</sup> The dramatic story of these rescues—in the words of two of their benefactors, the sisters Barbara and Halina Szymańska, and Rebecca Litowicz’s mother, who is reluctant to express gratitude—is related below.

Barbara Szymańska Makuch: Our apartment in Tarnobrzeg was very small—only one room and a kitchen. Since this was my first teaching job, the pay was quite low, and from that my mother [Janina Szymańska] and I had to squeeze the rent money. But we managed. It was enough.

It was late in the afternoon, one day in 1942, when a woman named Rachel Litowicz and her child [Rebecca] came to our door, saying she came because somebody had told her I was a good person. I had never seen her before. She had nowhere else to go—she was desperate. She wanted me to take her child. I knew that in Sandomierz that day the Germans were “cleaning” the town. A very bad raid had been going on all day. I had seen them shoot Jews right in the streets.

We all felt very scared. By law, the penalty was death if you offered so much as one glass of water to a Jewish person. The Germans killed us exactly the same as they killed the Jews. My mother and I knew that, but how could we refuse this woman’s plea? We didn’t even talk it over, we just invited her inside.

We talked with her for a few hours, and then she left the child with us and returned to her husband in Sandomierz, where he was working in a camp the Germans had set up for people who could still do useful work. I didn’t set eyes on Rachel again until after the war. I learned that she went to Auschwitz, but I knew she was very strong. Twice she escaped from the gas chambers.

So seven-year-old Rebecca stayed with us: we called her Marysia. I slept in the kitchen, and my mother slept with her in the other room. In the beginning everything was okay because she was blond, with a pale complexion and freckles, and slightly curly hair, which I would straighten by making her little braids. We told people she was my niece. At home her family spoke Yiddish, although fortunately Marysia had linguistic talent and could speak Polish quite well. But like all children in this situation, she was shy and frightened. Her mother had said to her, “I’m leaving you now. After today, Basha [Basia, a diminutive for Barbara] will be your mother.” How can a little child understand this? She grew close to my mother because my mother was staying at home while I was away every day at work. Right from the beginning my mother became her “aunt.” ...

The news that we were helping a Jew traveled fast among the many people needing help. ... It wasn’t long before the neighbors started to talk. Marysia came to us at the end

<sup>1906</sup> Testimony of Felicja Mikołajczyk, SFV, Interview code 45624.

of July 1942, and Olga [Dr. Olga Lilien from Lwów] and Stefan [a Jewish boy] soon after. At first everything was okay. But when Stefan or Olga needed something, they would come to our house, and people began to notice.

Marysia was my “niece,” but I thought to myself, how will I explain what kind of a niece she is when the Germans start searching for Jews in hiding? What would I do? They would ask, who is she? Why is she staying with you? Where are her other relatives? Where is she from? In fact, after she had been with us for a few months the neighbors were already asking each other these questions. I became frightened about what might happen to us if we remained in Tarnobrzeg.

My mother and I decided it would be best for me to take Marysia to a bigger city where nobody would know us. I would give up my job and we would go to Lvov [Lwów] to live with my sister Halina. My mother, who was not so adventurous, would go back to Sandomierz to live with my youngest sister and my aunt. So, late in September Marysia and I left. ...

Our journey was extremely dangerous. The train was in poor condition, short of coal, and it was always stopping, making long delays for supplies or because of damaged bridges. Lvov is not so far from Tarnobrzeg; normally the train took only eight hours, but this time it was two days. All through the trip I was very, very frightened, even though I thought I was probably not the only one with a Jewish child. I prayed. What else could I do? In the night Germans marched through the train with their dogs, looking at the children and the other people. Once, while we waited for another train to pass, I saw them take people—families with children—off the train, taking them behind a building, and then I heard shots. It was very frightening. At any moment it could happen to me, or Marysia—at any moment. ...

We arrived in Lvov and made our way to my sister’s apartment only to discover that this too was a dangerous place. Unknown to me, Halina [Szymańska] and my future brother-in-law, Slawek [Slawek, i.e., Sławomir Ogrodziński], belonged to an underground resistance group. It was a committee that organized the Lvov branch of Żegota [Żegota], a Warsaw group that was bringing money to Polish Jews in hiding. I soon joined them, so from that point on I was helping not just one or two, but a great many others.

This was not a good place for Marysia, so a few days later we found a safer place for her nearby in the Felician convent, where there were already thirty-five Jewish children in hiding. The Germans allowed convents to look after orphans—not Jews, but orphans. The nuns took in every orphan that needed help, which happened, of course, to be mostly Jewish children, and so Marysia survived the war in their care. When the war ended she found her mother, who survived Auschwitz. Her father died in Bergen-Belsen.

I became a Żegota courier, traveling often to Warsaw to bring back money from the Polish government-in-exile in London. The Warsaw group had an underground press for printing counterfeit documents and false identity papers for Jews, and I brought these back to Lvov, too. Another job we had was contact with Janowicka [Janowska], the big work camp for Jews in Lvov. On one visit we would deliver false papers to certain people, and then on the next, help them prepare to escape from the camp. If we learned that someone needed special medicine, we delivered it right to that person, not to the Germans. Sometimes we delivered money either to someone in the camp or perhaps to someone in hiding. Many people were hiding and they had to have money to give the person buying food for them. I did all these things. ...

Every few days I went to visit Marysia, but one day I did not arrive. I had been making frequent trips to Warsaw for Zegota, because I knew the city so well. This time on the return trip, approximately half way back to Lvov, Germans came into the compartment and made a search, looking at baggage, papers, everything. They found all the Zegota papers in my bag on the overhead rack. There was no way to hide them. Not knowing whose bag it was, they arrested all twelve people in the compartment, and took us to the Lublin jail. [Barbara Szymańska was eventually sent to the concentration camp in Ravensbrück. She survived two years of imprisonment and torture without betraying anyone.]

Halina Szymańska Ogrodzińska: During the months I was working [as a technician] in Dr. [Henryk] Meisel's laboratory [in Lwów] I was going very often to their home to give Polish literature lessons to their daughter, Felka. Each time, Dr. Meisel's mother, the old lady, would make scrambled eggs or an omelet, always urging me to "eat, eat, eat," which I did because I was still a teenager and always hungry. At this time Dr. Meisel was beginning to realize that the situation for the Jews had become quite intolerable, and he had to do something about his large family. He saw it would be impossible to save everyone. With the help of some friends he arranged to send Mrs. Meisel's sister, Nina, to Warsaw, and she survived. Felka went to the orphanage run by the nuns of the Felician convent. Then Dr. Meisel had a long discussion with the old lady. They decided that because she was so old, the best solution would be for her to take poison. Being a doctor he could give her something good that would cause no pain. They never spoke about this with the rest of the family, and one day she was dead—like that. I was still very young, but Dr. Meisel liked to talk to me, and he badly needed to speak with someone. He told me he had a very heavy heart, but I already knew that.

One day the authorities asked Dr. Ayre to eliminate all the Jews working for him, no exceptions. Ayre explained to them that the work of these people was important for the German army, but it was of no use; Dr. Meisel and his wife had to go to Auschwitz. The Germans had some sort of laboratory arrangement in the concentration camp, a little bit similar to the Weigl Institute, with worse eating and living conditions certainly, but the Meisels could still work on their research there. In general, I think that family came through the war rather well. Today Felka is a doctor and her Polish husband is a doctor too. ...

Basha was in Tarnobrzeg with Mama where she didn't have the opportunity to work for the underground. She was very happy there. In Lvov, in this Poland of terrorists, it was an altogether different world; the atmosphere was very unpleasant. When the situation in Lvov became very difficult we told Olga [Dr. Olga Lilien] to go to Basha and Mama in Tarnobrzeg. Not long after, Basha came to Lvov with the little girl, Marysia.

When she arrived, Basha had never heard of Zegota, but we needed people, and Slawek immediately took her in. She wasn't especially political; she joined us for private reasons, for family reasons. Certainly I was more political than she was.

Slawek arranged for Marysia to go to the orphanage run by the Felician convent, where she would be safer, the same place where Dr. Meisel's daughter Felka was staying.

I visited Marysia in the convent several times. I couldn't tell her anything about her mother or father. She would ask me for news of Basha. She was a sad girl, never smiling, but she liked it very much when I came to visit. I don't have an especially clear memory of her now because I visited so many friends in the same situation at that time. There were a great many small things that needed to be done for these people and sometimes it was

very difficult. Those in the convent were in a good situation and didn't need our help, so we only saw her occasionally, but we knew her life was safe.

Rachel Litowicz: When I returned [after the liberation], the Szymanskas told me that [my daughter] Rebecca [now Marysia] was in a convent in Lvov [Lwów]. This was not so easy because Lvov was now part of Russia, but fortunately I found out that they had moved the convent back to Poland. When I went to get her she was wearing a cross, but she understood, poor girl. Rebecca said she used to get down from her bed to pray she would be with mama and father, that we would be alive. The priests and nuns *were not so bad* since they knowingly took in Jewish children. They were kind to me—well, most of them—and they treated my daughter very well. She studied, and was very good in school, very intelligent. They loved her.<sup>1907</sup>

Barbara Szymańska (later Makuch) also took Malka, the 10-year-old daughter of Sara Glass (later Pasht), a fugitive from the Sandomierz ghetto in October 1942, to the Felician Sisters' convent in Lwów.

In October, 1942, after the Germans had begun to liquidate the Sandomierz ghetto in the Kielce district, Sara Glass (later Pasht) succeeded in transferring her ten-year-old daughter, Malka, to Janina Szymanska [Szymańska] for safekeeping. Janina, a former acquaintance, lived with her daughter, Barbara, in the village of Mokrzyszów [Mokrzyszów] in Tarnobrzeg county, Rzeszów district. Szymanska and her daughter received the young fugitive warmly, representing her to those who inquired about her as a relative and caring for her with love and genuine devotion. Despite the fact that Malka did not look Jewish, rumors began circulating in the village that Szymanska and her daughter were hiding a Jew in their home. Because of threats and their fear for her fate, Barbara took Malka to a convent in Lwów [Lwów], where she remained until the liberation of the city by the Red Army in July 1944. ... Sara Glass also survived the camps and after the liberation found her daughter Malka and they both emigrated to Canada.<sup>1908</sup>

The case of Dr. Olga Lilien, mentioned by the Szymański sisters, raises the controversial matter of the reaction of “neighbours” to Jews hiding in their midst. Originally from Lwów, Dr. Lilien had a very marked Jewish appearance. She lived in Mokrzyszów, near Tarnobrzeg, openly, in the home of Dr. Marian Połowicz.<sup>1909</sup> When the Germans came to the village looking for a fugitive, they summoned the villagers to a meeting to question them, thereby testing their solidarity under duress. Dr. Lilien recalled the incident:

<sup>1907</sup> Ellen Land-Weber, *To Save a Life: Stories of Holocaust Rescue* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 197–252. See also the testimonies of Barabara Makuch, SFV, Interview codes 32881 and 53620; Testimony of Halina Ogrodzinska, SFV, Interview code 32882.

<sup>1908</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 802–803.

<sup>1909</sup> Land-Weber, *To Save a Life*, 204–6, 244; Marian Połowicz, RD.

Everyone was telling the German they didn't know where the man was, when suddenly he looked at me and said, "Oh, but this is a Jewess." The head of the village said, "Oh, no, she cooks at the school. She is a very good cook." Nobody said, "Oh, well, she is Jewish. Take her." He let me go.

The population of the village was about two thousand. They all knew there was something "wrong" with me. Any one of them could have sold me to the Germans for two hundred deutsche marks, but out of two thousand people nobody did it. Everybody in the village protected me. I had very good relations with them.<sup>1910</sup>

Dr. Lilien settled in Tarnobrzeg after the war where she continued to work as a pediatrician caring for the children of the villagers who had sheltered her. She died there in August 1996, at the age of 92. Many other examples of communal solidarity—which undermine the notion that all or most of the neighbours of a rescuer posed a real threat—are found in the penultimate appendix.

The Felician Sisters rescued Jews in a number of other localities as well. Their convents and institutions in Kraków sheltered both Jewish children and adults. Maria Kiepura (née Neuman), the mother of the famous tenor, Jan Kiepura, who had converted to Catholicism when she married, was housed in the Felician Sisters' convent on Smoleńsk Street, in Kraków. After a three years' stay at the convent, she went to live with her husband's cousin, Helena Kiepura-Kuc, in Końskie, where she died on November 28, 1943. The convent's chaplain, Rev. Władysław Bajer, was summoned three times by the Gestapo in connection with Jewish women suspected of hiding there.<sup>1911</sup>

Barbara Metzendorf (b. 1936) was sheltered in a nursery school in Kraków run by the Felician Sisters until it was shut down. She then stayed in a shelter run by the Dominican Sisters outside of Kraków. Later she was cared for by a family friend. Her older sister (by three years) was rescued by a Polish aristocratic woman. The two girls were reunited with their father after the war.<sup>1912</sup>

Lidka Taubenfeld (also known as Ilana Feldblum) and her cousin Lena Gross (Kaniewska) were taken in by the Felician Sisters at their hospice (Dom Opieki) on Kopernik Street, in Kraków, under assumed identities,<sup>1913</sup> as was the daughter of Pinkas Goldfluss, a pharmacist from Dębica.<sup>1914</sup>

<sup>1910</sup> Land-Weber, *To Save a Life*, 246.

<sup>1911</sup> Testimony of Rev. Władysław Bajer in Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 341.

<sup>1912</sup> Testimony of Barbara Metzendorf, February 6, 1949, JHI, record group 301, no. 4268.

<sup>1913</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 350; Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 190. Lena Gross Kaniewska states that she stayed in three different convents.

<sup>1914</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 641.



During the occupation, Lidka Taubenfeld (born 1932) [later Ilana Feldblum] moved with her family from the town of Radom to Przemysł [Przemyśl], where her father passed away. Although Taubenfeld and her cousin, Lena Gross [later Kaniewska], had been provided with Aryan papers by their parents after Lena's parents perished, Lidka's mother realized the importance of finding them a safe shelter. In a chance encounter with Maria Klepacka, the latter agreed to hide the two girls in her apartment and teach them the basic tenets of Catholicism to prepare them for admission to a convent orphanage, where they would be safe. Klepacka took the two girls into her one-room apartment in Cracow [Kraków], where they were soon joined by other refugees. Klepacka often put up Jews on a temporary basis until they found more permanent accommodation on the Aryan side of the city. Half a year later, Taubenfeld and Gross were transferred to a convent belonging to the Felicjanki [Felician] Sisters under assumed identities. In late 1942, after Taubenfeld's mother perished, a relative undertook to pay the convent fees. After he too perished, the children were returned by the nuns to Klepacka, who continued to look after them like her own daughters. In due course, after Zegota [Żegota], at Klepacka's request, agreed to pay the convent fees, Taubenfeld and Gross were sent back to the convent, where they stayed until January 1945, when the area was liberated.<sup>1915</sup>

After being expelled from their home on Kopernik Street in Kraków, the Felician Sisters were taken in by the Benedictine Sisters in Staniątki and ran their boarding school there. Three Felician sisters were engaged in this operation: Sister Filipa (Irena) Święch, the superior, Sister Klementyna, and Sister Marcelina. Six out of the eighteen girls in residence were Jewish, among them Irena Zalewska, Marta Wiśniewska, Janina Baran, Hania Żorska,<sup>1916</sup> and Janina Ecker.

Tadeusz Latawiec and his wife, Jozefa [Józefa], lived in a residential building in Cracow that belonged to the Eckers. In 1940, the Eckers—husband, wife, and five-year-old daughter, Janina—were expelled from Cracow to the ghetto in Wieliczka, where they remained until the ghetto was liquidated in August 1942. During the evacuation Aktion, Tadeusz Latawiec entered the ghetto and, risking his life, removed little Janina (with her parents' full consent) and brought her to his apartment. From then on, Latawiec, a postal clerk, and his wife, Jozefa, protected the Jewish girl, cared for her lovingly and devotedly as they would their own daughter, and met all her needs out of humanitarian principles and for no material reward. Mr. Ecker perished; his wife was sent to the concentration camp in Plaszow [Płaszów]. Latawiec made contact with her and occasionally brought greetings from her daughter until she was transferred to a different camp, never to return. In the spring of 1943, when the Latawieces' neighbors identified Janina as the Eckers' daughter her protectors moved her to an orphanage at a convent in Staniątki [Staniątki] (near Cracow), for which they made [modest] monthly payment punctiliously [for the child's upkeep]. After the liberation, the Latawieces took Janina into their home and cared for her until 1949, when Jewish institutions arranged her resettlement in Israel.<sup>1917</sup>

<sup>1915</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 350.

<sup>1916</sup> Krystyna Samsonowska, "Pomoc dla Żydów krakowskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 848; Klimek, *Kościół krakowski 1939–1945*, 20.

<sup>1917</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 445

In her testimony, Janina (Nina) Ecker clarifies that both her parents survived the war, and she describes the circumstances in which she found herself in the care of the Felician Sisters in Staniątki.

My adoptive mother [Józefa Latawiec], a practicing Catholic, frequently went to church and prayed. According to her, St. Anthony inspired her one day to place me in a convent. She went to the Social Welfare Department and said that she had a niece from the Poznań [Poznań] area who she wanted to place in a boarding school. They gave her the name of the Felician Sisters in Staniątki [Staniątki] and obtained a birth certificate for me, and we left for Staniątki. This was the beginning of 1944. My adoptive mother had had me baptized with water earlier. I was accepted as a Polish girl in the convent until the end of the war.

The nuns did not know [initially], therefore, that I was Jewish. My appearance was good, my Polish likewise. I behaved properly and was a practicing Catholic.

When I was ready to take my first Communion, though, I was afraid that I would commit some sacrilege. In truth, though my adoptive mother had me baptized, it was not a real baptism. One day I approached the mother superior and asked to have a talk with her. I told her that I was a [sic] Jewish and begged her to have me baptized before I took Holy Communion. She fixed her eyes on me and said:

“Daughter of the Chosen Race, good child, let’s try to figure this out.” The next day the mother superior made a trip to my adoptive mother and asked her by what right had she placed a Jewish child in the convent without telling her. She said she already had several Jewish children and needed more Polish children to hide the presence of the others. Meanwhile, each new child she was getting was Jewish! (There were not many children in the school, about eighteen. Taking that into consideration, six Jewish girls was a lot.) My adoptive mother swore that I was not a Jew, but rather her niece. The sister replied that that was nonsense, for I had admitted it myself. When she next saw me, my adoptive mother said: “Nina, what have you done!”

So I became baptized. In the meantime I befriended the other Jewish girls there, and thanks to me all six became baptized. Of course, everything happened in secret, though with much ceremony. ...

We then went to church and, hiding there, started to tell each other about ourselves. There were three of us. As for the rest of the Jewish girls, everyone knew that they were Jewish because of the way they looked. ... Of course, no one betrayed them, but they were terribly bullied.

When I organized this baptism, we were all very happy because we felt that if something happened we would go straight to heaven.

I was treated very well in the convent. My adoptive parents paid for me during the entire time I was there. My adoptive father supported me from his meagre post office pension. Aside from the mother superior, not one of the nuns knew that I was Jewish. I was there until the liberation of Cracow in [sic] January 18, 1945. My adoptive parents came for me the following day and took me home with them. I returned home, and they enrolled me in school. ...

It was good in the convent. The nuns protected us. They tried to dress the girls who had an “inappropriate look” in such a way as to cover up their “Jewishness.” The nuns

were very orderly and tried very hard. Particularly, the mother superior, Sister Filipa Swiech [Świech]. ...

There were only three Felician sisters. Mother Superior Filipa Swiech, Sister Klementyna and Sister Marcelina. The teachers were secular, and they did not know [officially] that we were Jewish. ...

There were different stages in the convent. Toward the end of the war we suffered from hunger, for there were no food supplies and nothing to eat—but love and warmth were not lacking. Sister Marcelina was an exceptional person in this regard. For me she was not only a mother, but a friend. She worried over us and cherished us. And then there were the [Latawieces], of course. Every Sunday they came to me with a toy, a blouse, sugar or something else. Through all the years of the war I did not lack love and warmth. I was fortunate.<sup>1918</sup>

A number of Jewish children—perhaps seven—were sheltered by the Felician Sisters at their orphanage in Sądowa Wisznia, near Jaworów, among them Stanisław Stammer-Cichocki from Lwów (b. 1937) and Renia Gutman, the daughter of a local Jewish doctor. Three Jewish children from the nearby town of Gródek Jagielloński—the siblings Mania (Marusia) and Zew (Władek) Rajcfeld and Basia Rothman—were placed in the orphanage by Jan Ponulak. Afterwards, Jan and his brother Michał managed to smuggle Rajzel Rajcfeld, the mother of Mania and Zew, out of the ghetto in Gródek Jagielloński and brought her to the convent. She remained there with her children dressed in a nun's habit.

Because the number of children grew during the war to more than thirty, it was necessary to move the orphanage to the monastery of the Reformed Franciscan Fathers, also in Sądowa Wisznia. As the Soviet front approached, the nuns were ordered to evacuate the monastery for use by the German military. In the spring of 1944, they transferred their charges to a children's home in Otwock near Warsaw, also run by the Felician Sisters.

One of the nuns who accompanied the children and the mother of one of the Jewish children to Otwock was Sister Maria Łukasz Makuch. Two other nuns, Sisters Zdzisława Zarzycka and Irena Chrycuk, are shown in a 1943 group photograph with the children.<sup>1919</sup> The head of the convent, Sister Kantalicja (Julia) Zagrodzka, was awarded by Yad Vashem in 2016. She alone.

<sup>1918</sup> Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 179–85.

<sup>1919</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 265–66; Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 183–85 (with photographs); Gary Wisby, “Sister Mary Luke Makuch; Aided Jewish Kids in WW II,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 22, 2003; Testimony of Stanisław Stammer-Cichocki, SFV, Interview code 21024; Maria Sowisło, “Ze wspomnień Żydówki Rajzel dowiedział się o ojcu bohaterze,” *Dziennik Bałtycki*, September 27, 2019, based on the Yad Vashem testimony of Rajzel Rajcfeld; Tadeusz Epsztein, Ewa Grzymała, and Dorota Zamojska, eds., *Inwentarz Archiwum Wydziału Oświaty Cen-*

The following testimonials concern institutions run by the Felician Sisters in Wawer, located on the outskirts of Warsaw. Sister Zygmunta (Joanna Reiter), the director of the orphanage in Wawer, was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile. It is important to bear in mind that convents had to rely on charity and income from their own services or labour for subsistence, and that the nuns lived in poverty.

When their Warsaw apartment was confiscated during the occupation, Stefania Dlutowska [Dłutowska] and her daughter, Maria-Krystyna, were forced to move to the nearby village of Radosc [Radość]. From early 1943, six Jews—Jerzy Leinkram and his young daughter, Ruth; his grandmother, Blums Goldman; his nephew, Michal [Michał] Flohr; his uncle, Julian Leinkram; and his cousin, Marta Lencka—all found shelter in the cellar of the Dlutowskis' new home, where Stefania and her daughter took good care of them. When the Dlutowskis were no longer able to support such a large number of people, Dlutowska transferred Ruth under an assumed name to a children's institution run by the Felicjanki [Felician] nuns in the village of [Wawer-]Glinki, near Warsaw, and Flohr to a relative of Dlutowska's who agreed to take him in. ... Dlutowska and her daughter received no payment for their acts of courage ...<sup>1920</sup>

In 1943, Mirla Kajler managed to escape from the Warsaw ghetto with her four-year-old daughter, Felicia [later Sandzer, b. 1938]. When Kajler realized that she had no chance of surviving with her daughter, she went to a Catholic convent in Wawer, an eastern suburb of Warsaw, and approached the mother superior, Sister Zygmunta, the former Johanna Reiter, begging her to admit her daughter to the home for abandoned children run by the sisters of the convent. When Sister Zygmunta found out that the girl was Jewish, she looked after her devotedly, protected her, and watched out for her safety during the periodic interrogations conducted by the Germans in an attempt to discover Jewish children hiding there. ... After the war, Felicia was returned to her mother and the two moved to France ...<sup>1921</sup>

Before the war, Fraidla Skladkowska owned a leather-processing factory in Warsaw. After the occupation of Warsaw, Zenon Szenfeld helped the Skladkowskis by offering to hide their assets and valuables for them. When the Skladkowskis were interned in the ghetto, Zenon and his wife, Marianna, smuggled in food parcels to them. In July 1942, they helped the Skladkowskis and their daughter, Aliza, as well as Skladkowska's brother, Jakub Pin-czewski, escape to the Aryan side of the city, where they provided them with forged papers and financial aid. After putting them up for a short while, the Szenfelds arranged for the refugees to stay with Maria Szmidt, Marianna's mother. After the authorities were alerted by an informer, however, the Skladkowskis moved in with Czesław [Czesław] and Maria Car, where they hid until May 1943, while the Szenfelds continued to look out for their safety. Again the danger of discovery forced them to move, this time to the home of Janina Szymanska [Szymańska]. Thanks to the Aryan papers in her possession, Fraidla found work in a factory, while her daughter, who fell ill, was transferred to the nearby Wawer convent.

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*tralnego Komitetu Żydów w Polsce 1945–1950: Sygn. 303/IX* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 1997 and 2011), 86, 271 (Basia Rothman).

<sup>1920</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 174.

<sup>1921</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 666. See also the testimony of Felicia Sandzer, SFV, Interview code 22228.

In due course, her husband and brother moved in with Anna Szwerkowska and Irena Rudkowska, her sister, in Anin, near Warsaw, where they remained until September 1944, when the area was liberated. After the war, the survivors emigrated to the United States.<sup>1922</sup>

Halina Trachtenberg (later Robinson, b. 1928), was deported with her family from their hometown of Kalisz to Warsaw at the beginning of the war. She escaped from the Warsaw ghetto in September 1942, at the age of 14, by jumping over the ghetto wall with the help of Leokadia (Loda) Komarnicka. Komarnicka also helped Halina's stepmother, Jadwiga Trachtenberg, and Zofia and Sabina Zander, Jadwiga's mother and sister, escape from the ghetto.<sup>1923</sup>

For the next two years, Halina was in hiding. She stayed at thirteen different places and with four sets of false documents. As she recalls, "In the 23 months I spent in hiding, following my escape, I had to pass through 13 locations with four sets of false documents. That means that close to 100 other Righteous Gentiles risked their lives to save just one Jewish teenager."<sup>1924</sup> These courageous Poles arranged for her transport, accommodation, and false documents. Among them were Zygmunt and Maria Truchanowicz, with whom Halina lived for some time, and Maria Jiruska, who had worked as a headmistress before the war.

Passing as Halina Górską, Halina was among eleven Jewish children sheltered by the Felician Sisters in their convent in the Warsaw suburb of Wawer, where she attended a boarding school from October 1942 to February 1943. The Jewish children were under the care of Sister Maria Kalasancja (Antonina Fuja), who was the director of the high school. Halina describes her rescue in her memoir.<sup>1925</sup>

A summary account by Yad Vashem regarding Wanda Jiruska and her daughters, Stefania Weronika and Maria Antonina,<sup>1926</sup> suggests that the children's homes run by the Catholic Church to which Jiruska referred Jewish children as orphans were not aware of their charges' Jewish origin. That was certainly not the case with regard to the Felician Sisters in Wawer.

<sup>1922</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 784.

<sup>1923</sup> According to one report, Leokadia Komarnicka, a staunch nationalist who helped dozens of Jews, was executed by the Germans for helping Jews. See Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 204–6, 489. However, Komarnicka is identified as Meta Kemblińska by Yad Vashem, Sabina Zander is said to have been sent to a convent near Warsaw, and Kemblińska is said to have died in 1958. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 342–43.

<sup>1924</sup> Halina Robinson, "Survivor," in Nicola Schafer, ed., *The Words to Remember It: Memoirs of Child Holocaust Survivors* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2009), 291–304, at p. 298.

<sup>1925</sup> Halina Robinson, *A Cork on the Waves: Reflections of a Turbulent Life* (Sydney: Sydney Jewish Museum, 2005; Sydney: Park Street Press, 2006); Halina Czernuszyn-Robinson, *A Cork on the Waves: A Survivor's Story* (Silverwater, New South Wales: Vide Publishing, 2015).

<sup>1926</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 325.

Another Jewish charge at this institution was Lidia Szkolnikow (later Stamler, b. 1935), who, after her escape from the Warsaw ghetto, stayed there under the name of Teresa Cieřlik.<sup>1927</sup>

Barbara Bregman (later Marlow, b. 1930) and her mother, Bronisława Bregman, escaped from the Warsaw ghetto in July 1942. While residing in the ghetto, the family (including Barbara's parents and brother) had converted to Catholicism and were parishioners at All Saints' Church, located inside the ghetto. They were helped by a number of prewar Polish friends, among them Stanisława Wedecka and Bonawentura Lenart, Barbara's nanny, as well as by new acquaintances.

Rev. Leon Pawlina, who was a member of Caritas, the archdiocesan charitable organization, provided false birth and baptismal certificates. Bronisława Bregman became Paulina Karczewska and was sheltered by Irena Nowodworska, the widow of Leon Nowodworski, a National Democrat activist and head of the Warsaw Council of Lawyers. (After the Council rejected German demands to remove its Jewish members in February 1940, Nowodworski was removed from the bar.<sup>1928</sup> He died the following year.)

Barbara Bregman became Marianna Anyszka and, with the assistance of Rev. Pawlina, was placed in the Felician Sisters' boarding school in Wawer in February 1943. She remained there for half a year, before rejoining her mother. Barbara was asked to leave after another Jewish girl, whose true identity had become widely known, identified her as a Jew, thereby exposing her cover.

In her Shoah Foundation testimony, Barbara suggests that the two Jewish girls' departure had to do with her impression that the nuns did not want to shelter Jewish children. But this is incorrect; the Felician Sisters accepted other Jewish children at this institution, as the rescue of Halina Trachtenberg (described above) suggests. The two girls in question had to leave because, once

<sup>1927</sup> Testimony of Lidiah Stamler, SFV, Interview code 41787.

<sup>1928</sup> After the Warsaw Council of Lawyers rejected the German demand to remove its Jewish members in February 1940, the authors who issued the rejection were promptly disbarred. The Germans subsequently forbade all members of the council from practicing law and ordered a general registration of all Warsaw lawyers. Every candidate for inclusion on the official list of bar members was first questioned by the chief of the Warsaw District Department of Justice on his position on the admission of Jewish lawyers. The 80–100 lawyers who openly favoured their admission (nine lawyers did not state any view, the majority gave equivocal answers) were arrested in July 1940 and taken to Pawiak prison in Warsaw. They were sent to Auschwitz in September 1940, and only a few of them survived. See Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 116–20.



their cover had been exposed, their continued stay put the rescue operation at risk and set the entire institution on a precarious footing.<sup>1929</sup>

The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul sheltered at least three Jewish children at their orphanage in Przeworsk, among them Esther Singer (later Freilach, b. 1939) and Rina Szpigel (later Glahman, b. 1933). One of the children was given a birth and baptismal certificate by a priest. After leaving the ghetto in Przemyśl, Esther's father, Friedrich Singer, obtained false identity documents for himself and his daughter as Tadeusz Czajkowski and Antonina Czajkowska. He entrusted Esther to a Polish woman in Przeworsk, while he himself moved around working for Poles. When Esther fell ill, the Polish woman cared for the child and nursed her back to health.

Afterwards, in July 1943, Esther was placed in the orphanage run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, under the care of Sister Zofia Szczygielska. All of the nuns were aware that she was Jewish. After the war, Esther rejoined her father and later settled in the United States. Sister Zofia Szczygielska was persecuted by the Stalinist regime. She was sentenced to three and a half years in prison on trumped up charges. She was released in 1951, after serving two years and nine months of her sentence in a work camp. She was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2018.<sup>1930</sup>

The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul sheltered a number of Jewish children and adults at their convent in Nyrków, on the outskirts of Czerwonogród, near Zaleszczyki, in the Tarnopol province. After escaping from the ghetto in Drohobycz in 1942, Karolina Heuman (b. 1928) and her younger brother, Henryk (b. 1936), were placed there by their father. Karolina assumed the name of Marta Regusz; her brother, who did not survive a Ukrainian partisan attack, was known as Andrzej Tarnawski. The children had been provided with false documents by a priest before their arrival at the convent. He also made arrangements for their acceptance with Sister Klara Linowska, the superior.<sup>1931</sup> Karolina recalled those turbulent years.

After a few months of staying in the ghetto [in Drohobycz], we managed to escape. At that point, our entire family split up. Mother, under an assumed name, left for Lwów, and my

<sup>1929</sup> Testimony of Barbara Bregman, SFV, Interview code 25912; Jan Żaryn, "Zapomniani bohaterowie," *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], November 26, 2009; Testimony of Barbara Marlow in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 401–6.

<sup>1930</sup> Siostra Zofia Szczygielska, Yad Vashem, Internet: [https://www.24gliwice.pl/wiadomosci/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Szczygielska\\_Zofia\\_historia\\_Sprawiedliwej.pdf](https://www.24gliwice.pl/wiadomosci/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Szczygielska_Zofia_historia_Sprawiedliwej.pdf); Marian Wachowicz, "Sprawiedliwa wśród Narodów Świata," *Nasz Dziennik*, July 12, 2019.

<sup>1931</sup> Testimony of Sister Władysława Sobierajska, cited in "Pomoc Żydom w czasie wojny: Zgromadzenie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego à Paulo—szarytki," undated typescript.

brother and I were placed by Father in the cloister of the Sisters of Charity in Czerwonogród. I remember how we were driven by night in a horse-drawn wagon to the cloister and how Father bade us farewell. Pointing to the sky, he said, “We shall meet there.” He then paid for our stay<sup>1932</sup> with money he kept hidden in a bottle, and he left. From that moment I never saw him again.

In the cloister, I used the name Marta Regusz. I worked in the fields. Whenever Germans showed up in the cloister, I would die of fright (after all, my brother was circumcised!). After placing us in the cloister, Father went into hiding in Horodenka, where he was shot at the beginning of 1943. ... I don’t know where Mother perished. ... My brother perished during a raid on the cloister by the followers of Bandera [Ukrainian nationalist partisans who attacked Poles]. He was then nine years old. Here is how, at the time, I described the events of this horrible day:

“It was the second of February 1945, at eleven o’clock. ... There were three of us young girls and my beloved brother ... I woke up with a start during the night and heard terrible shooting around the cloister. There was often shooting going on at night, but it never made the same impression on me as then. I got up and walked up to the window. It seemed to me that it was strangely bright outside. I lay down again, but some inner voice would not let me lie. I started to get dressed, and I dressed my brother. All of us girls were already dressed when Sister Władysława [Sobierajska] walked in and said we were surrounded by Bandera’s followers. We were terrified.

Right away, we went over to the bedrooms of the Sisters, and there, by the window, we stood for three hours, watching the terrible tortures of people who were fleeing in panic from the flames. The inhuman barbarians ran around furiously with flares in their hands and set fires to one hut after another, and whenever they saw someone, if they could, they grabbed him alive, and if not, then they would shoot him on the spot. They captured one family in our village and all that was later found of the children were fragments of burned-up bones, and the father’s skin had been ripped off from his stomach all the way to his head. We, the girls, stood all the time by the window, waiting for what would happen next. We felt that our own lives, too, were hanging by a thread. ...

Soon, our suppositions came to pass. At three o’clock in the morning, we heard terrible knocking on the front gate, which seemed to foretell our approaching end. Sister Władysława called us into the chapel and began to pray and prepare us for death. We knelt in front of the altar for perhaps ten minutes. ...

I had no regrets about dying, because until then I had not experienced contentment on earth. I just felt sorry for my brother. ... In the last moment, when the glass of the windows in the lower corridor started falling onto the floor with a loud crash, Sister Superior [Klara Linowska] hid us under the altar.

Those who survived repatriated to Poland.”<sup>1933</sup>

<sup>1932</sup> It was not unusual for people who could afford to do so to make payments or gifts to religious institutions to offset the cost of caring for their children. During the war, convents and orphanages were overcrowded with charges and in dire financial straits. It is unlikely that the amount paid by their father was sufficient to maintain his children for their entire stay at the convent.

<sup>1933</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 187–89.

During the attack by Ukrainian partisans on Czerwonogród and nearby Nyrków on February 3, 1945, some 60 Poles lost their lives, including Rev. Szczepan Jurasz, the local pastor, and two nuns, Sister Klara Linowska, the superior, and Sister Henryka Bronikowska. Sister Władysława Sobierajska survived the attack.<sup>1934</sup>

The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul also sheltered Lusia (later Lucy Gertner, b. 1940), the daughter of Regina Fenster (née Nurnberg, later Gertner, b. 1921). Regina arranged with a priest (perhaps Greek Catholic) for her daughter to be hidden at the nuns' orphanage in Nyrków, near Czerwonogród. Lusia was left at the convent as a foundling by a Polish woman that Regina had turned to with that request. Regina survived the war hidden by a Polish family named Wołyński, and she reclaimed her daughter.<sup>1935</sup>

Miriam Fleisher (b. 1941) was accepted at the orphanage in Czerwonogród through the intervention of Rev. Szczepan Jurasz, the local pastor. Miriam's mother, Regina Fleisher (b. 1911), had been introduced to Rev. Jurasz before the war by a priest who was a client of her husband's mill in Ułaszkwce. Regina approached Rev. Jurasz with a request to save her infant daughter after the Germans announced in the Tłuste ghetto that young children had to be surrendered. Having discussed the matter with the superior of the convent, Rev. Jurasz concocted a story that Miriam was the daughter of a count's maid, and he provided her with identity documents as Maria Styczyńska. Regina asked the priest to baptize Miriam and offered a monetary contribution for her upkeep. A Polish friend of Regina's delivered Miriam to the convent, where she remained until the entry of the Soviet army. While there, Miriam was visited by Rev. Jurasz, who took an interest in her welfare.

Sometime later, Regina and her husband, Samuel, were transferred to a labour camp in Różanówka. During an Aktion, Regina was left for dead in a mass grave, but she had only been shot in the finger. The following morning, she crawled out of the pit covered with blood and made her way to a Polish friend, wearing only a night shirt. Her friend cleaned her up and clothed her. Regina then made her way to the convent in Czerwonogród. The nuns were afraid to let her stay inside the convent building because German officers often came around. During the summer months, Regina stayed in the garden and took shelter in the mausoleum, to which she had been given the key. In the fall, she was hidden in a closet inside the convent together with another girl. When Regina's husband

<sup>1934</sup> Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 432–33.

<sup>1935</sup> Etunia Bauer Katz, *Our Tomorrows Never Came* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 7; Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 368 n.6; Gertner Family Papers, USHMM, Accession no. 2018.217.2.

escaped from the labour camp later that year, he too came to the convent and hid in a cowshed for six weeks until the arrival of the Soviet army.<sup>1936</sup>

Miriam recalls the names of several Jewish children at the convent (mentioned earlier), as well as a girl called “Krzysia,” who was taken by her uncle after the war. Although the Jewish youngsters seemed to be aware of other Jewish children in their midst, characteristically, Miriam claims that only the convent’s superior was aware that she was Jewish. (Such claims are disseminated at face value in Holocaust literature.) Allegedly, despite her own Semitic features and the fact that her parents also found shelter there, the other nuns were clueless about her origin. In her testimony, Sister Władysława Sobierajska recalls the arrival at the convent of several Jewish children and adults, including the entire Fleisher family. Their Jewish origin was never in doubt. Sister Klara Linowska, who spoke German, did her best to assuage the Germans who came around to inspect.<sup>1937</sup> Baruch Milch’s memoir, cited below, provides more information about the convent’s rescue activities. Among the nuns’ charges was a four-year-old boy—who spoke only Yiddish—left in the convent’s courtyard.

According to several sources, Rev. Stanisław Szkodziński, the pastor of Tłuste, near Zaleszczyki, and Rev. Antin Navolskyi, a Greek Catholic priest from that town, exhorted their parishioners to close their ears to the anti-Semitic propaganda spread by the Germans, not to take the possessions abandoned by Jews, and to do everything they could to help the Jews.<sup>1938</sup> During the Aktion in April 1943, several Jews took shelter in the church rectory.<sup>1939</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Tłuste, Dr. Baruch Milch and his brother-in-law, Dr. Jakub Weinles (Weinloes), were sheltered by Poles in the village of

<sup>1936</sup> Testimony of Regina Fleisher, SFV, Interview code 53687; Testimony of Miriam Fleisher, SFV, Interview code 53686; Oral history interview with Regina Fleisher and Miriam Fleisher, USHMM, Accession no. 1996.A.0519.10, RG-50.439.0010; Christian Cassidy, “Remembering the Holocaust: A Winnipeg Couple’s Story of Survival,” *West End Dumplings*, January 27, 2020. Regina Fleisher mistakenly refers to Rev. Szczepan Jurasz as a bishop and gives his first name as “Bazylian.”

<sup>1937</sup> Testimony of Sister Władysława Sobierajska, cited in “Pomoc Żydom w czasie wojny: Zgromadzenie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego à Paulo—szarytki,” undated typescript.

<sup>1938</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 40; Preil, *Holocaust Testimonies*, 193, 196; Testimony of Berl Glik in Grynberg and Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945*, 369–70; Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 841; Oral history interview with Adela Sommer, USHMM, Accession no. 1993.A.0088.26, RG-50.002.0026; Julius S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-215), FVA. Rev. Antin Navolskyi was recognized by Yad Vashem initially under the name of Izvolski. He is credited with stopping a pogrom (by Ukrainians) in July 1941 and rescuing Ulla Sommer and others. See his entry in RD.

<sup>1939</sup> Testimony of Julia Bronisława Woytowicz, JHI, record group 301, no. 7111.

Czerwonogród. They—and other Jews—encountered helpful priests along the way, among them the aforementioned Rev. Szkodziński of Tłuste and Rev. Jurasz of Czerwonogród, as well as nuns, Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul from Nyrków. In his memoir, Dr. Milch describes the rescue of Lusia Geller and Manya Nirnberg, involving the help of Rev. Szkodziński.

Slowly, we started to sneak our way into the village we had been seeking, Czerwonogrod [Czerwonogród], a village that was inhabited largely by Poles. Former patients of mine from the old days lived in every other house. The Polish village priest [Rev. Szczepan Jurasz] had been very helpful to Jews in the past, and there was a convent where the nuns were hiding some Jewish children.<sup>1940</sup>

Alone, Lusia [Geller], escaping a Ukrainian gang of murderers, went on to the local priest [Rev. Stanisław Szkodziński], who lived on the other side of the town [of Tłuste]. At midnight, she knocked on the window. The priest's sister, a good-natured spinster, overcame her fear, opened the window and called the priest, who allowed Lusia to climb in.

After Lusia told them what had happened, the priest and his sister fed her and tucked her in a warm bed, where she fell deeply asleep. The next morning, she asked the priest's sister to visit the labor camp [in Różanówka] and speak with the German commandant, Patti. She met with Mr. Konigsberg, the camp foreman, and pleaded with him to save Manya [Nirnberg, Lusia's adopted sister]. Konigsberg's assistant was roped in, and the assistant, being on good terms with the Ukrainian police, managed to extricate the girl from the police and transfer her to the camp. Manya, barefoot, chalk-white, dressed in nothing but a nightgown and a thin blouse, related how the Ukrainian police had laughed at her when she said she wanted to die. They stood her up against a wall in the courtyard and several policemen lined up opposite her with pistols and fired, deliberately missing. A German came over and told them to leave her alone. "One doesn't shoot at those who want to die but only at those who want to live," he explained.

The priest's sister informed Lusia that Manya was alive and well. Lusia burst into tears and begged to be sent, along with Manya, to the Lisowce camp, where she would find her mother and sisters. There was typhus in the camp at the time, and Mrs. Geller, fearing that the two girls would succumb to the disease, bribed the camp manager, a Pole named Korczak, to quarter Lusia and Manya with a Polish family. She treated Manya like her fourth daughter. He complied willingly ... The Polish family was honest, devoutly Catholic, and hoped that the girls would convert after the war. Korczak watched over the girls and met their needs.<sup>1941</sup>

A second family, by the name of Zielinski [Zieliński], who had not known [Baruch] Milch or his brother-in-law before the war, took them in, and kept them in hiding for nine months. In spite of the danger to their own lives, the Zielinskis gave the two grieving men both 'moral support and love', in addition to taking care of all their daily needs. Later,

<sup>1940</sup> Baruch Milch, *Can Heaven Be Void?* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), 164. Józef Ojak and his wife, Helena Ojak-Sobkowiak, were recognized by Yad Vashem for rescuing the two physicians, Baruch Milch and Jakub Weinles. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 560–61. Earlier they had been sheltered by the Zieliński family.

<sup>1941</sup> Milch, *Can Heaven Be Void?*, 227.

they found a hiding place for the two men in a convent near Tłuste [Tłuste], run by three Sisters of Mercy [Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul] and their Mother Superior [Klara Linowska]. Baruch Milch later recalled: “These heroic women ran the religious services of the parish, conducted the choir, played the organ and managed the kindergarten. Later in the summer they opened a secret shelter for foundlings. Among these tiny outcasts were about six or eight Jewish children left by desperate parents roaming the fields and forests, or just found abandoned at the monastery’s threshold.” On one occasion the three nuns found in their backyard a four-year-old boy, speaking only Yiddish. “They gathered him into their midst. As long as the murderers were unaware of what was going on behind the walls the self-sacrificing women shared their scanty provisions, fed their charges, cared for them and took them to the church.”<sup>1942</sup>

[On March 26, 1944, after the entry of the Soviet army:] To be on the safe side, we [Baruch Milch and other Jews hidden by the Zieliński family] stopped on the way to Tłuste for a few days with the Polish priest [Rev. Szczepan Jurasz] who knew where we had been hiding. While there, we visited the convent [in Nyrków] and found a few Jewish children whom the nuns had concealed. ...

Surreptitiously, I [Baruch Milch] began planning to leave Zaleszczyki in the company of some Polish families. With help from the local Polish priest, I obtained papers in the name of Dr. Jan Zielinski [Zieliński], the real name of the Zielinskis’ son who disappeared in the Soviet Union during the war. My “adopted son,” Zalman Sperber, got papers in the name of Jozio Zielinski [Józio Zieliński]. ...

Even though the Soviets and the new Polish government had agreed in writing that Jews and Poles with Polish citizenship could return to Poland, I could not get permission to leave the USSR because of my profession and rank. Therefore, I scheduled the exodus of the expanded Zielinski family for a week in which I was to attend a symposium in Czortków, whence the transports to Poland set out. Some Poles in the transport knew what I had in mind, because I had done much for them and we got along very well. Even the Polish railwaymen knew.<sup>1943</sup>

Rev. Szkodziński, the pastor of Tłuste, and his young vicar, Rev. Bronisław Majka, are also identified by Krystyna Smolik (née Fey, b. 1930) as the protectors of her family. After the family converted to Catholicism in secret in Skąlat, she, her younger sister and, eventually, her mother, Bronisława Fey, relocated to Tłuste, where they lived under the care of the priests. Sister Teresa of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, who ran a shelter in that town, provided them with food. They also received assistance from the two Frankl sisters, who were teachers, and Jan Świąder, a forester who also sheltered another Jewish woman.<sup>1944</sup>

<sup>1942</sup> Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 51–52.

<sup>1943</sup> Milch, *Can Heaven Be Void?*, 254–56.

<sup>1944</sup> Krystyna Smolik, “Nadzieja nadeszła wiosną,” in Kołacińska-Gałązka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 188–90. See also the testimony of Krystyna Smolik, SFV, Interview code 30803.



Rev. Szkodziński and his vicar, Rev. Majka, were killed by Ukrainian nationalists on September 15, 1943.<sup>1945</sup>

It was widely known among the Polish population that many Jews were passing as Poles. In Warsaw alone, it is estimated that there were more than 20,000 Jews living on the Aryan side after the liquidation of the ghetto in April 1943. Discretion was the order of the day, especially among rescuers, including Catholic institutions. Probing questions were avoided. The less said the better; the less one knew the better. The following account attests to the silent assistance extended to the family of Adam Starkopf by a number of Poles, including nuns and priests.

In January 1944, however, I was forced to part from both my wife [Pela] and child [Jasia] because Pela had to go to the hospital. Her abdominal pains had returned and it was clear to me that she needed more competent care than she could receive at the clinic in Łochów [Łochów]. One of the men in the lumberyard told me about Professor Czyzewicz [Adam Czyzewicz], who was chief of surgery at the Szpital Dzieciątka [Dzieciątka] Jezus—the Hospital of the Holy Infant Jesus—in Warsaw. I had heard of this doctor even before the war, and I knew that he was an outstanding surgeon. I did not know his human qualities, but I feared that if Pela continued to go without proper treatment, we might one day find ourselves faced with a life and death emergency. And so I decided to take the chance and have Pela examined by Prof. Czyzewicz in Warsaw.

After examining Pela, the professor said that she should be operated on without further delay. ...

From the professor's words I realized that we could no longer put off the operation. But I also knew that the Hospital of the Holy Infant Jesus was not a charity clinic. Patients at this hospital were expected to pay for their beds and for their treatment. How was I to raise the money? I threw myself at Prof. Czyzewicz's mercy. I explained to him that I was at present without funds worth mentioning because I was a former officer of the Polish army in hiding from the Germans. The professor looked at me, and then at Pela. He seemed to understand. "Don't worry," he said. "I'll operate on your wife myself, and I'll collect the money from you whenever you'll have it." I think he suspected immediately that we were Jewish. Later, I learned that he had given a room in his apartment to Professor [Henryk] Beck, a well-known Jewish specialist who had been the hospital's chief of surgery before the Germans came. Thanks to Professor Czyzewicz, Professor Beck survived the war. [Professor Beck converted to Catholicism before the war. During the war, he was in hiding in Warsaw.]

A date was set for Pela's operation. Meanwhile, I was told to take her home. She was going to be admitted to the hospital only two days before the operation.

I took Pela back with me to Sadowne. Our security problem had been solved. Pela and I now had a legitimate reason for leaving Sadowne and staying away for some time. But what were we to do about Jasia?

<sup>1945</sup> Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 443.

We decided to do now what we had so firmly refused to consider doing after Jasia's discharge from the children's hospital: We were going to put Jasia into the convalescent home in Swider [Świder, a Warsaw suburb] which Dr. [Remigiusz] Stankiewicz, the pediatrician, had recommended to us at the time. I told the nuns who managed the sanatorium that I was a former officer of the Polish army, that I was a devout Catholic working for the Polish underground and that I had no money to pay for Jasia's care. But now my wife would have to go to the hospital for a serious operation and I was desperately in need of a place where our little girl, who was not quite three years old, could be cared for until her mother was well again. If I could not find such a place for Jasia, I would not be able to continue my resistance activities, I said.

The nuns were wonderful. I do not know whether they suspected that Pela and I were Jewish, but they immediately agreed to accept Jasia free of charge. Once again Pela and I had to go through the ordeal of putting our little girl into the care of strangers. We left her in the ward crying bitterly but we knew there was nothing we could have done and we tried to persuade ourselves that Jasia would be in good hands. ...

Pela entered the hospital in the middle of January 1944. She was placed into a women's ward with five or six other patients. In order to bolster Pela's credibility as a good Catholic, our friend Edward Galewski gave her a little breviary to keep with her in the hospital, along with a religious tract entitled *The Life of Saint Theresa*. Pela placed both books on full view atop her little bedside table. Before the operation a priest came to her bedside to hear her confession. This was something for which Pela had not been prepared. She did not know the responses used in this sacrament of the Church and she was afraid that her ignorance would betray that she was not the devout Catholic she had made herself out to be. So, when the priest asked her whether she was ready to confess her sins she told him that she was in too much pain to be able to perform the act with the full concentration it required. The priest gave her a sad but understanding smile, made the sign of the cross over her and left. I only hoped that when Pela came out of her anaesthesia after the operation she would not say anything that would betray her as a Jewess.

The operation took almost four hours. ...

Almost as soon as Pela was awake again the priest made a return appearance. He inquired whether she was now ready to make her confession. Once again Pela protested; she said she was still too weak and tried to concentrate on repentance. Very well, the priest said, he would take her deadly sins upon his conscience, but he would suggest that she at least attempt to confess her lesser sins. When Pela still refused, he shook his head, smiled and walked away. Pela thought he suspected that she was Jewish, because he stopped pressing her about making her confession but gave her a friendly smile whenever he passed through her ward on his daily rounds. ...

Because her operation had been a difficult one, Pela had to remain in the hospital for seven weeks. ... Every Sunday I visited Jasia at the sanatorium in Swider. I was happy to see that she, at least, was getting good food, that she had good color and had not only grown but also gained some weight. ...

Pela and I worried whether we had been right to leave Jasia in the sanatorium. The Soviets had begun to bomb Warsaw and its railroad communications. What if we could no longer go to Warsaw to visit our daughter? What if the sanatorium itself got hit? Perhaps

Jasia was now in no less danger at the sanatorium than she would be in Sadowne? So, just before Easter, we went to Warsaw to pick her up and bring her home again.<sup>1946</sup>

After the liberation, Jasia continued to suffer poor health and needed to regain her strength. The Starkopfs again turned to nuns for assistance.

But what were we to do? The payment I was receiving for my work with the “Jewish Committee” consisted of nothing more than room and board at the shelter. But the doctor had an idea. She suggested that we place Jasia into a children’s convalescent home which was housed in a convent near Lublin. She explained to us that, unlike the sanatorium in Swider, this institution accepted every child free of charge. “Of course, the generosity of the sisters creates a problem,” the doctor added with a sigh. “Usually, every bed is taken. But I’ll try and see whether they can make room for one more little girl.”

We were lucky; Jasia was accepted by the sisters and remained there for the next four months.<sup>1947</sup>

Sandra (Roma) Brand, originally from Niemirów, near Lwów, passed as a Polish Catholic in Warsaw. Under the assumed identity of Cecylia Szarek, she had a love affair with Rolf Peschel, a German officer at the Criminal Police Headquarters in Warsaw who, remarkably, helped Jews and the Polish underground. Shortly before the August 1944 uprising, the Germans discovered Rolf’s double life and murdered him and made it look like a crime committed by the Polish underground.

During the uprising, Brand befriended Rev. Teodor Bensch, a Polish priest who taught canon law at the underground university in Warsaw. Her conversations with Rev. Bensch, who suspected her of being Jewish, proved to be a great comfort to her.<sup>1948</sup> Unknown to her at the time, Rev. Bensch was hiding several Jews, among them a woman and her teenage niece, in the chapel of an old-age home run by the Franciscans in suburban Konstancin. His kindness towards Sandra (Roma) continued after the liberation.

After the war, Rev. Bensch returned to his teaching position at the Catholic University of Lublin and was soon elevated to the rank of bishop of Warmia.

Father Teodor Bensch who became my friend while I was attending the prayer sessions for the Polish Freedom Fighters during the uprising in Warsaw, passed everyday at the same time by the gardener’s house, which now was my so-called home. Although sick, I waited eagerly near the fence of the garden to hear some news.

<sup>1946</sup> Adam Starkopf, *There Is Always Time To Die* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1981), 201–11; Adam Starkopf, *Will To Live: One Family’s Story of Surviving the Holocaust* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 201–11.

<sup>1947</sup> Starkopf, *There Is Always Time To Die*, 229; Starkopf, *Will To Live*, 229.

<sup>1948</sup> That relationship is described in Sandra Brand’s memoir *I Dared To Live* (New York: Shengold, 1978), 144–55.

He came to my rescue. He heard me coughing and said, “You are sick my child and you seem hungry too. You need help. Why don’t you move into the Home for Retired Actors in Skolimov [Skolimów]. The home receives food coupons. It isn’t much, but enough to feed the inmates, and enough to feed one more person. I will speak to the Reverend Mother. I think the best place for you will be right here.” ...

I moved into the old age home. ...

There was, in contrast to all other inmates, a young woman occupying the room next to mine. She shared it with a twelve-year-old girl. They also, like myself, preferred to take their meals in their room.

She had access to underground news sheets and she knew that all of those deported died in gas chambers. She spoke authoritatively, leaving no room for arguments. But I did not want to believe her because I wanted to find my child alive.

In my room I pressed my forehead against the cool glass of the window. I did not hear the knock at the door. Father Bensch came in.

I sensed at once that he had something important to say. I pulled another chair to the window and motioned my guest to sit down.

“I have been recalled to Lublin Catholic University to resume teaching Canon Law.” ...

“What are your plans?” Father Bensch asked. “You can stay here as long as you like but you’re too young a woman to remain in an old age home indefinitely.” ...

“What do you think of resuming your education?” Father Bensch asked.

“Am I not too old for that?”

“No one is ever too old to learn. Come to Lublin and register at Lublin University. If I remember correctly you wanted to become a journalist.”

...

I talk about my unforgettable friend Father Teodor Bensch who hid several Jews in his chapel and saved them from deportation to death camps.<sup>1949</sup>

Not all rescue efforts in convents and institutions run by nuns ended fortunately. Helena Szereszewska describes her experiences at St. Roch’s hospice for the incurably sick (formerly *Schronisko dla paralityków pod wezwaniem św. Rocha im. Hrabiów Sobańskich*; currently *Zakład Specjalny dla Chronicznie Chorych*) in Warsaw, which was run by the Felician Sisters. There, she passed as a Christian named Alicja Majewska. After the Germans requisitioned the Sisters’ original building on Nowowiejska Street for a hospital, in February 1943, their institution moved to a former Jewish students’ hostel on the corner of Leszno and Żelazna Streets. It was staffed by 16 nuns under the direction of Sister Aniela Kasprowicz.

The Felician Sisters took in many Jews and Jewish converts, among them Szereszewska, Zofia Łoziewicz, Maria Zawadzka, Mrs. Makowska, Mrs. Kosińska, Mrs. Mech, Mrs. Kowalska, Mr. and Mrs. Binder, and Mrs. Kozubowska. However, a conspiracy of silence prevailed about what was in fact an open secret.

<sup>1949</sup> Sandra Brand, *Good People, Bad People* (Rockville, Maryland: Schreiber, 2003), 69–73, 78.

Szereszewska eventually had to leave the institution after her daughter, Anna Maria (Marysia), and her grandson, Robert (Maciuś) Szereszewski, came to join her, because they did not fit the resident profile. They thus avoided the tragedy that befell its residents during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.

On August 14, 1944, the Germans executed most of the 180 elderly and infirm residents of the institution. The nuns and lay staff were expelled to the transit camp in Pruszków. The nuns were then allowed to go to Kraków, whereas the lay staff was sent to Germany for slave labour.

I lived at Lwowska Street until the beginning of June 1943, until the day I received my identity card.

Mrs Grabowska had a confessor in the church [Church of the Holy Saviour] on Zbawiciela Square. She went there once a week and sought his advice in everything.

"There are two women living with me, a mother and daughter. They're Jewish. I want to get the mother taken in somewhere."

"Nuns are the best," advised the priest. "The Ursulines or the Felicians. The Felicians have got a place on Leszno Street now."

"Shall I tell the Reverend Mother the truth?"

"Don't say anything. I'll take the lie on my own conscience. Give the woman these books to contemplate from me." ...

The Reverend Mother was sitting at a desk.

"I've come on behalf of my tenant, Maria Majewska [Szereszewska's daughter's assumed name]," said Mrs Grabowska. "Her mother has a bad heart because of her terrible wartime experiences. She'd like the sisters to look after her."

"Tell her to come with her mother," said the nun. "We've always got room." ...

I went there with Marysia [her daughter].

"You're not Jewish or a convert, are you?" asked the Reverend Mother in her office.

"God forbid! I'm a good Catholic." ...

"In principle we only accept people over the age of sixty-five," said the nun looking at me inquiringly. "You're too young for us. But sometimes we make exceptions."

I was accepted and paid her the amount required, 500 złotych.<sup>1950</sup>

Szereszewska maintained the pretence that she was a Catholic throughout her stay at the institution. She gradually came to realize, however, that many Jews actually resided at the institution, and that there was an immense silent conspiracy concerning this matter among the nuns and the elderly chaplain. Szereszewska also encountered a Jewish woman who assumed the role of an anti-Semite during her stay. The residents were expected to attend chapel.

Szereszewska recalled other priests that she encountered. Among them was Rev. Zygmunt Kozubski, professor of Catholic theology at the University of

<sup>1950</sup> Helena Szereszewska, *Memoirs from Occupied Warsaw, 1940–1945* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 1997), 292–94.

Warsaw and rector of the academic church of St. Anne in Warsaw, who allowed her son to serve as an altar boy—something that would have been sacrilegious under normal circumstances.

In the middle sat an old woman in a black coat and a worn black felt hat on her head. She had a Jewish nose and looked like a town Jewess. She sat huddled up and slept all through the mass. She immediately attracted my attention. ...

Then an old priest in a golden chasuble celebrated the mass. There were two small altar boys, eight years old perhaps. ...

I watched the altar boys and thought about [my grandson] Maciuś. He had served at mass too [at St. Anne's church in Warsaw] thanks to Father [Zygmunt] Kozubski. The priest knew Maciuś was Jewish and wanted to protect him. So he gave him a white surplice and a bell. The young curate also knew about Maciuś but he found it worrying and one day he said, "He's a Jewish child so what's he doing serving at Holy Mass."

"What about it? All children are the same before God," replied Father Kozubski. ...

Every Sunday I listened to the priest's sermon. He often referred to the events which had so recently and so tragically taken place. He talked about the annihilation of the Jews. "Everything that has happened to the Jews is atonement for the terrible sins they committed. It was God's punishment. The Germans are only the instruments of God's punishment." ...

I walked to the church of St Charles Boromese [Borromeo] on Chłodna Street. I sat down on a pew and thought about my daughters ... I got up and approached the altar and knelt down. ... So I knelt in front of the altar with the huge cross all alone in the church, sensing the priest's questioning look on my back. He must have known who I was. ...

I knew the story of a relation of ours, an old woman who was hiding in the country with the family of a Polish friend of her son's. She became very ill so they called the priest. She was on the verge of dying. When she caught her breath she called out, "Shema, Israel." He gave her the holy oils. She died. He closed her eyes. 'I think,' he said as he was leaving, deeply moved, "that Catholic wasn't completely Catholic."

Being visited by people whose appearance was faultless could strengthen my position. It was very important. So [my daughter] Marysia asked Mrs Grabowska to visit me one day. ... So a few days later Marysia asked the very aristocratic-looking Mr. Sztark with the walrus moustache to visit me. ... He went to see the Reverend Mother in her office, kissed her hand, introduced himself and asked her to take special care of me as I was the wife of a colleague of his.

Anna Białkowska moved into our room ... In the second year of the war she was taken to Ravensbrück concentration camp and cleaned the latrines there. The cold and terrible damp affected her legs. Thanks to her distant relatives she got out after a while and spent a year in the Red Cross hospital unable to use her legs. ...

She was a Calvinist. In principle, the institution only took in Roman Catholics, but they made an exception for her. ... She supported the National Democrats and had ultra right-wing views. I realized that the very first evening when she mentioned politics while talking to Zofia Łoziewicz. That evening Zofia was playing the part of an anti-Semite who was nevertheless a supporter of Józef Piłsudski. ...

A few days after Anna Białkowska moved into our room a bombshell burst. Zofia Łoziewicz was summoned to the office. "Mrs Łoziewicz," said the Reverend Mother, "you



concealed the fact that you're Jewish. Your papers are in order and no-one knew, but your secret has come out and now we can't keep you here any longer." ...

"Mrs Majewska," said Mrs Kowalska ... "Someone rang from town and informed on her. They can't keep her any longer. But they're taking her to Otwock, to another place they've got. Sister Franciszka is going with her."

"Mrs Majewska," said Mrs Mech, the one who dozed during mass, "... Do you know who set her up like this? Her husband. She had a Polish husband who wanted to get his own back on her. Did you guess that Zofia is my daughter?" ...

That day, immediately after mass, as [Maria Zawadzka] was going round the rooms where the bedridden women lived, she came across someone who had just come to the institution. The woman looked at Maria Zawadzka and shouted, "I know her! She's Jewish! She comes from a Jewish house! I did their washing and I know her!"

Maria Zawadzka turned as white as a sheet, ran out of the room, looked for the Reverend Mother, Sister Bogumiła, and threw herself at her feet. Crying, choking and nearly unconscious, she told her what had happened. Then Sister Bogumiła rushed into the room like a fury, her habit flapping and her cross and rosary beads jingling. "Listen you, you hell-raiser." Perhaps she wanted to call her a bitch, but could she of all people say that? "You monster. If you open your mouth once more and say one more word about Mrs Zawadzka you'll die and perish and you'll be damned and swallowed up by hell. And you won't receive absolution in this world or in the next either. You're nearly dead already, you viper." That's how she spoke to her in her fury, completely ignoring the other invalids lying next to her and half dead with fright.

Later the nuns tried to cover up the whole business. "It's completely untrue," they told everyone. "That old Mrs Pikulska has gone mad. She doesn't know what she's saying. She was very ill when she came here and she'll go to Jesus soon." ...

One day when our old priest was celebrating mass a woman I'd never seen before entered the chapel. ... I could tell that she was terribly confused. She didn't know whether to kneel or sit. She could see that nearly all the women were wearing a hat while she was bareheaded. She didn't have a missal. ...

Her name was Mrs Makowska and she'd just arrived that day. ... I could immediately tell that she was Jewish. It wasn't because of her face ... but her manner and behaviour. ...

There was one thing I often thought about. I knew I wasn't the only Jew in the place. How did Mrs Makowska, old Mrs Kosińska, Mrs Mech and Mrs Kowalska get into the institution? Mrs Makowska could have got in the same way as I did. We both had neutral faces and our identity cards were in order. ... But Mrs Kosińska's and Mrs Mech's Jewish faces were absolutely obvious and so how could Reverend Mother possibly ask them that ritual question about whether they were Jews or converts? ...

By now I was sure that the nuns knew they had Jews in hiding in the institution. [Others included Mr and Mrs Binder and Mrs Kozubowska. Mr Binder's accent gave him away, as did his looks, so he hardly spoke.] I became fully aware of it when a tall, thin woman with a typically Jewish face entered the chapel for morning mass one day. She sat down on a pew and was so terrified that she didn't make the sign of the cross when she came in or during mass. ... I was sure that the nuns had accepted the woman knowing very well who she was.

But what about Zofia Łoziewicz? Why had she been expelled? Because someone had rung from outside. No-one outside should ever know that the nuns were hiding Jews.<sup>1951</sup>

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out on August 1, 1944, the residents of the institution took shelter in nearby cellars.

At midnight one of the nuns came and brought some soup in a watering can. ... Suddenly a strong blast of air from a nearby explosion hit the window. A column of dust and lime poured over the cellar. Maciuś jumped off the table and shook the dust and pieces of lime off. The priest stretched out his hand. “Did it frighten you, Maciuś?” he asked. He drew him close. “Are you scared?” ... The priest took the child’s head in his hands and brought it towards himself, smiling kindly. The boy leaned against the priest’s knees ... I looked at the two of them and wondered whether the priest knew or didn’t. Didn’t he suspect anything? He lived in the institution, so could he really not know about the Jewish women in hiding there, and the Jewish men too? ...

The priest repeated the child’s name tenderly. He put one hand lightly on his head in a gesture of benediction. His hand hung for a moment in the air and then descended as lightly as a caress. He didn’t ask if he was obedient and loved Jesus, like priests often do. The two of them hugged each other and listened to the shots and the noises of exploding buildings, and at every louder explosion they shuddered simultaneously.

Just then we heard a loud stamping of feet somewhere deep underground and suddenly a unit of insurgents appeared out of the darkness of the tunnel. ... There were a few dozen of them. Some had rifles, some had revolvers and some had Molotov cocktails. They also carried machine-guns and grenades tied to their belts. They were very young. There was one Jew among them. ...

At eight o’clock we attended mass in the cellar on the other side of the courtyard. The altar, pews and confessional had been moved there. About a dozen soldiers went to confession before the battle. The shelter was down there. The chapel was in the shelter and next to it, in the wide, dark space which used to be a store-room, about a hundred sick people lying in bed. The midget came out of the open door of this huge shelter and knelt on the concrete floor by the altar. She was followed by the girl with the paralysed hand and the girl with the ecstatic face. They both knelt by the altar. Then the monstrous woman dragged herself in and crouched down beside them. Finally one of the nuns came in holding the girl with chorea. The girl was nodding her head and walking strangely. Every muscle on her face twitched when, rolling her eyes and waving her hands, she sat down at last and made the sign of the cross with a disobedient hand.

The soldiers in the pews watched this human debris. They saw the terror on their faces and the way their bodies shook at every shot, they saw their terrified eyes looking through the small window at the sky with its billows of dark smoke. It was a pathetic sight, this fear of death on the part of creatures so very disabled by fate. They didn’t leave the shelter for a single second and hid under the thickest walls when they heard the buzzing of a plane. ...

There was a group of about fifty people. They were surrounded by gendarmes and ordered to march through the gate to Leszno Street, which was on fire. That was the first

<sup>1951</sup> Szereszewska, *Memoirs from Occupied Warsaw, 1940–1945*, 297–357.

selection. A moment later the whistle could be heard again. Now they summoned the nuns, the priest, the organist, the lay servants and everyone not connected with the institution who had found themselves in the place on the first day of the Rising. ...

The courtyard was paved with small, yellow bricks. In the middle was a walled circle and in the circle grey earth where grass or even flowers should have grown. Now it contained graves, six crosses on six mounds. Five old women from our institution, and the sixth grave belonged to the insurgent. In the courtyard 16 nuns, the priest, the organist and the lay servants, all in a row. ...

I started saying goodbye to the priest and the nuns. I thanked them warmly for looking after me and everything good they had done for me while I was in the institution. Maciuś stood lost next to the priest and nuns. He turned pale and shivered when the priest placed both his hands on his head and blessed him for the journey into the unknown. ...

“Schnell! Schnell!” shouted one of the Germans ... I wanted to prolong the moment. Marysia took the child by the hand and they both went quickly towards the gate. One of the Germans hit me on the back with a whip and pushed me in their direction with his fist. ... Then we went out onto Leszno Street and it was one sea of flames. It was 14 August 1944 at eleven in the morning.

At the beginning of May 1945, when we returned from the camp and were staying in Kraków, I met a nun on the street wearing the habit of the Felician Sisters. I went up to her and asked, “Sister, what happened to the Felician Sisters in Warsaw? They had an institution on Leszno Street. I lived there for a while.”

“The nuns and the priest were allowed to go to Kraków. The lay servants were taken to Germany.”

“What about the rest? The 180 old and sick people.”

“They shot them all and set fire to the house. The house burnt down with all of them in it.” ...

“When did it happen, Sister?”

“It happened on 14 August, at twelve o’clock, at noon exactly.”<sup>1952</sup>

Raymond M. Berger’s mother was 28 years old when, in March 1941, the Germans forced her into the Kraków ghetto. She got hold of false identity documents and managed to escape from the ghetto in March 1943. With her false identity papers, she travelled to Lwów, where her sister and sister’s family lived, assuming the identity of Catholic Poles. They hid her in their small apartment.

After a German raid on the premises, she decided to go to Warsaw. Her sister had learned from her boss about a nun who was willing to hide Jews from the Germans. Sister Edith, the director of a convalescent home for ill and elderly

<sup>1952</sup> Szereszewska, *Memoirs from Occupied Warsaw, 1940–1945*, 365–77. According to the institution’s website, the Germans expelled the institution from its own premises to an abandoned building on Leszno Street in February 1943. When the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944, the Germans shot the patients; the nuns and lay staff were sent to the transit camp in Pruszków. See Zakład Specjalny dla Chronicznie Chorych: Historia, Internet: <http://felicjankinowowiejska.pl/historia>.

patients, agreed to take her in, knowing that she was Jewish. Sister Edith told the staff and patients that she was a Polish woman. When she despaired at ever seeing her sister again, Sister Edith comforted her.<sup>1953</sup>

Berger's mother survived the war at this institution, as did another Jewish woman whose name has not been established.

Another such shelter for Jews was the home for infirm nuns known as Nazareth (Nazaret in Polish) in Międzylesie, a suburb of Warsaw, belonging to the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary. It was housed in a five-room building. Despite their own poor state of health, the nuns, who were mostly elderly, took in several Jewish women and, for a short period of time, two Jewish girls, ages four and ten, who were later transferred to orphanages. One of the Jewish women was 53-year-old Janina, who had sung in the Warsaw opera chorus and had striking Semitic features. Miraculously, she escaped the notice of two German raids on the premises.<sup>1954</sup>

The Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union (Unia Rzymska Zakonu św. Urszuli—*urszulanki Unii Rzymskiej*), who operated schools and boarding schools, engaged in clandestine teaching during the German occupation. With the approval of Mother Emmanuela (Oktawia) Mrozowska, the provincial superior, they sheltered many Jews, both children and adults, in their convents throughout German-occupied Poland in locations that included Warsaw, Kołomyja, Kraków, Lublin, Lwów, Siercza near Wieliczka, and Tarnów.<sup>1955</sup> Based on her involvement in the rescue activities, Sister Stella (Maria) Trzeciecka, wrote the following account.

Faced by the whole magnitude of peril that threatened for various “crimes” during World War II, many nuns assumed personal responsibility for various deeds and kept their superiors and mates wholly uninformed. Mothers Superior behaved in a like manner. That fact today, after the lapse of many years, is a serious limitation on our ability to recreate the true scale of the aid which we gave, to the extent our capabilities allowed, to our Jewish brethren.

<sup>1953</sup> Raymond M. Berger, “Sister Edith Made a Choice,” *The Times of Israel* (blog), February 9, 2018, and additional information provided by the author.

<sup>1954</sup> Frącek, *Siostry Rodziny Maryi z pomocą dzieciom polskim i żydowskim w Międzylesiu i Aninie*, 80–83.

<sup>1955</sup> On the rescue activities of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, see also Klemensa Misiurewicz, “Postawa Sióstr Urszulanek Unii Rzymskiej w czasie II wojny światowej wobec osób potrzebujących pomocy,” *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 131–39; Agata Mirek, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at pp. 141–42.

Accordingly, what follows is just a handful of reminiscences based on authentic reports of Sisters who were, for one reason or another, involved in those matters. This was not an organized action (our principal tasks were clandestine instruction and running of canteens, especially for the working intelligentsia). But daily situations created a need for assisting people, and that we did.

In Warsaw we ran a boarding house for 60 female students on behalf of the Central Relief Council (RGO). The house was at 5, Przejazd St. There were several Jewish girls among our charges and not one of them perished despite the Warsaw Uprising and the summary deportation of the entire boarding house, together with the Sisters, to the camp at Bietigheim and later to Heilbronn. They all had 'Aryan' identity documents. The outbuildings of our compound at Przejazd St. formed part of the Warsaw Ghetto, so both the Sisters and their young charges lived through the infernal experience of the Ghetto Uprising and the ensuing massacre of the Jews. They were eye-witnesses of the most tragic scenes imaginable. Among others, they saw how Jews, intent on saving their children, hurled them from ghetto windows down to their acquaintances or relatives who were standing outside. Many a time, the children were smashed against the pavement.

We stored our modest supplies of food in the basement of the boarding house. Many a time the provisions would vanish and Sisters would hear a patter of feet in the basement. Soon they discovered that there was an aperture in the cellar wall through which Jews pushed forward to the basement. Thenceforth, Sisters left food in front of that passage and the food disappeared. In connection with that hole and the venturing of Jews beyond the ghetto precincts, the Sisters lived through a harsh experience when an armed Nazi ordered Sister Izabela S. [Spinek] to lead him into the basement. She was to be shot if Jews were found there. Luckily, they were not, nor was the aperture discovered. The Sister survived but she was immediately moved to another house. Nor was that the end of the affair. One day, a Jew pierced through the ghetto wall right into our dormitory. He begged us to fetch him somebody with whom he had an agreement about the escape. It was a dramatic moment—he standing in the breach and guards nearby. The house on Przejazd St. was encircled by guards who kept watching that Jews did not run away from the ghetto. The Jews escaping through the hole dug in our basement were helped courageously by Sister Teodozja Hoffman who directed them in disguise to a home for the aged in the same outbuilding. There was another incident. A certain young Jewess insisted by all means to get into the ghetto in order to join her family there. Sister Lia P. [Przybylska], though she realized the extent of the danger, led her through the chain of guards and saw that the Jewess found her way, by covert tracks of course, to her family.

Also in Warsaw, at 7, Oczki St., we ran a canteen in which we cooked an average of 2,000 meals every day on behalf of the Central Relief Council (RGO). Lots of people milled about the street until 4 p.m. After that hour, when everything calmed down, Jewish children turned up as if they had sprung from the earth. They penetrated to that district all the way from the ghetto. In the main, they were small boys and were excellently organized. One of them would stand guard at the point where Oczki St. runs into Starynkiewicz Square and another at the intersection of Oczki St. and Chałubiński St. In case of danger the little tot would whistle and the children vanished like air. Usually, there were several sometimes over a dozen children, each carrying a can. The food was always there for the Sisters would already have made an allowance for the arrival of the children. Quietly and efficiently, the

cans were filled. This became part of the daily routine at Oczki St. throughout the existence of the ghetto. Not once was there a bad break and, although the ghetto was at a distance of from 7 to 8 minutes brisk walk from the canteen, the children always managed to keep the appointment.

After the demolition of the house on Łowicka St., we lived in a villa of Mrs [Zofia] Potocka at 107a Puławska St., also in Warsaw. In the years 1942–1943, Sisters Konstantyna [Aniela Baranowska] and Imelda [Bogumiła Adamska] took a charming Jewish girl into safekeeping. Her assumed name was Marta Krzywicka. The Sisters rented a room with Mrs Horwat for her. Shortly afterward, a policeman took an interest in her and she had to change her domicile. Marta remained in hiding in Warsaw until her father sent her a passport from Uruguay. She went with the whole transport full of misgivings: will the Germans keep an agreement? Alas, the entire transport was exterminated in Frankfurt.

At about the same time, a certain Jewish female physician [Maria Haller<sup>1956</sup>] was hiding at Puławska St. under Mrs Potocka's and our care. She was from Stanisławów. She later died of cancer. We also took into safekeeping the mother-in-law of Professor [Szymon] Askenazy and placed her at Królikarnia as a purported cancer patient. This we could do thanks to the assistance of Mrs Potocka and Father [Edward] Wojtczak. She died a natural peaceful death there, and was baptized before passing away. We likewise helped Professor Askenazy's daughter Janina, whom a traitor later gave up to the Gestapo. She was tortured and murdered at the Gestapo headquarters in Warsaw at Szucha Avenue.

Our Cracow [Kraków] convent on Starowiślna Street and the subordinated convent in Siercza also assisted the Jews, though the task was difficult in view of German presence in the Siercza house. For example, we hid Janeczka, one of the third-form pupils from the primary school away for a few months. We gave financial assistance to rescue our seventh-form pupil, Hala Friedman, from the hands of the Gestapo. Unfortunately, that worthy girl did not survive despite frantic efforts of her faithful nanny. The money, as it later turned out, was pocketed by blackmailers and we never again heard of Hala. Also, we concealed in our house a woman whose first name was Felicja (we do not know her surname [see the account of Felicja Kohn below]). A very painful experience was the kidnapping by the Gestapo of two little girls—Ludka and Hanka Boroniec [also given as Borometz], whom we were hiding away among Polish and several other Jewish girls in Siercza. An automobile pulled up at night, a band of Gestapo officers rushed into the dormitory, lighting electric torches into the faces of the sleeping children and pulled the two semiconscious girls out of their beds.<sup>1957</sup> Also in Siercza, a Mr Hilman was our cart driver for a long time.

<sup>1956</sup> Agata Mirek, "Udział siostr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 142.

<sup>1957</sup> The Boroniec (Borometz) sisters were seized on August 16, 1943, after their uncle fell into the hands of the Germans and disclosed their whereabouts under torture. The pleas of their guardian, Sister Aniela Pietrzyk, proved fruitless. The girls were taken to the Płaszów concentration camp. Hanka perished, whereas Ludka survived incarceration. See Martyna Grądzka, "Kościoł katolicki w okupowanym Krakowie w pomocy Żydom: Zarys problematyki badawczej," in Klimek, *Kościół krakowski 1939–1945*, 143.



On behalf of the RGO [Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, a social welfare agency] we ran a home for resettlers in Cracow on Krupnicza St. For a while the director of that home was the Mother Superior of our Lvov [Lwów] convent, a fine human being with a perspicacious mind and the best of hearts. There were Jewish children among the resettlers. Among others, Sister Celestyna T. [Mieczysława Talarczyk, incorrectly given as Tatarczyk] escorted a Jewish child from Kołomyja in the east there. There were also Eryka M., Genia K., and others.

After the abolition of that home, thirty children, one-half of them Jewish, were moved to Rękawki [Rękawka] St. One day, another four-years-old tenant was added. He was brought by a tram conductor who told us the boy had been left on his tram all day, nibbling at a piece of bread. We called the boy “Antoś.” He later went to Kochanów where the RGO moved the children’s home from Rękawki St. with the others. Our Ursuline Sisters tidied up an abandoned house there, preparing it for the same complement of children. Apart from the Sisters, the little Jews had other invisible caretakers; their next of kin of those families which escaped from the hands of the enemy. From time to time, one or another would turn up for a momentary visit to see their beloved children and then would disappear in a mysterious fashion. One night, for example, a Sister saw a father sitting at the bed of a sick child. All of those children survived.

Jagusia, a 15-years-old, fled to our house in Tarnów while Jews from the local ghetto were being driven to the railway station. She stayed with us in hiding for a fortnight, and then we put her somewhere else. The girl survived. [Józefa Gross was employed at the boarding school. Józefa Gross was employed as a teacher at the boarding school.<sup>1958</sup>]

Many resettlers passed through our Lublin convent during the war. There was a considerable number of Jews among them who hid away for shorter or longer periods. Among them was 18-years-old Marysia from Chełmno, who spent a month there. Mr Stanisław D. [Dąbrowski] worked and lived with us for a couple of years, and thanks to that he survived. We also gave material assistance to our former pupils of Jewish origin. Our Sister Wiktoria Bogacz helped the Lublin community in an especially selfless manner. People used to call her “Mother of the Poor.” Thanks to the unqualified endorsement to the action, given by the then Mother Superior of the convent, the splendidly righteous Mother Tekla Busz, Sister Wiktoria doled out up to a thousand bowls of soup every day. Nobody ever asked: who are you with a Semitic face? The nature of Sister Wiktoria Bogacz was best defined by her name (Bogacz stands for “rich” in Polish). This simple-hearted but magnanimous Sister never seemed to run short of bread, soup, or even ‘delicacies’ like a piece of sausage or lard, which she gave away to Poles, Jews, and inmates from the Majdanek camp alike.

Mother Teresa Dettlaff, the Mother Superior of our Kołomyja convent, aided Jews on a large scale, and the Sisters from her convent participated resolutely in her action. Most especially on grim days of terror—round-ups or executions—our Kołomyja house became an asylum for those that had managed to run away with their lives. With terrible despair, they would look through basement windows and see their relations and acquaintances being led away for execution. Sister Hiacenty S. [Hiacynta (Stanisława) Suchta, incorrectly given as Suchla] served most frequently as our courier, escorting Jews to their hideouts.

<sup>1958</sup> Klemensa Misiurewicz, “Postawa Sióstr Urszulanek Unii Rzymskiej w czasie II wojny światowej wobec osób potrzebujących pomocy,” *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 131–39, at p. 135.

Situations were sometimes fraught with drama but, luckily, our aid was most effective. It required, however, plenty of vigilance, acumen, courage and sacrifice. Among her many charges, Sister Hiacentka escorted Mrs Rozalia Wrońska (an assumed name), [the daughter of a local pharmacist], to our convent in Zakopane, and then on to Raciechowice to her family who had selflessly been giving a helping hand in that action. She brought Mr Ebstein [Eckstein? Ebenstein?], a dentist to that same place. He later went into hiding in Nowy Sącz [with the family of Sister Celestyna Talarczyk] where he spent a long time and managed to survive. At the beginning of 1943, Sister Hiacentka escorted 4-years-old Ewa Zawadzka (an assumed name) to her native regions of the country. The trip with the child was a dangerous ordeal for she panicked at the sight of troops and policemen and could easily betray both of them. Therefore, a few months later, she had to be moved to her mother who had been hiding away further eastward. The undersigned, being a member of the Lvov [Lwów] convent, escorted little Ewa from Tarnów to Stanisławów. The child behaved quietly, but just before reaching Stanisławów she addressed some woman with a telling Jewish accent: “I think I know you, Mrs” ... Naturally, I was greatly alarmed, but everything ended all right. A third nun took Ewa on her further journey east and the child survived the war.

Apart from the event related above, the Lvov convent helped Mother Teresa Dettlaff in rescuing Kołomyja Jews on several occasions. Accordingly, on 24 October, 1942, Sister Ewelina Z. [Janina Zasada] escorted 10-years-old Ewa Kassler [Kessler?] from Lvov to Warsaw where she accommodated the girl with the [Franciscan] Order of the Family of Mary. The girl survived the war. She was a step-daughter of the above-mentioned Mr Ebstein. His wife, Ewa's mother, fared worse. She made her residence in Lvov but was not cautious enough and perished. Blackmailers cashed in on our contacts with her. They followed the tracks down to Kołomyja. The situation was dangerous. They threatened Sister Celestyna T. [Talarczyk] with arrest; eventually, a hard-gotten ransom of 10,000 złotys saved us and calmed the storm. Acting with foresight, however, the superiors of the Order transferred Mother Teresa Dettlaff to Cracow.

In 1941 or 1942, we took Professor Józef Feldman into safekeeping for the two weeks' duration of an anti-Jewish campaign. We placed him at 12, Jacek [św. Jacka] St. During that time, illicit identity documents were made out in his name. He got them, left for Warsaw, and survived.<sup>1959</sup>

Mother Elżbieta [Cecylia] Łubieńska and Mother Władysława Lewicka assumed responsibility for our aid to Jews in Lvov. For both of them the Ebstein affair, related above, was a harsh experience. First one then the other headed the convent. During her term

<sup>1959</sup> Józef Feldman, professor of history at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, was assisted by a number of Poles in addition to the Ursuline Sisters in Lwów. He was also sheltered by the Conventual Franciscans in Kraków, Czystki (near Lwów) and Hanaczów (near Lwów—in Hanaczów, under the care of Fr. Wiktor Błaż), and by the Bernardines (Franciscans) in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (near Kraków). Feldman converted to Catholicism and died in 1946. See Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 478, 534; Andrzej Śródka and Paweł Szczawiński, comp., *Biogramy uczonych polskich: Materiały o życiu i działalności członków AU w Krakowie, TNW, PAU, PAN*, Part 1: *Nauki społeczne*, book 1: A–J (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1983), 351–54.

as Mother Superior, Władysława Lewicka was truly fearless in aiding camp inmates and refugees. It was she who admitted a Mrs Roszko, an elderly Jewish convert, together with her adult daughter Maria to the convent for about a year. The elder Mrs Roszko later moved from the convent to the flat of Mrs Antoniewicz, the mother of one of our nuns, where she died a peaceful death. Her daughter took another hiding place, was eventually escorted by Sister Celestyna T. [Talarczyk] to a gamekeeper's house, and survived the war.

We also gave a helping hand to a Lvov kiln manager (Rosenberg?). Mother Władysława took his jewelry and trunks and other belongings into safekeeping. Every once in a while, his 15-years-old daughter, Marysia, would come and spend part of the day with us while he was taking out some of his things for ransom. He survived for a long time. We do not know what happened to him later.

The Gadziński family, our neighbours in Lvov, also took a young Jewish couple into hiding. They deposited their belongings with us and then would select some of the things, little by little, to pay for their upkeep.

One more fragment from our Lvov contacts. We were on friendly terms with Doctor K. and his family. That excellent man devoted plenty of attention and loving care to the poor, whom he not only examined but also supplied with medicines. Mrs K. was of Jewish origin. One day, when he was in town, the Gestapo came and searched the flat. That brave woman, his wife, succeeded in destroying all papers compromising her husband (he was a member of an organization), and did it practically in the presence of the Gestapo. In the meantime, a chimney-sweep entered. ... He then left the flat, but kept a watch in the street until he could warn the Doctor that the Gestapo had come to his home. Mrs K. and her son (a school boy) were arrested as hostages for the Doctor. The organization forbade him to report to the Gestapo and he despaired lest the Jewish origin of his wife be discovered. He spent a few days with us, later came every day to fetch some bread. Mrs K. was detained for six months, then set free together with the son.<sup>1960</sup>

## Rescue activities by the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union in Warsaw and Kraków are confirmed in *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*.

In 1942, when the Germans deported the Jews from the village of Szreniawa to the nearby Cracow [Kraków] ghetto, the Sznajders tried to find a hiding place with Christian farmers in the village. However, the only member of the family who managed to find a hiding place was 16-year-old Genia Sznajder, who was taken in by Barbara Dobrolubow, an old school friend of hers who, together with her family, looked after Sznajder devotedly, without expecting anything in return. A few weeks later, the Dobrolubows decided to send her to relatives of theirs in Warsaw, where no one knew her, on the assumption that, with her Aryan looks, she had a better chance of surviving there. In Warsaw, Sznajder was taken in by Zygmunt and Jadwiga Koczorowski, Dobrolubow's uncle and aunt, who looked after her, obtained Aryan papers for her, and registered her at a convent high school belonging to the Urszulanki [Ursuline] Sisters. The Koczorowskis showed loving concern for Sznajder, who stayed in the home run by the sisters until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in late summer 1944. Sznajder was sent to Germany with the other children of the home

<sup>1960</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 352–59.

and Koczorowski was sent to a concentration camp. After the war, they met up again in Warsaw and Sznajder stayed with the Koczorowskis until she finished her studies. In 1954, Sznajder immigrated to Israel.<sup>1961</sup>

Olga Zawadzka, originally from Lwow [Lwów], moved to the village of Czusow [Czuszów], Kielce district, after her marriage. Between the years 1925 and 1930, she had been a student in Jan Kazimierz University in Lwow, where she had befriended a Jewish woman named Frida Kohn, who was a mathematics student. After Olga left Lwow, the two friends lost contact. When the Germans took over Lwow, a mutual friend turned to Olga and asked her if she would hide Fela in her home. Olga, bearing in mind the fact that Fela was a Jew, told her warmly that Fela would be most welcome. Fela arrived in Czusow and Olga, with the help of friends and a priest, obtained a false birth certificate and Kennkarte for her made out in the name of Maria Zajackowska [Zajackowska]. Fela asked Olga to help a friend of hers, Klara Nachtgaist, who was spending entire days in churches, too frightened to leave. Olga welcomed her into her home as well. Klara already had Aryan papers made out in the name of Julia Nahorayska. In the summer of 1942, Olga went to Lwow again, where she agreed to bring back Nina Drucker (later Noe Levine), the seven-year-old daughter of the director of the Lwow ghetto hospital, Dr. Herman Drucker, to Czusow. Olga took Nina, who had a birth certificate in the name of Janina Witeszczak, into her home. Whenever the need arose, the child was either put up in the Sisters of St. Urszula [Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union] boarding school in Cracow [Kraków] or the Sisters of the Holy Ghost [Sisters Canonesses of the Holy Spirit de Saxia] boarding school in Busko [Busko-Zdrój]. Olga represented the fugitive child as a daughter of relatives who had died during the war.<sup>1962</sup>

**F**elicity Tendler (later Gnieslaw) was another Jewish girl enrolled at the Ursuline Sisters' boarding school in Kraków. The following account appears in the Yad Vashem entry recognizing Helena Kruszelnicka, and her mother, Malwina Kruszelnicka:

Before the war, Felicity Tendler lived with her parents, Anna (née Eck) and Edward, in Lwów. They were a happy family; Edward practiced medicine in Lwów and nearby Tumacz. Felicity was very small, and has very few memories of her prewar life. ... When the Nazis occupied Lwów, Edward Tendler contacted Helena Kruszelnicka, a friend who was also acquainted with Anna's physician brother, Leon Eck. Kruszelnicka lived with her 75-year-old mother Malwina, and worked as a secretary. Edward persuaded Kruszelnicka to take in little Felicity. There was no financial arrangement involved; the arrangement was made only through the bonds of friendship. Before departing, Edward gave Kruszelnicka the address of his niece in Melbourne, as well as that of Anna's sister in Denver, Colorado. He would never see his daughter again; he perished in the Janowska camp.

Felicity stayed hidden in Helena and Malwina's basement in Lwów from 1941 until 1943. She never allowed out, and there was little food. False papers were obtained for her under the name of Krystyna Torosiewicz and later, Krystyna Kruszelnicka. In 1943, Helena took Felicity to the Saint Ursula's Convent in Kraków, where she joined the boarding school.

<sup>1961</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 360.

<sup>1962</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 928–29.

For the remainder of the war she remained at the convent, without contact with anyone she knew. When the other children went home for the holidays, she was looked after by the nuns. She was frightened and felt imprisoned, but she was safe and survived the war, despite its interminable dangers. She remembers how one night, two German soldiers came to the convent looking for Jewish children and got very close to her, but fortunately did not discover her. After the war, Helena retrieved Felicity from the convent and they settled in Kraków.<sup>1963</sup>

Before they were killed in a mass execution of Jews, the parents of Monika Goldwasser (b. 1941) placed her with a family in a village near Myślenice, not far from Kraków. After a short stay there, Monika was sent to the Ursuline convent in Kraków. Orphanages were overflowing so children were often placed in foster homes. Monika was taken in by Anna and Maksymilian Kamiński, a childless couple, who were aware from the beginning of the girl's origins as she had come from the convent with a note containing her real name, date of birth, and the names of her parents. Monika, who was called Łucja, did not learn about her past until she was 22 years old. Her adoptive mother disclosed this information to her shortly before she died. Eventually, Monika was able to establish contact with her mother's sister, who lived in Israel.<sup>1964</sup>

Janina Szapiro (later Kuśmierek, b. 1926) converted to Catholicism together with her mother, Aniela Szapiro, at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Warsaw ghetto. After escaping from the ghetto before the Great Deportation of the summer of 1942, Janina joined her father, Leon Szapiro, who was passing as a Christian in Kraków. Janina was enrolled at the boarding school of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union under the name of Janina Szczygielska. Her father would visit her posing as her uncle. He was arrested as a Pole in March 1943 and sent to Auschwitz. Janina remained at the school for several months after his arrest. Afterwards, she returned to Warsaw with her mother, who had been hiding in Kraków, and resided in the home of her paternal uncle's sister-in-law, who was Catholic. Neither of her parents survived the war.<sup>1965</sup>

Armed with birth certificates of deceased girls provided by Rev. Waszczyszyn (?), a Greek Catholic priest who was a friend of their uncle, the twin sisters Rose

<sup>1963</sup> Helena and Malwina Kruszelnicka, RD.

<sup>1964</sup> Kołacińska-Gałązka, *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5, 319; Stępień, *Witnesses to Polish-Jewish History*, 32–33; Oral history interview with Monika Goldwasser, August 11, 2016, Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/oral-history/182507-monika-goldwasser>.

<sup>1965</sup> Testimony of Janina Kusmirek, SFV, Interview code 19296.

Roth (later Rose Moskowitz, b. 1925) and Irena Roth left their native city of Lwów bound for Kraków. Passing as Józefa Melnyk, Rose was placed in an Ursuline convent in Kraków by her Polish friend, under the frequently used guise of being the daughter of a Polish officer who had been arrested.

Another Polish friend arranged employment for Irena, under a false name, in Zakopane. Unfortunately, Irena was denounced to the Gestapo by a Jewish woman from Lwów who recognized her in the street. (This woman cooperated with the Gestapo in exchange for her own life, a promise that was rarely kept. Irena's high school teacher from Lwów, also in Zakopane, was yet another of her victims.) Irena was sent to Auschwitz, where she perished.

When word of her sister's arrest reached Rose, by way of the friend who had secured the placement for Irena in Zakopane, Rose was alarmed. Fearing that her sister might disclose her whereabouts under torture, Irena managed to get herself picked up in one of the frequent street round-ups of Poles, who were then sent to work in Germany. Irena survived the war, but her parents and sister perished.<sup>1966</sup>

Activities of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union in Kraków are also recorded in the accounts of Felicja Kohn from Lwów, who was employed as a teacher, and Wanda Załuska, a woman of Jewish origin from Kraków. The assistance of Rev. Edward Lubowiecki is also noted.

In Cracow [Kraków] I was put up for the night by the mother superior of a convent (Mother Superior Łubieńska of the Ursuline Sisters), despite continuous visitations by the Gestapo. Another sister from the same convent recommended me for suitable jobs, thus making it possible for me to survive. ... Also in Cracow I was very warmly received by Myszka P., who got hold of a *Kennkarte* for me, from the Reverend [Edward] Lubowiecki.<sup>1967</sup>

The nuns in the convent [in Kraków] were extraordinary. They helped us—my family, the PPS [Polish Socialist Party] organization, and later Żegota—tremendously during the war. I would have been unable to secure half of the birth certificates and identity documents without the help of that Ursuline convent. They behaved extraordinarily.<sup>1968</sup>

Another Jewish woman, Felicja Soluch, was employed in the communal kitchen located at the Ursuline convent in Kraków.<sup>1969</sup>

<sup>1966</sup> Testimony of Rose Moskowitz, SFV, Interview code 9851.

<sup>1967</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 259, 262.

<sup>1968</sup> Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość*, 152.

<sup>1969</sup> Martyna Grądzka, "Kościół katolicki w okupowanym Krakowie w pomocy Żydom: Zarys problematyki badawczej," in Klimek, *Kościół krakowski 1939–1945*, 125–54, 146; Agata Mirek, "Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń," in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60, at p. 142.



The story of Wanda Załuska (née Nelken) is especially distinguished. Although baptized a Catholic at birth in 1913, Wanda's mother had converted to Catholicism as a teenager and had married Dr. Benedykt Nelken, a Jew. Wanda graduated from the high school run by the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union in Kraków, and she studied art history student at the Jagiellonian University. In 1938, she married Kazimierz Załuski, a Catholic, who spent the war years in England.

A member of the Polish Socialist Party, Wanda joined the Polish underground, the Home Army, and devoted her efforts to helping Jews, first in her native Kraków, then in Warsaw. Using her contacts with the Ursuline Sisters and Archbishop Adam Sapieha of Kraków, she obtained false birth and baptismal certificates for Jews. When conditions in Kraków became hazardous, she moved to Warsaw. She brought false documents to Jews inside the ghetto. At the orphanage run by Janusz Korczak, she taught Jewish children how to pass as Catholics, brought them out of the ghetto with the help of the Home Army, and placed them with the Ursuline Sisters, who also ran institutions in Warsaw.<sup>1970</sup>

A housekeeper named Marysia brought Hana Krajterkraft (b. 1935), who had a false identity document in the name of Regina Dziedzio, to Kazimierz Bogucki's home in Lublin. He and his wife took care of Hana, pretending she was their niece. She was enrolled at the Ursuline Sisters' grammar school, where she learned the basics of the Catholic religion.<sup>1971</sup> Towards the end of the war, Hana was transferred to a Catholic orphanage in Miechów. The Yad Vashem Archives document the assistance provided by the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union in Lublin.

Hana Krajterkraft was born in Puławy, Poland, in 1935. In 1938 her family moved to Warsaw; it was there that the war caught up with them. The two parents and three children were all sent into the ghetto. The conditions there were severe: food was in such short supply that Hana and other children were forced to sneak out of the ghetto and steal potatoes to stave off starvation.

About a year and a half later, in 1941, Hana's aunt Blima took her out of the ghetto and back to Puławy, where an agreement had been reached with Rozalia Misztal (b. 1896), a former neighbor. Rozalia lived with her husband and daughter and took Hana in as a second child. Hana stayed with the Misztals for about a year. Rozalia managed to obtain Aryan identity papers for her in the name of Regina Dziedzio. Hana was free to walk about, and this eventually led to disaster. One day Hana was walking home and saw Germans by the house. She started running, and they shot in the air. When they caught up with the child,

<sup>1970</sup> Jerzy S. Majewski, "Niezwykłe życie Wandy Nelken-Załuskiej: Została odznaczona," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 3, 2014.

<sup>1971</sup> Kazimierz Bogucki, RD.

they asked why she was running. Because of the shooting, she replied, and the soldiers did not recognize her as Jewish. This made it clear that staying in Puławy was no longer safe.

Rozalia began to look for another Polish family willing to take Hana (now known as Regina). The first family she found proved unsuitable for the girl. The housekeeper suggested someone she knew, and they agreed to take Hana. The Boguckis (recognized as Righteous Among the Nations in 1981) helped other Jews besides Hana-Regina. They also, however, belonged to the resistance movement and needed to move about. A small child could not be towed along.

Thus Hana-Regina found herself changing shelters again. This time she was taken to a Catholic orphanage in Miechów. She lived there and went to school until the liberation. After that, she continued studying. In 1960 the Boguckis went to live in Warsaw and brought Regina to live with them as she completed her education. She remained in close contact with them and called them Aunt and uncle for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately she lost touch with Rozalia.<sup>1972</sup>

Extensive assistance was provided by the Albertine Sisters (*albertynki*), formally the Congregation of the Sisters Serving the Poor (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Albertynek Posługujących Ubogim), in at least 29 of their convents and institutions throughout German-occupied Poland. Many of the nuns' own accounts, which were compiled in 1961 and summarized (below) by the order's historian, have been confirmed by Jewish testimonies.<sup>1973</sup>

When the Servant of God Brother Albert [Adam Chmielowski] founded his orphanages in 1888, he helped everyone regardless of their status, nationality or religious beliefs. The orphanage took in Catholics, Ruthenians, Jews, in other words everyone.

Religious organizations founded by Brother Albert worked in this same spirit. The Albertine Sisters never turned away anyone who needed help from their orphanages. In the years before the outbreak of the war in 1939, the nurseries run by this order contained many Jewish children who were cared for with the same love as the other children. When in 1942 the terror against the Jews increased sharply, many Jewish children found shelter in the order's orphanages. Jews were to be found in 29 institutions operated by this order. In all 95 Jews were taken in, of whom 50 survived in hiding. Twelve were apprehended and killed; the fate of 35 people is not known. These statistics are based on the testimony of 50 Sisters who are still alive. However, many Sisters who were involved in the running of the order's orphanages have died and thus many facts will never surface.

The following are summaries of statements obtained from the Albertine Sisters. Many of the names of persons who received assistance have been forgotten over time. In some cases people were never asked their names because it was safer not to know. Many of those helped never provided their real names; often they used false identification.

<sup>1972</sup> Rozalia Misztal, RD.

<sup>1973</sup> A summary of these accounts, with some omissions, are also found in Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine*, 145–57.

## I. Kraków—Shelter at 47 Krakowska Street

1. An unknown person brought two Jewish children to the shelter. One child was ten, the other eleven years old. It turned out that one of these “girls” was actually a boy dressed as a girl. Because the children went to chapel regularly and prayed, they did not arouse any suspicion. Despite numerous searches conducted by the Germans, these two children survived and were later taken, probably to Sweden.<sup>1974</sup>

2. A girl named Marysia, the daughter of a Jewish doctor from Kraków, was occasionally paid a visit by her grandmother. This child did not want to go to chapel and stated openly that she was Jewish and did not need to pray. Some women working at the orphanage reported her to the Gestapo. Most likely she did not survive.

3. Mrs. Barska and her grown daughter—their names had been changed—were sheltered in the shelter for a period of time. During a search by the Germans they were warned by Sister Urbana and escaped through a fence. Their fate is not known.<sup>1975</sup>

<sup>1974</sup> The children in question were Hanna and Bernard Kempler. See Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 370–71; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 542, 939. See also the memoir of Hanna Kempler (later Anita Lobel), Lobel, *No Pretty Pictures*, portions of which are reproduced earlier.

<sup>1975</sup> The women in question were Irma Prinz and her daughter, Janina Prinz (later Janina Kozma, b. 1920). The testimony of Janina Prinz differs somewhat from this account. After obtaining false documents under the name of Barska from the Polish underground, Janina and her mother moved to Lwów. They had to leave Lwów when their documents were checked and found to be bogus. Upon returning to Kraków, they stayed in the home of the family’s former maid before presenting themselves at the Albertine Sisters’ convent, posing as Catholic Poles who had escaped from a work camp. The nuns took them in without asking for identity documents. They remained at the convent for two and a half years, where they were known by the name of Barska, working at various tasks like cooking and laundry and looking after some of the charges, who included the homeless poor and mentally handicapped persons from institutions that had been closed by the Germans. The nuns were friendly and did not question them about their background. During the frequent Gestapo inspections, Janina and her mother would hide. Later on, posing as expellees from Eastern Poland, they were able to acquire legal documents under the name of Rozsadowski (Janina and Irena). While Janina was away from the convent (she had a day job as a housekeeper for a Polish family), the Gestapo raided the convent on December 22, 1944 and arrested Janina’s mother and some other residents. Janina believes they were denounced by a maid on the staff. Janina was warned and did not return to that convent. She went to the Albertine Sister’s convent on Kolettek Street, where she remained for a few days. She was befriended by a woman who took Janina into her home. The city was liberated on January 18, 1945. Janina learned that her mother had been taken to the Montelupich prison and perished in unknown circumstances. After the war, Janina visited with an unidentified Jewish woman, a runaway from Bełżec, who had also stayed at the convent on Krakowska Street. Janina reunited with her father, who had divorced her mother before the war, and his new wife and two children, all of whom had survived in hiding. See the testimony of Janina Kozma, SFV, Interview code 27459; Testimony of Janina Kozma, William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum (Atlanta), Esther and Herbert Taylor Oral History Collection.

4. Elżbieta Sękowska was betrayed to the Germans. Sister Urbana therefore placed her in a room with the chronically ill, where no one walked around. She stayed there for two months not once leaving the room. She was cared for by the Sisters during this time. After the war she left for Palestine. She lives with her married daughters and is in good health. She was very grateful to the Sisters and to this day writes and sends food packages. Her last letter is dated December 14, 1960. In that letter she sends her holiday greetings, wishing “Blessings from the Child Jesus.” She writes that she lives comfortably under a beautiful sun with her daughters and grandchildren who love and respect her. Her oldest daughter’s only regret is that she cannot make her young once more. Her address is c/o Leonora Awiezer, Kirjat-Sefer 4, Tel Aviv, Israel.

5. Together with these people there was a young girl named Zosia Kerocka. No one knew whether she was Jewish or not because she never admitted it to anyone. Several times she was almost taken to the ghetto but each time she stated steadfastly that they should shoot her outside in the courtyard because she would not go with them. Sister Urbana protected her saying that she was sure that she was not Jewish. Zosia was very bright and hardworking. She went to school and received her high-school diploma. She is presently a teacher in Warsaw and has occasional contact with the Sisters to whom she has remained very grateful.

These statements were made by Sister Urbana and Sister Seweryna. Sister Urbana stated that there may have been other Jews but she does not remember the particulars.

## II. Kraków—Nursery at 10 Kołetek Street

The director of this institution was Sister Hermiana. During the height of the terror against the Jews more children were left at the nursery. The children were identified as Jewish because they had Semitic physical features and the boys were often circumcised.

1. One evening, at about nine o’clock, a man and a woman brought a one-year-old child in a white astrakhan coat to the nursery. They said that as they were crossing the Vistula River in a boat, they had heard a splash and noticed something white floating in the water. They moved alongside of it and pulled a child out of the water. The boy was completely soaked through, blue in colour and unconscious. Sister Fidelisa spent about four hours with him until he regained consciousness. The boy had pneumonia. He eventually recovered and was healthy. He was named Józio. When the German terror abated, Jews came and took Jewish children away to their own institutions. Józio was also taken. Sometime later a Jewish man from Warsaw came to the nursery looking for his son. From the description that he gave, it was evident that Józio was his son. The father said that he had given the child over to a woman to be sheltered but the woman had disappeared and he had lost track of the child. He probably located his son at the Jewish institution where he had been taken.

2. The [Blue] police brought a lost four-year-old boy to the nursery. The child was bright and knew the Hail Mary but would not tell his name. He answered all questions about his name by saying that his last name is Wróblewski and sometimes he added that he must be Wróblewski because otherwise the Germans would kill him. We called him Tomuś. No one was allowed to undress or bathe him except the Sisters. He was, of course, circumcised and had typical Semitic features. He was terrified of the Germans. When the Germans came to search, the Sisters would lock him up in a room and tell him to sit quietly.

He understood and would not move. When the nursery changed locations to Rymanów [near Krosno], he accompanied the other children. After the war he was taken with others by a Jewish organization.

3. In Rymanów, there was a three-year-old circumcised boy. At the time the nursery doctor was a woman who was afraid of the authorities. Once she asked whether there were any Jewish children in the nursery. She was told by Sister Hermana in a very firm manner that she didn't need to know and that she would not provide that information. Furthermore, all the children were legally admitted. That is why, when the Jewish children were ill, the Sister Superior did not let the doctor examine them, for fear she would turn them in to the Germans. She cared for them herself and, thank God, none of them died.

4. Krzyś was officially accepted into the nursery as a Jew, the illegitimate child of a Jewish woman named Eisenberg. He was brought up in the nursery from infancy and was well behaved. He said his prayers with the other children. When a directive came from the authorities to take all Jewish children to the ghetto, the Mother Superior asked the Director of Social Services for permission to hold on to the child. The child, however, had Jewish identification papers. After protracted and strenuous efforts by the Mother Superior, the director decided to destroy the child's documents and from that time the child was entered as Krzyś NN (last name unknown). When the boy was seven years old he went to the nursery run by the Sisters Servants of Mary in Prądnik Czerwony. It was impossible to baptize him at this time because it would have been dangerous. The Sisters Servants of Mary did not know he was Jewish. New identification was made for him with the last name of Zaleski and Krzyś became a student of the organ. When he was 18 years old he needed a birth certificate. He went to the Sisters Servants of Mary and they in turn sent him back to us. When he was informed that he was never baptized, he decided to be baptized by Father [Władysław] Miś. He is today the organist in Łętowice, near Tarnów.

5. A woman from Mostowa Street brought a year-old baby as a foundling. He was named Staś. The child was very sickly and needed care and attention. As a three-year old, Staś went to a foster family who became very attached to him and put in much effort to help him with regard to his health. After some time his older brother and other relatives showed up. The Mother Superior had to admit that this child was indeed their relative. A tragedy ensued. Staś's new family did not want to give him up. The Jewish family took this family to court. After much unpleasantness, the child was taken by his relatives even though he did not want to leave his new family.<sup>1976</sup>

6. A certain woman came to the nursery and asked how to save a child from the ghetto. She was told to bring him to the nursery. She did just that. The father of the child came out of an underground sewer and handed over a year-old boy. This woman brought the child to the nursery. As the guardian of this child, she sometimes came to visit him and brought money for his upkeep. The child became sick. Because the parents were worried about the child or did not believe the woman, they wanted to see the child in order to be convinced that he was still alive. The father wanted to come see the child disguised as a workman. The Mother Superior decided against this because it might arouse the suspicion of the lay personnel of the nursery. The father decided to take the child back the

<sup>1976</sup> This may refer to Henryk Weinman (Wajnman) whose rescue is described earlier somewhat differently.

same way he had brought him out. The child was two years old. In the rush he was taken to the ghetto in nursery clothes with the name of the institution, St. Joseph's Orphanage for Children, and an image of St. Joseph. When the Jews were driven from the ghetto, this child accompanied his parents and two relatives to a station where the Germans told everyone to get out and leave their belongings to one side. Little Ignáš ran out with his arms outstretched in the direction of the German commander. His parents were paralyzed with fear when a German asked to whom the child belonged. Shaking from fear the father stepped forward and said the child was his. "How many are there of you?" he was asked. "Four," was the reply. "To the side." All four Jews with the child went to stand on the side, filled with fright. They were sure they would be shot because of this child's actions. Instead, all the other Jews were sent to their deaths, but they were left alone at an empty station with their belongings. The Germans had let them go. Maybe they were moved by the act of this little boy, but the fact is that a miracle had happened. The entire family eventually reached Westphalia and survived the war. In 1947 they came back and visited the nursery in Kraków and spoke to the Mother Superior. They were very grateful and said that the shirt with the emblem of St. Joseph had saved their lives. They made a donation that was generous at that time—a bolt of linen.

7. Wojtek was a nice little boy who did not like to play with the other children. He later said that his father had told him not to pray to holy paintings and not to cross himself. He was transferred to a different location.

All together at the nursery there survived ten children who were handed over to a Jewish organization after the war. Of those children who were brought in during the war, not one was taken to the ghetto. However, the children who were brought in before the war with Jewish identification, could not be prevented from being taken there and cried when they were taken away. They probably did not survive. There were eight of these children.

### III. Częstochowa—Overnight Shelter at 14 Wesola Street

When Jews were being shipped out of the ghetto, a woman about 32 years old came to us. She was a bright, thin, blonde with blue eyes and of average height. She had two children: Ludwik, a seven-year old, and Adusia, a three-year old. The children were bright and looked pleasant. At first they were held out to be the cousins of Sister Hugona and they were given a separate room on the second floor. They attended chapel regularly with the other children. The boy was a good observer who learned quickly how to conduct himself in chapel. Their mother was said to have been the owner of a small factory in Częstochowa. After a period of time we were able to obtain for her a Polish identity card with the name Janina Światała. The two children were registered under her name. This woman later began catechism lessons with Father [Tadeusz] Wiśniewski from our parish—St. Sigismund. Together with her children, behind closed doors, she was baptized.

She spoke German fluently and did not have Semitic features. She moved around freely and sometimes even travelled to earn an income. She smoked cigarettes. One time a Sister asked little Adusia what her name was. The little girl answered: Horowitz. The little boy turned red and started instructing his sister in a whisper: "Adusia, that was before. Your name is Światała now."

One of the women on staff went to the Gestapo and betrayed the Jewish women who were sheltered in our institution. It was at that time Mrs. Światała moved out to a private



apartment with her brother, who was also hiding in Częstochowa. While there, a German agent called the boy over and after confirming that he was Jewish, had all three of them shot in the Jewish cemetery in Częstochowa. The brother survived.

An older woman, about 50 years old, with an identity card with the name Zofia Kowalczyk, came from Radomsko. She was a small, thin, serious woman with regular features. She had blue eyes and greying dark-blond hair. She said that she had hidden in an attic with her two grown sons. The Germans had taken her sons but she had escaped through the fence wearing only one shoe. Because she had money, she was able to bribe a policeman who had stopped her along the way. She spent some time with us after arriving in Częstochowa. After the betrayal, which will be described in detail, she left our house. We do not know her fate. She might have survived.

A mother, 38 years old, a small dark blonde with blue eyes, a Semitic nose and olive complexion. She had a five-year-old daughter named Lola. We were able to get an identity card for her with the name Karolina Wiśniewska. She worked for us for some time as a receptionist. After the betrayal she moved in with friends. At this new location there was a small girl who did not speak Polish well. This was the cause of their being denounced to the Germans.

Another tall, young mother with dark hair and complexion came with a five-year-old girl named Gienia. The last name she assumed was Racińska. She was a very hard worker. She worked for us in the laundry. She had two identity documents (Kennkarte).

After a woman, who was surely the mother of a seven-year-old boy named Jędrus (although she would not admit to this), brought him to us, we had four Jewish adults and four Jewish children staying with us. A girl who was employed in our kitchen threatened to turn in the Jews. We never thought that she would actually go through with this. We had told her that she was mistaken because there were no Jewish people staying with us. Everyone had Polish identity cards that had been obtained with the assistance of St. Sigismund parish, which had provided us with birth and baptismal certificates. This girl did indeed go to the Gestapo and gave them all the names of the Jews and which rooms they lived in. The Germans arrived and took everyone they found with them. They were astonished to see everyone kneel in the chapel and pray fervently before they were taken. At Gestapo headquarters, after a thorough interrogation, the last thing demanded of them was to say prayers. Having gone to chapel daily with the other women, they had learned to pray and consequently were let go and came back to us that same day, though in a very depressed state. They no longer felt safe in our home so they left soon after.

During the Gestapo interrogation, Mrs. Racińska was told that she was too young not to be working. She was dispatched to a sack factory. Not used to hard work, she broke down. She moved out of town with her young child. After a short while she brought the child, for whom she had packed a small bag, back to us. She tried to commit suicide by jumping into the Warta River. She was pulled out and taken to the hospital. She was taken by the Germans and her fate is not known. The child stayed with us for a while, then was adopted by someone.<sup>1977</sup>

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<sup>1977</sup> The subsequent rescue of Chana or Hanna Batista (then Sara Rozen) is described earlier. She was adopted by Henryk and Gertruda Zielonka and survived the occupation. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 938; Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 50.

Two sisters, the daughters of a miller by the name of Borkowski [the assumed surname of Paula and Hannah Kornblum of Kałuszyn], worked in a Christmas ornament factory. They slept and ate in our house. Both of them survived and later left to join their uncle in America.<sup>1978</sup>

Irena Bochenek was a young, blond woman. She knew how to sew. The German police came for her one day and demanded to see the registration books. She was registered but Sister Izydora hid her in the washroom. The police were told that she was not at home. When the Germans left, Sister Izydora disguised her and sent her that day to Warsaw. The next day another German came who did not believe that she was not there. He was told to ask the woman at the gate, who was a retired lay person. When she stated that the woman had not returned home the day before, he left offering some chocolate to a little girl.

Jędrus, the bright five-year-old, was placed in an institution for boys. The Gestapo came for him there and took him away. His mother was said to have been living with our Sisters in Kielce, where she survived the war.<sup>1979</sup>

An 18-month-old child was brought to the nursery in Częstochowa. There were a number of other people, but I don't remember them all, states Sister Wita [Vita] Pawłowska, ending her testimony.

#### IV. Bochnia, near Kraków—Orphanage

1. Wojciech Pacula, who was a guard in the ghetto, brought a five-year-old girl named Halinka, who was born in 1938. She was a pretty blonde with blue eyes. She did not look Jewish. She was given the name Kubicka. (Her photograph is in the Sisters' archive.) She was the daughter of Eliaszk Elszajn (Elstein or Elnstein), the proprietor of a leather factory in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, and Róża Weber. She was a very bright girl who went to school with the other children, never spoke about her family background, and studied religion very diligently. At her request she was baptized by Fr. [Stanisław] Pycior on June 6, 1943 and received her First Communion. After the liberation her aunt took her secretly from the school. It was said that her father also survived and took her to Palestine. They both live there and he is grateful to the Sisters for having helped to hide his child.

2. Little Róża, the daughter of a lawyer from Kraków, stayed in the orphanage in Bochnia for three years. She was very pretty and bright but her Semitic features betrayed her background. She also spoke about her parents to the other children. There was a fear that she would be turned in by the older boys. Her fate is not known.

3. For a short period of time Róża's brother, Władysław, stayed at the orphanage, but he was taken back because he was circumcised and brought attention to himself.

4. On May 29, 1943, a one-year-old child was brought to us. Judging by her features, she was Jewish. Marysia was registered as a foundling and was brought up in safety. During a period when the Sisters were away, according to the other children, a woman had come around asking for Marysia.

5. Ten-month-old Eliza from Bochnia, whose last name was not known, stayed at the orphanage. In 1945 this four-year old was taken by a foster family. When her relatives were

<sup>1978</sup> This refers to Paula and Hannah Kornblum, whose rescue is described earlier.

<sup>1979</sup> This appears to refer to Maria Widawska (an assumed name) and her son, whose rescue is described earlier.

later found, they took her with them. Her fate as well as that of the other Jewish children is known by Dr. Jan Krupa from the Health Centre in Bochnia.

6. Jaś Moskowski stayed at the orphanage. After the Germans left, he was sent back to Kraków.

V. Tarnów—Children's Infirmary and Nursery at 6 Nowodąbrowska Street

1. A member of the Polish Blue police accompanied by a brother from the Missionary Order brought a young boy to the nursery. He was four years old and had been found in the Church of the Missionary Fathers. The boy was good looking, well fed and very bright. He wore a medal around his neck depicting the Sacred Heart of Jesus and could cross himself very nicely. He kissed his medal often and said his prayers. He said that he had been left in the church by his uncle, who told him to sit quietly and wait for him to return while he bought a violin. The uncle did not return and the priests from the church sent him to the nursery. The boy said his name was Jurek Górski. Later, he told a Sister in secret that his name was not really Jurek but Norek. He was above average in ability and learned quickly. He went to the nursery chapel with the other children. He adapted very quickly. After the liberation, four Jews came with a letter from the reeve and demanded that Jurek be handed over to them. When Jurek was told about this, he took his missal and hid behind the altar in the chapel. No one could find him. He did not want to leave for anything but was eventually taken by force.

2. A girl named Zosia was brought in by a woman who by her behaviour was obviously the mother. For a certain time this woman came to visit the little girl every day, bringing with her anything she could. One day she said good-bye to her daughter and never returned. The child was pretty and bright. A certain German officer took an interest in her and after some efforts brought his wife to the orphanage. They took the child with them to Germany.

VI. Tarnów—Shelter for the Poor at 65 Szpitalna Street

The director of a factory in Borysław hid in an attic for two years. The Sisters gave him food. With tears in his eyes he told the Sisters that the Germans had taken his wife. He wore a medal with the Virgin Mary. It was said that after the war he was baptized and found work in a cooperative.

VII. Sulejów, near Piotrków Trybunalski

During the German occupation the authorities assigned to the Sisters ten Jews to help in the fields. Every day they came under German guard and under punishment of death were not allowed to be fed. One Sister gave them food in the basement, where one by one they came down to be fed. They were weak from starvation. The German guards checked to see that no one escaped and that they worked well. Although the Jews were not much help, the Sisters always reported that they were very hard working.

VIII. Kielce—Shelter of the Holy Trinity at 31 Bandurskiego Street

During the war Józef Freund, a Jew, stayed at the shelter. At the beginning he stayed indoors only. He felt safe and was grateful for his shelter. After a certain time, he began going into town, even though he was warned that this was dangerous and he should stay home. Because nothing happened to him he began going every day and returned happily, having seen something or bought something. One day he did not return. The Sisters started to look for him. When they did not find him at the Polish police station, they went to the

German one and found out that he had been arrested. They begged for his release but were only given permission to send him food. For a number of days they sent hot dinners to him. The Gestapo found out about this and forbade any visitors. Late at night, Freund himself returned to the shelter asking for help. He had apparently escaped. The Sisters gave him money and sent him to their neighbours. During the night the Gestapo came looking for him at the shelter. They turned over the entire house and shined light into everybody's eyes, but left without ever finding him. His fate is not known.

#### IX. Lwów-Zamarstynów [Sklepiński Street]—Institution for Boys

During the German occupation, three Jewish boys were hidden in the institution. After the war, two of them were taken by relatives. The remaining one left for the West [i.e., central Poland] because he had no family left.<sup>1980</sup>

#### X. Lwów-Persenkówka

For five months, three Jews hid in the basement. The Sisters would bring food to them. They left during the first day of bombing.

#### XI. Baworów, near Tarnopol

1. Pastor [Karol] Procyk sent a ten-year-old girl to the Sisters. She admitted to the Sisters that she was Jewish. She was baptized.

2. A two-year-old girl was found by people near the forest. She was handed over to the Ukrainian police, who brought her to the Sisters to keep for a few days. She was to be sent to the ghetto in Tarnopol. Because of the efforts of the Sisters she remained in the shelter. She was baptized on June 13, 1943, and given the name Antonina. After the occupation her mother came for her and took her away.

#### XII. Tarnopol

1. Icek Weiss came secretly at night to our kitchen and everyday, in the attic, so that no one would see him, he got something to eat. He also received clothes on occasion. This lasted for two months, after which he disappeared.

2. In 1940, after the Soviets invaded, they took away our Polish charges and brought in sick Jewish people. We took care of them in the same way we treated our Polish patients. At the end of two years the Germans came and they took them to the ghetto.

3. During the time of the most intense anti-Jewish campaign, one afternoon a policeman brought in a basket with a foundling in it that weighed no more than 4 kg. The policeman stated that the little boy was found in an empty house. The child was taken in, given a bath, fed and cared for. Because there was no crib for the baby, we put him into a laundry basket,

<sup>1980</sup> At least three Jewish boys stayed at the shelter, which was funded by the Main Welfare Council. Jan Kulbinger (b. 1930) states that he and his cousin, Jezek Rabach, who were passing as Jan and Józef Bandrowski respectively, convinced the German police in Lwów that they were not Jews after an inspection by a Jewish doctor, and were then sent to a shelter run by nuns where they successfully kept up their guise, even though they knew nothing about Catholic rituals. After a stay of several weeks, they were taken by farmers as cattle herders. See the testimony of Jan Kulbinger, JHI, record group 301, no. 344. Another Jewish boy sheltered at this institution was Ryszard Macharowski, whose rescue is described earlier.

and the children surrounded the little one like angels around the manger in Bethlehem, happy to be with the new arrival. After a few days, a childless Catholic couple came with a desire to adopt a baby of their own. We will not reveal their last name because the Sister gave her word that she would never tell. When they were shown the little one and were told how he had been found, they were eager to take it. They baptized him, giving him the name of Tadeusz. They showered him with the love of real parents. The child was not attractive. He had a low forehead, a big nose and eyes as black as coal. He was healthy and the parents he had were ideal. No one suspected that the child was not their own.

#### XIII. Stanisławów

In 1942 or 1943 a woman was brought to the shelter who had supposedly lost her voice as a result of almost drowning. We suspected that she was Jewish, but told no one. She also told no one and remained mute. After the Germans left, Mother Superior took her aside and told her that she could now speak because she was no longer in danger. Then, speaking nicely in Polish, she admitted that she was a baptized Jew and that her surname was Jarocka. A few days later she left, borrowing some clothes which she said she would bring back. But she never did bring them back. After a while one of the Sisters saw her in Przemyśl in the company of other Jews.

#### XIV. Śniatyń, near Stanisławów—Old Age Home on Kolejowa Street

1. A mute Jewish man died at the home. He was baptized before he died.

2. Along with Mojsie Grosshaus, we cared for our Jewish charges in a special way, and watched out that they did not go out into the streets. By doing that they would have put themselves in danger of being taken to the ghetto and killed, as others had been. When the Sisters left for Western Poland [as a result of postwar border changes], Grosshaus remained in Śniatyń.

#### XV. Sambor, near Lwów

A small two-month-old Jewish child was brought to us. One of the Sisters took care of it for an entire year with great dedication. When it began to walk it was given to an orphanage in the same city run by the Basilian Sisters because our institution was an old age home.

#### XVI. Brzeżany, near Tarnopol

1. Józef and Maria Gelber, a married couple, were Catholics but had a Jewish background. They were in the old age home from 1941 to 1944. They were on in years when Józef died in the home.

2. Helena Uchman was the daughter of a Jewish neighbour. She hid in our home for a month. One Saturday she did not return. At that time there was an anti-Jewish campaign and she died along with her parents.

3. Zosia, a little Jewish girl, was given over to the Rada Główna Opiekuńcza (Social Welfare Agency) by a peasant woman, a widow who was leaving Eastern Poland [i.e., fleeing Ukrainian nationalists] with her two children in 1943 and could not take her. The RGO directed Zosia to the Sisters. The child was taken in and brought up by them.

4. A Jewish dentist gave us two rolls of woollen cloth to hold. His wife, who retrieved pieces of the cloth at a time, was able to get money from selling it.

5. During one winter we kept a cow owned by a Jewish neighbour. The Ukrainians had destroyed all his property.

6. During an intensive search for Jews we hid a woman with an eight-year-old boy. Later, when she saw the nuns on the street, she knelt down in front of them, thanking them for saving her life.

XVII. Rawa Ruska, near Lwów

A boy who was found on the street was brought to us. He could only tell us that he had had a letter and money, which a woman had taken from him. His name was Zygmus (Zygmunt). He was later transferred to our shelter in Kraków at 6 Podbrzezie Street. His fate after leaving that institution is not known.<sup>1981</sup>

XVIII. Kołomyja, near Stanisławów

1. Lodka (Leokadia) Rajbach, along with her two brothers, stayed with us for some time. After our home was taken over and included in the ghetto area, for three weeks we tried to help them any way we could by supplying food every evening. Lodka probably did not survive.

2. Tola Litner from Bielsko hid in our house for a certain period. We dressed her as a postulant and sent her to Kraków in the company of one of our Sisters. She spent the night in Kraków with the Sisters and then went on to her friends in Kalwaria.

3. We lived across from the ghetto where our old building was. The Sisters, hungry themselves, shared their bread with the poor Jews who stood near the wire fences and begged for something to eat or drink. Sometimes the Sisters would get a pass from the German command to go into the ghetto under the pretext of having to repair their shoes, umbrella, etc. You could not bring food into the ghetto. The Sisters would hide butter and other food in their sleeves and when they were out of sight of the German guards, they would give these things to the poor families inside the ghetto. They tried in this way to rescue a disabled Jew who was starving to death. He was given a coat, the only one in the home, by one of the Sisters. Once a soldier hit one of the Sisters on the head because he saw her give milk to a Jewish woman.

XIX. Drohobycz, near Lwów—Shelter for the Poor on Cerkiewna Street

1. In 1942 a woman from the Polish Committee brought a two-and-a-half-year-old child to us who had been found. He was circumcised. We learned that his name was Tadzio. Because he couldn't say his last name he was given the name of Galewicz. When the advancing Soviet front moved closer and things became very dangerous, Tadzio was baptized because we feared for his soul should he be killed in the bombing. In July of 1944, after the Germans retreated, Tadzio's aunt came to us with a photograph of the child and was able to identify him. The father waited outside. This was Major Mieczysław Hański, who served in the Polish Army and had arrived with the advancing Russian Army. The aunt assured the Sisters that the father would reward the Sisters for having saved his son. And, indeed, he did. When we were evacuated to Wrocław the Sisters along with their poor charges were homeless. They went into the town looking for a place to live. Walking along they met a Jewish man who asked them what they were looking for. They told him of their fate and he answered them by saying that they had a highly placed person who

<sup>1981</sup> It is not clear whether Helen Lewin and her son from Rawa Ruska were placed there. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 542–43.



would offer them protection in the person of the Major. This was the Major whose son the Sisters had saved. The man gave the Sisters his address at the army headquarters. When the Sisters met with the Major, he assigned to them the one-story house he had been living in at 8 Serbska Street. He, himself, moved to another house on Karłowicka Street. After a while he came to the Sisters and asked them for his son's baptismal certificate. In 1950, when the house on Serbska Street was being taken away from the Sisters, the Major was living in Legnica. The Sisters contacted him there and asked him for his help.

2. At the institution in Drohobycz, there hid for a time a Jewish woman who said she was a Catholic. She had false identification papers with the surname Kalińska. She went to church, had a rosary and even received the sacraments. Advised not to do this by the Sisters, she still would not admit that she was Jewish. When she became deathly ill she still kept pretending until finally she asked to be baptized by our priest. He was surprised at her sudden change of heart. When the Sisters were leaving for the western part of Poland, they took all the sick with them, including her. She died en route in the arms of a Sister who had been taking care of her the entire way. She was buried in Wrocław at Psie Pole.

#### XX. Przemyśl-Bakończyce

1. Once during the occupation, an elderly Jewish couple came to our institution. They were very hungry. Because we were surrounded by German military objects and lookout posts, the Sisters directed the couple to some thick raspberry patches and brought them Kosher food to eat. When they had eaten, they went on their way. The Sisters do not remember their last name but they remember well the names of their friends from Przemyśl, who lived on Nadworska Street: Wincz, Gepsman, Szwebel, and Rajchilbert.

2. Dr. Majzles from Przemyśl (address: 12 Plac Na Bramie) often came to the institution when it was difficult to obtain food. He always received some provisions.

3. Director Szwebel's position was threatened in Przemyśl. At the time, Sister Bernadetta intervened and spoke up at a meeting, stressing his work and sense of duty. He was saved and remained in his position.

4. In 1944 a one-year-old boy with a curved spine was sent to us from the hospital. His name was Henio. He was surrounded by loving care. He was fed goat's milk and egg yolks and returned to health. After the Germans left his relatives came for him and took him.

#### XXI. Busko-Zdrój, near Kielce

The magistrate sent us a Jewish woman with two children whom we were to shelter for the night. They stayed for half a year, during which time we supported them. After the liberation we gave her warm clothing and she left, with her children, for Częstochowa.

#### XXII. Opoczno, near Piotrków Trybunalski

There was a married couple from Przasnysz whose last name has been forgotten. Because they attracted attention to themselves by their appearance, the mayor told them to leave the institution. Consequently, Mother General asked the mother superior in Skarżysko to accept them. They were accepted there.

#### XXIII. Skarżysko-Kamienna, near Kielce

1. This same couple is remembered by another Sister. The man was sick, had a stroke and died in the institution. His wife survived the war and returned to Przasnysz.

2. After the Warsaw Uprising, a Jewish family which was evacuated to Skarżysko under an assumed Polish name left an elderly man at the institution. He died there.

3. A little Jewish girl was sheltered at the orphanage. Her mother had been imprisoned. After she was freed, she came and took the child.

4. A foundling was brought to the institution. There was a brief note with the child stating that it was nine months old and not baptized. A childless couple took the child from the institution and baptized her giving her the name of Barbara. After the war some Jews came to take the child.

#### XXIV. Wołomin, near Warsaw—Orphanage

1. The institution housed two little Jewish girls. One was adopted by a family and the older child, who was sickly, was baptized. Her brother came for her [after the war]. She did not want to go. She hid herself. She was afraid of the Jews. A letter was brought from the voivodship authorities, however, and she was taken. I think her name was Bronia.

2. During the Warsaw Uprising, a five-year-old boy was found near the institution. He was poor, in torn clothes, hungry and had lice. The boys from the institution chased him, and even threw stones at him. When a Sister became aware of him, she called him over, washed him, fed him, gave him some clothes and he stayed. He couldn't tell us anything about himself. Because he had a dark complexion, the children called him a Gypsy. At first he was frightened and shy. After a few days he changed and the boys began to like him very much. He remained at the institution until September 1946. At the time the Sister who took care of him was transferred to Siedlce. There a certain Jewish woman who was looking for her child in the local orphanage showed a photograph of him. This Sister recognized the little "Gypsy" from Wołomin. The grateful mother took back her child and as a gift to the Sisters, offered them leather to make shoes.

#### XXV. Siedlce—Nursery

1. In 1943 a farmer brought a six-month-old Jewish child, along with her mother, to us from the countryside. The mother, out of fear, pretended to be incoherent. The father remained outside. The child was raised by us until the Germans retreated. The father came back and took the child. He said that his wife had been killed in Warsaw and that he, himself, had been sheltered by the Albertine Brothers in Warsaw.<sup>1982</sup> He was very grateful to the Sisters that at least this child was saved out of the whole family.

2. When the ghetto was being liquidated, a Jewish infant was left with us. After being taken care of by Sister P., who hid him from the lay personnel, he was taken by the Jewish social agency.

<sup>1982</sup> Other accounts also mention that the Albertine Brothers provided food and temporary shelter to Jewish fugitives at their shelter on Jagiellońska Street in the Praga district of Warsaw. They also provided proof of registration for Jews with false identity documents. However, because of German raids and inspections, the shelter was a precarious place to stay for an extended period of time. See the testimony of Zofia Myczko-Grzybowska, JHI, record group 301, no. 5768, reproduced in Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 4, 363–64; Testimony of Felicja Bolak, JHI, record group 301, no. 5119; See Tzvi Shedletzki, "A Saga of Pain and Heroism," in Shimon Kanc, ed., *Sefer zikaron kehilat Wolomin* (Tel Aviv: Wolomin Society, 1971), 485–549.

3. In the spring of 1943 a Jewish woman kept coming to our convent in Siedlce at 10 Cmentarna Street. She received food and worked at small jobs in the kitchen in order to stay with us. This lasted several weeks. She never told us her last name and no one ever asked. All that was necessary was to help this person in need.

4. Sometimes Jews would come to the orphanage from the ghetto and ask for bread. If there were no Germans nearby we gave them food.

5. About 1943 two women came to the nursery asking that a child be taken in. Because the Sisters could not do this without formal papers, they told the women to leave the child at night. The women did this. The little girl, who was only a few months old, stayed in the orphanage for some time. Later a friend of the mother's, a Polish woman, came to take the child.<sup>1983</sup>

6. A father came looking for his daughter Róża Zoik, a foundling, after the Germans retreated. He had been hidden by a Catholic woman in Warsaw, and after his wife died in the ghetto, he married this woman.

7. A farmer from the countryside brought in a little three-year-old girl with Jewish features because he was afraid to hide her any longer. This child was mortally afraid of Germans. She did not even look out the window for fear of being seen by the Germans. After a while someone told the authorities that the institution was harbouring a Jewish child. When the Germans came, a Sister covered this little girl up in a bed and showed them another child indicating that this was the one in question. That child had typical Aryan features so they patted her on the head and said that they must have received false information.

8. In 1945 the wounded were brought in from the front. These were Jews and Russians. The hospital's lay personnel left before the front reached us. Two Albertine Sisters went to the hospital to help the other nuns—Sisters of Charity—who were working there. Together with Dr. Krakówka, they carried the wounded to beds, dressed wounds and treated everyone with equal loving care.

#### XXVI. Mników, near Kraków

During the German occupation evacuees from Warsaw came to us. Along with others, a Jewish woman and her child and two elderly Jewish sisters from Warsaw stayed with us. They told us that, in Warsaw, they had stood behind the chimney of a burned-out building, on the third floor, for two days. They had prayed to the Blessed Virgin of Częstochowa for help. After two days they were rescued by the fire department. These people stayed with us for two weeks, until the local reeve, who was afraid of the Germans, told them to leave the village.

#### XXVII. Kraków: 6 Podbrzezie Street

Two Jewish boys were accepted into the institution. They were seven and ten. One of them was named Jurek. Their last name had been changed to a Polish one, Nowak. Their mother came to see them three times a week and brought them various things. She was wealthy because it was said that the family owned two large stores on Floriańska Street and their own house. The mother promised the Sisters a large reward for sheltering these

<sup>1983</sup> This account appears to refer to Rachela Zonszajn, the daughter of Cypora Zonszajn (née Jabłoń). The rescue is described earlier in this text.

children. The children went outside once and were caught by the Germans. Because of this incident the institution had much unpleasantness: reports, German inspections, etc.

Another Jewish child who was sheltered briefly at this orphanage was Sara Warszawiak, who passed as Irena Jabłońska. She was transferred to the Albertine Sisters' orphanage in Kraków in the winter of 1943, when the orphanage where she was staying in Brody, run by Ukrainian nuns, was shut down by the Germans. Sara, who had Semitic features, arrived in Kraków in poor health and was taken, and later adopted, by Professor Jan Pilch and his wife, Julia. Sara remained with the Pilchs for some time after the war. Despite her desire to be baptized, Fr. Archilles, a Capuchin (Franciscan) monk, dissuaded her from doing so.<sup>1984</sup>

#### XXVIII. Rzęska, near Kraków

1. A ten-year-old girl named Hania Raj [Reich]<sup>1985</sup> gave the impression of being physically developed beyond her years. She was brought to us by her aunt, who said that the girl's parents were taken to a camp and then left for England, and that she did not have the means to keep the girl. Hania attended school and was a good student. At the request of her aunt she was prepared by the Sisters for Confession and Holy Communion. When the Russians came, the aunt took her and placed her in the Jewish Orphanage in Kraków.

2. A 70-year-old woman walking to Rzęska met some Sisters and asked them whether she could stay overnight. The next day she asked to stay another night because she had no place to go. She did not admit to being Jewish. She prayed, received the sacraments, and only when the local priest admonished her did she stop taking Holy Communion. She lived in a room with the children, behind a screen, because there was no other place to put her. She was fluent in German and Russian and helped the children with their lessons. As soon as the Germans left, she went to Kraków.

#### XXIX. Kraków-Prądnik Czerwony

A certain lady came to Mother General asking her to accept Jaś into the shelter. He was the son of a rich neighbour from Rzęska who was a lawyer. The parents were Catholics,

<sup>1984</sup> Sara Avinum, *Rising from the Abyss: An Adult's Struggle With Her Trauma as a Child in the Holocaust* (Hod Hasharon, Israel: Astrolog Publishing House, 2005), 96–106, 152, 185–86. See also the testimony of Sala Warszawiak (Irena Jabłońska), June 26, 1945, JHI, record group 301, no. 431.

<sup>1985</sup> Hania (Anna) Reich's story is set out earlier in the text. Józefa Rysińska, a Żegota liaison officer, took the child to Kraków from Pilzno and entrusted her to her aunt, Miriam Peleg-Mariańska. Peleg-Mariańska placed her niece with several Polish families before she was taken in by the Albertine Sisters in Rzęska. Peleg-Mariańska claims that the nuns were never informed that Hania was Jewish, either when she was left at the convent or when she was removed after the Germans retreated from the area, and that therefore "no-one suspected her of being Jewish." See Peleg-Mariańska and Peleg, *Witnesses*, 54–56, 165–66. The accounts of the Albertine Sisters indicate that they either knew or suspected that the woman was Jewish. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that Hania would have acquired the level of knowledge of religious matters and practices expected of a 10-year-old Catholic child. Furthermore, one of the reasons Hania left the home of Jadwiga Kruczkowska, one of her benefactors, was that Hania "looked Jewish" and passing her off as Kruczkowska's niece was becoming problematic. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 404–5.

but of Jewish background. Jaś, using the name of Moskowski, was sent to our orphanage in Bochnia. He survived the war and returned to his family.

Additional Data:

1. One Sister stated that in Szczawnica a Mr. Majerczak hid a Jewish man in his basement. He brought this man food in a basket used for coal. After the war this person rewarded him.

2. Another Sister stated that while she was still living with her parents (Jan and Anna Zielonka, in the village of Filipy, in the county of Końskie), during the third year of the war, there was a Jewish family who went from house to house looking for a place to stay the night. Her parents took them in and that night the woman gave birth to a child. They could not stay any longer because the Germans made a thorough search of all of the houses.

3. A Sister stated that in 1939, after the German invasion, her friend from school, Salomea Baldinger, begged her to help her receive the sacrament of Baptism. The Baptism was performed by Fr. Józef Kosibowicz, the pastor of Sromowce Wyżne. As her Godmother, the Sister felt a responsibility to take care of her friend. Her friend's family was very angry with her. After two years the benefactor became a Sister. Not too long after Maria Salomea came to the Sister asking for help because her entire family had been killed by the Germans.

Miraculously, the friend was able to reach Kraków. Mother General instructed that she be accepted into the convent on Lubicz Street [in Kraków] as a helper. After a few weeks she came back to the Mother House to ask for different work because she said working with the mentally ill depressed her. She later left for Germany to work. After the liberation she returned to Poland. In 1952 she came to us to ask for a baptismal certificate which she could not obtain during the war. She received one, got married and I was present at her daughter's First Holy Communion. At the present time she is doing well.

The above statements are based on the testimonies of the following Sisters:

1. Adelajda Tomasiak—Kołomyja,
2. Adolfa Szczerbowska—Baworów, Brzeżany, Tarnopol,
3. Aniceta Wierzbicka—Brzeżany, Siedlce,
4. Anzelma Krupa—Skarżysko, Wołomin, Życzyn,
5. Apolonia Leśniak—Bochnia, Kołomyja,
6. Balbina Bielańska—Bochnia,
7. Bernadetta Wołk—Przemyśl,
8. Blandyna Tkaczyk—Kraków (Mother House),
9. Bonawentura Chrobak—Sulejów,
10. Cypriana Mrzygłód—Drohobycz,
11. Efrema Lis—Lwów—Zamarstynów
12. Emanuela Minko—Częstochowa, Mników, Siedlce, Wołomin (orphanage),
13. Emeryka Gaca—Tarnów (nursery),
14. Eleonora Janik—Przemyśl, Tarnopol,
15. Eufrazja Wiatrowicz—Wołomin (orphanage),
16. Eugenia Gajewska—Brzeżany, Busko-Zdrój,
17. Eulalia Dzidek—Siedlce, Skarżysko,
18. Ewencja Panasiuk—Rząska,
19. Ferdynanda Grzenkowicz—Kołomyja,
20. Fortunata Kołodziej—Rząska,
21. Helena Wilkołek—Kraków—Prądnik Czerwony,

22. Hermana Bąk—Kraków (nursery),
23. Hugona Klimpel—Częstochowa,
24. Ignacja Pluta—Kraków (Krakowska Street),
25. Józefina Latka—Śniatyń,
26. Kaliksta Góźdz—Kielce,
27. Katarzyna Bikowska—Drohobycz,
28. Leokadia Sowińska—Mników,
29. Lidwina Święs—Tarnów,
30. Longina Konieczna—Tarnopol,
31. Łucjana Stano—Bochnia,
32. Magdalena Kaczmarczyk—Częstochowa,
33. Marcelina Wędzicha—Bochnia,
34. Maria Kotas—Baworów,
35. Maurycja Wohnout—Brzeżany, Tarnopol,
36. Modesta Wierchowska—Mników,
37. Pankracja Solarz—Opoczno,
38. Paulina Adamczyk—Wołomin (orphanage), Siedlce,
39. Rafaela Kupczyk—Stanisławów,
40. Scholastyka Bogacz—Częstochowa,
41. Serwacja Dobrotowska—Sambor,
42. Seweryna Domaradzka—Kraków (Krakowska Street), Tarnów (Shelter for the Poor),
43. Stanisława Kluz—Kraków (nursery), Tarnów (nursery), Lwów,
44. Suplicja Kogutowicz—Skarżysko, Kraków (educational institution),
45. Sykstusa Kardyś—Busko-Zdrój, Śniatyń,
46. Taida Balanda—Drohobycz,
47. Teresa Wilhelm—Drohobycz,
48. Urbana Kondeja—Kraków (Krakowska Street),
49. Wita Pawłowska—Częstochowa,
50. Waleriana Żuchowska—Rawa Ruska.

Although these accounts were gathered a number of years after the war, rather than exaggerate, they appear to underreport the assistance extended to Jews. For example, the rescue activities of the Albertine Sisters in Życzyn, near Dęblin, described earlier on, are not mentioned in the above listing. In addition to the aforementioned Aleksandra Śmietanowska, the Albertine Sisters in Życzyn sheltered Hanka Arbesfeld (b. 1935),<sup>1986</sup> as well as Hanna Krall, a well-known journalist who claimed that as many as 45 Poles risked their lives to rescue her.<sup>1987</sup>

<sup>1986</sup> Testimony of Hanka Arbesfeld, Ghetto Fighters House Archives (Israel), catalog no. 4918, registry no. 02850 collection.

<sup>1987</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 410–13.



The Albertine Brothers were also engaged in rescuing Jews. After being separated from his mother, Zygmunt Weinreb found refuge in their shelter on Krakowska Street in Kraków. Afterwards, the Thiel family took him under their care and he survived the war.<sup>1988</sup>

Zygmunt Weinreb was born in Poland in 1935. He grew up in Kraków, in a mixed Jewish-Christian neighborhood. When the war began, his father left the family and tried to escape. He was never seen again. Zygmunt's mother managed to obtain false identification papers for herself and her young son. For a brief period of time, the Weinrebs stayed with the Puchala [Puchała] family in Niepolomice [Niepołomice] Wielickie. One day, Zygmunt's mother went to Kraków to retrieve some property, and did not return. Józef Puchala brought back the news that she had probably been captured carrying false papers and sent to a concentration camp. Now nine-year-old Zygmunt was left without "Aryan" documents, because he had been registered on his mother's papers.

Zygmunt left the Puchalas' home and roamed the streets alone. He met someone who advised him to go to the nearby monastery, where many Polish refugees of war were sheltered. There, the young boy met Jan and Olga Thiels, teachers at the monastery who supported him and tried to dispel the arising suspicions of his origins. When they found an apartment outside the monastery, the Thiels took Zygmunt with them, along with a friend of his, a Polish boy aged six. They sent the children to school and cared for all of their needs until liberation. After the war, the Thiels gave Zygmunt over to the Jewish community. In 1950, he moved to Israel, where he took the name Yizhar Alon and built a new life for himself, including a family of his own.<sup>1989</sup>

Weinreb's own testimony was recorded shortly after the war.

I stayed at the Albertine Brothers and Mrs [Olga] Thiel, the teacher, guessed that I was Jewish, and the Brother Superior did too, and they helped me a lot. They did not say anything to me, but the Brother told me to bathe in bathing trunks like the older boys, and the teacher got angry whenever anyone called me a Jew and secretly taught me things so that no one would be able to tell I was Jewish. But then everyone began whispering about me, so the teacher took me home with her and put me in a school where the headmaster, Mr [Bronisław] Chrzan, knew that I was Jewish and helped me a lot. ...

When the Russians arrived the Brother Superior read in the newspaper that there was a Jewish Committee, and he told me to go to Długa Street to find out if my father had registered there.<sup>1990</sup>

<sup>1988</sup> Olga Thiel and her husband Jan were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2009. Józef and Maria Puchała, who had sheltered Zygmunt Weinreb earlier, have also been recognized. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 649–50. Two Polish policemen in Kraków also provided help along the way: a Polish police commander assisted Zygmunt Weinreb's cousin to smuggle Zygmunt out of the Kraków ghetto; when Zygmunt was taken to a police station to check out his false identity, a police officer confirmed that identity as true without verification.

<sup>1989</sup> Thiel Family, RD.

<sup>1990</sup> Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 114.

The following account by Tadeusz Seweryn, who headed the Kraków District of the Council for Aid to Jews, clarifies some aspects of Weinreb's story.

I know the case of a boy kept in the Albertus Friars Institute in Cracow. One day, at the beginning of 1944, the head of this Institute, whose name, if I correctly remember, was Jabłoński, approached my friend Bronisław Chrzan, a radical peasant leader and headmaster of the Prince Józef Poniatowski Elementary School No. 26, with the request that he accept in the school a Jewish boy, Zygmunt Weinreb. Asked why he himself did not want to keep him, Jabłoński answered that the boy lived with a group of Christian boys and therefore the teacher advised him to put on his bathing trunks when attending the steam bath with his colleagues. He did as he was told, but the other boys evidently didn't like it and shouted: "Take them off, what are you ashamed of?" They pounced on him and pulled the trunks down and so it came out that he was a Jew. 'I think it could be dangerous to keep the boy any longer,' said Jabłoński. "The children may spread the news and this will cause grave trouble for us and for this orphan." Bronisław Chrzan immediately agreed to accept the boy, wrote his name in the school register, provided him with a school card and kept him under his personal care to the end of the war.<sup>1991</sup>

Several Jewish youths—street children who sold cigarettes—were apprehended by the police in Kraków and sent to the reformatory for boys in Bronowice, even though their origin was suspect. The staff at that institution, as did the chaplain, tried their best to overlook the origin of the children.

Many of the sixty youths aged between six and eighteen were difficult boys whose life circumstances had taught them the tough rules of street life. Some were bullies; some were antisemites. Jerzy [Hoffman] recalled that one boy recognized him from the time when Jerzy hid with a Polish family, and he told everyone that Jerzy was a Jew. "They began to harass me terribly, they called me names, and I didn't know what to do," Jerzy recalled. A nurse in the institution urged the boys to stop and bribed them with treats, while she encouraged Jerzy to escape. He was afraid and stayed. More importantly, he had nowhere to go.

For Abraham [Blim], the institution offered stability, which his itinerant life on the city streets had lacked. He began to live the life of his alter ego, Józek. ... Educators prepared children of unconfirmed background such as Abraham for baptism. The fact that the institution was created specifically for street children was sufficient reason for its residents not to have proper identity papers. For Abraham, attending church and sessions with a priest held no religious meaning. He did what was expected of him. And he received additional food from the priest.

Some boys, like Abraham, awaited war's end in the reformatory; others chose to continue to try to survive on the move. Jerzy Hoffman stayed in the institution until his term ended and then sought the assistance of the Main Welfare Council. He was sent to an orphanage in Kochanów.<sup>1992</sup>

<sup>1991</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 87.

<sup>1992</sup> Joanna Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków: A Microhistory of the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2021). Another Jewish boy who stayed at the Bronowice reformatory was Henryk Meller (b. 1932). Henryk had been caught in Kraków

## Rescue in German Camps

Jews imprisoned in concentration and slave labour camps encountered members of the Polish clergy and many other Polish prisoners who were willing to extend a hand to their fellow prisoners when the opportunity arose. Dr. E. Szor, an inmate of Auschwitz, confirmed the helpfulness of fellow prisoner, Jan Kledzik, who was a hospital attendant at that camp: “He displayed a father’s devotion to his fellow sufferers, irrespective of race and nationality.” Kledzik, in turn, acknowledged the helpfulness of other Poles who collaborated with him, including a priest, Rev. Wawrzyniec Wnuk.

As a former inmate of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, I wish to state how Poles saved and helped the Jews in the camp. Jews were hidden in hospitals; food that other prisoners received in parcels were shared with them. This was how the people working with me in the hospital gave help. They were: Andrzej Białecki, Stach Bukowski, Tadeusz Radomski, Marian Czerwiński, Bogdan Kolasiński. And in this way, thanks to our help, the following people regained their liberty: Doctors Knoch, Szor, Gabej, August, Dizerej, and Fastman [Ludwik Fastmann], the pharmacist Gotlieb, Zukier, Zieliński. The last two had already been selected for the gas chamber and, thanks, to Zygmunt, the Schreiber [clerk], they were taken from the hospital to the workers’ camp. They all survived. When I was in the workers’ lager before I started to work in the hospital, Father [Wawrzyniec] Wnuk from Gniezno and I saved Jews, who were so exhausted during roll call, that they collapsed and lay in the mud. Their co-religionists could not save them since they were afraid of the Nazis, but we Poles carried them on our shoulders to the block. There the Poles washed and fed them.<sup>1993</sup>

Rev. Wnuk was imprisoned in Auschwitz from August 1943 until June 1944, when he was transferred to Buchenwald and later to Dachau.

Michel (Mendel) Mielnicki, a young Jew from Wasilków, near Białystok, described the kindness of a Polish priest he encountered in the slave labour camp at Mittelbau-Dora, near Weimar.

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in the summer of 1944 as a street child and brought to a police station. He admitted he was Jewish after his made-up address and name did not clear. The police officer chose to help Henryk by sending him to the reformatory as a Polish youth. According to another source, after he was apprehended, Henryk was sent to the main institution for homeless boys in Kraków. The authorities there assured the police that the boy’s identity was in order, but evidently thought it best to shelter him elsewhere, for his safety. Henryk recalled conditions in Bronowice as “good and the work easy.” See Borwicz, *Vies interdites*, 75.

<sup>1993</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 478–79.

Well, very early one morning, I was awakened when my head hit the wooden sleeping shelf beneath it with a thud. I knew instantly what had happened. I was out of my bunk and onto the back of a prisoner who'd stolen my bread in a second. But not fast enough to stop him from stuffing my bread into his mouth. Possessed of a strength that in retrospect still surprises me, I quickly had him down on the floor with my hands locked on his throat, when the Polish priest, who was our Blockältester [block elder], came out of his room to see who was making all the racket.

I can't say whether it was my intention to strangle the thief or just to stop him from swallowing my bread (and thus my ability to stay alive). Whatever the case, I was on the brink of choking the final breath out of the man, when this priest, who was tall, and heavy enough to have pulled me away with one hand, instead said, "So what will you accomplish if you kill him? He's already eaten most of your bread, and you'll be hanged tomorrow. Remember your Ten Commandments. Let him go, and I'll tend to his punishment." So I let the son of a bitch go. At which point the big priest added, "God will help you." In Hebrew! Somehow, he had known from the outset that I was a Jew. I don't recall that in my subsequent dealings with him, which, given his position, were considerable, he ever so much as alluded to this again. And I couldn't be more grateful to this Christian man of the cloth if I tried. In his own way, he too saved my life.<sup>1994</sup>

Similar accounts attest to the selfless sacrifice of Polish priests and nuns imprisoned in other Nazi German camps. Rev. Michał Piaszczyński, who maintained friendly relations with Jews before the war and invited rabbis to the seminary in Łomża where he taught, shared his meagre food ration with fellow prisoners of Sachsenhausen (Oranienburg), where he died of malnutrition and disease in December 1940. When a Jew in his block, a lawyer from Warsaw by the name of Kott, was denied his food ration one day, Rev. Piaszczyński gave him his ration. The Jewish prisoner turned to Rev. Piaszczyński with tears in his eyes and said: "You Catholics believe that in your churches there is a living Christ in your bread. I believe that in this bread there is a living Christ who told you to share it with me."<sup>1995</sup>

An inmate of the Dachau concentration camp, where "altruism is almost completely unknown," records how Rev. Jan Tymiński of the diocese of Łomża volunteered to be transferred to one of the blocks that was ridden with the typhus epidemic in order to help his fellow prisoners who were less fortunate than he was: "He hops from one bunk to another, blesses the dying, no matter of what nationality or faith they are, consoles those who are still conscious."<sup>1996</sup> Rev. Tadeusz Gaik, who was also interned in Dachau, struck up a deep friendship

<sup>1994</sup> Michel Mielnicki, as told to John Munro, *Białystok to Birkenau: The Holocaust Journey of Michel Mielnicki* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press and Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 2000), 202–3.

<sup>1995</sup> Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 144–46.

<sup>1996</sup> S.J. [Stanisław Jerzy] Sagan, *Food Carries Out!* (Toronto: n.p., 1982), 110.

with a Jew by the name of Dawid Jakubowski from his hometown of Bochnia, and provided him with food and a sweater.<sup>1997</sup>

Feliks Nelken (later Felix Gwozdz, b. 1920) was part of a group of Jews who were transferred from the Płaszów concentration camp to Dachau in 1945. Upon arrival in Dachau, the prisoners were registered by inmates, among them a Polish priest. The priest quietly told Nelken and his companion to come up with Polish names in order to register them as Poles. Nelken became Gwóźdz. This ruse saved their lives, as the other Jewish prisoners perished.<sup>1998</sup> The testimony of Ryszard Ores (b. 1925), who was also transferred to Dachau in April 1945, is similar.<sup>1999</sup>

During a typhus epidemic in Dachau, the Jesuit Fr. Czesław Fabisiak, although himself in a very fragile state, volunteered to give blood to a Hungarian Jew by the name of Wachs (István Wax?), who was in need of a blood transfusion.<sup>2000</sup> Fr. Fabisiak recalled:

Among them was a sick Jewish prisoner from Hungary who was transferred from another sick room. He had been hated in his previous sick room for being Jewish and needed a blood transfusion to save his life; no one had been willing to give him their blood, so I offered to give my blood for analysis to see if we were a match. The exam revealed that the Hungarian Jew and the Christian priest shared the same kind of blood. He received the transfusing day seemed to be feeling somewhat better.

From that moment on, I treated him as though we were brothers by blood. When I visited him, I called him brother. It seemed to bother him greatly. He asked, "Why do you call me brother when I am not your brother?"

I said to him, "You being a Jew and me being a Polish man does not mean we are not brothers."

"No, no," he yelled at me, "I do not want to be your brother. I am Jewish, and I want to be only Jewish."

I told him, "You know that your life was saved by Polish blood, which is also Christian blood."

When he heard those words, he screamed at me, "No, I don't want that. I want only to be Jewish and of pure blood. I would prefer to die than be a Christian. I hate the Christians. I hate them with all my being."

<sup>1997</sup> Tadeusz Gaik, "Moje krótkie wspomnienie," in Gładysz and Szymerski, *Biografia byłych więźniów politycznych niemieckich obozów koncentracyjnych*, vol. 1, 72–74.

<sup>1998</sup> Testimony of Halina Nelken, SFV, Interview code 6258.

<sup>1999</sup> Richard O. [Ores] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2936), FVA. See also Aleksander B. Skotnicki, *Ryszard Ores (1925–2011): Od sanitariusza w krakowskim getcie do dyrektora kliniki na nowojorskim Manhattanie* (Kraków: Stradomskie Centrum Dialogu, 2012).

<sup>2000</sup> Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at p. 142.

At the time I was grossly offended. I did not understand his way of thinking because I did not understand what had been happening to all the Jews in Germany.<sup>2001</sup>

Miroslav Grunwald, a Jewish prisoner of Dachau from Croatia, confirms the kindness of Polish prisoners, among them priests.

The first impression at the entrance was misleading: there was a sign “Arbeit Macht Frei” (“Work Will Set You Free”) so I was determined to work very hard so as to get free as soon as possible. An hour later we learned that the reality of the camp was different. The sign meant that our possible freedom depended, first of all, on a German victory (occupying the entire Soviet Union, as well as the British Isles). We were also warned that this was not a hotel or home for convalescence; that we were really convicts.

After that speech, we were ordered to undress completely (it was thirty below zero!). In this fatal five minutes, many people just fell down and were taken to the crematoria. I managed to get away with just contracting pneumonia and a high fever. A Polish doctor (an older prisoner) saved my life in a miraculous way. We were first brought into a bar-ricade for disinfection. This action deserves a description in detail. First came a prisoner (with a black triangle for anti-socials) to trim our hair. That was not so bad, but then he shaved all hairs from our body with an old-fashioned razor, without soap or cream, and fast, injuring almost everybody’s face. Then came another prisoner with a pail of carbolic acid and with a hard barn brush, swept our bodies. An enormous burning sensation left us really suffering. Then we went into the showers: first boiling hot water, then ice cold showers!

All of us that survived the bath with a suspiciously burnt skin went to another lineup for a medical examination. An SS man presided and two Polish doctors (prisoners) examined us and proclaimed us fit for instant labor or for a couple of days “rest.”

As soon as it was my turn, I was the first to establish a third line and this third group got an instant treatment. There was a pile of paper cement bags in which tar glued together several layers of paper. The layers were separated and our bodies were covered with sticky tar paper. This was supposed to reduce the skin inflammation and reduce the body temperature.

I was warned by one of the doctors that I still had to come every Saturday to remove the tar paper and take a bath, but he whispered to me that the healing process would occur only if I could manage not to remove the tar paper for several months.

This meant I had to hide every Saturday and not go to the bathhouse with the others. This would be a punishable offense if I were caught. I managed not to get caught all through the winter months of 1943-44; always being in mortal fear of being found behind the barracks.

<sup>2001</sup> Fabisiak, *Memories of a Devil*, 205–6. Fr. Fabisiak does not spare some of the small number of German priests in Dachau. The German priests were treated better than the Polish priests (who were put in a barracks apart from all the other priests), for whom they exhibited open contempt, and even prevented the Poles from participating in religious observances. *Ibid.*, 285. Fr. Fabisiak mentions a group of prisoners that has been overlooked: Polish teenage boys brought to Germany as farm labourers who refused to copulate with German women, who then falsely denounced them. *Ibid.*, 270.



However, God helped me two-fold during this time. First, by my hiding undiscovered and, secondly, by allowing me to return to my barrack at noon with some foodstuff in my pockets, as I usually hid where it was most dangerous; behind the barrack of Polish priests who managed to give me some dry food through the back window.<sup>2002</sup>

Rev. Witold Kiedrowski, from the Chełmno diocese, who was imprisoned in the Majdanek concentration camp, witnessed how Rev. Julian Chrościcki, a priest from the Warsaw suburb of Włochy who had been arrested for helping Jews, accompanied a rabbi in reciting psalms from the breviary he had managed to smuggle into the camp.

In his capacity as pharmacist, Rev. Kiedrowski visited sickrooms in the camps in which he was interned, namely, Majdanek, Birkenau and Ohdruf, bringing both medical and spiritual assistance to prisoners of all nationalities, including Jews, for whom he would recite psalms. During the massacre of Jewish prisoners in Majdanek on November 3, 1943, Rev. Kiedrowski was badly beaten for trying to protect a Jewish boy.<sup>2003</sup>

Sister Julia (Stanisława) Rodzińska, a Dominican nun from Wilno, was arrested in July 1943 and imprisoned in the Stutthof concentration camp. She died there on February 20, 1945, after contracting typhus while visiting and caring for inmates infected with typhus. A fellow Jewish inmate by the name of Eva Hoff recalled, “She helped us with her inner strength.”<sup>2004</sup>

## Rescue of Jews during Death Marches

Even as the war was drawing to a close, Jews still found themselves in need of protectors. During the evacuation of prisoners from the Stutthof concentration camp in January 1945, a group of women prisoners, among them Jews, fled from German guards who opened fire on them. Ten of the survivors made it to a nearby Polish village, where a priest and another man directed them to an empty barn. Fighting raged all around as the Germans retreated from the area, and the next day the Soviets entered the village.<sup>2005</sup>

<sup>2002</sup> Mirosław (Fred) Grunwald, USHMM, Internet: <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-reflections-testimonies/behind-every-name-a-story/mirosław-fred-grunwald>.

<sup>2003</sup> Witold Kiedrowski, “Świat potrzebuje pomnika żywej modlitwy,” *Miesięcznik Franciszkański*, September 12, 1987.

<sup>2004</sup> Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 281–85. See also Justyna Mirosława Dombek, *Moc w słabości: Życie i męczeństwo bł. Julii Stanisławy Rodzińskiej, dominikanki*, 2nd expanded ed. (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, 2006).

<sup>2005</sup> Testimony of Hinda Danziger Kibort in Zelle and Sussman, *Witnesses to the Holocaust*, 94.

Eugenija Rubinshtein, a native of Lithuania interned in Stutthof, managed to run away from a column of prisoners and hid with Polish farmers.<sup>2006</sup> Lajosné Fleischer, a Jewish woman from Hungary who survived the forced death march during the evacuation of Stutthof, recalled:

If we marched through a village during the day, then from behind the fences they would throw us pieces of bread from open windows and boiled potatoes with their skin on. Running alongside our columns, Polish women poured hot coffee into our mess kits. They paid no attention either to the shouts of the SS men or the butts of their rifles. We who survived will remember with lifelong gratitude these simple Polish people who took food from their mouths and gave it to us. Thanks to these few morsels they saved the lives of many of us.<sup>2007</sup>

Lusia Feinstock-Shimmel, from Wilno, was one of the many Jewish women sent on the death march.

On the way, frozen, starved, and exhausted, she collapsed in the snow. She expected to be shot on the spot, but that did not happen. She lay unconscious in the field for hours, until a local farmer found her. He took her to his aunt's house. The aunt, Monika Schwertfeger took it upon herself to tend to Lusia, wash and treat her wounds, and feed and clothe her, even when Lusia revealed to her that she was Jewish. Monika spent five months caring for Lusia like the daughter she never had.<sup>2008</sup>

Jewish evacuees from Auschwitz also managed to escape and find refuge with Poles.<sup>2009</sup> Seven Jewish women—Sara Erenhalt (née Flaks), Genia Ekert, Tema Laufer, Tosia Zak, Stefa, and Leah Binstock and her sister—who were evacuated from Auschwitz by the Germans in the so-called death marches, managed to escape in the village of Poręba, near Pszczyna, and hid in a barn that belonged to an elderly priest, Rev. Alojzy Pitlok. Sara Erenhalt recounts:

We all entered some cottage. There was an old man. We greeted him saying “Praised be Jesus Christ.”<sup>2010</sup> We asked him about the night in his barn. He replied: “Poor little things,

<sup>2006</sup> Antonina Levinienė, Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=7090>.

<sup>2007</sup> Tomasz Ceran, “Prości polscy ludzie,” “Nieznane historie z dziejów ratowania Żydów pod okupacją niemiecką,” Supplement to PlusMinus, *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], March 23–24, 2019.

<sup>2008</sup> Monika Schwertfeger, RD.

<sup>2009</sup> On this topic, see Aleksandra Namysło, *Po tej stronie był również Człowiek: Mieszkańcy przedwojennego województwa śląskiego z pomocą Żydom w okresie II wojny światowej* (Katowice and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2021), 194–212.

<sup>2010</sup> A traditional Polish greeting that is falling into disuse except when greeting clergy: “Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus.” The response is: “Na wieki wieków. Amen,” which translated as “For ever and ever. Amen.”

how can I let you sleep in a barn at minus eighteen degrees.” It appeared that our host was a priest, dressed at that time in secular clothing. We started talking to him and asking for shelter at his home. He agreed immediately to hide me and Genia. ... We attempted to persuade him that we could not separate from our female companions because we were together all the time in the camp, and if they went away, they surely would die.<sup>2011</sup>

Fr. Pitlok agreed to host all of the women. He brought them food and took them into his house, despite the fact that the Germans had sequestered a room there. The Jewish women remained with him for three-and-a-half weeks until the arrival of the Soviet army. Five of the Jewish women were hidden in the cellar, while the two women with a non-Jewish appearance pretended to be the priest's Christian servants. Rev. Pitlok was also willing to offer them help after the liberation. “He said that it did not matter that we were Jews, but it was important that our guardian angel had sent us to him and that he could save us. He also stressed that if we did not manage to find our families, we could always come back to his place and find employment.”<sup>2012</sup>

Sympathy for the victims of the death marches was widespread. At least 16 individuals and families from Poręba were known to have sheltered prisoners who escaped during the death march that passed through that village.<sup>2013</sup> Morris Dach was able to escape with two other men during the third day of the death march; they were hidden by a Polish farmer.<sup>2014</sup> Henryk Mandelbaum, a native of Ząbkowice Będzińskie, was rescued by Polish villagers in the vicinity of Jastrzębie-Zdrój after his escape,<sup>2015</sup> as were Helena Berman and Romana Duracz.<sup>2016</sup> Jan and Katarzyna Szczerbowski and their daughter, Irena, sheltered Krystyna Żywulska (Zofia Sonia Landau) in Jawiszowice, and Jadwiga Miś of Bieruń Nowy sheltered a Jew from Wieluń.<sup>2017</sup> Maria Dżambowa was taken in by a Polish woman who fed her and bought her a train ticket to Katowice, where

<sup>2011</sup> Testimony of Sara (Flaks Pater) Erenhalt, YVA, file O.3/1588 (Item 3555725).

<sup>2012</sup> Sara E. [Erenhalt] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1085) and Leah B. [Binstock] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-369), FVA; Testimony of Sara (Flaks Pater) Erenhalt, YVA, file O.3/1588 (Item 3555725); Oral history interview with Leah Binstock, USHMM, Accession no. 1993.A.0087.11, RG-50.091.0011.

<sup>2013</sup> Andrzej Strzelecki, “Marsz śmierci”: *Przewodnik po trasie Oświęcim—Wodzisław Śląski* (Katowice: Towarzystwo Opieki nad Oświęcimem, 1989), 49–53.

<sup>2014</sup> Testimony of Morris Dach, November 23, 1994, Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills, Michigan, Internet: <http://www.holocaustcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=515>.

<sup>2015</sup> Bolesław Ciepiela and Małgorzata Sromek, *Śladami Żydów z Zagłębia Dąbrowskiego: Wspomnienia* (Będzin: Stowarzyszenie Autorów Polskich Oddział Będziński, 2009), 78.

<sup>2016</sup> Testimony of Helena Berman and Romana Duracz, JHI, record group 301, no. 6182.

<sup>2017</sup> Henryk Świebocki, ed., *Ludzie dobrej woli: Księga pamięci mieszkańców Ziemi Oświęcimskiej niosących pomoc więźniom KL Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau and Towarzystwo Opieki nad Oświęcimem, 2005), 134, 372, 450. See also Krystyna

she found shelter with friends.<sup>2018</sup> Pieterkowski, a Jew, managed to escape and found shelter with a man named Grzebowski in Mikołów.<sup>2019</sup> Leon Reig, who managed to escape together with some other prisoners during the evacuation of the Monowice subcamp of Auschwitz, reported that they were treated well by Polish villagers, who sheltered and fed them.<sup>2020</sup> Ted Libfeld and his companions were given food, some clothes and lodging by Polish farmers after escaping from a death march near Pszczyna.<sup>2021</sup>

Poles who have been awarded by Yad Vashem for sheltering death march escapees in various localities include: Katarzyna Froehlich and Dorota Kuc-Froehlich (several other people involved in this rescue, among them Rozalia Kalabiś, were not recognized); Augustyn and Zofia Godziek; Brunon and Bronisława Jurytko of Książenice, who rescued 14 Jews; Paweł, Marta and Anastazja Muskietorz; Alfred Panic, Wilhelm and Wincenty Kostka, and Erna Stasiak-Kostka; Ludwik, Maria and Henryk Paszek; Gertruda Pustelnik; Maria and Wanda Sitko; Teodor and Franciszka Tendera; and Konrad, Wiktor and Maria Zacny, and their daughters, Stefania and Janina; Regina and Stefania Zimoń.<sup>2022</sup> The Hanak family, who also took in death-camp escapees, has not been recognized.<sup>2023</sup>

Characteristically, Jews who endured the death march, like Helen Lewis, a Czech Jew who was evacuated from Auschwitz on January 27, 1944, recalled, “We were on the road to begin with for a fortnight. It was indescribably cold, and the only food we got was from villagers—the Poles gave us some, the Germans, later, none at all.”<sup>2024</sup> In other words, while marching through territory populated by Poles, Jews would receive help from sympathetic Poles; however, they could not count on empathy once they arrived on lands populated by Germans. Nate Leipciger, who was marched from the Flossenbürg concentration camp to

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Żywulska's memoir, *I Survived Auschwitz* (Warsaw: tCHu; Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2004).

<sup>2018</sup> Testimony of Maria Dżambowa, JHI, record group 301, no. 3555.

<sup>2019</sup> Testimony of Pieterkowski, JHI, record group 301, no. 446.

<sup>2020</sup> Testimony of Leon Reig, JHI, record group 301, no. 94.

<sup>2021</sup> Testimony of Ted Libfeld, SFV, Interview code 6836.

<sup>2022</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 222, 319–20, 532–33; and vol. 5, 578–79, 586, 652–53, 711–12, 815, 940–41. The Zacny family of Pszczyna was recognized in 2019. Regarding Rozalia Kalabiś, see The Froehlich Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-froehlich-family>. See also the testimony of Dunia Urbańska (Urysson), JHI, record group 302, no. 124, who describes how she, another Jewish woman and several men who had escaped during the death march were sheltered in a village near Bielsko-Biała, where they were helped by a number of villagers.

<sup>2023</sup> Aleksandra Namysło, “Postawy mieszkańców rejencji katowickiej wobec ludności żydowskiej,” in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 793–94.

<sup>2024</sup> Gill, *The Journey Back from Hell*, 415.

the small town of Leonberg, near Stuttgart at the end of the war recalled, “The German people looked away as we went past, as if we were monsters.”<sup>2025</sup>

Many of those forced to endure the death marches, however, were not as fortunate. Prisoners, especially those too weak to walk or who tried to escape, were mowed down by German bullets and their bodies left by the roadside. Prisoners killed during the death marches—among them many whose identity was not known—were buried respectfully by Catholic Poles regardless of their religion.

In a Christian cemetery in the village of Książenice, Poland, about an hour and a half from Auschwitz-Birkenau, is a memorial which stands over a mass grave of 45 people, victims of the death march that left Auschwitz-Birkenau. .... The local priest, Paweł Rys [Rev. Paweł Ryś], decided, for humanitarian reasons, to bury the victims and also to document their ‘names’—the inmate numbers tattooed on their arms. The priest instructed the grave-digger to record the numbers. The original document is stored in the Auschwitz Archive and a copy is on display in the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem.

Together with the thousands of other inmates in the death march, they departed from Auschwitz-Birkenau on 18th January 1945. The inmates received a piece of bread, one packet of canned food between four and a blanket. They were forced to walk tens of kilometers in the freezing cold wearing rags and trudging through the snow in wooden clogs. The inmates suffered from exhaustion and dysentery, eating handfuls of snow to ease their hunger. Any inmate who became weak and dropped behind was immediately shot by the SS. After a march of approximately 59 km the inmates arrived at a train station in the city of Gliwice where 100–150 inmates were crowded into open train carriages. The inmates were transported for hours in the extreme cold of -20°C and many of them froze to death. When the train stopped, the SS guards continued to march the inmates, who had not received food for three days. On the 22nd of January the inmates neared the forest by the settlements of Młyn [Młyn] and Rybnik. As the inmates entered the forest the guards began to shout that they were being attacked by partisans and began shooting towards the inmates. The site was filled with dead and injured. Residents of Młyn used wagons to transport some of the corpses for burial in Książenice cemetery. Their funerals were held on the 26th of January and the 12th of February. ...

Initial research in the Auschwitz Archive revealed that 26 of the buried were Jews from Germany, Czechoslovakia, France, The Netherlands, Poland and Hungary. Five of the buried were Polish political inmates and the others were of varied nationalities.<sup>2026</sup>

Yaki Gantz, an Israeli who made it his mission to identify the Jews among the victims of the death marches and to commemorate them, wrote, “It is amazing to see how many people helped the Jews then, and how many people want to

<sup>2025</sup> Nate Leipziger, *The Weight of Freedom* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2015), 121.

<sup>2026</sup> “Death March of Male Auschwitz Inmates,” YVA, Internet: [https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/death\\_march/overview.asp](https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/death_march/overview.asp).

help me now.” According to an article in an Israeli newspaper that featured this story, “Gantz promises he will not cease his search for mass graves. It is his way of thanking the Polish citizens who buried the victims of the death marches regardless of their religion, he says.”<sup>2027</sup>

Valerie Straussová, a Czech Jew, feigned death when she was shot during the evacuation of prisoners from the Schlesiersee labour camp in Lower Silesia. Wounded, she managed to drag herself to the Polish village of Wijewo, near Leszno, where she was taken in by Maria Wojciech. Maria entrusted Valerie to the care of her sister-in-law, Stefania (Jadwiga) Wojciechowska, a nun whose convent had been closed down by the Germans and the nuns dispersed. Maria was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Among the Nations, whereas Sister Stefania was merely awarded a certificate of appreciation.<sup>2028</sup>

In the second half of January 1945, with the approach of the front, the Schlesiersee labor camp for women, a branch of the Gross-Rosen camp, in Lower Silesia, was evacuated, and about 200 Jewish women from the camp were forced to participate in a death march, in freezing weather, in a northwesterly direction. In order to make them walk faster, the guards escorting them selected twenty “slow” prisoners and shot them to death. Waleria Straussova, a Jewish woman born in Czechoslovakia, was wounded, but survived. After the group had passed out of sight, Straussova dragged herself with her remaining strength to the Polish village of Wijewo in the county of Leszno in the Poznań district, where she collapsed on Maria Wojciech’s doorstep in a pool of blood. Despite the presence of German soldiers and policemen in the village, Wojciech took Straussova in, washed her, dressed her wounds, fed her and allowed her to rest. In the dead of night, Wojciech took Straussova in a little sledge to the home of her relative, Stefania Wojciechowska, a nun, who took care of Straussova until the Germans’ final retreat. When the village was liberated, Straussova was admitted to a nearby military hospital and after her recovery returned to her home in Prague.<sup>2029</sup>

Alek Elias Kleiner, a native of Kraków, was imprisoned in several German concentration camps before he ended up in Kaufering, a subsidiary of Dachau, near Landsberg in Bavaria, around the end of the war. During the evacuation of the camp in late April 1945, Kleiner and some other Jewish prisoners managed

<sup>2027</sup> Nissan Tzur, “Former Intel Agent Discovers Jews in Mass ‘Christian’ Graves,” *Times of Israel*, December 1, 2013. The article mentions several villages, among them Książenice and Miedźna, where ceremonies were held with the participation of the local Catholic priest and community in conjunction with the erection of monuments to commemorate the Jewish victims.

<sup>2028</sup> See also Testimony of Valerie Straussová, EHRI (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure) Document Blog, Internet: <https://blog.ehri-project.eu/2016/03/11/testimony-of-valerie-straussova/>; “Maria Wojciech from Wijewo Village,” *Memory and Identity*, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/maria-wojciech-from-wijewo-village>.

<sup>2029</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 880–81.



to escape and make it to the Benedictine abbey in St. Ottilien, which had been taken over and converted into a military hospital for German soldiers. When they arrived, they encountered Polish nuns, who had likely been expelled from Warsaw after the uprising of 1944. On hearing their story, the nuns led the escaped prisoners to the cellar, took their prison clothes, burned them, and gave them new clothes and shoes. They then brought a priest, probably Fr. Moritz Schrank, who agreed to hide them in a stable with horses, pigs and cows. He brought them food every day until the American army arrived on May 9, 1945.<sup>2030</sup>

## The Future Pope John Paul II

Growing up in Wadowice, Karol Wojtyła had made friends with Jerzy Kluger, a Jewish boy.<sup>2031</sup> During the German occupation of Poland, Wojtyła entered a clandestine underground seminary in Kraków. He was ordained a priest in November 1946.

Wojtyła's rescue activities only came to light after he became Pope John Paul II. According to historian Paul Johnson,

His name also figured on a Nazi blacklist on account of his activities on behalf of the Jewish community in Cracow [Kraków] and its neighbourhood. As recorded in the archives of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, ... he belonged to an underground group which took Jewish families out of the ghettos, gave them new identity papers and, if necessary, found them hiding places.<sup>2032</sup>

According to another source, "Many people have told me: [Wojtyła] was one of the people who took risks for the Jews. We know, for example, that he made false papers for them during the war. ... this young man participated in making, inside the Bishop's palace, false papers destined for Polish members of the Resistance and Jews."<sup>2033</sup>

<sup>2030</sup> Memoirs of Alek Elias Kleiner, YVA, file O.3/8486 (Item 9438476); Testimony of Elias Kleiner, SFV, Interview code 476; Moritz Schranf postcard, March 26, 1953, USHMM, Accession no. 1997.A.0392.

<sup>2031</sup> After the war, Jerzy Kluger settled in Rome. He rekindled his friendship with Karol Wojtyła, then Auxiliary Bishop of Kraków, when he attended the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. See O'Brien, *The Hidden Pope*; Jerzy Kluger with Gianfranco De Simone, *The Pope and I: How the Lifelong Friendship between a Polish Jew and John Paul II Advanced Jewish-Christian Relations* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012).

<sup>2032</sup> Paul Johnson, *Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Restoration* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 10.

<sup>2033</sup> Halter, *Stories of Deliverance*, 258–59.

Edith Zierer, who was liberated from the work camp in Skarżysko-Kamienna in January 1945, credits Wojtyła with saving her life in the final months of the war. Virtually weakened by tuberculosis and other ailments, she encountered Wojtyła, then a seminarian, at a railroad station. After joining other survivors and staying at an orphanage in Poland and a French sanatorium, she emigrated to Israel in 1951. She met Pope John Paul II again at a moving reunion at Yad Vashem in 2000.

When Pope John Paul II visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and museum in 2000 he met with a group of Holocaust survivors, among them Edith Zierer of Haifa. “He who saves the life of even one Jew is likened to one who has saved an entire world,” she told him in Polish. “He put his hand on my shoulder and I was so moved. I had closed a circle,” she told the daily newspaper *Maariv*.

She was born to a wealthy and educated Jewish family in Katowice, Poland. In 1939, in advance of the German invasion of Poland, her family fled and moved from place to place. “We hid in the attic of Polish farmers, among the hens,” she recalled.

Her father, mother and sister were subsequently murdered, and Zierer remained incarcerated alone. She worked in a weapons factory in the Skarżysko-Kamienna labor camp in occupied Poland. “I worked for 12 hours a day. I was lucky that I spoke a good German and that the German bosses liked me. Otherwise I probably would have ended my life,” she said. “I worked from the end of 1942 until January 28, 1945. I was by myself, alone in the world, in harsh conditions, in freezing cold, doing hard labor. I was small, weak, without shoes, with frozen feet.”

After her release at the end of January 1945, Zierer lay helpless in an old train station in Poland. “I was thin, eaten up by lice, tired and exhausted. There wasn’t a drop of life in me. I was lying there, apathetic and motionless,” she later said in an interview.

“Suddenly, totally unexpectedly, a young priest made his way through the people and approached me. I looked up and saw a Christian priest in a brown robe standing in front of me, with a great light in his eyes. He turned to me of all the people who were sitting there in the station, and asked ‘Why are you sitting here like that?’” she recounted.

The young priest was Karol Wojtyła [Wojtyła], who in 1978 would become Pope John Paul II. He brought her a sandwich and tea. “I was thin, gaunt, tired and ill. To this day I remember the first bite ... I finished the sandwich and he told me to stand up because ‘We’re going,’ as he said. I wasn’t capable of standing on my skinny legs. I fell onto the floor of the train station and he was forced to carry me in his arms.”

Wojtyła carried her on his back for about three kilometers, until they reached the station from which a train took them to Krakow. “We were both alone on the railroad track, in the dark ... We arrived together, I on his back, at the next station,” she said.

In Krakow [Kraków] she was taken in by a relative, and later had the good fortune of being one of the 100 orphans taken in and rescued by Lena Kuchler. She wandered with them to Zakopane, Czechoslovakia and France. ...

In 1951 Zierer immigrated to Israel, where she raised a family and worked as a dental technician.<sup>2034</sup>

<sup>2034</sup> Ofer Aderet, “Edith Zierer, Holocaust Survivor Saved by Pope, Dies,” *Haaretz*, January 16, 2014.

After the war, Pola Hipsz returned to Poland from exile in Siberia. She credits Wojtyła, then a young priest, with helping her to locate her husband, Daniel Sztarkstejn, leading to their reunion in London.<sup>2035</sup>

In 1946, Józefa and Bronisław Jachowicz turned to Rev. Wojtyła, then a newly ordained priest, with a request to baptize Shachne Hiller. They had cared for the boy as if he were their own child since 1942, when he was just two years old and his mother smuggled him out of the Kraków ghetto. The parents died in Auschwitz. After being asked what the wish of the boy's parents had been when they entrusted him to their care, the Jachowiczes acknowledged that his parents had requested their son be raised as a Jew. Rev. Wojtyła replied that it would be unfair to baptize the child while there was still hope relatives might be found who would take him. Shachne was eventually reunited with family in the United States who adopted him, and he grew up as Stanley Berger.<sup>2036</sup>

On his first trip to Poland as Pope in June 1979, John Paul II visited Auschwitz, where he stated:

I have come and I kneel on this Golgotha of the modern world, on these tombs, largely nameless like the great tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I kneel before all the inscriptions that come one after another bearing the memory of the victims of Birkenau in languages ...

In particular I pause with you, dear participants in this encounter, before the inscription in Hebrew. This inscription awakens the memory of the People whose sons and daughters were intended for total extermination. This People draws its origin from Abraham, our father in faith (cf. Rom 4:12), as was expressed by Paul of Tarsus. The very people that received from God the commandment "Thou shalt not kill," itself experienced in a special measure what is meant by killing. It is not permissible for anyone to pass by this inscription with indifference.<sup>2037</sup>

On many occasions since that time, Pope John Paul II spoke movingly of the Jewish suffering in the Shoah.

Nevertheless, remarkably, a major Jewish news agency characterized Pope John Paul's attitude and behaviour toward Jews as "offensive":

Jewish feeling toward Pope John Paul may have been summed up by Elie Wiesel, author, human rights activist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. Writing in the New York

<sup>2035</sup> Marilyn Schimmel, *Witnesses: Voices from the Holocaust* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>2036</sup> "The Merit of a Young Priest," in Yaffa Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 142–47.

<sup>2037</sup> Apostolic Pilgrimage to Poland, Homily of His Holiness John Paul II, Auschwitz-Birkenau, 7 June 1979, Internet: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19790607\\_polonia-brzezinka.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790607_polonia-brzezinka.html).

Post, Wiesel accused the Pope of wanting to “dejudaise the Holocaust” with his “strange and offensive behavior whenever he is confronted by the crudest event in recorded history.” ... “It is now clear: this Pope has a problem with Jews, just as Jews have a problem with him. His understanding for living Jews is as limited as his compassion for dead Jews,” wrote Wiesel, an Auschwitz survivor. ... Wiesel accused John Paul of wanting people to believe Christians suffered as much as Jews in Hitler’s concentration camps.<sup>2038</sup>

These charges began to proliferate. John Allemang, writing in Canada’s leading daily newspaper, accused the Pope of “play[ing] down their [i.e., the Jews’] sufferings in the Holocaust.”<sup>2039</sup> At a meeting with foreign journalists in January 1988, he was asked: “I would like to know if we are right, we Jews, in thinking that in Your Holiness’s continual [sic] references to the *Shoah* there is a certain tendency to minimize, to lessen the dimensions of the *Shoah*.” “I am amazed. That is all I can say. I am amazed at your question,” was the Pope’s response. Could there be any other response to this kind of baseless complaint?

Nonetheless, the charges persisted in certain quarters. Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, one time vice-president of the World Jewish Congress and chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, gave a speech to an international gathering of Jewish Second World War military veterans held in Israel on February 23, 2000, in which he deplored what he called the Pope John Paul’s wartime “acquiescence” to the “Nazi” persecution of Jews. He urged Israelis not to celebrate the Pope’s upcoming visit to Israel until he clarified what he was doing as a priest in Poland during the Second World War. Posters plastered through an ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighbourhood of Jerusalem called the Pope “the evil one” and promised his March 2000 pilgrimage to the Holy Land would not pass peacefully.<sup>2040</sup>

<sup>2038</sup> JTA, “Wiesel assails Pontiff for ‘offensive behavior,’” *The Canadian Jewish News* [Toronto], July 7, 1988. Elie Wiesel has a long history of making disparaging remarks about Poles. He is on record for holding Poles co-responsible for the camps Nazi Germany established in occupied Poland. “As for the Poles,” Wiesel wrote in 1968, “it was not by accident that the worst concentration camps were set up in Poland, worse than anywhere else.” See Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 163. The Nobel Peace Prize winner went on to demonize Polish society: “We had so many enemies! ... the Poles betrayed them. True, here and there a ‘good’ citizen was found whose cooperation could be bought [sic] with Jewish money. But how many good-hearted, upright Poles were to be found at the time in Poland? Very few.” See Introduction to Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, 3–4.

<sup>2039</sup> John Allemang, “Turbulent Times: Ten Years of John Paul II,” *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], October 15, 1988.

<sup>2040</sup> William A. Orme Jr., “Israelis Are of 2 Minds About John Paul’s Coming Sojourn,” *The New York Times*, February 25, 2000; “Pope begins pilgrimage in Egypt,” *National Post* [Toronto], February 25, 2000; “Jewish militants call Pope ‘evil one,’” *The Toronto Star*, February 29, 2000.

## The Conversion of Jews

Priests did not rush to convert Jewish children after the war. Another such example involves Chana Mandelbaum (b. 1937), who was left by her mother in the care of the Nabelski family of Chronów, near Nowy Wiśnicz. Known as Jańcia, the girl was hidden in that home for four years. She could not leave the house during daylight hours as her dark hair might draw unwarranted attention. Her mother never returned for her.

After the war, Mrs. Nabelski decided to have the girl baptized and to treat her as a foster daughter. She went to Rev. Wilhelm Boczek, the local parish priest, regarding the matter. He agreed to do it only on condition that the girl's family could not be found. As it happened, Chana was on the Jewish Committee's missing persons list in Kraków. It was decided to turn her over to the committee. The decision was extremely hard and painful for everyone. Chana was eventually reunited with her father, who had survived the war.<sup>2041</sup>

The case of Szlama Jakubowicz of Sochaczew, who spent the war working as an itinerant farm hand near his hometown of Sochaczew, is similar. Despite having registered with the Jewish committee after the war, he found it difficult to adjust to his new surroundings and decided to return to the last farmer he worked for. Fourteen years old at the time, Szlama approached the local priest requesting to be baptized. The priest dissuaded him, suggesting that he first attend mass and catechism classes. After the boy completed his classes the following year, he told the priest that he no longer wanted to be baptized. The priest reassured him in his decision, and they parted amicably. A cousin who returned from the Soviet Union found Szlama later that year, and Szlama decided to rejoin the Jewish community.<sup>2042</sup>

Batia Akselrad (later Eisenstein, b. 1932) of Krosno was sheltered by the Krukierak family, who were acquainted with her parents. After the war, she remained with her adopted family, to whom she had become attached, as she was unaware that anyone from her immediate family had survived. She recalled the circumstances under which she decided to convert to Catholicism:

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<sup>2041</sup> "Looking for Jańcia," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/looking-jancia>.

<sup>2042</sup> Leociak, *Ratowanie*, 130–31, based on the testimony of Szlama Jakubowicz, JHI, record group 301, no. 2427.

Slowly and steadily I became attached to the Christian family and integrated myself within the family. Followed their customs and habits and became a practicing Polish Catholic youngster. This was also the year that I had to start school for the first time and I wanted to be like all the other children, namely Christian. I wanted to be accepted and not shunned. The family encouraged me in that direction. Presently I loved the family and was very attached to it. I went to the priest in Krosno and asked to be baptized. He was very surprised and told me that he knew my father. He asked whether there were any survivors in the family and I replied that I was the sole survivor. The priest baptized me on September 5th 1945, and that same month I started school for the first time. I was admitted to the seventh grade in the elementary school; I had to be prepared by a private teacher since I had to make up a great deal of schooling.<sup>2043</sup>

Afterwards, Batia learned that one of her brothers had survived, and she was removed from the Krukiereks' home against her will.

**A**fter the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Szlomo Grzywacz (b. 1931) was relocated with other deportees to the vicinity of Kraków, where he was placed in an orphanage as Marek Kaczyński. A Polish family in Dębniaki took him in, presuming he was Catholic.

As the war came to a close, Shlomo [Grzywacz] disclosed his Jewish identity to the family that had adopted him from the orphanage. Since he had become a choir [altar] boy by that time, the rescuers reported this to the priest, who baptized him. Some two years after the war, when he told them that he had been offered an opportunity to leave Poland for Palestine with Jewish children, the family and the priest were immensely agitated. However, when Shlomo eventually decided to leave, the priest gave him his blessings.<sup>2044</sup>

**D**avid Soroka and his wife decided to entrust their young daughter, Esther (b. 1940), to the care of their former housemaid, Jadwiga (Jadzia) Łukowska. She assured them that, if they remained alive, she would return the child. As part of a work crew, David was able to smuggle the child out of the Wilno ghetto. When the ghetto was liquidated in 1943, David and his wife were sent to the Kailis labour camp. David was transferred to the Stutthof concentration camp, and survived. His wife perished at the Ponary killing fields.

After liberation, David returned to Wilno to look for his child. But the Soviet Union had annexed Wilno, causing many Poles to move inside the newly drawn borders of Poland. In 1946, David learned that Łukowska had resettled in Wałcz, and he went there looking for his child.

<sup>2043</sup> Batia Eisenstein, "The Akselrads," in Leibner, *Krosno by the Wislok River*, April 2014, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/krosno/Krosno.html>, 244 ff.

<sup>2044</sup> Gafny, *Dividing Hearts*, 284; Nechama Tec, "Righteous Gentiles," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Internet: [https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Righteous\\_Gentiles](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Righteous_Gentiles) (photograph caption).



Finally, and with great difficulty I arrived, only to learn that Jadzhe [Jadzia] had died 2 months earlier. My question, where is my child?

I came across a woman and she showed me through a window, a child playing in the garden and she called out to her, “Teresa, your father is here!” She came running, and took a look at me and said, “but this is a Jew! My father is on the front!” She ran back to play and I stood paralyzed in my spot!

I stayed overnight with this Christian and the next day the priest summoned me to him. He was very friendly and told me the child was not converted: “a lot of Jews were saved in my Church. I saw and suffered your pain and anguish what I saw around me, a folk that is washed in blood, we cannot force their children to be converted!”

I remained in the village for several days in order to gain the trust of this child. In the end I was able to take my child with me to Lodz [Łódź]. At the train station, the Polish neighbours, their children and the priest who played with my Esther, all came to say goodbye. I wanted to give the Christian woman more money, but she answered me, “we wanted to save your child from the hands of those bloody murderers, not for money.”

We arrived in Lodz and it took a while to distance her from her Christian beliefs. We finally made Aliyah to Eretz Israel after 3 hard months at sea on the “Exodus,” enduring more difficulties.

In the end, my Esther became a real Israeli child, grew up and married. Today she is a mother of 2 children.<sup>2045</sup>

The five-member Chucherko family took in Berish (Berek or Bernard) Feiler—a store owner in their village of Nowa Góra, near Krzeszowice, west of Kraków—and his wife Bela (Lola), who knocked on their door starving and weary in the summer of 1942. The Feilers had escaped the Aktion in Pilica. They asked if they could stay for the day and recuperate; they ended up staying for two years.

(The request for an overnight stay was often part of a survival strategy: a ploy before seeking a more permanent arrangement from an unsuspecting helper, who might not otherwise have agreed initially to a long-term commitment. Large sums of money, belongings or real property were then promised to entice the person into assuming the tremendous risk involved. Even at that stage, however, many rescuers did not fully comprehend the efforts that would be needed to care for their charges, nor did they foresee the length of time the arrangement would last. Often, the charges’ money would run out, and their host—usually not a wealthy person—would have to bear the cost of providing for them.)

The Chucherkos also agreed to hide Bernard’s brother, Chaim (Henryk) Feiler, and his wife, Sala. A few days later they were joined by Yitzhak-Shaya (Icchak) Grosman, Sala’s brother, who died shortly before the German occupation ended.

<sup>2045</sup> David Soroka, “‘Righteous Gentiles’ Have Saved My Child Esther,” in *Kanc, Svinzian Region*, cols. 1831–36.

Stefan Chucherko and his three sons—Eugeniusz, Henryk, and Leopold—built a hiding place for the Jewish refugees beneath the floor of the hayloft, in the farmyard. At first, the refugees paid for their upkeep, which was only fair, given their number and their hosts' extreme poverty. But even after the fugitives' money ran out, the Chucherkos continued to support them.

In 1943 or 1944, Bela Feiler gave birth to a baby boy. The crying infant posed an immense danger to everyone. (In many such cases, parents would take the life of their newborn child.) One night, Stefan left the baby in a basket near the home of the Noworytas, in nearby Miękinia. The childless couple took him in, suspecting he was born out of wedlock. They baptized the baby and raised him as their own.<sup>2046</sup> After the war, the local priest persuaded the couple to return the boy to his parents.

After the war, the town was occupied by Soviet forces. Hearing Berek's account, a Jewish officer offered to retrieve Berek's son, but Berek refused to take his child by force. Instead, he sought out the priest who had baptized the boy and he identified himself as the father. The priest arranged a meeting between Berek and the man who had taken in his baby. Weeping, the adoptive father pleaded with Berek to leave the boy in their care. "You are young, and we like the child very much. Please give us the child." Berek did not demand the return of his son. Instead, he acknowledged the bond between the boy and the adoptive father. "You are the same father as I am. You have the same rights to him like I am." Over time, the priest persuaded the adoptive couple to give the boy back to his birth parents.<sup>2047</sup>

As we have seen, on occasion Jews placed Jewish children in Catholic convents after the war. The following account was recorded by a historian who had himself survived the war as a child.

Ten-year-old Joseph Sliwa was sheltered by a Polish foster family on the outskirts of Warsaw. The family received payment from the boy's mother, who was hiding elsewhere. After the Polish uprising in Warsaw in late 1944, contact with the mother was lost—Joseph never saw her again—and the payments stopped. Nevertheless, Joseph's benefactors continued to look after him at their expense and treated him lovingly. After liberation, the boy's uncle, who was a soldier in the Polish army, arrived and took him. Joseph was pleased at the thought that he would be living with a relative. However, it transpired that the uncle did not yet have a home of his own and saw no other choice than to place his nephew in a convent. ... It was not until a few months later, when his relatives had managed to get settled, that they moved him to a Jewish children's home.<sup>2048</sup>

<sup>2046</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 145–46; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 83–84.

<sup>2047</sup> Sara R. Horowitz, "If He Knows to Make a Child...": Memories of Birth and Baby-Killing in Deferred Jewish Testimony Narratives," in Goda, *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust*, 145.

<sup>2048</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 204.

Not all Jewish children returned to their families and faith after the war. Some chose to remain with their new identities and associations. Here is another such example involving the distant cousin of a survivor.

On my mother's side of the family there were cousins. My mother's mother's sister was Telca Trauman and she had two children, Lutek and Franka. Her son Lutek was married to Hela ... Lutek and Hela went through the wall [of the Warsaw ghetto] to live in the Aryan section. They took their daughter Hanka and lived with his mother Telca. His sister Franka also lived there, and brought her daughter Bronia.

Telca made believe she was deaf and mute in order to hide her Jewish accent. She had blue eyes, a good face. ... And they got through the war this way to die natural deaths. Bronia's father, Adolf, was taken away one day near the Umschlagplatz and killed, but Franka and her mother, Telca, were able to get some kind of papers and hide in the apartment in the Aryan section. Lutek Trauman was stopped one day, the Germans pulled his pants down, and when they saw that he was circumcised, they killed him on the spot.

Soon after they got to the Aryan side Bronia was put in a Catholic convent. She was five years old, and she was told by a priest, "You are a Jewish girl, but now you are a Christian, and never say anything. After the war you can be Jewish again." But Bronia after the war did not want to be Jewish anymore and she remained Catholic. After all the suffering, her mother, Franka, was driven out of her mind because her daughter remained a Christian. Bronia is still in Poland, while Hela and her daughter Hanka moved to Israel.<sup>2049</sup>

Jewish teenagers and adults who expressed a willingness to convert during the war in order to secure a hiding place were not pressed by priests to keep their side of the bargain. They were met with understanding. Zofia Sikoń, a poor, pious woman with two children who lived in Łukowica, near Nowy Sącz, agreed to shelter three siblings from a nearby village. She hoped they would convert to Catholicism after the war in gratitude for being saved. When she brought them to her parish priest after the war, they explained to the priest that they had simply promised to do so in order to placate their rescuer, that they did not want to convert and that they would not make good Catholics. The priest agreed with them and there the matter ended.<sup>2050</sup>

Emil and Maria Łoziński, a poor, elderly and poor couple, sheltered the three-member Rozenberg family (a pharmacist, his wife and their daughter, Helena) in Żółkiew, north of Lwów. The Łozińskis looked after them devotedly, without expecting anything in return. Worn down by constant anxiety and tension, Emil Łoziński one day asked his charges to leave. However, the next day,

<sup>2049</sup> Zosia Goldberg, as told to Hilton Obenzinger, *Running Through Fire: How I Survived the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 2004), 36–37.

<sup>2050</sup> Testimony of Helen Alt, SFV, Interview code 54678.

after attending church, he took back his request. The Rozenbergs wound up staying another 16 months, until the Soviet army arrived.<sup>2051</sup>

Although the Łozińskis had hoped that their charges would convert, this was in no way a condition of their rescue. To demonstrate respect for their hosts, after liberation, the Rozenbergs went to see the priest, whom they remembered well from before the war: “He’d come to the pharmacy, we’d chat. Nothing very personal, but pleasant. A decent man. Very respectful.”

So all three of us went to the priest’s apartment to meet with him. My father mentioned to him that Łoziński saved us, and that he thinks we should convert. The priest asked, “Are you converting because you’re grateful to Łoziński for saving your life, or because of your convictions?”

“Well,” my father said, “I don’t feel that strongly, but I am thinking about it because of Łoziński.”

The priest said, “If that’s the only reason, that’s not good enough. Thank God you survived, you survived as a Jew, you are Jewish stay what you are.”

We went back and told Łoziński what the priest said. He said, “Well, it’s the priest’s decision and you have to abide by what he said.”<sup>2052</sup>

In some cases, Jews decided of their own accord to convert during or after the war. Some tested the waters, then later changed their minds. Henryk (Chaim) Grinblat (later Henry Greenblatt, b. 1930), who worked as a cowherd for a farmer by the name of Mieczysław Ślepowroński, near Siedlce, decided he would become a Christian. He and another Jewish boy, who also worked as a cowherd in the vicinity, left their farms in 1946 and enrolled in a Jesuit orphanage, possibly a boarding school. The boys remained there for several months. Ultimately, they decided that Christianity was not for them, so they left the institution.<sup>2053</sup>

Helena Tenenbaum (later Ilana Ben-Israel, b. 1929) initiated the process of conversion to Catholicism after liberation in Lwów in order to express her gratitude to her Polish rescuers: Zuzanna Łozińska and her husband, Stanisław Faliszewski. She did so in accordance with the wishes of her deceased mother.

<sup>2051</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 465–66.

<sup>2052</sup> Wyshogrod, *Hiding Places*, 271–72.

<sup>2053</sup> Testimony of Henry Greenblatt, SFV, Interview code 12447; Henry Greenblatt, *Father’s Legacy: Remembrance of a Holocaust Childhood* ([U.S.A.]: Biblio Books, 2008). After escaping from the Siedlce ghetto, Henryk Grinblat turned to a Catholic priest when he was infected with a serious skin disease. Henryk claims the priest was unaware that he was Jewish. The priest directed him to his friend at a hospital, where the boy was treated by nuns who worked as nurses. It was there that he met Mieczysław Ślepowroński, the farmer who hired him as a cowherd. Henryk’s Jewish identity was divulged by his employer’s Jewish friend, who came to the farm for food. Nonetheless, the farmer allowed him to stay on. Henryk worked on the farm until 1946. Ślepowroński was a member of the Home Army.

Eventually, however, relatives arrived and took her with them to Palestine, where Helena reverted to Judaism.<sup>2054</sup>

Some converts chose to assimilate into Polish society. Others retained a sense of belonging to the Jewish people, even though they continued to cling to their new Catholic faith. After the war, 16-year-old Rachel Dążek from Ostrołęka, who had lost her family to the Holocaust and survived the war on the run, with the help of Poles, decided to become a nun. She entered the Benedictine monastery in Łomża. She was one of several Jewish survivors who took and persevered in that path.

“I was lonely. Every day I wanted to die,” she said.

“I was in pain—why don’t they search and find my brother? I felt guilty. That was my stigma. My decision was that if I became a Christian I’d enter a monastery so I could pray for the Jewish people.”

Later on, relatives of hers located her and tried to convince her to return to Judaism, but despite the tears, threats, offers of money and other temptations, she insisted on staying at the monastery.

The monastery records reveal fears that Jews would try to abduct her, so she was locked inside. It was also said that a large reward was offered to anyone who could get her out, but she declared that she’d never leave.

The Polish name she adopted was Maria Janina Malczewska. On becoming a nun, she became Sister Paula. In the mid-1970s she traveled to Israel after making contact with Brother Daniel, formerly known as Shmuel Oswald Rufeisen, a Polish Holocaust survivor who had become a monk. Her next stop was the Benedictine monastery on the Mount of Olives.<sup>2055</sup>

## Stories That Will Never Be Fully Told

Many cases of rescue of Jews by the Roman Catholic clergy may never be known, or fully known. Polish clergy involved in rescue activities seldom recorded their deeds. Due to their Christian modesty, they did not go out of their way to publicize them. Many of those rescued by the clergy have not come forward with their stories. In many cases, those who did come forward did not identify their benefactors by name. Most of the children sheltered in convents did not maintain contact with their benefactors nor did they apply to Yad Vashem for recognition of the nuns who rescued them.

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<sup>2054</sup> Testimony of Ilana Ben-Israel, SFV, Interview code 46091.

<sup>2055</sup> Ofer Aderet, “From Jewish Ghetto to Monastery: The Holocaust Survivor Who Chose Jesus,” *Haaretz*, January 25, 2019.

Halina Krzypow (later Greenberg, b. 1934) survived the war in an unspecified convent on the outskirts of Warsaw. The superior of the convent was aware she was Jewish. After the area was liberated, Halina was reunited with her parents, who were passing as Christians with the help of Poles.<sup>2056</sup>

A 12-year-old girl who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto was placed—by Maria Bortnowska of the Information Bureau of the Polish Red Cross—in a convent in an unspecified locality near Lublin, under the assumed name of Kasia Wiśniewska.<sup>2057</sup>

After escaping from a German-run estate near Zamość, where she was a forced labourer, Chaia Smichkowitz (b. 1924) found refuge in an unspecified convent in or near Lublin. With the help of a nun, she obtained the identity documents of a Christian woman. Chaia volunteered for labour in Germany under her false identity. She survived the war, working on a farm.<sup>2058</sup>

Daniel Witelski (b. 1936), the son of a Warsaw ghetto policeman, was placed in a Warsaw convent for about a year and then transferred to a children's institution in Świder, where he remained until the German occupation ended.<sup>2059</sup>

Freda Felman (b. 1940) was entrusted by her parents to a Christian friend in 1942. But when the woman became fearful of hiding Freda, she left her in a Warsaw park. Some nuns found the three-year-old child and took her to a convent where she survived the war. Freda's parents also survived in hiding and eventually reclaimed their daughter. The family settled in Australia.<sup>2060</sup>

After escaping from the ghetto in Mińsk Mazowiecki with the help of her Polish nanny, Zipora Cheslava (Czesława) Domb (later Anbar, b. 1934) lived with

<sup>2056</sup> Testimony of Abraham Krzypow Hancher, SFV, Interview code 29922; Ajzner, *Hania's War*, 65.

<sup>2057</sup> Joanna Beata Michlic, "Daily Life of Polish Women, Dedicated Rescuers of Jews during and after the Second World War," in Gigliotti, Golomb, and Steinberg Gould, *Ethics, Art, and Representations of the Holocaust*, 220–21.

<sup>2058</sup> Testimony of Chaia Smichkowitz, YVA, file O.3/10392 (Item 3564946).

<sup>2059</sup> Testimony of Daniel Witelski, dated October 28, 1947, JHI, record group 301, no. 3005; Orzeł, *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady*, 272. Little is known about Daniel Witelski's fate. Apparently, he left Poland in 1968, settled in the United States, and died in 2006. His adult life is described as "torturous, bizarre and horrifying." See Sven Sonnenberg, *A Two Stop Journey to Hell* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2001).

<sup>2060</sup> Jack Felman, "Growing Up As a Child of Holocaust Survivors," Descendants of the Shoah, Melbourne, Internet: <http://www.dosinc.org.au/stories5.htm>. Dr. Jack Felman, Freda's brother, states: "An intense hatred of Poles and Germans was more than evident in our home. When my wife and I visited Poland in 1975 I can still vividly remember the intense hatred I felt for the 8 days I had to endure in this country. Although I acknowledge the fact, I find it unbelievable that there are so many Jewish survivors who re-visit this country. As a doctor, I have had to counsel a number of these people who were traumatised after going back to Poland. In my own case, my parents shuddered at the prospect of going back, even when I told them that my wife and I were going to visit Poland."



her nanny in Warsaw under a false identity. When the Germans expelled the city's population after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Zipora jumped from a train and escaped to a village. For a time, she was employed by a priest. Afterwards, she was placed in a nearby convent.<sup>2061</sup>

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto with his mother and sister, Mati Mazei Eizenberg Savitzki's sister was placed in a convent.<sup>2062</sup>

Many other untapped testimonies mention stays in convents. The following are from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies: Vladimir S. (b. 1937) was placed in an orphanage run by nuns in Otwock;<sup>2063</sup> the three-year-old niece of Manny B. of Częstochowa;<sup>2064</sup> the young daughter (b. 1937) of Ludwig F. of Częstochowa;<sup>2065</sup> Hanna K. (b. 1939) of Warsaw;<sup>2066</sup> Kochevit P. (b. 1931);<sup>2067</sup> Helen R. (b. 1938);<sup>2068</sup> Ruth H. and her sister;<sup>2069</sup> Olga S. of Wilno.<sup>2070</sup> Aliza R. and her young daughter were helped by nuns from a convent near Złoczów.<sup>2071</sup> Jack G. (b. 1936) was protected by nuns when he was hospitalized with typhus.<sup>2072</sup> Just after the war ended, Tushia Silbering (b. 1925) was helped by nuns while searching for relatives in Kraków.<sup>2073</sup>

References to unidentified priests can also be found in many untapped testimonies.

Henia Weit, a native of Sambor, survived the war with the help of a number of Poles. After confiding in a priest, a woman who lived on a farm near Sambor agreed to employ Henia and her twin sister. Afterwards, they were taken in by a retired priest for a short period, before moving on. Hiding in farmers' stables and the woods, the sisters survived the war.<sup>2074</sup>

Rina Fuks Werner (b. 1939) escaped from Lwów to Warsaw with her family. Her parents had connections to the Polish underground. Their children

<sup>2061</sup> Testimony of Zipora Cheslawa (Domb) Anbar, YVA, file O.3/13133 (Item 7498113).

<sup>2062</sup> Testimony of Mati Mazei Eizenberg Savitzki, YVA, file O.3/14257 (Item 13169372).

<sup>2063</sup> Vladimir S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2662), FVA.

<sup>2064</sup> Manny B. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1592), FVA.

<sup>2065</sup> Ludwig F. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-155), FVA.

<sup>2066</sup> Hanna K. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1794), FVA.

<sup>2067</sup> Kochevit P. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-85), FVA.

<sup>2068</sup> Helen R. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2539), FVA.

<sup>2069</sup> Ruth H. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-412), FVA.

<sup>2070</sup> Olga S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-88), FVA.

<sup>2071</sup> Aliza R. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-256), FVA.

<sup>2072</sup> Jack G. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-4202), FVA.

<sup>2073</sup> Tushia Z. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-3175), FVA; Oral history interview with Tushia Silbering, USHMM, Accession number 199.A.12809.22, RG-50.225.0022.

<sup>2074</sup> Henia W. [Weit] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-418), FVA; Oral history interview with Henia Weit, USHMM, Accession no. 1989.345.27, RG-50.005.0027.

were hidden by the underground, with her brother being placed in the home of a priest. The family survived the war.<sup>2075</sup>

Julius Ciembroniewicz (b. 1929) was sheltered in a monastery outside of Kraków for almost four years.<sup>2076</sup>

Nuchem Smiga, a child at the time, was rescued by an unidentified priest near Płock.<sup>2077</sup>

Henry Rubanek (b. 1912) was protected by his friend Count Jan Zamoyski, who employed him as a forester in Huta Krzeszowska, near Biłgoraj under an assumed name. Henry assisted the local priest by teaching religion to children.<sup>2078</sup>

After the Red Army liberated the area in the summer on 1944, Esther Neiman Mendelman (later Kozłowski) went to Lublin. She ran into an aunt of her late husband, Rafael Mndelman. Her aunt and uncle had been saved by a priest.<sup>2079</sup>

Historians from Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute mention the assistance provided by Rev. Baranowski in Zakopane, doubtless based on the testimony of a Jew, but provide no details.<sup>2080</sup>

A Jewish boy from Kraków was one of a group of several Jews smuggled out of Poland into Slovakia and then Hungary. After the Gestapo seized his parents, unidentified nuns had smuggled him out of the ghetto and sheltered him in a convent. The boy's fate is unknown.

We reached the border. The [Polish] guide shows us where the border is. We can see the Germans, we can see the dogs, and the lights. The guide shows us that we will cross between two posts and not to worry, because they know when the guards make their rounds. And indeed, just as they said, we crossed to the Slovakian side. Slovakian guides would come to pick us up and take us to the Hungarian border, to the town called Mikulasz [Mikuláš]. So we're waiting for the Slovak guides and they never show up! So, to make things more exciting, for we have to have fun, we cross back to the Polish side. The Polish guides put us in a hay-loft which belongs to them. Apart from the two of us, there is a little boy, four people from the Kaczmarek family, an engineer from Lwow [Lwów] who escaped from the Yanovski [Janowska] camp and a woman from Warsaw, Hanka. Except for the Kaczmarek family, all of us are Jewish.

<sup>2075</sup> Testimony of Rina Fuks Werner, YVA, file O.3 Video (Item 13142510).

<sup>2076</sup> Julius C. [Ciembroniewicz] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2403), FVA.

<sup>2077</sup> The Jewish Holocaust Partial Survivors List from Płock, Poland, Internet: <http://www.zchor.org/SURVIVO.HTM>.

<sup>2078</sup> Henry R. [Rubanek] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2947), FVA.

<sup>2079</sup> Oral history interview with Esther Kozłowski, USHMM, Accession number 1999.A. 0122.1222, RG-50.477.1222.

<sup>2080</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 40; Szymon Datner, "Materiały z dziedziny ratownictwa Żydów w Polsce w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 73 (January–March 1970): 133–38, at p. 133.

We sit there quietly. We can see the Germans and the dogs, we can hear German and there we are, not farther from the Germans than this balcony is from us [several meters]. We stay there for one day. Next day at night we start again. We walk for a long time, for the distance between Chabowka [Chabówka] and the border is about 20 kilometers.

We are in the care of two Slovak guides. They tell us that we will spend the night at their place and the next day they will take us to the train, buy us tickets and go to Mikulasz with us where the Hungarian guides will take over. The little boy spoke beautiful Polish. It was easy to tell he was an intelligent child. Of course, it was a Jewish child. He was from Cracow. He must have been from the family of the intelligentsia, for he spoke beautiful French, and nice German and Hebrew. He told us stories and sang French songs. We became very good friends. He was wearing a beret and a chain around his neck with a clover. I said, "You know, you're inside, and one does not wear a hat inside." And he says, "I won't take it off!" I say, "Do take it off, for the lady of the house will feel offended." So he took off his beret and it turned out his hair was red! That's why he kept his hat on!

We felt very close to this little boy. He told us his grandparents sent for him from Switzerland. His parents must have belonged to some Jewish organization. The Gestapo came, together with the Jewish police and they found weapons. They took the parents away, but the Gestapo man left the boy behind. Later he was at a convent; the nuns got him out of the ghetto.

There were rich Jews in Slovakia. I decided to get through to a Jew to ask if I could wash up the boy and ask for some clothes for him, for he didn't have anything! I said, "Excuse me, Mister, we have this child with us, who's been sent for by his grandparents. His grandparents paid for him and sent a man to Cracow. Please, help us take care of this child. Help me into a house so that the little one could wash up. Maybe you could get him some chocolate or something proper to eat, or maybe you have some old clothes? He only has what he's wearing." But they didn't help. Until today, I can't understand why. Maybe because they had not yet been beaten and kicked themselves.

We came up to a booth on the border. The guide said goodbye to us. There were two Hungarians in the booth who said they will take us to Koszyce [Košice, in Slovakia]. ...

Next day they took us to the local authorities in Koszyce. We walked in and there were soldiers there. They sent in two gendarmes to watch us. Finally, they called in Karol. Karol still had the papers to the name of Marian Warunek. I didn't show my papers. They told him not to worry, that they won't send us back to Poland and that we'll stay and go to Budapest.

It must have been Saturday. Our room was on the ground floor and I was sitting at the window, looking out. I said, "Karol, look, they are making a movie!" There were three Jews walking with a little boy; such as I've never seen in Lwow: Jews wearing gabardine, fur caps, white stockings, patent leather shoes, and yellow stars, for the Hungarians wore yellow stars. I said, "They must be making a film here." For can you imagine Jews like that walking on the streets of Hungary in 1943 as real people?! But it turned out those were real Jews, to whom nothing happened. It was such a shock for me. I thought, "Where on earth am I?"<sup>2081</sup>

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<sup>2081</sup> Testimony of Ewa S. (Stapp), September 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org> (Biographies).

Chava Fefer, one of the last survivors of the German Aktion in Tarnogród, near Biłgoraj, in the Lublin area, emerged from her hiding place in the emptied ghetto and turned to a friendly Polish family for help. The family sheltered her in their home for several weeks, but she did not wish to jeopardize their safety, so she decided to leave. Soon after she chanced on a young Pole. He would become her protector throughout the German occupation, enlisting the help of his sister, his parents, and a priest whose identity is not known.

Chava Fefer was alone in her house, hiding under a bed. The Germans suspected that someone was still in the house and shot into all the dark shadowy corners and into the bedclothes. It was a great miracle that none of the bullets hit her. The house filled with feathers and the Germans were convinced that there was no longer a living soul there and in resignation left the house.

Frightened and pale as death, Chava Fefer decided to creep out of her hiding place. She became aware that she was alone, the only survivor in the emptied ghetto. She barely took a step, shaking at every rustle. Suddenly she was startled. In a corner of the yard, near the gate, she noticed a figure, which stood as if pressed into the wall. She started to run away, but just at that moment she heard her name quietly whispered. The figure was her brother.

They embraced each other arms in silence. They would have cried, but their eyes were all dried out. Their words stuck in their throats. They took each other by the hand and moved carefully, like people lost in a dark wood. She remembered the name of a Pole, a close acquaintance of theirs, whom she believed would save them. But at that very moment heavy soldier's boots echoed through the empty street. They stood for a moment frozen with fear. Her brother panicked and without a word began to run back. In despair she wanted to call to him to go on with her, but he had disappeared from her sight and she ran on in a different direction, to the house of the Poles in whom she placed so much hope.

She finally succeeded in reaching this house. The people there, frightened by her appearance, stood in the open doorway, not knowing what to do. But they let her in and for three weeks hid her in their house.

Her first request was that they find out what happened to her brother. Carefully the Polish people began to creep around every house in the ghetto, looking for a trace of the brother who had disappeared. After long searches they succeeded in finding out that on that same day, immediately after running back to the house, he poisoned himself. The Germans found him dead.

Chava Fefer realized the danger in which the Polish people hiding her found themselves. These were good and honest people and she did not want to put their lives at risk. After about three weeks she fled into the woods.

It was on a cold evening at the end of autumn, when, finding herself on the road to Czeplić [?], she suddenly spied a young man, a Pole, eighteen years old. Fear seized her.... Frightened, she looked around for an escape route. As she stood confused the young man approached her. He must have noticed that she was afraid. He began to calm her.

His voice, his polite speech inspired trust. He introduced himself and told her his name was Frantyszek [Franciszek] Czapek. As long as he had lived, he said, he had never yet done anyone any harm, and she could be absolutely sure that nothing would happen to her.

They walked along together and he told her the he belonged to the underground and so was forced to hide out at his sister's house. She lived not far from the woods and he believed that she too could hide there. The young Pole did indeed bring her to his sister's. There she was hidden for several days in the barn.

Every evening the young man brought her bread and water. He was somewhat embarrassed at this and assured her that he too ate the same thing, because he was busy day and night working for the Polish underground. He smuggled weapons for the Polish partisans who were in the near-by woods. In all probability he took no money for this and therefore fed himself very poorly. He really did share his last morsel with the Jewish woman.

After several days the young man announced that he had to go away. He was leaving for Central Poland, which at that time was separated off by a border and was called "General Government." Chava Fefer saw no other way than to accompany him, since no one was left who could get her anything to eat.

They set out together on the road and passed the border, and went on until they arrived at the village from which the young man came. For a short time she hid in his parents' house. When it became dangerous, he reached an understanding with the parish priest, who agreed to hide Chava Fefer in the church. She stayed there until the Liberation, when the Soviet army took the village.<sup>2082</sup>

The following testimonials bear eloquent witness to the sacrifice and selflessness of countless Polish rescuers, among them members of the clergy, whose identities will never be known.

Dr. Aron Arkadiy Kaplan, a physician and surgeon, met Rakhil [Rachel], a teenaged girl whose last name is not recorded, in the military hospital in Wilno in 1944. Her family resided in Wilno before the war; her father was an engineer and her mother was a physician. A priest, whose name is unknown, resided nearby. He took Rakhil into his home when her family moved to the ghetto. He registered her as a Christian named Maria. She remained in hiding in the priest's home for a period of three years.<sup>2083</sup>

Yehuda Bauer, a pioneer of research and writing on the Holocaust, tells a story from his personal experience in Israel after the war ... "On my kibbutz," he writes, "there lives a man whom we shall call here Tolek. All he knows about himself is his name. He was born near Cracow [Kraków], or in Cracow, prior to World War II, and he was three when the war broke out. He was in an orphanage, probably because his father had died and his mother could not support him. A Polish woman took this circumcised man-child to her home and raised him there during the Nazi occupation, in alliance with a Catholic parish priest. When the Nazis came searching Polish homes for Jewish children, the woman

<sup>2082</sup> K. Shimoni, "The Heroic Struggle of the Two Heroes, the Adler brothers," in *Book of Tarnograd: In Memory of the Destroyed Jewish Community*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Tarnograd/Tarnograd.html>, translation of Sh. [Shimon] Kanc, ed., *Sefer Tarnograd: Le-zikaron ha-kehila ha-yehudit she-nehreva* (Tel Aviv: Organization of Former Residents of Tarnograd and Vicinity in Israel, United States and England, 1966), 373–80.

<sup>2083</sup> Recorded by Dr. Aron Arkadiy Kaplan, YVA, file O.3/9052 (Item 10787779).

used to hand over Tolek to the priest. Tolek still remembers how, at the age of five and six, he used to assist the priest at Mass, swinging the incense around, walking behind the priest through the church. They survived the war, and when liberation came, the woman took Tolek to a Jewish children's home and said, 'This is a Jewish child, I have kept him throughout the war, he belongs to your people, take him and look after him.' Tolek does not know the name of the Polish woman, nor does he know the name of the priest."<sup>2084</sup>

After fleeing to Soviet-occupied Białystok in 1939, a Jewish family named Tailblum, originally from Wołomin, was deported to the Soviet interior. On their return to Poland after the war, an unidentified Catholic priest, who had also been exiled and travelled with them in the same train car, protected them from hooligans and brought them food when the train stopped at various stations.<sup>2085</sup>

Lilli Lewin Folk's family was deported to the Soviet interior from Drohiczyn Poleski in April 1940. (Most of those seized in her town were Catholic Poles from prominent families.) After the war ended, the Lewins were transported back to Poland, with a stopover in Lwów. There, a Catholic priest from her hometown recognized her and took her family to a monastery, where they were dressed and given food, and new papers were made for them. The family was sent to Silesia.<sup>2086</sup>

## Rescue of Jews by Poles Outside Poland

Poles living outside occupied Poland, among them members of the Catholic clergy, also played a role in saving Jews. A little-known chapter of the war is the rescue effort of Henryk Sławik, who headed the Polish Committee (*chargé d'affaires*) in Budapest. He is credited with rescuing at least five thousand Polish Jews—both members of the military and civilians—who fled to Hungary during the war.

When Germany invaded Hungary in March 1944 and embarked on a massive deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz, the fate of Polish Jews living in camps for Polish refugees became precarious. The rescue operation required that Polish Jews pass as Catholic Poles.

<sup>2084</sup> Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 179–80.

<sup>2085</sup> Tova Paskowitz-Tailblum, "My Wanderings in Foreign Lands," in Kanc, *Sefer zikaron kehilat Wolomin*, 468, translated as *Volomin: A Memorial to the Jewish Community of Volomin*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/wolomin/Wolomin.html>.

<sup>2086</sup> Testimony of Lilli Folk, Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, Internet: <<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/604>>.



Sławik turned to the Polish Committee and the Polish Catholic Mission in Hungary for assistance. The Polish Catholic Mission, which was organized by the Pauline priest Fr. Michał Zembrzuski, consisted of some 60 priests who had taken refuge in Hungary after Poland was overrun in the fall of 1939. The priests were stationed for the most part in refugee camps. The Polish Catholic Mission, which was headed by Fr. Piotr Wilk-Witośławski, a Franciscan, and Rev. Jan Stączek, a diocesan priest, issued instructions to all its priests to assist any Jew who needed to assume a new identity as a Christian. Every Jew who sought a false birth and baptismal certificate was issued one without question and without having to undergo baptism or conversion. This fact became widely known among Polish Catholic refugees, yet not one of the Jews was denounced. All survived safely in Hungary.

Some 80 Jewish children were placed in an orphanage in the town of Vác, ostensibly as children of Polish officers, where they were passed off as Catholic. A Piarist priest from Slovakia, Rev. Pavel Boharčík (also known as Bucharczyk), instructed the children in the Catholic religion. The children and Jewish personnel attended Sunday mass at the local church as part of their guise. Itzhak Brettler, a Jew passing as a Catholic by the name of Władysław Bratkowski, taught the children the Old Testament and Torah. When Fr. Zembrzuski visited the orphanage, the Jewish children would greet him with the words, "Praised be Jesus Christ!"

Sławik, the Polish *chargé d'affaires*, was arrested by the Germans on March 19, 1944. He betrayed none of his Hungarian and Polish colleagues, though brutally tortured. He was sent to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he was executed probably, in August 1944.<sup>2087</sup>

Henryk Sławik, Franciszek Świder, Maria Wąskowska-Tomanek, Jan Kołtataj-Srzednicki, the chairman of the Polish Red Cross in Hungary, and Rev. Pavel Boharčík were recognized as Righteous Gentiles. Yad Vashem issued the following summary of the rescue in recognition of their award.

With the defeat of Poland in September 1939 and the subsequent German occupation, thousands of Poles crossed into Hungary and settled there. The Polish refugees were followed by hundreds of Jewish families. More Jewish refugees arrived in 1942 and 1943, when the Polish ghettos were liquidated and Hungary was still relatively safe. Henryk Sławik, a Polish activist, together with his Polish unit was arrested when crossing the border and was interned as prisoner of war in Hungary. In the camp he was introduced to József Antall, a member of the Hungarian Ministry of Interior, responsible for civilian

<sup>2087</sup> Henryk Zvi Zimmermann, *Przeżyłem, pamiętam, świadczę* (Kraków: Baran i Suszczyński, 1997), chapter 32; Zych, *Diecezja przemyska obrządku łacińskiego w warunkach okupacji niemieckiej i sowieckiej 1939–1944/1945*, 201 (Rev. Jan Stączek); Tomasz Kurpierz, *Henryk Sławik: 1894–1944: Biografia socjalisty* (Katowice and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2020), especially chapter 11.

refugees from Poland. Shortly after, Antall and Sławik created the Citizen's Committee for help for Polish refugees. Sławik was deeply devoted to his work ... Together with Antall, Countess Erzsébet Szapáry [the daughter of Maria-Ludwika Przezdziecka] and the head of the Polish Red Cross in Hungary, Jan Kollataj-Srzednicki, provided all Jewish refugees with forged Christian documents, and located Jews in the refugee camps in Hungary. Among them were also many orphaned children. Izaak Brettler (Władysław Bratkowski) and his wife, Mina, took care of many of them. In July 1943, they gathered a group of 76 children between the ages of three and 19 from Budapest and led them out to the locality of Vac [Vác], some 30 kilometers away.

There, Izaak organized a boarding school and with the help of the local Jews got in touch with the delegate to Hungary of the Polish Government-in-Exile, Henryk Sławik, and asked him for help. The latter agreed unhesitatingly. In September 1943, the boarding school was proclaimed a Polish educational institution acting on behalf of the Polish Committee in Hungary. All students and personnel were given forged documents and a Polish army officer, Franciszek Świder, was appointed director of the school. Maria Tomanek, a teacher, also volunteered to work there. With the invasion of German troops into Hungary on March 19, 1944, the institution appeared to be under threat. To give the school a more Polish and Christian image, all the students and teachers attended regular church services at the local church. In addition, a priest from Slovakia, Dr. Pavel Boharčík, came to the school to teach religion, but in reality he was teaching the students Hungarian.<sup>2088</sup>

**F**r. Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus stationed in Rome, made interventions on behalf of Jews in Rome.<sup>2089</sup> He oversaw the assistance provided by the Jesuits to Polish and Jewish refugees who found themselves in Romania after the joint German-Soviet invasion of Poland.<sup>2090</sup>

<sup>2088</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 768–69, supplemented by the entry for Henryk Sławik, RD.

<sup>2089</sup> Fr. Włodzimierz Ledóchowski intervened with the Polish consulate in Rome in June 1940 to secure a visa for Abraham Wasserstein, a German-born Jew who did not speak Polish but claimed Polish citizenship; the visa enabled him to leave Italy for neutral Turkey, and then go on to Palestine. See "Włodimir Ledóchowski (1866–1942), Superior General of the Jesuits, 'Black Pope,'" Internet: <http://www.ledochowski.eu/rodzina/wladimir1866.html>; David J. Wasserstein, "Abraham Wasserstein, 1921–1995," *Scripta Classica Israelica*, vol. 15 (1996): 1–6. Interventions by Polish authorities on behalf of citizens of Jewish origin, most of whom who had virtually severed all ties with Poland, were not isolated. Author Ruth Prawer Jhabvala recalled how her father had left Poland after World War I to avoid being "conscripted by the Polish army, in which no Jew wanted to serve. They were the worst anti-Semitic country in the world. Worse than Germany at that time." She then went on to remark, without realizing the incongruity of her statement, that when her father was arrested by the Germans in the early 1930s, he was able to secure his release through the intervention of the Polish authorities, as a citizen of Poland. See the interview with Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, *Writers and Company* with Eleanor Wachtel, CBC Radio, May 27, 2012.

<sup>2090</sup> Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 83–84; Correspondence de l'Ambassadeur [Kazimierz Papée] avec le Général des Jesuites Père Wl. Ledóchowski concernant l'aide et

Fr. Stanisław Skudrzyk, a Jesuit priest stationed in Bucharest, fabricated some 500 birth and baptismal certificates for Jews.<sup>2091</sup> Mosze Jung was one of those who obtained a false document from a priest in Bucharest identifying him as a Catholic Pole.<sup>2092</sup>

Fr. Stanisław Suwała, a Pallottine priest who resided in Rome, rescued four Jews, among them Pacifico Pavoncello and his brothers Mosè and Angelo, who had been apprehended by the Italian police and held by the Gestapo. Fr. Suwała devised an elaborate plan that entailed staging a contagious illness and escape from hospitals. All four Jews survived.<sup>2093</sup>

Brother Bernard Mrozek, a Jesuit studying at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, helped about a dozen Jews who were sheltered there. When the Germans broke into the institution, he hastily moved the Jews to a nearby Jesuit church, where they hid in the attic.<sup>2094</sup>

Polish diplomats turned to Catholic priests in order to save Polish citizens of Jewish origin who found themselves outside of Poland during the war. Polish diplomatic authorities were able to secure passports for Polish refugees from some Latin American countries; however, since those countries issued passports only to Christians, falsified documents were necessary for Jews to use the passports.

Wojciech Rychlewicz, the Polish consul general in Istanbul, obtained false birth and baptismal certificates from Rev. Antoni Wojdas, a Salesian priest who served the Polish community in Turkey. (Rev. Wojdas was based in the Polish settlement of Polonezköy or Adampol.) The number of Jews who received such documents likely numbered in the hundreds. Confirmation of these activities have been unearthed recently by Jews who were rescued.<sup>2095</sup>

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l'assistance de l'Ordre aux Polonais et Juifs restés en Roumanie, September 1942, Ambasada Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Watykanie, Józef Piłsudski Institute of America, folder 701/12/1.

<sup>2091</sup> Felicjan Paluszkiewicz, "Chasidei Ummot ha-Olam," *Przegląd Powszechny*, no. 9 (September 2001): 266–71; Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekrowane*, 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at p. 153; Stanisław Cieślak, "Polscy jezuici zaangażowani w pomoc Żydom w latach II wojny światowej," in Wenklar, *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici*, 125–98.

<sup>2092</sup> Testimony of Mosze Jung, YVA, file O.3/3515 (Item 3556639).

<sup>2093</sup> Testimony of Pacifico Pavoncello in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 395–400.

<sup>2094</sup> Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at p. 153.

<sup>2095</sup> Eldad Beck, "The Angel from Istanbul," *Israel Hayom*, December 11, 2020; Jenni Frazer, "Revealed: The Polish Ambassador Who 'Saved Thousands' during the War," *The Jewish Chronicle*, December 17, 2020.

Father Antoni Wojdas, who served in a parish in the Polish settlement of Adampol in Turkey during World War II, issued baptism certificates for Polish Jews to save them from the Holocaust. Dr. Jakub Kumoch, ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Ankara told PAP [Polish Press Agency]. The found documents show that Fr. Wojdas collaborated with Polish diplomats who made it possible for Jews to escape from German-occupied Europe.

In the first years of World War II, the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Istanbul, Wojciech Rychlewicz, issued to hundreds, perhaps thousands of Jews, false certificates that they were Catholics, thanks to which they could obtain a visa and go to Palestine and the Americas, reminds the ambassador.

“Several sources contained information about a Catholic priest helping Rychlewicz, but we did not know his identity, these materials show that this figure could have been the priest of the Polish parish in Adampol, the Salesian Antoni Wojdas,” Kumoch said in an interview with PAP. The Polish diplomat published on Twitter on Wednesday photos of documents confirming his assumptions.

Among them is a certificate signed by Fr. Wojdas and Rychlewicz confirming the Catholic religion of one of the Polish citizens. “However, two months later, Fr. Wojdas signed the baptismal certificate of the same man. Most likely, the certificate of the sacrament was false, and earlier the clergyman confirmed his religion knowing that he was not a Catholic,” explains Kumoch.

Documents certifying the religion made it easier for Jews to obtain visas enabling them to escape from Europe via neutral Turkey to Palestine, the USA or Brazil. After the outbreak of the war, especially many Jewish refugees from Poland appeared in Adampol (Polonezkoy [Polonezköy]) near Istanbul, a settlement established in the 19th century by Polish emigrants. ...

We can assume that Fr. Wojdas was helped by some Polish families in his heroic activity. We found a few baptism certificates signed by the Salesian. Most likely they are false, the persons signed as godparents never existed. The only real person appearing in one of the records as Godmother is Zofia Ryży, also known as “aunt Zosia,” a Polish activist from Adampol, whose house now houses a local museum, explains the Polish diplomat.

Kumoch adds that Fr. Wojdas also helped in the preparation of completely false baptismal certificates in Istanbul, which were to confirm the sacraments in Poland. He points out that these documents were issued on the appropriate forms, but signed with the names of non-existent clergymen.

Fr. Wojdas came to Turkey in 1935 and stayed there until his death in 1949, during his lifetime he probably did not talk about his cooperation with Rychlewicz, informs the ambassador.<sup>2096</sup>

Together with other senior Polish officials—General Zygmunt Szyszko-Bohusz, Liaison Officer Andrzej Jenicz, and Colonel Klemens Rudnicki—Rev. Józef Gawlina, a bishop attached to the Polish army, intervened on behalf of Izrael

<sup>2096</sup> Jerzy Adamiak, “Ambasador RP w Turcji: Odnaleziono dokumenty o księdzu z Adampola ratującym Żydów podczas wojny,” Polska Agencja Prasowa (PAP), June 30, 2021, Internet: <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C901704%2Cambasador-rp-w-turcji-odnaleziono-dokumenty-o-ksiedzu-z-adampola-ratujacym>.

Halberstam, a prominent Hasidic rabbi who found himself in the Soviet interior following the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939. After Germany attacked its erstwhile Soviet ally in the summer of 1941, the Soviet authorities began to release Polish citizens interned in prison and work camps. The Polish authorities agreed to evacuate Rabbi Halberstam from the Soviet Union with General Władysław Anders' army. But just before his train was to depart, Rabbi Halberstam was arrested by the NKVD because he had taken Soviet citizenship. (Many Polish Jews had opted for Soviet citizenship; almost all ethnic Poles refused to do so.) After negotiations with General Georgii Zhukov, Rabbi Halberstam was allowed to leave the Soviet Union with the Polish army. He arrived in Palestine at the end of 1943.<sup>2097</sup>

Polish nationals living in France also came to the aid of Jews. Sister Kazimiera Małolepszy (Małolepsza), a Polish nun of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, known as Sister Madeleine, was honoured by Yad Vashem for her part in the rescue of three Jewish sisters sheltered at the order's convent in Flers.

Oscar and Margurete Roth lived in Mulhouse, in the département of Haut-Rhin with their three daughters, and the girls' grandmother. When the war began, the Roths moved to Paris, believing that this would be better for them as Jews. They rented an apartment in Paris, Oscar found a job, and as French citizens, they lived reasonably for a while. When the mass arrests of Jews began in July 1942, the Roths split up to improve their prospects of survival. The grandmother, who was blind, was placed in an old age home, and the three daughters, Renée, Denise, and Liliane, aged eight to eleven, were sent to a Catholic institution. Oscar and Marguerite left their apartment and hid in a small room near Oscar's workplace. The Catholic institution that took in the three girls belonged to the St-Vincent-de-Paul order and was located in Flers, in the département of Orne. Sister Pannelay, the Mother Superior of the institution, sheltered the Jewish girls despite the danger. The Roth girls were the only Jews in the home, and in order to keep them from standing out, Sister Marie-Louise taught them basic Catholic customs. She confided in two other sisters in the institution, Sister Madeleine Małolepszy [Małolepszy], who was Polish, and Sister Anne-Marie le Cahérec. Sister Madeleine became very attached to the girls, for she understood their distress. It was difficult to be deprived of all contact with their family and to be alone in a Christian setting that was foreign to them. She thus treated them very kindly and devotedly. When she worked in the kitchen, she always gave them an extra portion. The girls became very attached to her and she was the one they turned to when they had a problem. The sisters kept the secret and helped the Jewish girls get along with the other children. Sister Marie-Louise devised a cover story for the Jewish girls, presenting them as three Parisian girls whose parents, afraid of air raids and lacking food, had sent them to this institution for safety and better nutrition. Although no attempt was made to convert the girls, Sister Marie-Louise had them baptized when the Germans entered Flers in March 1944, so that they could take part in religious ceremonies reserved for baptized Catholics and thereby mask their Jewishness more effectively. Until the area was liberated, Sister

<sup>2097</sup> Testimony of Izrael Halberstam in Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci*, 446–47.

Marie-Louise and her colleagues spared no effort to protect the girls, even when German soldiers were terrifyingly close. After the war, Renée Roth emigrated to the United States and documented the story of her survival in a children's book, *Touch Wood*. On February 19, 1992, Yad Vashem recognized Sister Marie-Louise Panneley and Sister Madeleine Malolepszy and Sister Anne-Marie le Cahérec as Righteous Among the Nations.<sup>2098</sup>

There was a substantial Polish population (minority) in interwar Lithuania, and a number of Poles from that country, including a priest, have been awarded by Yad Vashem. Rev. Polikarp Maciejowski, formerly a prefect at the Adam Mickiewicz Polish High School in Kaunas, served as the local pastor and chaplain to the Polish Benedictine Sisters in the village of Kolainiai (Chwałojnie), near Užventis. (Rev. Maciejowski was expelled from Kaunas in 1923 as a Pole, as were eleven Polish nuns the following year, when the Benedictine convent in Kaunas was Lithuanized.<sup>2099</sup>)

During the German occupation, Rev. Maciejowski provided extensive relief to Jews with the assistance of the Polish Benedictine nuns and other helpers, including members of his family. He was awarded by Yad Vashem in 2005 under his Lithuanized name, Polikarpas Macijauskas. (Polish orthography was not recognized in interwar Lithuania, nor was it recognized in post-1991 Lithuania until 2022.)

In 1924, young and well-read Polikarpas Macijauskas (Maciejovskis) became the rector of the church and monastery of Kolainiai. Here he soon established close relations with the local people—both the Catholics and the Orthodox. The residents of Kolainiai recall his warm relations with the local Orthodox priest, Butas; they would always exchange Christmas or Easter wishes, even though these holidays are celebrated at different times by each of the denominations.

The war came although nobody was expecting it. On 7 October 1941, the first war victim knocked on the monastery's door—it was Basė Braudienė [Basia Brojdel], a Jew from Kelmė. She found shelter there. Some time later the farmer Michailas Juškevičius brought another four women who had escaped from the Šiauliai Ghetto. Dressed in nun's clothes, the women freely walked in the parsonage garden. He hid many other Jews who he had saved with the help of Doctor Petras Girbudas and other honest people. Only the priest himself could recall the total number of the rescued.

Everybody had a share of his kindness. Jadvyga Šliogerienė from Kolainiai remembers: “I went to receive the Eucharist, I still have a photo with the priest. He was very gentle with us children. If he was going to visit a sick person, he would always take some apples for the patient to refresh the heart.”

<sup>2098</sup> Kazimiera Malolepszy, RD.

<sup>2099</sup> Artūras Grickevičius and Aušra Vasiliauskaitė, “Kauno seserų benediktinių vienuolyno pertvarka 1918–1926 m. (I),” *Soter: Religijos Mokslo Žurnalas*, vol. 57, no. 29 (2009): 69–84.



Vincenta Šiušienė remembers how the priest helped to liberate her two brothers who had been arrested during the Nazi regime. Nobody had asked him to do this—he himself went to them, said a word for them, and thus saved the lives of two young people!

Truth is the daughter of Time, as the old Roman saying goes. Time is needed to understand things, to assess a man or a phenomenon. To priest Polikarpas Macijauskas all were equal. When he could, he supported and saved. And it was not a Russian, a Jew, or a German—he hid a Human.

“I did not hide Your truth in my heart. I preached Your truth and Your salvation”—these words from a psalm, the credo of the priest’s life, are hewn on a stone slab in the Kražiai church, the basement of which is the place of eternal rest for Polikarpas Macijauskas, a priest and master of theology.<sup>2100</sup>

Priest Polikarpas Macijauskas (Maciejovskis) was doctor Petras Girkubas’ friend. He would hide Jews in the Kolainiai monastery and provide them with forged birth certificates. Užventis doctor Petras Girkubas and priest Polikarpas Macijauskas became true organisers of rescuing of the Jews in this region.

They would make agreements with local farmers and choose remote farms covered by trees. 18 years old Alfonsas Songaila would bring the Jews from the Šiauliai Ghetto to these farmsteads in a carriage pulled by a horse.<sup>2101</sup>

In all Petras [Girkubas]’s deeds, he had the support of his friend, the Catholic Priest Polikarpas Macijauskas, who headed the women’s monastery in Kolainiai, some 15 km from Užventis. From the end of 1941, the Jewish woman Basja Brojde lived in the monastery, disguised as a nun. Basja had survived the massacre in her native town of Kelmė but had lost her husband and children. In 1942, Brojde was joined, for two months, by 15-year-old Chana Pelc from Telšiai. The girl had a document in a Lithuanian name and only Father Macijauskas knew her true identity. In every sermon, the priest told his parishioners about their Christian duty to help the persecuted and openly talked about helping Jews. In the cellar of his house, adjacent to the monastery, Jews could always find rest and shelter. The survivors related later that the priest used to say Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead, reminded the survivors about the Jewish holidays and did not approve of those of his co-religionists who were helping only baptized Jews. ... Among those helped by Dr. Girkubas and Father Macijauskas were Rachel Leshem (later, Kacev) and her mother-in-law Riva Leshem, Esther Blecher (later, Kreingel) with her mother-in-law Musia Blecher, Bluma Shachnovich and her sister Chaja, the Chalozin brothers, Simcha Magid with his son, Ita Swer, and others.<sup>2102</sup>

The Macijauskas [Maciejowski] family—Jonas Juozas Macijauskas [Maciejowski], his wife Katerina, his sister Germana Macijauskaitė [Maciejowska] and Jonas’ mother Felicja Maciauskienė [Maciejowska]—lived in Pakievukai [Pakėvukai] homestead, not far from Vai-

<sup>2100</sup> Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=7487>.

<sup>2101</sup> Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=7484>.

<sup>2102</sup> Polikarpas Macijauskas, RD. See also Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust*, 229–30; and Sandler, *The Lithuanian Slaughter of Its Jews*, 106, regarding Rev. Polikarp Maciejowski’s temporary shelter of Yakov Zak and Shmuel Kholozhin.

guva, Kelmė District, and helped Jews during all years of war. Often they were asked to accept Jews by Jonas Macijauskas' brother, Kolainiai dean Polikarpas Macijauskas [Polikarp Maciejowski], who was renowned for his good deeds in the entire neighbourhood. Chana Pelcaitė (later Zakienė) born in Telšiai hid in Macijauskas' family, Pakievukai homestead, for four months. The girl was only 14, when her entire family was shot dead in the summer of 1941. Many more people found shelter with the family of Jonas and Katerina Macijauskas including Sara Olšvangaitė-Montvilienė (daughter of a shoemaker Saiva Olšvangas from Užventis), Michailas Gutmanas, doctor Dolnickis, etc.<sup>2103</sup>

The following account pertains to Maria Rudziańska, a Polish woman who lived in Kaunas, Lithuania's capital.

From the mid-1930s a Polish woman Maria Rudžianskienė [Rudziańska] lived in Kaunas and worked as a housemaid for the Jewish Segalson family. Moshe and Haya Segalson had two children, Lusik and Katya, whom Maria knew from birth. ... At the beginning of summer 1941 the Segalsons' son went to the pioneer camp on the Baltic shore, and their daughter—to her maternal grandmother who lived in the town of Punia near Alytus. Katya was at her grandmother's when the Germans entered Lithuania, while Lusik's pioneer camp was evacuated to the east. In accordance to the Segalsons' request Maria set off for Punia in order to bring Katya back to Kaunas—they could not do it themselves since it was prohibited for Jews to travel freely. Upon their arrival to Kaunas, they found Katya's parents in the ghetto, where they shared a house with a number of Jewish families, among them the family of Perla (Pera'le) Hofmekler, Haya Segalson's cousin. Pera'le's husband, Michael Hofmekler, was a well-known violinist and conductor in the pre-war Lithuania. The Hofmeklers lived with their only three-year-old daughter Dalia. ... In March 1944 the Segalsons somehow found out about another approaching Aktion. They immediately contacted Maria who was ready to shelter Katya. At the same time another Lithuanian, Genė Pukaitė, the Segalsons' former neighbor, suggested to take the girl under her care. The parents sent Katya to Genė, while little Dalia Hofmekler was transferred to Maria. Dalia was hidden inside a kitchen cabinet that Maria allegedly bought from Jews. Thus the girl managed to leave the ghetto. Maria could not keep the girl by her side, so she took her to an elderly Polish couple, farmers who lived in the vicinity of Jonava and were ready to help. It took Dalia some time to get used to her new life; she missed her mother and even Maria's weekly visits could not distract her from the sad thoughts. Thus passed the last months before the liberation.<sup>2104</sup>

The above entry, however, is silent about the role of the priest mentioned in Dalia Hofmekler-Ginzburg's testimony.

My mother set with Mania [Maria Rudziańska] that she will wait in the other side of the gate, she found a wagon driver and asked him to deliver a small kitchen cupboard outside the ghetto. I was put inside the cupboard that had two doors and two drawers and the wagon driver together with the guard Bretter let the wagon pass through the gate. Bretter

<sup>2103</sup> Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=7508>.

<sup>2104</sup> Maria Rudžianskienė, RD.

even opened one of the drawers that I can breathe better. That's how I separated from my mother into Mania's loving hands. Mania brought me to her relatives in the village I can't remember the name of.

The life in the village was not easy. The old couple was poor and hardly earned their own living, they had few pigs and a small vegetables garden. I was presented in the village as the daughter of Mania, the priest of the village was a family friend and came home to christen me as Catholic. The Polish name Jadvyga [Jadwiga] was given to me. I was taught to pray in Polish. Mania was visiting me and bring candies. The days of Mania's visiting were the happiest days while I was in the village. Genutė was also coming to visit me few times. ...

It must be mentioned that the story of my rescuing was not for any payment or reward, not Mania, not Bretter and not the old couple, it was all done for human love by taking big life risk.<sup>2105</sup>

**E**thnic Poles played a prominent role in rescue activities on interwar Lithuanian territories. Nine Polish families (consisting of 18 people) from the predominantly Polish county of Giedraičiai (Giedrojcie) were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles,<sup>2106</sup> as well as some Poles from the heavily Polish counties of Kėdainiai (Kiejdany)<sup>2107</sup> and Vandžiogala (Wędziogół).<sup>2108</sup> A Jewish woman from Butrimonys (Butrymańce) recalled the widespread assistance of the local Polish minority: "Parankova [Parankowa] became known among us unfortunate Jews as a Polish hamlet where nobody would hand you over to the murderers; 'to me Parankova is truly the Jerusalem of Lithuania.'"<sup>2109</sup> Marija Leščinskienė (Maria Leszczyńska), an ethnic Pole, is known as the "mother" of the Jewish partisans from the Kaunas ghetto.<sup>2110</sup> Survivor accounts mention Poles from

<sup>2105</sup> Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=16908>.

<sup>2106</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 8, 215–16. The following families are mentioned: Czajkowski, Godlewski, Gulbinowicz, Lutkiewicz, Masewicz, Rauba (2 families), Rynkiewicz, and Stankiewicz. See Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=2592>, where the nationality of all of these rescuers is given as Polish.

<sup>2107</sup> Two Polish families recognized by Yad Vashem, Augustynowicz and Rymowicz, are shown on the Lithuanian list, whereas the Bogdanowicz family appears on the Polish list of rescuers.

<sup>2108</sup> Three Polish families recognized by Yad Vashem, Wonżod, Eimont and Truskowski/Witkowska, are shown on the Lithuanian list, whereas the Kaczan family appears on the Polish list of rescuers. See Ryszard Jakowski, "Wspomagając wędziagolskich Żydów...", *Nasza Gazeta* [Vilnius], February 1, 2017.

<sup>2109</sup> Rivka Lozansky Bogomolnaya, *Wartime Experiences in Lithuania* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 75. See also *If I Forget Thee...: The Destruction of the Shtetl Butrimantz: Testimony by Riva Lozansky and Other Witnesses* (Washington, D.C.: Remembrance Books, 1998), passim.

<sup>2110</sup> Christopher Lawrence Zugger, *The Forgotten: Catholics of the Soviet Union from Lenin through Stalin* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 450; Freda Hodge,

Butrimonys (Butrymańce);<sup>2111</sup> villages near Stakliškės (Stokliszki);<sup>2112</sup> Keleriškiai, near Kaišiadorys (Kielerszki, near Koszedary);<sup>2113</sup> Telšiai (Telsze);<sup>2114</sup> Kapči-amiestis (Kopciowo);<sup>2115</sup> and other localities.<sup>2116</sup>

## Postwar Restoration of Jewish Religious Objects

Jewish religious objects (e.g., Torah scrolls, prayer shawls, and phylacteries) were entrusted to Catholic priests for safekeeping in a number of locales. Once the German occupation ended, as we have already seen, priests returned those objects to the remnants of the Jewish community.

A delegation of Jews from Buczacz entrusted Torah scrolls and other religious objects to the Latin-rite Roman Catholic church as well as to the (Uniate)

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comp., *Tragedy and Triumph: Early Testimonies of Jewish Survivors of World War II* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University, 2018), 176.

<sup>2111</sup> *If I Forget Thee...*, passim; Martin Dean, ed., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part B (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, in association with the United States Memorial Museum, 2012), 1046. The brothers Piotr and Bronisław Gołombiewski (Petras and Bronius Golumbiauskas in Lithuanian) were executed in April 1942 together with the seven Jews they were sheltering near Butrimonys. See Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/content.php?id=4172>.

<sup>2112</sup> Testimony of Sarah Epstein (Sara Epshteyn) in Joshua Rubenstein and Ilya Altman, *The Unknown Black Book: The Holocaust in the German-Occupied Soviet Territories* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008), 297.

<sup>2113</sup> Waław and Anna Paszkowski (also given as Paškovski or Paškauskas) and their stepson, Stanisław Krywicz (also given as Krivičius), were recognized by Yad Vashem in 1999. A homage to that Polish family can be found in Nancy Wright Beasley, *Izzy's Fire: Finding Humanity in the Holocaust* (Richmond, Virginia: Palari Publishing, 2008), 251, passim.

<sup>2114</sup> Waław and Halina Szukszta were recognized as Righteous Gentiles in 2006. See Szukszta Family, RD.

<sup>2115</sup> Dorothy Leivers, *Jews of Kopcheve* (Bergenfield, New Jersey: Avotaynu, 2006), 47–49.

<sup>2116</sup> Solomon Abramovich and Yakov Zilberg, eds., *Smuggled in Potato Sacks: Fifty Stories of the Hidden Children of the Kaunas Ghetto* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011), 48–53, 63–64, 79, 85–87, 103–4, 161–62, 218, 254, 274–79, 316–17, 327–29, 337, 343–45, 379; Sandler, *The Lithuanian Slaughter of Its Jews*, 76, 80, 105–7, 131, 133, 159, 187–88, 559. See also Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, Vilnius, Internet: <http://rescuedchild.lt/> (Rescuers of Jews) for additional examples. Aba Gefen mentions a large number of rescuers with Slavic, as opposed to Lithuanian names in his *Defying the Holocaust: A Diplomat's Report* (San Bernardino, California: Borgo Press 1993), but identifies only one person specifically as a Pole: pp. 58–59, 76 (Meteliai/Metel near Simnas/Simno). However, elsewhere, Gefen states that Poles in Lithuania were friendlier to the Jews than Lithuanians. See the Oral history interview with Aba Gefen, October 17, 2011, USHMM, Accession no. 1995.A.1272.387, RG-50.120.0387.

Basilian monastery in that town. After the war, those objects were recovered and given to the Jewish community in Wrocław.<sup>2117</sup> Here is another such account from Lublin.

Arriving in Lublin, after I was let go from the Red Army in the year 1944, ... Lublin could be compared to a [prison] camp. The bombs fell on the side where the Nazis were. No people could be seen in the streets. I ran into single Jews and they told me about the terrifying fate that had befallen all the Jews of Poland.

As a soldier in the Red Army, they invited me to the “Peretz House,” where there were several hundred Jews—men and women, mostly partisans from the forests, a large number from out of the country, who were dragged by German fascists to the Polish camps to be killed.

The day was precisely Hoshana Rabbah. The Jews made a pulpit out of stones in order to conduct services, and a Polish priest that had concealed 6 Torah scrolls, brought them to the “Peretz House.” All of the several hundred Jews began to pray and prepare for the Festival Holiday.<sup>2118</sup>

In August 2013, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that a Torah scroll, hidden in a Redemptorist monastery in Tuchów since Second World War, was returned to the former synagogue in Dąbrowa Tarnowska. The synagogue, devastated by the Germans during the war, has been faithfully restored by the Poles in recent years. (Although it was the Germans who destroyed Jewish synagogues and other buildings in Poland, it is the Poles who are rebuilding these monuments with virtually no financial assistance from the German government.) The synagogue in Dąbrowa Tarnowska now houses a museum and centre for intercultural events with emphasis on Jewish matters.<sup>2119</sup>

A Torah scroll that since 1942 has been hidden in a Tuchow [Tuchów] monastery was returned to the synagogue in Dabrowa [Dąbrowa] Tarnowska in southern Poland.

The Torah was returned earlier this month but reported for the first time on Saturday.

It had been brought to the monastery in Tuchow, approximately 60 miles from Krakow [Kraków], by an anonymous person who asked the Redemptorist priests to hold the scrolls until the synagogue in Dabrowa again became a place of prayer, according to Father Kazimierz Piotrowski of the Redemptorist monastery in Warsaw.

<sup>2117</sup> Account of Shmuel (Samuel) Rosental (Samuel Rosenthal) in I. Kahan (Yisrael Cohen), ed., *Sefer Buczacz: Matsevet zikaron le-kehila kedosha* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1956), 258–63, translated into English as *Book of Buczacz: In Memory of a Martyred Community*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/buchach/buchach.html>; Testimony of Samuel Rosental, JHI, record group 301, no. 2086.

<sup>2118</sup> Yehuda Weinstock, “Returned from the Red Army,” in Shuval, *The Szczebrzeszyn Memorial Book*, 191.

<sup>2119</sup> Ośrodek Spotkania Kultur, Internet: <http://www.oskdabrowa.pl/>.

“After the war for many years the synagogue was systematically devastated. The Torah was thus kept in a monastery in Tuchow,” Piotrowski told the Catholic News Agency.

The synagogue in Dabrowa Tarnowska was built in the second half of the 19th century; during World War II the Germans turned it into a workshop. Over the past few years the building was renovated and it is now the House of Cultures in Poland.

Following the building’s dedication, the Redemptorists decided to donate the Torah scroll there. In 2010, the mayor of Dabrowa Tarnowska gave the scroll to conservationists, and today it can be seen in the prayer hall of the former synagogue.<sup>2120</sup>

Jewish accounts also mention appeals made by priests after the war, e.g., in Sokołów Podlaski, to return property to the rightful Jewish owners.<sup>2121</sup>

## Postwar Jewish Financial Assistance for Catholic Institutions

In the immediate aftermath of the war, some Jewish circles recognized that Jews owed a debt of gratitude to Poles who put their lives on the line for Jews. Apart from providing assistance to Jews and Jewish organizations in Poland, the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) allocated a small portion of its funds to support Catholic institutions that had rescued Jews.

The Joint also directed its financial assistance to non-Jews. Special consideration was offered to those who rescued and hid Jews during the occupation; for example, 1 million zlotys [zlotys] was allocated to this purpose during the first quarter of 1947. At the same time, several caregiving facilities—orphanges, convents, and boarding schools—administered by monastic communities that hid Jewish children received AJDC support.<sup>2122</sup>

In a letter, dated April 1, 1948, addressed to Monsignor Zygmunt Kaczyński, the pastor of All Saints Church in Warsaw, William Bein, director of the Warsaw office of the AJDC, wrote: “I wish to inform you that, albeit in a small measure, we want to contribute, in the name of those Jews who survived with the truly

<sup>2120</sup> “Torah Scroll Hidden Since WWII in Polish Monastery Returned to Polish Synagogue,” August 25, 2013, Internet: <https://www.jta.org/2013/08/25/news-opinion/world/torah-scroll-hidden-in-polish-monastery-returned>.

<sup>2121</sup> Gelbart, *Sefer ha-zikaron: Sokolow-Podlask*, 426, translated as *Memorial Book Sokolow-Podlask*, Internet: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokolowa\\_podlaski/Sokolowa\\_Podlaski.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokolowa_podlaski/Sokolowa_Podlaski.html).

<sup>2122</sup> Records of the American Joint Distribution Committee: Warsaw Office, 1945–1949, Internet: <https://archives.jdc.org/our-collections/finding-aids/warsaw/1945-1949/>.



humanitarian help of the Church, to its rebuilding. We are enclosing a cheque in the amount of 100,000 złoty for the rebuilding of All Saints Church.”<sup>2123</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

It bears repeating that this compendium is not comprehensive. Nonetheless, it is a striking testimony to the extraordinary courage, compassion and sacrifice shown by many members of the Polish Catholic clergy and the Polish population during the Holocaust. Their contribution to the rescue of Jews was very real and substantial. It was carried out in perilous circumstances and at great personal risk. Their efforts merit recognition and gratitude.

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<sup>2123</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 83.

# APPENDICES



## Select Bibliography

The following list of sources in English, Polish and Italian supplements the testimonies of assistance extended to Jews by Polish Catholic clergy. No such list could ever be definitive or complete.

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## Parishes and Church Institutions Where Assistance Was Provided to Jews (Excluding Institutions Run by Religious Orders)

The following list includes parishes and diocesan institutions of the Latin and Armenian rites in some 580 localities; the vast majority of these rescue efforts, involving more than 700 priests, are described in the text. The list is not exhaustive. Religious and monastic orders of men involved in rescue activities are excluded, having been listed separately.

Archdioceses and dioceses are not comparable because of their divergent sizes (i.e., number of parishes and religious institutions, number of priests and members of religious orders) and because of the varied circumstances in Polish lands that the Germans administered differently. For instance, the Archdiocese of Gniezno–Poznań was incorporated directly into the Reich, where almost every parish and church institution was shut down and clergy were expelled.

**Archdiocese of Gniezno—Poznań:** Boguszyń/Bronikowo (near Kępno).

**Diocese of Chełmno**

**Diocese of Włocławek:** Chełmca Duża, Grodziec, Konin, Osiećciny.

**Archdiocese of Warsaw:** Warsaw (a large number of parishes and institutions in and near the city), Annopol, Babice, Bełchów, Brwinów, Cegłów, Czerniaków, Dąbrówka Szlachecka, Góra Kalwaria, Goszczyn, Grodzisk, Grójec, Izabelin, Kampinos, Kiernozia, Konstancin, Laski, Leszno, Łomianki, Mińsk Mazowiecki, Młyniec, Mszczonów and nearby, Niegów, Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, Otwock, Podkowa Leśna, Pruszków, Radzymin, near Skierniewice, Rokitno, Słomczyn, Szymanów, Włochy, Wołomin, Zaborów, Zakroczym, Zalesie Górne.

**Diocese of Łódź:** Łódź (several parishes and institutions), Głowno.

**Diocese of Lublin:** Lublin (several parishes and institutions in and near the city), Biłgoraj, Borów, Chełm, Depułtycze Królewskie, Dzierzkowice, Firlej, Garbów, Głusk, Grabowiec, Janów Lubelski, near Kajetanówka/Trzęsiny, Kraczwice, Kraśnik, Krasnystaw, Krężnica Jara, Krzczonów, Lubartów, Łuków and nearby, near Nałęczów, Opole Lubelskie, Piaski, Potok Górny, Pryszczowa Góra, Puławy, Sawin, Siedliszcze, Szczepreszyn, Tarnogóra, Tomaszów Lubelski, Turkowice, Turobin, Urzędów, Wąwolnica, Wólka Kańska, Żółkiewka, Żułów, Żyrzyn.

**Diocese of Płock:** Czernice Borowe, Gostynin, Maków Mazowiecki, Mława-Wólka, Mława, near Płock, Przasnysz, Radzanów.

**Diocese of Sandomierz:** Sandomierz (several parishes and institutions), Bliżyn, Boże, Chobrzany, Chotcza, Ćmielów, Garbatka-Letnisko, Iwaniska, Jedlińsk, Końskie, Mniszew, Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą, Przedbórz, Radom (several parishes), Rytwiany, Skarżysko-Kamienna, Tczów, Trójca.

**Diocese of Siedlce (Podlasie):** Siedlce, Czerwonka Liwska, Domanice, Garwolin, Gołębki, Grębków, Hańsk, Kłoczew, Kock, Konstantynów, Łochów, Łosice, Łuków, Oleksin, Osiek, Piszczac, Radzików, Rozbity Kamień, Ryki, Skórzec, Sobieszyn, Sokołów Podlaski, near Sterdyń, near Stoczek Węgrowski, Ugoszcz, Węgrów, Włodawa, Żelechów, Żeliszew Podkościelny, Życzyn.

**Archdiocese of Kraków (Cracow):** Kraków (many parishes and institutions in and near the city), Biały Kościół, Czyżyny, Dobczyce, Imbramowice, Luborzyca, Maków Podhalański, Michałowice, near Myślenice, Nowy Targ, Piaski Wielkie, Raciborowice, Raba Wyżna, Ruszcza, Sułkowice, Wadowice, Wawrzeńczyce, Wojakowa, Zakopane, Zielonki.

**Diocese of Częstochowa:** Częstochowa (several parishes), Będzin, Gidle, Gorzkowice, Kłomnice, Kościelna, Olsztyn, Przyrów, Radziechowice, Sosnowiec, Zawiercie.

**Diocese of Katowice (Silesia):** Katowice, Poręba, Rybnik.

**Diocese of Kielce:** Kielce (several parishes and institutions), Białogon, Busko-Zdrój, Bydlin, Działoszyce, Gorzków, Jędrzejów, Kamienna (Czarkowy), Kazimierza Wielka, Koniecpol-Chrzastów, Koszyce, Kroczyce, Lelów, Leszczyna, Miechów, Mierzwin, Mstyczów, Nowa Słupia, Niegardów, Nowe Brzesko, Oleśnica, Olkusz, Osiek, Pilica, Proszowice, Rogów, Świętomarz, Świaniary, Szczaworyż, near Wolbrom, Zadroże.

**Diocese of Tarnów:** Tarnów (several parishes and institutions), Baranów Sandomierski, Bobowa, Bochnia, Bolesław, Brzeźnica, Brzozowa, Czchów, Czerмна, Dobra, Gorlice, Gręboszów, Grywałd, Gumniska, Jodłowa, Kolbuszowa, Łapczyca, Łękwowice, Limanowa, Lipnica Wielka, Lipniki, Lisia Góra, Luszowice, Maniów, Miechowice Małe, Mościce, Nagoszyn, Nowy Sącz, Olesno, Ostrowy Tuszowskie, Pilzno, Podgrodzie, Podleszany, Przydonica, Radomyśl Wielki, Ropczyce, Święcany, Szarwark, Szczawnica, Szczucin, Tropie, Wadowice Solne, Wadowice Górne, Wola Rzędzińska.

**Archdiocese of Lwów:** Lwów (numerous parishes and institutions); Lwów voivodship: Bełz, Brzozdowce, Chodorów, Gródek Jagielloński, Horyniec, Lubaczów, Mosty Wielkie, Narol, Nawaria, Oleszyce, Rodatycze, Ryczki, Siemianówka, Sokal, Uhnów, Zimna Woda, Żółkiew; Stanisławów voivodship: Bolechów, Bursztyn, Bybło, Dolina, Felizienthal (Felicental), Horodenka, Kołomyja, Kościejów, Nadwórna, Nowosielce, Pistryń, Ponikwa, Rozdół, Roźniatów, Stryj, Tarnawica Polna, Tłumacz, Wołosów; Tarnopol voivodship: Barysz, Baworów, Białobożnica, Biały Kamień, Brody, Brzeżany, Buczacz, Budzanów, near Busk, Chlebowice Świrskie, Chodacków Wielki, Chomiátówka, Czerwonogród, Dobropole, Dunajów, Huta Nowa, Janówka (near Tarnopol), Jazłowiec, Jelechowice, Jezierna, Kokutkowce, Kopyczyńce, Kuropatniki, Liczkowce, Łopatyn, Markowa, Mikulińce, Proszowa, Pomorzany, Przemyślany, Puź-

niki, Radziechów, Skała Podolska, Świrz, Szczurowice, Tarnopol, Tłuste, Trembowła, Trościaniec Wielki, Wicyń, Zaleszczyki, Założce, Zborów, Złoczów.

**Diocese of Łuck:** Łuck, Dąbrowica, Dederkały, Dubno, Janowa Dolina, Klesów, Kowel, Luboml, Ołyka, Powursk, Równe, Rożyszcze, Rymacze, Sarny, Swojczów, Szumbar, Trylisica, Uściług, Wełnianka, Wiszenki, Włodzimierzec, Włodzimierz Wołyński, Wyrka, Żytyń.

**Diocese of Przemyśl:** Przemyśl (several parishes and institutions), Bachórzec, Bączal, Barycz, Bieliny, Blizne, Borysław, Bratkowice, Brzostek, Brzozów, Bukowsko, Chmielnik, Domaradz, Domostawa, Drohobycz (several parishes and institutions), Dydnia, Dynów, Felsztyn, Frysztak, Gać, Gniewczyna, Golcowa, Gorzyce, Grodzisko Dolne, Humniska, Husów, Iwonicz, Jaćmierz, Jaśliska, Jasło, Jaworów, Jedlicze, Kańczuga, Leżajsk, Lubatowa, Lutowiska, Majdan Królewski, Manasterz, Michałówka, Nisko, Nowosielce, Nowotaniec, Nowy Żmigród, Odrzykoń, Pruchnik, Przeworsk, Pstrągowa, Pysznica, Raclawice, Radomyśl nad Sanem, Rakszawa, Rozwadów, Rudki, Rudna Wielka, Rymanów, Rzeszów, Sambor (several parishes and institutions), Sanok, Sieniawa, near Skołyszyn, Sławęcin, Staroniwa, Stary Żmigród, Stojanice, in and near Strzyżów, Święcany, Trzcieniec, Trzcínica, Trześnia, Trześniów, Turka, Ulanów, Urzejawice, Ustrzyki Dolne, Warzyce, Wesoła, Wielowieś, Wola Rzeczycka, Zarzecze.

**Archdiocese of Lwów (Armenian Rite):** Lwów, Kutry, Stanisławów.

**Archdiocese of Wilno:** Wilno (numerous parishes and institutions), Balingródek, Belmont, Białystok (several parishes and institutions), Bieniakonie, Borodzienie, Brasław, Budzław, Choroszcz, Cudzeniszki, Dąbrowa Białostocka, Dereczyn, Dołhinów, Dryświaty, Duniłowice, Dziewieniszki, Ejsymonty Wielkie, Ejszyszki, Gródek, Grodno and nearby, Hermaniszki, Hoduciszki, Holszany, Idołta, Indura, Iszczołna, Jasionówka, Juchnowiec Kościelny, Kiemieliński, Knyszyn, Kolonia Wileńska, Konstantyów, Kundzin, Kurzeniec, Landwarów, Lida, Łyntupy, Mejszagoła, Michaliszki, Mickuny, Mołodeczno, Nacza, Niemenczyn, Nowa Wilejka, Nowe Troki, Nowy Dwór, Ostrowiec, Ostryna, Pielasa, Plebania, Podborze, Podbrodzie, Połusze, Porozowo, Porudomino, Raduń, Raków, Rukojnie, Słobódka, Słonim, Suraż, Święciany, Szarkowszczyzna, Trokiele, Turgiele, Urbany, Wasilków, Werenowo (Werenów, Woronów), Węslawienieta, Widze, Wilejka, Wiszniew, Wojstom, Wołkołata, Wołkowysk, Worniany, Zadoroże, Zdzięcioł.

**Diocese of Łomża:** Łomża, Borkowo, Czerwin, Dobrzyjałowo, Grajewo, Hodyszewo, Jabłoń Kościelna, Jedwabne, Kolno, Łapy, Ostrołęka, Piekuty Nowe, near Pietkowo, Poświętne, Przytuły, Radziłów, Rutki, Sokoły, Stary Lubotyń, Stawiski, Suchowola, Szumowo, Topczewo, Tykocin, Waniewo, Wizna, near Wołomin.

**Diocese of Pińsk:** Pińsk, Białowieża, Bielsk Podlaski, Brańsk, near Brańsk, Brześć nad Bugiem, Derewno, near Drohiczyń (on the Bug River), Drohiczyń Poleski, Dziadkowice, Hancewicze, Horodyszcze, Kamień, Kleck, Kobryń, Łunin, Międzyrzec, Mir, Naliboki, Narew, Niedźwiedzica, Nieśwież, Nowogródek, Ostrożany, Pohost Zahorodny, Porzecze, Słobódka, Stolin, Stołowicze, Świsłocz, Szereszów, Wołożyn, Wsielub.





## Religious and Monastic Orders of Women Who Rescued Jews

Sixty-six religious and monastic orders of women of the Roman Catholic Latin Rite carried out rescue activities in some 450 convents and other institutions throughout German-occupied Poland. The list that follows derives from a 17-volume work, *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947*,<sup>2124</sup> undertaken by the Catholic University of Lublin, from the research of historians Ewa Kurek and Agata Mirek, as well as from other accounts we have cited elsewhere. This list cannot be treated as exhaustive of the rescue effort of Polish nuns.

**Albertine Sisters (Congregation of the Albertine Sisters Serving the Poor)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Albertynek Posługujących Ubogim—*albertynki*): Baworów (near Tarnopol), Bochnia, Brzeżany, Busko-Zdrój, Częstochowa, Drohobycz, Kielce, Kołomyja, Kraków (2 institutions), Kraków-Podbrzezie, Kraków-Prądnik Czerwony, Lwów-Persenkówka, Lwów-Zamarstynów, Mników (near Warsaw), Opoczno, Przemyśl-Bakończyce, Rawa Ruska, Rymanów, Rząska (near Kraków), Sambor, Siedlce, Skarżysko-Kamienna, Śniatyn, Stanisławów, Sulejów (near Piotrków Trybunalski), Tarnopol, Tarnów, Wołomin, Życzyn (near Dęblin).

**Sisters of the Angels** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr od Aniołów—*siostry od Aniołów*): Chylce (near Warsaw), Wilno, Wyszary (near Wilno).

**Antonian Sisters of Christ the King** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Antonianek od Chrystusa Króla Trzeciego Zakonu Regularnego św. Franciszka z Asyżu—*antonianki*): Łódź.

**Antonine Sisters (Sisters of Social Service of St. Anthony)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Opieki Społecznej pod wezwaniem św. Antoniego—*antoninki*): Wieluń (2 institutions).

**Benedictine Sisters (Order of St. Benedict)**, (Mniszki Zakonu Świętego Benedykta—*benedyktynki*): Lwów, Nieśwież, Ponary (near Wilno), Przemyśl, Staniątki (near Kraków), Wilno.

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<sup>2124</sup> The data regarding assistance to Jews compiled in the first 16 volumes of *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947*, published between 1982–2002, was summarized by Agata Mirek in her overview article, “Udział sióstr zakonnych w ratowaniu ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1939–1945 na przykładzie wybranych zgromadzeń,” published in Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 135–60. See also Agata Mirek, “Il contributo degli ordini religiosi femminili al salvataggio degli ebrei in Polonia durante la Seconda Guerra mondiale,” in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 609–42.

**Benedictine (Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Matki Bożej Loretańskiej—*benedyktynki loretanki*): Warsaw.

**Benedictine Missionary Sisters** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Benedyktynek Misjonarek—*benedyktynki misjonarki*): Łuck.

**Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** (Mniszki Benedyktynki od Nieustającej Adoracji Najświętszego Sakramentu—*benedyktynki sakramentki*): Lwów, Warsaw.

**Benedictine Samaritan Sisters of the Cross of Christ** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Benedyktynek Samarytanek Krzyża Chrystusowego—*benedyktynki samarytanki*): Henryków (near Warsaw), Niegów-Samaria (near Wyszków), Pruszków and Pruszków-Żbików (near Warsaw).

**Bernardine Sisters (Franciscan)**, (Mniszki Trzeciego Zakonu Regularnego św. Franciszka z Asyżu—*bernardynki*): Borki-Łuków, Łowicz.

**Sisters of the Family of Bethany** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Rodziny Betańskiej—*betanki*): Lublin, Mełgiew (near Lublin), Międzyzlesie (near Warsaw).

**Discalced (or Barefoot) Carmelite Sisters** (Mniszki Bose Zakonu Najświętszej Maryi Panny z Góry Karmel—*karmelitanki bosc*): Lwów, Przemyśl, Warsaw.

**Carmelite Sisters of the Infant Jesus** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Karmelitanek Dzieciątka Jezus—*karmelitanki Dzieciątka Jezus*): Czarna (near Krzeszowice), Sosnowiec.

**Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Karola Borromeusza—*boromeuszki*): Łańcut, Przemyśl.

**Capuchin Poor Clares** (Klaryski Kapucynki—*klaryski kapucynki*): Przasnysz.

**Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration** (Mniszki Klaryski od Wiecznej Adoracji—*klaryski od wiecznej adoracji*): Kraków, Lwów, Stary Sącz.

**Daughters of Divine Love** (Zgromadzenie Córek Bożej Miłości—*córki Bożej Miłości*): Pleszów and Wola Justowska (near Kraków).

**Daughters of Mary Immaculate** (Zgromadzenie Córek Maryi Niepokalanej—*córki Maryi Niepokalanej*): Hrubieszów, Kielce, Końskie, Lida, Radom, Rawa Mazowiecka, Warsaw, Wiszniew (near Wołożyn).

**Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (Zgromadzenie Córek Najczystsze Serca Najświętszej Maryi Panny—*córki Najczystsze Serca NMP (sercanki bezhabitowe)*): Janów Podlaski, Kolno, Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą, Otwock, Pińsk, Sitnik (near Biała Podlaska), Skórzec (near Siedlce), Świder (near Warsaw), Warsaw (2 institutions), Wilno.

**Sisters of Divine Providence** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Opatrzności Bożej—*siostry Opatrzności Bożej*): Międzyrzec Podlaski, Przemyśl, Rodatycze (near Gródek Jagielloński), Rzeszów, Skole (near Stryj), Sterdyń (near Sokołów Podlaski).

**Sisters Shepherds of Divine Providence** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Pasterek od Opatrzności Bożej—*pasterki*): Lubartów, Lublin.

**Dominican Sisters** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr św. Dominika—*dominikanki III Zakonu*): Biała Niżna (near Nowy Sącz), Chorzów, Dziżułki (near Żółkiew), Kielce, Kraków, Wilno, Złoczów, Żurów (near Rohatyn).

**Dominican Sisters (cloistered)**, (Mniszki Zakonu Kaznodziejskiego—*dominikanki II Zakonu (klazurowe)*): Przysów (Święta Anna, near Częstochowa), Kolonia Wileńska (near Wilno), Kraków.

**Dominican Missionary Sisters of Jesus and Mary** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Dominikanek Misjonarek Jezusa i Maryi—*dominikanki misjonarki*): Warsaw, Zielonka (near Warsaw).

**(Grey) Sisters of St. Elizabeth (Silesia)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr św. Elżbiety Trzeciego Zakonu Regularnego św. Franciszka z Asyżu—*elżbietanki (śląskie; szare)*): Otwock, Warsaw.

**(Franciscan) Sisters of St. Elizabeth (Cieszyn)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr św. Elżbiety Trzeciego Zakonu Regularnego św. Franciszka z Asyżu—*elżbietanki (cieszyńskie)*): Cieszyn.

**Felician Sisters (Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr św. Feliksa z Kantalicjo Trzeciego Zakonu Regularnego św. Franciszka z Asyżu—*felicjanki*): Bezwola (near Radzyń Podlaski), Chełm, Dobranowice (near Wieliczka), Jadwinów (near Lubartów), Kraków (2 institutions), Lwów (3 institutions), Otwock, Przemyśl (2 institutions), Pustomyty (near Lwów), Sądowa Wisznia (near Jaworów), Staniątki (at the Benedictine convent near Kraków), Warsaw (2 institutions), Wawer (near Warsaw), Widawa (near Zduńska Wola), Zbaraż.

**Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross (Laski)**, (Siostry Franciszkanki Służebnice Krzyża—*franciszczanki służebnice Krzyża*): Bukowina Tatrzańska (near Zakopane), Laski (near Warsaw), Żułów (near Kraśniczyn/Krasnystaw).

**Franciscan Sisters of the Suffering** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek od Cierpiących—*franciszczanki od cierpiących*): Kozienice (2 institutions), Łuck, Warsaw, Wilno.

**Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek Rodziny Maryi—*franciszczanki Rodziny Maryi*): Anin (near Warsaw, 2 institutions), Beresteczko, Białoleka Dworska (near Warsaw, 2 institutions), Brwinów (near Warsaw, 2 institutions), Bóbrka (near Lwów), Brzezinki (near Warsaw), Dubno, Dżwiniaczka (near Borszczów), Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Izabelin (near Warsaw), Kołomyja, Kostów, Kostowiec (near Warsaw), Krasnystaw, Łomna (near Turka), Lwów (3 institutions), Małechów (near Lwów), Mickuny (near Wilno), Międzyziesie (near Warsaw, 3 institutions), Mińsk Mazowiecki, Mirzec (near Starachowice), Mszana Dolna (near Rabka), Nieborów (near Łowicz), Nienadowa, Ostra (near Buczacz), Ostrówek (near Klembów/Warsaw), Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, Pityń (near Kołomyja), Płudy (near Warsaw), Podhajce (near Brzeżany), Pustelnik (near Warsaw), Puźniki (near Buczacz), Raków, Robercin (near Grójec), Sambor, Soplicowo (near Warsaw), Tłuste (near Zaleszczyki), Turka, Warsaw (5 institutions), Wilno, Wola Gołkowska (near Warsaw), Woł, Zazule (near Złoczów).

**Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary** (Franciszczanki Misjonarki Maryi—*franciszczanki misjonarki*): Radecznicza (near Zamość), Warsaw, Zamość.

**Salesian Sisters (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians)**, (Zgromadzenie Córek Maryi Wspomożycielki—*salezjanki*): Laurów in Sakiszki (near Wilno).

**Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (Nazarene Sisters)** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Najświętszej Rodziny z Nazaretu—*nazaretanki*): Częstochowa, Gulbiny (near Wilno), Komańcza (near Sanok), Kraków, Nowogródek, Olsztyn (near Częstochowa), Stryj, Warsaw.

**Missionary Sisters of the Holy Family** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Misjonarek Świętej Rodziny—*misjonarki Świętej Rodziny*): Białystok, Holszany (near Oszmiana), Prużana.

**Sisters Canonesses of the Holy Spirit de Saxia** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Kanoniczek Ducha Świętego de Saxia—*duchaczki*): Biskupice, Busko-Zdrój, Chmielnik, Kraków, Leżajsk, Lublin (2 institutions), Pacanów, Proszowice, Zabłocie (near Warsaw).

**Sisters of the Gratification of the Most Holy Face** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Wynagrodzicielek Najświętszego Oblicza—*obliczanki*): Częstochowa, Lublin, Miedzeszyn (near Warsaw), Wilno, Zielonka (near Warsaw).

**Sisters of the Most Holy Name of Jesus Under the Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary Help of the Faithful** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Najświętszego Imienia Jezus pod opieką Maryi Panny Wspomożenia Wiernych—*siostry Imienia Jezus, maryłki*): Klimontów, Suchedniów (near Skarżysko-Kamienna), Wilno.

**Sisters of the Robe of Jesus** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Westiarek Jezusa—*westiarki*): Duchnice (near Pruszków).

**Servants of Jesus** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Sług Jezusa—*sługi Jezusa*): Bychawka (near Lublin), Kielce, Kielczewice, Lublin, Tarnów.

**Sisters Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus** (Zgromadzenie Służebnic Najświętszego Serca Jezusowego—*sercanki*): Brody (near Lwów), Krosno, Przemyśl-Błonie, Radomsko, Rymanów Zdrój, Zakopane.

**Oblate Sisters of the Heart of Jesus** (Instytut Sióstr Oblatek Serca Jezusa—*oblatki Serca Jezusa*): Częstochowa.

**Sisters of the Most Holy Soul of Christ the Lord** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Najświętszej Duszy Chrystusa Pana—*siostry Duszy Chrystusowej*): Kraków-Prądnik Biały, Kraków-Azory, Kraków-Skotniki, Zielonki (near Kraków).

**Sisters (of Charity) of St. Joseph** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Świętego Józefa—*józefitki*): Łaszczów (near Tomaszów Lubelski), Mielec, Narajów (near Brzeżany), Skałat, Sokal, Szmańkowczyki (or Szmańkowce, near Czortków), Stryj, Tarnów, Trzęsówka (near Kolbuszowa), Zamość.

**Michaelite Sisters (Sisters of St. Michael the Archangel)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr św. Michała Archanioła—*michalitki*): Godowa (near Strzyżów), Miejsce Piastowe (near Krosno), Przytyk, Radom, Wielopole Skrzyńskie (near Rzeszów), Wysoka Głogowska (near Głogów Małopolski), Wysoka Strzyżowska (near Strzyżów).

**Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy (Magdalene Sisters)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia—*magdalenki*): Częstochowa, Derdy (near Warsaw), Kalisz, Kraków, Lwów, Rabka, Radom, Walendów (near Warsaw), Warsaw (Żytia Street), Warsaw-Grochów (Hetmańska Street), Wilno, Werki (near Wilno).

**Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny—*niepokalanki*): Jarosław, Koźle, Nowy Sącz, Pruszków-Żbików (near Warsaw), Skolimów (near Warsaw), Słomim, Szymanów (near Warsaw), Tarnów, Warsaw, Wrzosów-Buraków (near Warsaw).

**Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (of Pleszew)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny z Pleszewa—*służebniczki pleszewskie (wielkopolskie)*): Brodnica, Czersk nad Wisłą, Piotrków Trybunalski, Przesmyki, Warsaw, Włodzimierzów.

**Sisters of Mary Immaculate** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Maryi Niepokalanej—*siostry Maryi Niepokalanej, marianki*): Katowice, Zgoda (Świętochłowice).

**Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin Mary (of Mariówka), known outside of Poland as Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służek Najświętszej Maryi Panny Niepokalanej z Mariówki—*służki*): Bychawa (near Lublin), Czyżów Szlachecki, Drzewica, Grodno, Jeżewo, Kurozwęki (near Staszów), Łomża, Mariówka (near Przysucha), Mościska (near Przemyśl), Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą, Sandomierz, Warsaw.

**Sisters Servants of the Virgin Mother of God Immaculately Conceived (of Dębica)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek Bogarodzicy Dziewicy Niepokalanie Poczętej—*służebniczki dębickie*): Dębica, Dominikowice (near Gorlice), Jezierna (near Zborów), Nowy Sącz, Proszówki (near Bochnia), Żołynia (near Łańcut).

**Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Służebniczek Najświętszej Maryi Panny Niepokalanie Poczętej ze Starej Wsi—*służebniczki starowiejskie*): Będzin, Brzeżany, Chotomów (near Warsaw), Chorostków (near Kopyczyńce), Czerwona Wola (near Jarosław), Częstochowa, Drohobycz, Gorlice, Grodzisko Dolne (near Przeworsk), Jagielnica (near Czortków), Jasionów (near Brzozów), Końskie, Kopyczyńce, Kraków-Prądnik Czerwony, Łązniew (near Warsaw), Lesko, Lisków (near Kalisz), Łódź, Lublin, Miechów, Nienadówka (near Rzeszów), Piotrków Trybunalski, Róża (near Mielec), Rzepińce (near Buczaczy), Skała Podolska, Stara Wieś (near Brzozów), Staromieście (near Rzeszów), Szywna, Tapin (near Przemyśl), Tarnopol, Tarnów, Turkowice (near Hrubieszów), Wirów (near Drohiczyn), Wola Rzędzińska (near Tarnów).

**Sisters of Common Work of Immaculate Mary** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr “Wspólnej Pracy” od Niepokalanej Maryi—*siostry “Wspólnej Pracy” od Niepokalanej Maryi*): Warsaw.

**School Sisters of Notre Dame** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Szkolnych de Notre Dame—*siostry de Notre Dame*): Lwów (2 institutions), Mikuliczyn (near Kołomyja).

**Sisters (Ladies) of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (Zgromadzenie Panien Ofiarowania Najświętszej Maryi Panny—*prezentki*): Kraków, Ujazdy (near Rzeszów), Wilno.

**Sisters Servants of the Mother of the Good Shepherd** (Zgromadzenie Służebnic Matki Dobrego Pasterza—*pasterzanki*): Białystok, Częstochowa, Piaseczno (near Warsaw).

**Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (Zakon Nawiedzenia Najświętszej Maryi Panny—*wizytki*): Wilno.



- Seraphic Sisters (Daughters of Our Lady of Sorrows)**, (Zgromadzenie Córek Matki Bożej Bolesnej; Zgromadzenie Córek Najświętszej Maryi Panny od Siedmiu Boleści—*serafitki*): Drohobycz, Jarosław, Nowy Targ, Pysznica (near Stalowa Wola), Stryj.
- Norbertine Sisters (Sisters of St. Norbert)**, (Zakon Norbertanek—*siostry kanoniczki regularne zakonu premonstratensów, norbertanki*): Imbramowice (near Wolbrom), Kraków.
- Pallottine Sisters (Missionary Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Misjonarek Apostolstwa Katolickiego—*pallotylni*): Nowogródek, Rajca (near Nowogródek).
- Passionist Sisters (Sisters of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Męki Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa—*pasjonistki*): Będzin, Błazny, Głowno, Kielce, Końskie, Łąka Zaklikowa (near Janów Lubelski), Płońsk, Stopnica.
- Resurrectionist Sisters (Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa—*zmar-twychwstanki*): Bukowina Tatrzańska (near Zakopane), Częstochowa, Lwów, Mir, Starawieś (near Węgrów), Warsaw (4 institutions), Wejherowo.
- Sacré Coeur Sisters (Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus)**, (Zgromadzenie Najświętszego Serca Jezusa Sacré-Coeur—*siostry Sacré Coeur*): Lwów (2 institutions), Warsaw, Zbylitowska Góra (near Tarnów).
- Sisters of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr św. Teresy od Dzieciątka Jezus—*terezjanki*): Luboml, Włodzimierz Wołyński.
- Ursuline Sisters of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus (Grey Ursulines)**, (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Urszulanek Serca Jezusa Konającego—*urszulanki szare*): Brwinów (near Warsaw), Czarna Duża (near Wołomin), Czarny Bór (near Wilno), Janów Poleski, Łódź, Milanówek (near Warsaw), Ołtarzew (or Ożarów, near Warsaw), Radość (near Warsaw), Sieradz, Warsaw (3 institutions), Wilno, Zakopane.
- Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union** (Unia Rzymska Zakonu św. Urszuli—*urszulanki Unii Rzymskiej*): Częstochowa, Kołomyja, Kraków (2 institutions), Lublin, Lwów, Rokiciny Podhalańskie (near Rabka), Pokrzywno (near Poznań), Siercza (near Wieliczka), Stanisławów, Tarnów, Warsaw (2 institutions), Włocławek, Zakopane.
- Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul** (Zgromadzenie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego à Paulo—*szarytki*): Biała Podlaska, Białystok, Budzanów, Czerwonogród (or Nyrków, near Zaleszczyki), Góra Kalwaria, Ignaców (near Mińsk Mazowiecki), Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (near Kraków), Kielce (2 institutions), Klarysew (near Warsaw), Kraków, Kurozwęki (near Staszów), Lublin, Lwów, Mienia (near Mińsk Mazowiecki), Opoczno, Otwock, Przasnysz, Przeworsk, Radom, Siedlce, Supraśl, Szczawnica, Warsaw (8 institutions), Werki (near Wilno), Wilno, Zebrzydowice.

## Religious and Monastic Orders of Men Who Rescued Jews

Rescue activities were carried out in some 85 homes, parishes and institutions of 25 religious and monastic orders of men of the Latin-rite throughout German-occupied Poland. Most of the recorded rescue efforts in these locales are described in the text. The following list does not include male diocesan clergy, who constituted the majority of the male clergy.

**Albertine Brothers** (Bracia Albertyni, Zgromadzenie Braci Albertynów Trzeciego Zakonu Regularnego św. Franciszka Serafickiego Posługujących Ubogim (Alb)—*albertyni*): Przemyśl, Kraków, Lwów, Warsaw.

**Augustinians** (Zakon św. Augustyna (OSA)—*augustianie*): Kraków-Prokocim.

**Benedictines** (Mnisi Reguły św. Benedykta (OSB)—*benedyktyni*): Tyniec.

**Bernardines** (*bernardyni*) or **Franciscans** (*franciszkanie*): Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (near Kraków), Kraków, Lwów, Panowice (near Podhajce), Radecznica (near Zamość), Tarnawica Polna (near Tłumacz), Zbaraż.

**Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God** (Zakon Szpitalny św. Jana Bożego (OH)—*bonifratrzy*): Warsaw.

**Canons Regular of the Lateran (Canons Regular of St. Augustine of the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour at the Lateran)**, (Zakon Kanoników Regularnych św. Augustyna Kongregacji Laterańskiej Najświętszego Zbawiciela (CRL)—*kanonicy regularni (laterańscy)*): Kraków.

**Capuchins** (Zakon Braci Mniejszych Kapucynów (OFMCap)—*kapucyni*): Drohobycz, Horodno (Polesie voivodship), Kraków, Lublin, Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą, Warsaw.

**Carmelites** (Zakon Braci Najświętszej Maryi Panny z Góry Karmel (OCarm)—*karmelici*): Bołszowce (near Rohatyn), Pilzno.

**Discalced Carmelites** (Bracia Bosi Najświętszej Maryi Panny z Góry Karmel (OCD)—*karmelici bosi*): Czerna (near Krzeszowice), Kraków, Wilno.

**Cistercians** (Zakon Cystersów (OCist)—*cystersi*): Mogiła (near Kraków).

**Dominicans** (Zakon Braci Kaznodziejów (OP)—*dominikanie*): Czortków, Lwów, Podkamień (near Brody), Warsaw.

**Conventual Franciscans (Order of Friars Minor Conventual)**, (Zakon Braci Mniejszych Konwentualnych (OFMConv)—*franciszkanie konwentualni*): Czyszki (near Lwów),

Grodno, Hanaczów (near Lwów), Kostowiec (near Warsaw), Lwów, Niepokalanów (near Sochaczew), Sanok, Słonim, Święty Stanisław (near Halicz), Warsaw.

**Reformed Franciscans** (Zakon Braci Mniejszych (OFM), Prowincja Matki Bożej Anielskiej—*franciszkanie reformaci*): Dursztyn, Kraków, Przemyśl-Panewniki, Rawa Ruska, Sądowa Wisznia (near Jaworów).

**Franciscans (not identified)**, (*franciszkanie*): in and near Kraków, in and near Warsaw.

**Jesuits (The Society of Jesus)**, (Towarzystwo Jezusowe (SJ)—*jezuici*): Albertyn (near Słonim), Lwów, Nowy Sącz, Otwock, Słonim, Stara Wieś (near Brzozów), Tarnopol, Turkowice (near Hrubieszów), Warsaw (various priests), Wilno.

**Missionaries of La Salette (Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette)**, (Zgromadzenie Misjonarzy Matki Bożej z La Salette (MS)—*saletyni*): Kobylanka (near Gorlice).

**Marians** (Zgromadzenie Księża Marianów Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny (MIC)—*marianie*): Bielany (near Warsaw), Warsaw.

**Michaelites (Congregation of St. Michael the Archangel)**, (Zgromadzenie św. Michała Archanioła (CSMA)—*michalici*): Działkowicze (near Kobryń), Struga (near Warsaw), Miejsce Piastowe (near Krosno).

**Oblates of Mary Immaculate** (Zgromadzenie Misjonarzy Oblatów Maryi Niepokalanej (OMI)—*oblaci*): Okopy (near Rokitno, Volhynia).

**Orionines (Sons of Divine Providence)**, (Małe Dzieło Boskiej Opatrzności (FDP)—*orioniści*): Łaźniew (near Warsaw), Warsaw.

**Pallottines** (Stowarzyszenie Apostolstwa Katolickiego (SAC)—*pallotyni*): Warsaw.

**Paulines** (Zakon św. Pawła Pierwszego Pustelnika (OSPPE)—*paulini*): Częstochowa, Leśniów (near Żarki).

**Redemptorists (Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer)**, (Zgromadzenie Najświętszego Odkupiciela (CSsR)—*redemptoryści*): Mościska (near Przemyśl), Tuchów (near Tarnów), Warsaw, Wilno.

**Resurrectionists** (Zgromadzenie Zmartwychwstania Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa (CR)—*zmartwychwstańcy*): Międzyrzec Podlaski, Nowy Sącz (or Kraków), Warsaw.

**Salesians (The Salesian Society, The Society of St. Francis de Sales)**, (Towarzystwo św. Franciszka Salezego (SDB)—*salezianie*): Częstochowa, Głusków (near Warsaw), Łódź, Lwów, Przemyśl, Supraśl, Warsaw (3 institutions).

**Vincentians (Missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul)**, (Zgromadzenie Księża Misjonarzy św. Wincentego à Paulo (CM)—*misjonarze*): Kraków, Lwów, Tarnów, Warsaw (various priests).

## Polish Catholic Clergy Recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations” by Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Authority

Among the almost 7,200 Poles recognized by Yad Vashem as of January 1, 2021, there were 105 members of the Roman Catholic clergy of the Latin rite, including 38 priests and 67 nuns. Proportionally, in relation to their overall numbers, the Polish clergy has been awarded more often than the Catholic clergy of almost every other German-occupied country;<sup>2125</sup> this despite the incomparably greater hardships faced by the Polish clergy and the death penalty imposed on Poles for helping Jews. The representation of Catholics among the clergy recognized by Yad Vashem far exceeds the Protestant and Orthodox clergy.

Nevertheless, it remains a fact that of the vast majority of members of the Polish Roman Catholic clergy who came to the assistance of Jews have gone unrecognized. Usually, these individuals belonged to a chain of rescuers or a communal operation. Rarely if ever was the rescue of a Jew effected by a *single* nun, priest or monk. On the other hand, it is probable that *many* acts of assistance, rendered by *many* persons, would have each been *vital* to the rescue of any given Jewish survivor.

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<sup>2125</sup> Yad Vashem recognitions as of 2006 for Christian clergy rescuers—mostly Roman Catholic—in various countries were as follows: Austria—none, Belgium—103, Croatia—3, Czech Republic—none, England—one, France—136, Germany—7, Hungary—25, Italy—52, Latvia—one, Lithuania—15, Luxembourg—none, Poland—59, Netherlands—8, Slovakia—5 (including two Eastern-rite Greek Catholics), Switzerland—one, and Ukraine (part of interwar Poland)—9 Greek Catholics (Eastern-rite Roman Catholics). Since 2006, the number of clergy recognized by Yad Vashem, especially Catholic, has grown considerably. Recognitions of Polish clergy have almost doubled.

Polish Roman Catholic Priests Recognized by Yad Vashem  
(with year of recognition)

1. Wojciech Bartosik, 2014 (Wawrzeńczyce, near Kraków)
2. Brunon Boguszewski, 1978 (Kraków)
3. Józef Czapran, 2022 (Lwów)
- (Michał Czuba, seminary graduate<sup>2126</sup>)
4. Antoni Dunajewski, 2019 (Kolbuszowa, near Rzeszów)
5. Stanisław Falkowski, 1993 (Piekuty Nowe, near Brańsk)
6. Mikołaj Ferenc, 2013 (Capuchin until 1943, then a diocesan priest; Markowa, near Podhajce)
7. Władysław Głowacki, 1982 (Warsaw)
8. Marcei Godlewski, 2009 (Warsaw)
9. Antoni Godziszewski, 2020 (Częstochowa)
10. Józef Gorajek, 1989 (Wąwolnica, near Lublin)
- (Jan Gozdek, status unclear<sup>2127</sup>)
11. Henryk Hilchen, 2018 (Warsaw)
12. Antoni Kania, 2013 (Huta Nowa, near Monasterzyska)
13. Adolf Kruszewski, 2020 (Jabłoń Kościelna, near Wysokie Mazowieckie)
14. Michał Kubacki, 1997 (Salesian; Warsaw)
15. Ferdynand Machay, 2017 (Kraków)
16. Polikarp Maciejowski, under the name of Polikarpas Macijauskas, 2005 (Kolainiai, Lithuania)
17. Albin Małysiak, 1993 (Kraków; made a bishop postwar)
18. Gabriel Marszałek, 2015 (Borownica, near Sanok)
19. Stanisław Mazak, 1984 (Szczerzowice, near Radziechów)
20. Aleksander Osiecki, 1990 (Brzeźnica, near Dębica)
21. Andrzej Osikowicz, 1995 (sometimes spelled Osikiewicz; Borysław)
22. Jan Patrzyk, 1979 (Lipinki, near Gorlice)
23. Jan Pawlicki, 1969 (Zborów)
24. Jan Poddębniak, 1986 (Krężnica Jara, near Lublin)
25. Jan Raczkowski, 2012 (Otwock, near Warsaw)
26. Jan Sielewicz, 2000 (Worniany, near Wilno)
27. Adam Skałbania, 2006 (Salesian; Głusków, near Warsaw)
28. Kazimierz Słupski, 2018 (Puźniki, near Buczac)
29. Franciszek Smorczewski, 1979 (Stolin, Polesie or Polesia)
30. Adam Sztark, 2001 (Jesuit; Słonim)

<sup>2126</sup> Michał Czuba was recognized in 1989 for rescuing four members of the Wajzman family in the town of Radziechów. Although described as a priest in some documents, his status is not clear. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 161.

<sup>2127</sup> Jan Gozdek was recognized in 1988 for rescuing two Jewish men in the village of Józików, near Końskie. Although described as a priest, his status is not clear. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 252; Jan Grek-Gozdek, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-grek-gozdek-jan>.

31. Witold Szymczukiewicz, 1966 (Rukojnie, near Wilno)
32. Edward Tabaczkowski, 2018 (Tłumacz, near Stanisławów)
33. Zygmunt Trószynski, 2020 (Marian; Warsaw)
34. Oskar Wiśniewski, 2018 (Franciscan; Warsaw)
35. Ludwik Wolski, 2008 (Otwock, near Warsaw)
36. Ludwik Wrodarczyk, 2000 (Oblate of Mary Immaculate; Okopy, Volhynia)
37. Mieczysław Zawadzki, 2007 (Będzin)
38. Jan Zawrzycki, 2007 (Rymanów, near Krosno)
39. Ignacy Życiński, 1993 (sometimes spelled Życzyński; Trójca, near Zawichost)

Poles Recognized by Yad Vashem Who Became  
Roman Catholic Priests after the War  
(with year of recognition)

1. Antoni Bradło, 1986<sup>2128</sup>
2. Franciszek Leszczyński, 1997<sup>2129</sup>
3. Fanciszek Rzuttky, 1997<sup>2130</sup>
4. Adam Stalmach, 1990<sup>2131</sup>
5. Witold Stolarczyk, 1995<sup>2132</sup>

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<sup>2128</sup> Antoni Bradło (b. 1933) was recognized together with his parents and three siblings; they rescued 13 Jews in the village of Lubcza near Pilzno. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 111.

<sup>2129</sup> Franciszek Leszczyński (b. 1920) was recognized together with his parents and two brothers; they sheltered 13 Jews in the village of Bocianka, near Siemiatycze. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 452.

<sup>2130</sup> Franciszek Rzuttky (1923–1971) was recognized together with Tadeusz and Janina Lewandowski. His story is found in the text. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 453.

<sup>2131</sup> Adam Stalmach (b. 1923) was recognized together with his parents. He was ordained a priest after the war. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 567; The Stelmach Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-stelmach-family>.

<sup>2132</sup> Witold Stolarczyk (1921–2020) was recognized together with his parents; they rescued five Jews in the village of Dąbrowica, near Włoszczowa. He was ordained a priest in 1950. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 755. According to Rev. Stolarczyk, their Jewish charges lived openly in his family's home, and the villagers were aware of their presence and Jewish origin. See The Stolarczyk Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-stolarczyk-family-1>.



Polish Roman Catholic Nuns Recognized by Yad Vashem  
(with year of recognition)

1. Irena Adamek, 1984 (Sister Małgorzata, Dominican Sister; Kolonia Wileńska, near Wilno)
2. Władysława Bartkowiak, 2002 (Sister Euzebia, Sister of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ; Mir)
3. Stanisława Bednarska, 1984 (Sister Stefania, Dominican Sister; Kolonia Wileńska, near Wilno)
4. Irena Bielawska, 1983 (Mother Superior Maria Honorata, Felician Sister; Przemyśl)
5. Anna Borkowska, 1984 (born Janina Siestrzewitowska, Sister Bertranda, Dominican Sister; Kolonia Wileńska, near Wilno)
6. Anna Budnowska, 2016 (Sister Tekla, Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Łomna)
7. Stanisława Chmielewska, 2014 (Sister Helena, Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Podhajce, near Brzeżany)
8. Genowefa Czubak, 1980 (formerly Sister Dolorosa, Missionary Sister of the Holy Family; Prużana)
9. Helena Dobiecka, 2020 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Pustelnik, near Warsaw)
10. Aleksandra Drzewiecka (Drzewecka), 1992 (Wilno)
11. Helena Frąckiewicz, 1984 (Sister Diana, Dominican Sister; Kolonia Wileńska, near Wilno)
12. Bronisława Galus, 2001 (Sister Róża, Sister Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś); Turkowice, near Hrubieszów)
13. Wanda Garczyńska, 1983 (Sister Wanda, Sister of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Warsaw)
14. Matylda Getter, 1985 (Mother Matylda, Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Warsaw)
15. Maria Stefania Górską, 1997 (Sister Andrzejka, Ursuline Sister of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus; Warsaw)
16. Anna Grenda, 1986 (Sister Ligoria, Sister Servant of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus; Przemyśl)
17. Weronika Hendzel, 2017 (Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Warsaw)
18. Bronisława Hryniewicz, 1994 (Sister Beata, Daughter of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Skórzec, near Siedlce)
19. Kornelia Jankowska, 2013 (Sister Kornelia, Sister of the Most Holy Name of Jesus Under the Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary Help of the Faithful; Suchedniów, near Skarżysko-Kamienna)
20. Bronisława Jaroszyńska, 1981 (Sister Klara, Franciscan Sister Servant of the Cross; Laski, near Warsaw)
21. Stanisława Józwickowska, 1994 (Sister Stanisława, Daughter of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Skórzec, near Siedlce)
22. Leokadia Juśkiewicz, 1986 (Sister Longina, Sister Servant of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus; Przemyśl)

- Maria Kazuczyk, 2010 (tertiary; Janowicze, near Białystok)
- 23. Aniela Kędzierska, 2015 (Sister Celina, Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Sambor)
- 24. Janina Kierocińska, 1992 (Mother Teresa, Carmelite Sister of the Infant Jesus; Sosnowiec)
- 25. Aniela Kotowska, 1983 (Sister Klara, Felician Sister; Przemyśl)
- 26. Teofila Kozłowska, 2017 (Sister Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś); Chotomów, near Warsaw)
- 27. Bronisława Krzemińska, 2017 (Sister Witolda, Sister Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś); Chotomów, near Warsaw)
- 28. Marcjanna Łączniak, 2017 (Sister Ambrozja, Sister Servant of the Virgin Mother of God Immaculately Conceived (of Dębica); Dominikowice)
- 29. Bernarda Lemańska, 2018 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Warsaw)
- 30. Ludwika Lis, 2020 (Mother Superior, Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Lwów)
- 31. Zofia Liszka, 2015 (Sister Serapiona, Sister Servant of the Virgin Mother of God Immaculately Conceived (of Dębica); Dominikowice)
- 32. Zofia Makowska, 1993 (Sister Bogumiła, Franciscan Missionary Sister of Mary; Zamość)
- 33. Halina Małkiewicz, 1981 (Sister Ludwika, Sister of St. Elizabeth; Otwock)
- 34. Kazimiera Małolepszy (Małolepsza), 1992 (Sister Madeleine, Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Flers, Orne, France)
- 35. Antonina Manaszczyk, 1989 (Sister Irena, Sister Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś); Turkowice, near Hrubieszów)
- 36. Stanisława Marciniak, 1987 (Sister Gertruda, Sister of St. Elizabeth; Otwock)
- 37. Krystyna Marcinowska, 2017 (Sister Eugenia, Daughter of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin; Warsaw)
- 38. Maria Mikulska, 1974 (Sister Benedykta, Benedictine Sister; Wilno)
- 39. Janina Mistera, 1985 (Sister Joanna, Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Ignaców, near Mińsk Mazowiecki)
- 40. Maria Neugebauer, 1984 (Sister Imelda, Dominican Sister; Kolonia Wileńska, near Wilno)
- 41. Zofia Olszewska, 2016 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Łomna)
- 42. Maria Ostreyko, 1984 (Sister Jordana, Dominican Sister; Kolonia Wileńska, near Wilno)
- 43. Józefa Pawłowska, 2014 (Sister Vita, Albertine Sister; Częstochowa)
- 44. Ludwika Peńsko, 2018 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Płudy, near Warsaw)
- 45. Maria Pietkiewicz, 2004 (Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Kamionek, in Warsaw)
- 46. Zofia Pięłowska, 2016 (Sister Blanka, Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Lwów)
- 47. Aniela Polechajło, 1989 (Sister Stanisława, Sister Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś); Turkowice, near Hrubieszów)
- Janina Popławska (Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Ignaców, near Mińsk Mazowiecki; awarded a certificate of appreciation in 1996)
- 48. Teresa Reformat, 2020 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary)
- 49. Joanna Reiter, 1986 (Sister Zygmunt, Felician Sister; Wawer, near Warsaw)

50. Marianna Reszko, 1985 (Sister Marcjanna, Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Ignaców, near Mińsk Mazowiecki)
51. Józefa Romansewicz, 1989 (Sister Hermana, Sister Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived (of Stara Wieś); Turkowice, near Hrubieszów)
52. Adela Rosolińska, 2013 (Sister Serafia, Sister of the Most Holy Name of Jesus Under the Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary Help of the Faithful; Suchedniów, near Skarżysko-Kamienna)
53. Maria Janina Roszak, 1984 (Sister Cecylia, Dominican Sister; Kolonia Wileńska, near Wilno)
54. Olga Schwarz (Szwarz), 2018 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Warsaw)
55. Rozalia Domicella Sidełko, 1986 (Sister Bernarda, Sister Servant of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus; Przemyśl)
- Maria Siwek, 2002 (tertiary; Brzączowice)
56. Julia Sosnowska, 1996 (Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Warsaw)
57. Aniela Stawowiak, 2018 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Płudy and Międzyzylesie, near Warsaw)
58. Katarzyna Stępa, 2020 (Sister Teresa, Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Warsaw)
59. Romualda Stępak, 2018 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Międzyzylesie and Płudy, near Warsaw)
60. Zofia Szczygielska, 2018 (Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Przeworsk)
- Jadwiga Urbańczyk, 2002 (tertiary; Brzączowice)
61. Eugenia Wąsowska-Renot, 1980 (formerly Sister Alfonsa, Sister Servant of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus; Przemyśl)
62. Aniela Wesołowska, 2018 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Puźniki, near Buczacz)
- Stefania (Jadwiga) Wojciechowska (Wijewo; awarded a certificate of appreciation in 1997)
63. Bronisława Wilemska, 1995 (Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Kraków and Szczawnica)
64. Anzelma Wojdyła, 2020 (Franciscan Sister of the Family of Mary; Lwów)
65. Jadwiga Wyszomirska, 2017 (Daughter of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Warsaw)
66. Julia Zagrodzka, 2016 (Sister Kantalicja, Felician Sister; Sądowa Wisznia, near Jaworów)
67. Helena Zienowicz, 1992 (Sister of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Wilno)

Protestant Clergymen from Poland  
Recognized by Yad Vashem<sup>2133</sup>  
(with year of recognition)

1. Feliks Gloeh, 1984 (Evangelical)
2. Władysław Kołodziej, 1980 (Methodist)
3. Iosif Nazaruk, 2005 (Baptist)
4. Grigory Tsitsura, 2000 (Evangelical)

Greek Catholic (Eastern Rite Roman  
Catholic) Clergymen from Poland Recognized by Yad Vashem  
(on Ukraine list)  
(with year of recognition)

1. Brother Teodosy (Tadeusz Cebryński), 1984
2. Brother Lazar, 1984
3. Antin Navolsky (Izvol'ski), 1993
4. Fr. Nykanor (Mykola Deyneha), 1985
5. Josif Pietrash (Petrash), 1993
6. Vasili Popel, 2003
7. Clement Sheptytski (Kazimierz Szeptycki), 1995
8. Marko Stek, 1995
9. Daniil Tymchina (Tymchyna), 2008

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<sup>2133</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum also mentions a former Evangelical clergyman who he calls Mr. Z. (his identity has not been established) and two Methodist clergymen, Witold Benedyktowicz and Ignacy Kasprzykowski, who helped rescue Jews in Warsaw. Mr. Z. sheltered four Jewish children and helped other Jews. Witold Benedyktowicz, then a theology student, was ordained in 1947. From 1969 to 1983, he was head of the Methodist Church in Poland. He helped smuggle Jews out of the ghetto and found shelters for them. His sister, Zofia, was one of those who took in Jews. Benedyktowicz was denounced by a Jewish Gestapo agent named Joske Erlich (Josek Ehrlich) and spent nine months in Pawiak prison. Together with his wife, Kasprzykowski, who lived outside of Warsaw, "takes care of adults and children, has them live in his house, feeds and protects them." Many Jews, especially children, were in hiding in this area, and the rural population protected them. See Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, 240–42.

Eastern Orthodox Clergymen  
from Poland Recognized by Yad Vashem  
(with year of recognition)

1. Ignatij Grogul, 1993 (Ukraine)
2. Vladimir Imshennik, 1993 (Belarus)
3. Konstantin Komar, 2001 (Belarus)
- Benedykt Kopiec, 1988 (Poland) – not yet a priest at the time of rescue
4. Stefan Kuchinskiy, 2017 (Belarus)

## Polish Catholic Clergy Who Lost Their Lives for Helping Jews

Among the hundreds of Christian Poles put to death by the Germans for coming to the assistance of Jews, there were dozens of members of the Catholic clergy.

Not all of the victims of German repressions cited below can be confirmed as *solely* attributable to helping Jews. Often there were other circumstances at work in a priest's arrest and execution. In such instances, although the exact charges levelled by the Germans may not have been known, the priest in question *is* known to have been active in rendering assistance to Jews. That much can be said with certainty.

In some cases, the murder of priests and other religious was immediately triggered by and clearly owing to their illegal involvement with Jews. In many other cases, the degree to which this involvement was a factor in their deaths is impossible to determine—though technically, under the rule of German terror, it would have been sufficient in itself.

All but a handful of the examples listed below have been recorded in Wiktor Jacewicz and Jan Woś's monumental register of members of the Polish clergy killed during the German occupation.<sup>2134</sup> The starting point, however, is another publication which draws heavily on Jacewicz and Woś's research.<sup>2135</sup>

The entries below have been verified for accuracy and supplemented by other sources, where known. Occasionally, the priest in question has not been identified by name. Those cases are usually based on the testimony of Jews recorded many years after the fact.

- [1] Fr. Antoni Grzybowski, a Jesuit, was executed on October 20, 1943 for providing shelter to Jews at the Jesuit novitiate of the Byzantine rite in Albertyn, near Słonim, where he was rector of the Latin rite chapel (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 39). Fr. Grzybowski provided Jews with birth and baptismal certificates and found refuge for them with trusted persons. According to one source, he was executed by Soviet partisans dressed as Germans.<sup>2136</sup>

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<sup>2134</sup> Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vols. 1–5.

<sup>2135</sup> Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*.

<sup>2136</sup> Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 140–55, at pp. 146–47.



- [2] Rev. Andrzej Osikowicz (Osikiewicz), pastor of Borysław, was deported to Majdanek in February 1943, for helping Jews and openly encouraging his parishioners to do so; he perished there on December 29, 1943 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 74).<sup>2137</sup>
- [3] Rev. Henryk Opiatowski, vicar and Home Army chaplain from Brańsk, was arrested on July 15, 1943, and imprisoned in Bielsk Podlaski, for assisting Jews, partisans, and escaped Soviet prisoners-of-war. He perished in a mass execution of Polish prisoners soon afterwards (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 76).<sup>2138</sup>
- [4] Rev. Mieczysław Akrejc, pastor of Brasław, in northeastern Poland, perished in June 1942, while interceding on behalf of Jews being taken to their execution (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 77).
- [5] Rev. Jan Urbanowicz, dean and pastor of Exaltation of the Holy Cross parish in Brześć nad Bugiem in Polesie (Polesia), was executed in June 1943, for aiding Jews by issuing false baptismal certificates and finding shelters for them; he also spoke out against the looting of Jewish property (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 84).<sup>2139</sup>
- [6] Rev. Teodor Popczyk of St. Barbara's parish in Częstochowa was shot on June 16, 1943, after being identified by a Jew who had received false documentation from his parish (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 124).<sup>2140</sup>
- [7] Rev. Adam Sekuła, a vicar in Dobra near Limanowa, was killed at the jail in Nowy Sącz on April 7, 1941, after refusing to betray the names of Jews to whom he had issued birth and baptismal certificates (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 141).
- [8] Fr. Michał Klimczak (Fr. Dionizy), guardian of the Conventual Franciscan monastery and pastor of Our Lady of the Angels (*Matki Bożej Anielskiej*) parish in Grodno, was executed outside Grodno on July 15, 1943 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 168).<sup>2141</sup>
- [9] Monsignor Albin Jaroszewicz, dean and pastor of St. Francis Xavier parish in Grodno, was not executed on July 14, 1943, as claimed (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 168).<sup>2142</sup> Although arrested by the Germans twice, he survived the war only to be arrested

<sup>2137</sup> See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 568; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 254–55.

<sup>2138</sup> See also Hoffman, *Shtetl*, 232; Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 174; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 315.

<sup>2139</sup> See also Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 126; Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.*, 132; Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 175–76.

<sup>2140</sup> See also Jan Pietrzykowski, "Księża diecezji częstochowskiej w walce z okupantem," *Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolicki*, May 10, 1970.

<sup>2141</sup> On Fr. Dionizy (Michał Klimczak) see Tadeusz Krahel, "Zginęli 15 lipca 1943 r. przy fortach koło Naumicz," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 8 (August 2003); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 150, 154; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 574. Fr. Dionizy was arrested at least twice, last on July 15, 1943. He was executed the same day, outside Grodno, together with two other priests, Rev. Justyn Skokowski and Rev. Kazimierz Szypiłło, as well as many other Polish residents of Grodno in the Sonderaktion targeting the intelligentsia.

<sup>2142</sup> This entry is based on incorrect information found in Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 126.

by the Soviets in 1945, tried, and sentenced to eight years imprisonment in a concentration camp. He perished in July 1946.<sup>2143</sup>

- [10] Rev. Władysław Grobelny, vicar of Kobryń, near Brześć nad Bugiem, was executed on October 15, 1942, together with the Jews he was helping (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 222).
- [11] Monsignor Jan Wolski, pastor of Kobryń, near Brześć nad Bugiem, was executed on October 15, 1942, for assisting partisans and Jews who fled from the ghetto (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 223).
- [12] Monsignor Zygmunt Surdacki, vicar general of the diocese of Lublin (following the arrest of the diocese's bishops), was arrested in March 1941 for, among other transgressions, aiding Jews. He was deported to Auschwitz, where he died on April 30, 1941 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 271).<sup>2144</sup>
- [13] and [14] Two unidentified young priests were shot to death on February 21, 1942, in the Lwów suburb of Zamarstynów, when they were caught bringing two Jewish families to their monastery (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 278).<sup>2145</sup>
- [15] Another unidentified monk from Lwów was shot dead on February 28, 1942, when he was caught carrying food and money to the ghetto and tried to escape (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 279).<sup>2146</sup>
- [16] Rev. Fabian Poczobutt-Odlanicki, dean and pastor of Łunin and delegate of the Polish government in exile for Polesie (Polesia), was executed on August 4, 1944, for organizing aid to Jews and partisans (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 300).<sup>2147</sup>
- [17] Rev. Antoni Mackiewicz, pastor and dean of Mir, near Stołpce (voivodship of Nowogródek), was executed in Kołdyczewo concentration camp on November 14, 1942, for helping Jews (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 322). According to other sources, however, although he did assist Jews, Rev. Mackiewicz was arrested as part of a general sweep directed against the Polish intelligentsia in the region.<sup>2148</sup>
- [18] Rev. Tadeusz Kaczmarczyk, a vicar from Nowy Sącz, refused to betray the Jews to whom he had provided birth and baptismal certificates, even under torture; he was executed on August 21, 1941 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 343).
- [19] Rev. Władysław Deszcz, also from Nowy Sącz, was executed on August 21, 1941 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 344). He provided Jews with baptismal certificates and

<sup>2143</sup> Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 156, 230; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 202–3.

<sup>2144</sup> See also Zdzisław Goliński, *Biskupi i kapłani Lubelszczyzny w szponach gestapo 1939–1945* (Lublin: Związek Kapłański "Unitas," 1946), 13; Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 331–32; Szymon Datner, "Materiały z dziedziny ratownictwa Żydów w Polsce w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 73 (January–March 1970): 133–38, at pp. 133–34.

<sup>2145</sup> See also Jacek E. Wilczur, *Do nieba nie można od razu: Zapiski z okupowanego Lwowa* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1991), 34.

<sup>2146</sup> See also Wilczur, *Do nieba nie można od razu*, 34–35.

<sup>2147</sup> See also Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 175.

<sup>2148</sup> Tec, *In the Lion's Den*, 73, 96, 98–99, 254 n.13.

other forms of assistance (like smuggling himself into the ghetto to bring sacraments to converted Jews). According to another source, however, the two priests from Nowy Sącz were arrested in May 1941 for their suspected role in the escape of Jan Karski, a member of the Polish underground, from the local hospital where he was being held in between interrogation and torture sessions. They were executed in a mass reprisal against 32 Poles in Biegonice.<sup>2149</sup>

- [20] Monsignor Witold Iwicki, vicar general of the diocese of Pińsk, after refusing an offer of clemency, was executed in Janów Poleski on January 22, 1943, for assisting Jews (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 376).<sup>2150</sup>
- [21] Rev. Paweł Dołyżk, pastor of Derewna (Pińsk diocese), was shot to death on August 8, 1943, for aiding partisans and Jews (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 377).
- [22] Monsignor Józef Bajko, pastor of Naliboki, near Nowogródek (Pińsk diocese), and
- [23] his vicar, Rev. Józef Baradyn, were locked in a barn and burned alive in August 1943 for aiding Jews and partisans (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 378).
- [24] Rev. Leopold Aulich, dean of Iwje (Iwie) and pastor of Kamień, near Nowogródek (Pińsk diocese), and
- [25] his vicar, Rev. Kazimierz Rybałtowski, were both executed on July 24, 1943, on suspicion of aiding Jews and partisans (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 379).
- [26] Rev. Błażej Nowosad, pastor of Potok Górny, near Biłgoraj, was beaten by the SS Galizien who wanted to find out the location of Polish partisans and Jews that were hiding in the vicinity; then he was shot to death on December 19, 1943 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 395).<sup>2151</sup>
- [27] Fr. Adam Sztark, administrator of the parish in Żyrowice, provided various forms of assistance to Jews. For example, he placed Jewish children in the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Słonim, where he was chaplain. On December 18, 1942 together with two Sisters from this convent—Kazimiera Wołowska, the superior, and Bogumiła Noiszewska, who was in charge of the local polyclinic—Fr. Sztark was arrested. All three were shot the

<sup>2149</sup> Wood and Jankowski, *Karski*, 89–90.

<sup>2150</sup> See also Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych*, 104, 113. Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.*, 132. According to another source, although Rev. Iwicki had extended help to Jews, he was arrested as a hostage after the Home Army had staged a breakout in Pińsk. See Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 84.

<sup>2151</sup> According to other sources, Rev. Nowosad was among a score of Poles killed in a pacification carried out by Ukrainian policemen, German gendarmes and the Ukrainian self-defence. Rev. Nowosad was known for extending help to everyone in need, including Jewish fugitives. See Mariusz Leszczyński, “Ks. Błażej Nowosad,” *Niedziela* [Zamość–Lubaczów], no. 42 (2003); Józef Fajkowski and Jan Religa, *Zbrodnie hitlerowskie na wsi polskiej 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1981), 438–39; Mariusz Zajączkowski, *Ukraińskie podziemie na Lubelszczyźnie w okresie okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1944* (Lublin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Lublinie; Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2015), 197–98.

following day, in a mass execution of several hundred Poles (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entries 463 and 702).<sup>2152</sup>

- [28] Fr. Wojciech Kopliński, known as Fr. Anicet, a Franciscan from the Capuchin monastery on Miodowa Street in Warsaw, was arrested in June 1941 for, among other offences, helping Jews. He was deported to Auschwitz and perished in a gas chamber there on October 16, 1941 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 531).<sup>2153</sup>
- [29] An unidentified priest from Warsaw who worked closely with Maria Malicka and her brother, Tadeusz Romaszewski, in providing false birth and baptismal certificates and other identification to Jews was shot to death on December 19, 1942, after one of the Jews who was caught with the false documents identified his benefactors (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 537—based on a Jewish survivor's account). This story is dealt with in depth earlier in the text. The information about the priest's death has not been confirmed; it appears to be an embellishment.<sup>2154</sup>
- [30] Monsignor Roman Archutowski, rector of the Archdiocesan Seminary of Warsaw, was arrested (for the second time) in November 1942 for, inter alia, helping Jews. He was imprisoned in Pawiak and tortured. He was deported to Majdanek on March 25, 1943, and died there on April 18, 1943 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 547).<sup>2155</sup> Rev. Archutowski was one of the many victims, often elderly, of the sadistic Jewish Kapo of Majdanek known as Bubi.

Suddenly, Bubi, the *Lagenjüngster*, appears before us. A thirteen-year-old Jew, the bane of Field 3, a sadist about whom I heard things when I was still in Warsaw. In all the clatter and noise, we never heard the squeaky double doors of the barracks opening. Seeing a prisoner sitting down, Bubi leaps toward him and beats him on the face with his hand [fist]; next, he orders the tall man to bend over and whips him in the behind. The painful lashes last a long time. His whip is reinforced with wire. The priest [Rev. Archutowski] emits a quiet groan. An old, gray-haired Polish Jew, block overseer Bass, standing near me, mumbles curses at Bubi under his breath. But what can we do, we are helpless.<sup>2156</sup>

<sup>2152</sup> See also Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 236–37; Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 385–86, 390–92; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 311–12.

<sup>2153</sup> See also Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 334–35; Szymon Datner, “Materiały z dziedziny ratownictwa Żydów w Polsce w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 73 (January–March 1970): 133–38, at pp. 133–34.

<sup>2154</sup> Damian Sitkiewicz, “Maria Malicka: O pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez organizację narodową Grupa ‘Szańca,’” *Kolbojnik: Biuletyn Gminy Wyznaniowej Żydowskiej w Warszawie*, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 28–31.

<sup>2155</sup> See also Friedman, *Their Brother's Keepers*, 126; Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 210–12; Władysław Bartoszewski, *Warszawski pierścień śmierci 1939–1944* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1970), 220; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 88.

<sup>2156</sup> Jerzy Kwiatkowski, *485 Days at Majdanek* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2021).

- [31] Rev. Franciszek Garncarek, pastor of St. Augustine's Church in the Warsaw ghetto, was murdered on December 20, 1943; he was shot on the steps of the presbytery of another church outside the ghetto (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 574).<sup>2157</sup>
- [32] Fr. Józef Leńko of the Missionary Congregation of St. Vincent, a vicar at Holy Cross parish in Warsaw, was arrested (for the second time) and brought to Pawiak prison on February 7, 1944, for helping Jews. He was deported to Gross-Rosen concentration camp, where he perished on May 20, 1944 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 585). Fr. Leńko had been particularly active in issuing false baptismal certificates to Jews.<sup>2158</sup>
- [33] Fr. Leon Więckiewicz, of the Missionary Congregation of St. Vincent, a vicar at St. Augustine's Church in the Warsaw ghetto, was arrested for helping Jews on December 3, 1943; he was deported to Gross-Rosen concentration camp, where he died on August 4, 1944 (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 590).<sup>2159</sup> According to another source, however, it is believed that the immediate cause of Fr. Więckiewicz's arrest was not his extensive assistance to Jews but his open display of support for a group of Poles slated for execution.<sup>2160</sup>
- [34] Rev. Alfonsas Lipniūnas, a Lithuanian priest, was assistant pastor of St. Teresa's Church (next to Ostra Brama) and a preacher at the University Church of St. John, in Wilno. He was arrested by the Gestapo on March 17, 1943. According to one version, this was because of his sermons admonishing those who stole Jewish property and participated in violence against Jews. In fact, he was one of forty prominent Lithuanians who were accused of inciting young Lithuanians to resist conscription into the SS. They were arrested in March 1943 and sent to the Stutthof concentration camp. Rev. Lipniūnas survived the evacuation of the camp in January 1945. He died on March 28, 1945, soon after the entry of the Soviet army. (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 642—based on Philip Friedman's *Their Brothers' Keepers*).<sup>2161</sup>
- [35] and [36] Two Basilian Fathers from the Uniate Catholic monastery in Wilno were arrested for helping Jews; they were never heard from again (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 643—based on Philip Friedman's *Their Brothers' Keepers*).
- [37] Rev. Józef Kuczyński, pastor of Wsielub, near Nowogródek (Pińsk diocese), was executed on July 31, 1942, for helping Soviet POWs and sheltering Jewish children (*Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 665).<sup>2162</sup>

<sup>2157</sup> See also Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 652–53.

<sup>2158</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 648.

<sup>2159</sup> See also Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 652 (Więckowicz).

<sup>2160</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 647–48.

<sup>2161</sup> Rev. Alfonsas Lipniunas, Stutthof German Concentration Camp, Internet: <http://stutthof-museum.blogspot.com/2016/03/rev-alfonsas-lipniunas.html>.

<sup>2162</sup> Rev. Józef Kuczyński was arrested on June 29, 1942 in a sweep targeting Polish intelligentsia known as Polenaktion. According to other sources, the precise reason for his arrest and execution is unclear. See Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 130, 228.

- [38] Szczęsny (Felix) Zachuta, a clandestine seminarian in Kraków, was arrested in April 1944, for preparing Jews for baptism, then an illegal activity. He was executed shortly after his arrest.<sup>2163</sup>

Another important source—Zygmunt Zieliński's *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*—identifies additional priests put to death for helping Jews.

- [39] Rev. Franciszek Żak, administrator of the parish of Ponikwa, near Brody and a catechist in Dolina (archdiocese of Lwów), was imprisoned in Stanisławów and executed in March 1942, for rendering various forms of assistance to Jews. The false birth and baptismal certificates he provided helped some escape to Romania and Hungary.<sup>2164</sup>
- [40] Rev. Bolesław Gramz, pastor of Idołta, near Braśław.<sup>2165</sup>
- [41] Witold Sarosiek, pastor of Kundzin.<sup>2166</sup>
- [42] Monsignor Karol Lubianiec, pastor of Plebania, dean of Mołodeczno and vicar general for Byelorussia.<sup>2167</sup>

<sup>2163</sup> Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 3, 119; Andrzej R. Małeck, "65. rocznica tajnego nauczania UJ (Part 2)," *Alma Mater*, no. 92 (May 2007): 50–55, at p. 54.

<sup>2164</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 157. See also Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 176.

<sup>2165</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 44, 54. On Rev. Bolesław Gramz, see Tadeusz Krahel, "Ksiądz Bolesław Gramz," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 8 (August 1999); Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 166–69. Rev. Gramz extended help to Jews, Gypsies and others in need. He was arrested on June 8, 1944 by the Belorussian police and executed. The precise reason for his arrest is unknown. See also Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32, based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum.

<sup>2166</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 50, 54. See also Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (Vitold Garosek), based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum. On Rev. Witold Sarosiek, see Tadeusz Krahel, "Ks. Witold Sarosiek (1988–1944)," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 4 (April 2000). Rev. Starosiek was a member of the Home Army who extended help to Jews and others in need. He was arrested on April 10, 1944, imprisoned in Białystok, and sent to the Gross-Rosen concentration camp, where he died on December 14, 1944. The precise cause of his arrest is not known.

<sup>2167</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 44, 54. On Monsignor Karol Lubianiec, see Tadeusz Krahel, "Ks. Prałat Karol Lubianiec," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 8 (August 2000); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 195, 229. Monsignor Lubianiec, born in 1866, settled in the village of Plebania near Kraśne where he was in charge of a small church; he was highly regarded by people of all faiths. He was arrested in July or September 1942, imprisoned in Wilejka, and executed. Neither the precise cause of his arrest nor the circumstances of his death are clear. See also Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir*



- [43] Rev. Kazimierz Grochowski, pastor of St. Andrew's parish in Słonim;<sup>2168</sup> Helping Jews was not the only "subversive" activity engaged in by the last four priests listed above, who hailed from the archdiocese of Wilno;<sup>2169</sup>
- [44] Rev. Dominik Amankowicz, pastor of Widze (archdiocese of Wilno), collapsed and died on July 26, 1941, after terrified Jews seeking shelter in the church rectory described the mass execution of Jews they had just narrowly escaped (Zieliński, 52). The foregoing information regarding Rev. Amankowicz appears to be incorrect. It refers to the circumstances of the death of Rev. Mieczysław Akrejc of Brasław.
- [45] Rev. Romuald Świrkowski, pastor of Holy Spirit parish in Wilno, located near the ghetto, assisted Jewish fugitives by providing false documents and finding shelters for them. He was arrested on January 15, 1942, and executed in Ponary on May 5, 1942. The precise reason for his arrest is not clear. According to one version, he was betrayed by one of the Jews whom he had helped.<sup>2170</sup> He may have been arrested in connection with his underground activity as representative of the Archbishop's curia's representative on the voivodship council attached to the Command of the Wilno District of the Union of Armed Struggle.<sup>2171</sup>
- [46] Rev. Piotr Pianko, administrator of the parish in Szumowo, near Zambrów, was shot on September 4, 1941, in his liturgical vestments for refusing to announce German orders calling on the population to obey the German authorities, surrender their arms and capture Soviet soldiers.<sup>2172</sup> The memoirs of Józef Klimaszewski (nom de guerre, "Cień") indicate that Rev. Pianko incurred German wrath for defending

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*rezystencja*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (Liubianec), based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum.

<sup>2168</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 44. Rev. Kazimierz Grochowski's rescue efforts are described earlier on. See also Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom*, Entry 210; Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (Grochowski), based on the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum.

<sup>2169</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 44, 54.

<sup>2170</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 52.

<sup>2171</sup> On Rev. Romuald Świrkowski see Tadeusz Krahel, "Ks. Romuald Świrkowski (1986–1942)," *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 2 (February 2000); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 116, 225; Tadeusz Krahel, "Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell'arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944," in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 651; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 426–27. According to the archival records of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, Rev. Świrkowski's execution was motivated by his assistance to Jews. See Viktorija Sakaitė, "Lietuvos dvasininkai—žydų gelbėtojai," *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, no. 2 (12) (2002): 222–32 (Świrkowski).

<sup>2172</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 74. See also Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 2, 84.

Jews.<sup>2173</sup> A different version of Rev. Pianko's execution exists, along with Rev. Aleksander Łuniewski, by German gendarmes.<sup>2174</sup>

- [47] Rev. Leon Bujnowski, pastor of Niedźwiedzica (Pińsk diocese), was arrested on June 27, 1942, during a religious ceremony, on various charges including suspicion of helping Jews. He was executed on July 13, 1942.<sup>2175</sup>  
Rev. Jan Urbanowicz ([*supra* 5], *Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 84);<sup>2176</sup>  
Rev. Józef Kuczyński ([*supra* 37], *Martyrs of Charity*, Entry 665);<sup>2177</sup>
- [48] Rev. Władysław Klimczak, pastor of Porzecze, near Pińsk, was executed on July 13, 1942 for aiding Jews.<sup>2178</sup>
- [49] Rev. Jan Grodis, principal of Romuald Traugutt high school in Nieśwież (Pińsk diocese), was executed for assisting Jews and Soviet partisans.<sup>2179</sup> According to a Jewish source, Rev. Grodis, who "was beloved by his students and especially the Jewish ones, ... expressed his deep shock at the German policies towards the Jews and respected the Jewish suffering."<sup>2180</sup>
- [50] Rev. Edward Tabaczkowski, pastor of Tłumacz, was put to death on October 20, 1942. He provided many false birth and baptismal certificates and other forms of assistance to Jews. He sheltered Leon Weiser, a Jewish student, in the rectory.<sup>2181</sup> According to one source, Rev. Tabaczkowski was betrayed to the Gestapo by a Jewish woman from Tłumacz.<sup>2182</sup>

The following clergymen have been identified in various other sources as having been killed for helping Jews:

- <sup>2173</sup> Józef Klimaszewski ("Cień"), *W cieniu czerwonego boru*, typescript, 20 (in the author's possession).
- <sup>2174</sup> See the eyewitness account in Jan Żaryn, "Przez pomyłkę: Ziemia łomżyńska w latach 1939–1945: Rozmowa z ks. Kazimierzem Łupińskim z parafii Szumowo," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, nos. 8–9 (September–October 2002): 112–17.
- <sup>2175</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 83–84. See also Maria Suchecka, "Proboszcz z Niedźwiedzicy," *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Kraków], April 1, 1990.
- <sup>2176</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 84.
- <sup>2177</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 84.
- <sup>2178</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 84.
- <sup>2179</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 84.
- <sup>2180</sup> Cholański, *The Jews of Bielorussia during World War II*, 278.
- <sup>2181</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 154–55. See also Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims*, 227; Barański, *Przeminęli zagończycy, chłibo-robi, chasydzi...*, 417–18; Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom*, Entry 741; Blond, *Memorial Book of Tłumacz*, cols. xxxiv, cxxix and clxxiii; Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 154–55.
- <sup>2182</sup> Lesław Jezowski, "Ks. Edward Tabaczkowski," *Semper Fidelis* [Wrocław], no. 3 (16) (1993): 10.

- [51] an unidentified priest in the village of Ossowo, near Wilno, was said to have been killed for extending help to Jews.<sup>2183</sup> However, Rev. Sykstus Hanusowski, the local pastor, survived the war. His postwar fate is unclear; according to one source, he was arrested by the Soviets and deported to the Gulag. There is more about Rev. Hanusowski in the text.
- [52] Rev. Dominik Przyłuski, pastor of Garbów, near Lublin, died of a heart attack in December 1942, when, reportedly, his rectory was searched by the Germans looking for Jews. The Jews who had been hiding there were not found.<sup>2184</sup> According to another source, however, the Morel family, for whom Rev. Przyłuski was providing food, were hidden in the barn of the Gęsik family. They were shot by a local policeman.<sup>2185</sup>
- [53] Fr. Remigiusz (Antoni) Wójcik, administrator of the parish in Święty Stanisław, near Halicz (archdiocese of Lwów),
- [54] Fr. Peregryn (Jan) Haczela, guardian of the Conventual Franciscan monastery in Święty Stanisław, and
- [55] Brother Szczepan (Franciszek) Kosiorek were denounced by Ukrainian nationalists and arrested for possession of illegal weapons, which had been planted on their premises. According to another version, they were hiding a Jewish woman in the bell tower of their church. In any case, after their arrest by the Ukrainian police in July 1942, they were either taken to the Gestapo prison in Stanisławów or murdered on the way there. According to one eyewitness, Fr. Wójcik was held by the Gestapo and beaten for three days. On the fourth day, he was ripped apart by dogs in the prison courtyard.<sup>2186</sup>
- [56] Fr. Maximilian (Maksymilian) Kolbe was arrested in February 1941. One of the reasons for his arrest was the shelter and care his Franciscan monastery in Nie-

<sup>2183</sup> Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 33, based on the testimony of Borys Kaminski, an Orthodox priest.

<sup>2184</sup> Franciszek Stopniak, "Katolickie duchowieństwo polskie i Żydzi w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," in Izabella Borowicz, ed., *Polskie podziemie polityczne wobec zagłady Żydów w czasie okupacji*. Conference Papers, Warsaw, April 22, 1987 (Warsaw: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, and Polskie Towarzystwo "Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata," 1988), 70.

<sup>2185</sup> Anna Malinowska, *Komendant: Życie Salomona Morela* (Warsaw: Agora, 2020), 371. See also Jan Konefał, "Z Mandżurii do Grabowa: Kapłańska droga ks. Dominika Przyłuskiego 1872–1942," *Roczniki Teologiczne*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2000): 185–96, at p. 194.

<sup>2186</sup> Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 215, 238–39, 291–92; Barański, *Przeminęli zagonczycy, chliborobi, chasydzi...*, 84, 173; Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 495. See also Siekierka, Komański, and Różański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946*, 503–4, based on the eyewitness account of Michał Przygrodzki.

pokalanów had extended to large numbers of Jewish refugees. Fr. Kolbe was put to death in Auschwitz on August 14, 1941.<sup>2187</sup>

- [57] Rev. Józef Pawłowski, rector of the Higher Seminary in Kielce (until November 1939) and pastor of the cathedral parish, was arrested on February 10, 1941, for ministering to the faithful and extending aid indiscriminately, i.e., to Jews along with others. He was deported to Auschwitz and then to Dachau, where he was murdered on January 9, 1942.<sup>2188</sup>
  - [58] Rev. Jan Gielarowski, pastor of Michałówka, near Radymno, with the assistance of an elderly priest from a nearby village, provided false birth and baptismal certificates to a number of Jews and sheltered Jews in the parish rectory. He provided Jadwiga Bałaban with a certificate under the name of Jadwiga Kowalczyk. Bałaban also states, in her testimony, that Rev. Gielarowski sheltered a Jewish woman and her nine-month-old child. The Germans arrested Rev. Gielarowski in December 1942, but their interrogation at the prison in nearby Jarosław failed to extract from him any information that would compromise anyone else. He perished in Auschwitz on March 21, 1943.<sup>2189</sup>
  - [59] Rev. Paweł Szczygieł, the retired pastor of Jakubkowice, near Nowy Sącz, was arrested on April 14, 1942, on charges of smuggling food into the Nowy Sącz ghetto, which he used to visit under the pretext of caring for his parishioners (i.e., converts). He dies in the Auschwitz concentration on October 31, 1942.<sup>2190</sup>
- The memoirs of Jewish survivors include further examples of Polish priests who appear to have been executed for their rescue efforts on behalf of Jews.
- According to the memoir of Joseph Riwash,
- [60] Rev. Romuald Dronicz, pastor of Wołkołata, in northeastern Poland, like many other priests in the area, fed and sheltered Jews. However, he missed an opportunity to escape and was executed by the Gestapo in July 1942.<sup>2191</sup>

<sup>2187</sup> Treece, *A Man for Others*, 91–93, and endnote 12.

<sup>2188</sup> Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 102–4; “Biogramy 108 męczenników,” *Głos Polski* [Toronto], May 18–24, 1999.

<sup>2189</sup> Krętosz and Pawłowiczowa, *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa Metropolii Lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego ofiar II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, 67; Smólski, *Za to groziła śmierć*, 113–19; Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 4, 292; Zygarowicz and Jedy-nak, *Świadkowie wiary Diecezji Przemyskiej z lat 1939–1964*, 85–86; Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 2, 213–14; Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 77–78; Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod okupacją niemiecką, Institute of National Remembrance, Internet: <https://straty.pl>; Testimony of Jadwiga Bałaban, JHI, record group 301, no. 5476.

<sup>2190</sup> Parafia pw. Podwyższenia Krzyża Świętego w Borusowej, Internet: <http://www.borusowa.diecezja.tarnow.pl/szczygiel.html>; Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 4, 389.

<sup>2191</sup> Riwash, *Resistance and Revenge, 1939–1949*, 144. According to Polish sources, Rev. Romuald Dronicz’s death may have been as a result of his patriotic stance. See Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 23, 44; Tadeusz Krahel, “Ks. Romuald Dronicz,” *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 123 (July 2000); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 195.

According to another memoir,

- [61] and [62] Two priests from Ikażń and Prozoroki were shot in a forest outside of Głębokie, in northeastern Poland, in March 1942. They had been arrested for imploring their parishioners to assist Jews and not to take part in the persecutions directed against them.<sup>2192</sup> According to Polish sources, Rev. Władysław Maćkowiak, pastor of Ikażń, and his vicar, Rev. Stanisław Pyrtek, were arrested in December 1941 for their ardent preaching and for giving illegal religious instruction to children. They were detained in the jail in Braśław, and later in Głębokie, along with Rev. Mieczysław Bohatkiewicz, who was arrested in Dryssa in January 1942. The Germans executed all three on March 4, 1942, in Borek forest, near Berezwezc, outside Głębokie.<sup>2193</sup>

Another Jewish survivor, Wili Fink, mentions:

- [63] An unidentified Polish priest in the Wilno area, “who paid with his life for those (birth) certificates given to Jews.”<sup>2194</sup>

A Jewish wartime report includes the following incident in early December 1939:

- [64] A priest was hanged near the synagogue in Gostynin because he traded with the Jews.<sup>2195</sup> According to Polish sources, however, the pastor and dean, Rev. Apolinary Kaczyński, was arrested in October 1939, along with some thirty Polish and Jewish hostages. Three young vicars—Rev. Antoni Dubas, Rev. Stanisław Krystosik, and Rev. Kazimierz Stankiewicz—volunteered to take his place and were executed by the Germans along with the other hostages on December 1, 1939. Rev. Kaczyński was released but was arrested again in April 1941. He died on December 26, 1941, from the severe beatings he endured while in prison.

Survivor Francesca Bram (née Grochowska) recalled:

- [65] The village priest of Grodziec demonstrated tremendous compassion and organized community assistance for the Jews expelled from Konin to surrounding villages in the summer of 1940. According to her testimony, “The Germans sought an opportunity to arrest him and this happened after he helped the Jews in Grodziec. Soon afterwards came news of his death.”<sup>2196</sup> According to Polish sources, Rev. Franciszek Jaworski, pastor of Grodziec, was arrested by the Germans on August 26, 1940.

<sup>2192</sup> Silverman, Smuschkowitz, and Smuszkowicz, *From Victims to Victors*, 246–47, 325. See also the written statements of Peter (Pejsach) Smuszkowicz, November 18–23 and November 20, 1993 (in the author’s possession); Machnes and Klinov, *Darkness and Desolation*, 571, 575.

<sup>2193</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 38–39, 58; Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 9–18; Tadeusz Krahel, “Nasi Męczennicy,” *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, May 1999; Tadeusz Krahel, “Błogosławieni Męczennicy z Berezwezca,” *Czas Miłosierdzia: Białostocki Biuletyn Kościelny*, no. 131 (March 2001).

<sup>2194</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 397.

<sup>2195</sup> Siek, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 9, 26.

<sup>2196</sup> Mendl Gelbart, ed., *Kehilat Konin be-Frihata u-ve Hurbana (The Community of Konin: Its Flowering and Destruction)* (Tel Aviv: Association of Konin Jews in Israel, 1968), 526–27, as cited in Richmond, *Konin*, 163.

He was deported to Sachsenhausen and later transferred to Dachau. He survived the war.<sup>2197</sup>

A survivor from Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, recounts her story:

- [66] An unidentified parish priest from her town assisted Yehudis Pshenitse, a young girl separated from her family, who appealed to him for help. The priest did much more than shelter her. After being reported to the Germans, he refused to surrender her. Beaten mercilessly and left to die, the priest had the young girl brought to him, blessed her, and implored his housekeeper to find a safe hiding place for her. He died in her presence. "His body was pierced in several places, and his face was unrecognizable."<sup>2198</sup>

The Grajewo Memorial Book pays tribute to a Polish priest who defied the Germans:

- [67] Rev. Aleksander Pęza of Grajewo called "tirelessly" on the Christian population, at the daily masses, not to cooperate with the Germans' mistreatment of Jews. When word of this reached the Germans, he was shot. Various dates are given for Rev. Pęza's death. The most authoritative—on his tombstone—is July 15, 1943.<sup>2199</sup>
- [68] When the Gestapo took a group of Jews from Kolno through the village of Borkowo, near Łomża, on July 9, 1941, the housekeeper rang the church bell to announce the morning mass. Believing this to have been done as a sign of solidarity with the Jewish prisoners passing near the church, they arrested the pastor, Rev. Stanisław Rejmentowski, and his housekeeper. Both disappeared without a trace, probably executed and buried in the nearby forest.<sup>2200</sup>

Relying on Soviet and Jewish sources, Israeli historian Leonid Smilovitskii (Smilovitsky) states that the Germans executed priests for helping Jews in a number of towns across northeastern Poland: Braśław, Brześć, Grodno, Wilejka, Mołodeczno, and Pińsk. He identifies some of these priests by name:

- [69] Rev. Mieczysław Kubik, dean and pastor of Nieśwież (formerly rector of the Church of the Transfiguration of Our Lord in Nowogródek),
- [70] Rev. Michał Dalecki, dean and pastor of Nowogródek,
- [71] Rev. Tadeusz Grzesiak, pastor of Kleck.

<sup>2197</sup> Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 4, 460.

<sup>2198</sup> Kugelmass and Boyarin, *From A Ruined Garden*, 2nd expanded ed., 177–78.

<sup>2199</sup> George Gorin, ed., *Grayever yizker-bukh (Grayevo Memorial Book)* (New York: United Brayever Relief Committee, 1950), xxxii–xxxiii. Witold Jemielity gives the date of Rev. Aleksander Pęza's execution as July 15, 1941—see Witold Jemielity, "Martyrologia księży diecezji łomżyńskiej 1939–1945," *Rozporządzenia Urzędowe Łomżyńskiej Kurii Diecezjalnej*, nos. 8–9 (1974): 53; whereas Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 2, 184 gives the date as August 15, 1943.

<sup>2200</sup> Stanisław Łukomski, "Wspomnienia," *Rozporządzenia Urzędowe Łomżyńskiej Kurii Diecezjalnej*, nos. 5–7 (May–July 1974): 62; Witold Jemielity, "Martyrologium księży diecezji łomżyńskiej 1939–1945," *Rozporządzenia Urzędowe Łomżyńskiej Kurii Diecezjalnej*, nos. 8–9 (August–September 1974): 55; Jan Żaryn, "Przez pomyłkę: Ziemia łomżyńska w latach 1939–1945: Rozmowa z ks. Kazimierzem Łupińskim z parafii Szumowo," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, nos. 8–9 (September–October 2002): 112–17.



According to Polish sources, the aforementioned Rev. Kubik of Nieśwież was executed in Baranowicze on July 13, 1942 for contacts with partisans and for assisting Jews.<sup>2201</sup> This is confirmed by Józef Halperin, who was imprisoned with Rev. Kubik in Baranowicze.<sup>2202</sup>

Other priests identified by Smilovitskii include the aforementioned Rev. Władysław Grobelny (of Kobryń) [*supra* 10], Rev. Józef Kuczyński (of Wsielub) [*supra* 37], Rev. Fabian Poczobutt-Odlanicki (of Łunin) [*supra* 16], and Rev. Jan Urbanowicz (of Brześć) [*supra* 5].<sup>2203</sup>

- [72] Rev. Aleksander Ciszkievicz, rector of an auxiliary church in Pleszewicze, in the parish of Niedźwiedzica (Pińsk diocese), was arrested by the Belorussian police during a hunt for Jews and handed over to the Gestapo. He was executed in August 1942, near Nieśwież.<sup>2204</sup>
- [73] Rev. Zygmunt Miłkowski, pastor of Wiszniew, was arrested in August 1943 for helping Jews and executed later that year in Wilejka.<sup>2205</sup>
- [74] Rev. Antoni Udalski, a former pastor of Wołożyn, was transferred to the parish in Soleczniki Wielkie, near Wilno, in November 1941. He was arrested by Lithuanian police in mid-1942 for helping Jews. He was imprisoned in Wołożyn, and put to death the following year.<sup>2206</sup>
- [75] Rev. Wincenty Kuras directed the institution for orphans and poor children run by the Michaelite Fathers in Działkowicze, near Kobryń, in Polesie (Polesia). Sheltered there were six Jews—three children (two boys and a girl), a tailor and his wife, and a cobbler—and three escaped Soviet prisoners of war. Rev. Kuras was one of some 400 Poles, among them 17 Catholic priests, arrested in a Polenaktion at the end of

<sup>2201</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 84; Laryssa Michajlik, “‘Sąsiedzi’ obok ‘sąsiadów’? Ratowanie Żydów przez chrześcijan na terytorium Białorusi w latach 1941–1944,” in Jasiewicz, *Świat niepożegnany*, 737.

<sup>2202</sup> Halperin, *Ludzie są wszędzie*, 173.

<sup>2203</sup> Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.*, 132.

<sup>2204</sup> Jasiewicz, *Świat niepożegnany*, 735.

<sup>2205</sup> Jasiewicz, *Świat niepożegnany*, 736–77; Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 126, 168, 195; Tadeusz Krahel, “Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell’arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944,” in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at p. 656; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 292–93.

<sup>2206</sup> Threatened with execution under the Soviet occupation, Rev. Antoni Udalski was defended by Jews whom he had helped before the war. He assisted Jews on the entry of the Germans in June 1941 and provided them with false birth and baptismal certificates. He baptized a child born to a Jewish mother and Polish father named Dratwicki, which is what led to his arrest and the arrest of the child’s godparents. See Jasiewicz, *Świat niepożegnany*, 737; Tadeusz Krahel, “Ksiądz Antoni Udalski: Zginął za ratowanie Żydów,” *W Służbie Miłosierdzia* [Białystok], no. 4 (April 2007); Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej*, 126, 166–67, 195; Tadeusz Krahel, “Il salvataggio degli ebrei da parte del clero dell’arcidiocesi di Vilnius nel 1941–1944,” in Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 643–61, at pp. 655–56; Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, 437–39.

June 1942 and imprisoned in Baranowicze. They were executed on July 13, 1942, by the SS and Belorussian police. The three adult Jews at the institution, however, were executed on the spot in Działkowicze when Rev. Kuras was arrested. On the intervention of Countess Helena Jelska, the institution's benefactor, the Jewish children were given to Jewish families in Połonka. However, the Jews of Połonka were soon annihilated as well, also in July 1942.<sup>2207</sup>

- [76] Rev. Ludwik Peciak, dean and pastor of the parish in Kołomyja, provided birth and baptismal certificates to many Jews, among them Mila Sandberg Mesner, Lola Sandberg, Jasia Elberger, and Iser and Toni Reisman. The Reismans were caught by the SS and murdered, and Rev. Peciak's signature on their documents may have led to his arrest by Ukrainian police in November 1942. Delivered to the Gestapo, he was imprisoned in the Majdanek and Flossenbürg concentration camps. He died on April 16, 1943.<sup>2208</sup>

Many similar cases are recorded elsewhere but have still not been confirmed independently (as of this writing).<sup>2209</sup> Some of the repressions of clergymen attributed to assisting Jews have been disproved or are doubtful. For example, there is the case of the Salesian Fathers from the Ks. Siemca Institute in Warsaw.<sup>2210</sup> According to Adina Blady Sz wajger, a Jewish woman who worked in the child welfare section of the Central Relief Council housed in the Salesian Fathers' residence, some priests and lay staff suspected of involvement in underground activities were taken away by the Germans in the spring of 1944 without any explanation and hanged in the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto.<sup>2211</sup> It appears much more likely, however, that they were taken to the Pawiak prison and that some of them, like Rev. Stanisław Janik, were subsequently sent to concentration camps.<sup>2212</sup>

Prior to October 15, 1941, when the death penalty was officially decreed in the General Government for any assistance rendered to Jews, members of the clergy could face deportation to concentration camps for their activities on behalf of Jews. Prominent examples include Fr. Maximilian Kolbe [*supra* 56] and Fr. Anicet (Wojciech Kopliński) [*supra* 28], both of whom perished.

<sup>2207</sup> Marcin A. Różański, "Ks. Wincenty Kuras zapomniany bohater," *Niedziela* [Sosnowiec], August 11, 2015; Dymitr Zagacki, "Szlachetne serce księdza Wincentego Kurasa," *Echa Polesia*, August 28, 2016; "Rev. Wincenty Kuras—murdered for helping Jews," Memory and Identity, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/rev-wincenty-kuras-murdered-for-helping-jews>.

<sup>2208</sup> Sandberg-Mesner, *Light from the Shadows*, 81, 104–5; Lindeman, *Shards of Memory*, 10.

<sup>2209</sup> See, especially, Kącki, *Udział księży i zakonnic w holokauście Żydów*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed.

<sup>2210</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 352.

<sup>2211</sup> Sz wajger, *I Remember Nothing More*, 122–24.

<sup>2212</sup> Jarosław Wąsowicz, "Cierpiący świadek Chrystusa: Ks. Stanisław Janik (1909–2006), więzień obozów hitlerowskich i komunistycznych," *Nasz Dziennik*, July 7–8, 2007; Jarosław Wąsowicz, "Wychowawca, nauczyciel, więzień PRL—ks. Stanisław Janik SDB (1909–2006), in Romanowski, *Bohaterowie trudnych czasów*, vol. 2, 30–45.

A number of other priests arrested for assisting Jews after the implementation of the death penalty either survived incarceration in prisons and camps or managed to escape and hide. Here are some examples.

- Rev. Franciszek J. Gabryl of Kraków was arrested towards the end of 1941 for baptizing a Jew who had expressed an intention to convert several years before the war. After his detention and repeated beatings in the Montelupich prison in Kraków, Rev. Gabryl was sent to Auschwitz, and then to Dachau;<sup>2213</sup>
- Monsignor Witold Dzięcioł of Kielce was arrested by the Gestapo on May 20, 1942, for helping a Jew. He was imprisoned in several concentration camps for the duration of the war;<sup>2214</sup>
- Rev. Julian Chrościcki, pastor of Włochy (a Warsaw suburb), who was active in the Central Relief Council (RGO), was arrested on September 18, 1942, imprisoned in Pawiak prison and the Majdanek concentration camp. He was (miraculously) released from Majdanek on May 15, 1944;<sup>2215</sup>
- Rev. Władysław Miś, pastor of All Saints parish in Kraków, was arrested on September 1, 1942, for issuing a false birth and baptismal certificate to a Jewish woman and was sent to Auschwitz. He survived three concentration camps;<sup>2216</sup>
- Rev. Stanisław Szwaja, a catechist, was arrested in Kraków on November 12, 1942, for aiding Jews. He survived four concentration camps (Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, Sachsenhausen, and Dachau);<sup>2217</sup>
- Rev. Ignacy Świrski, professor at the Stefan Batory University in Wilno, had to hide from the Germans near the village of Turgiele for two and a half years;<sup>2218</sup>
- Rev. Władysław Świder, a vicar at the parish in Mościce, on the outskirts of Tarnów, was arrested on March 5, 1943, for providing a birth and baptismal certificate to a Jewish woman named Jersawitz. The woman was executed. Rev. Świder was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp on May 26, 1943, and then to the Dachau concentration camp. Fortunately, he lived to see the liberation of Dachau on April 29, 1945;<sup>2219</sup>

<sup>2213</sup> Gładysz and Szymerski, *Biografia byłych więźniów politycznych niemieckich obozów koncentracyjnych*, vol. 1, 70–71.

<sup>2214</sup> Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 33.

<sup>2215</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, lxxxiv; Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 43; Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life*, 269.

<sup>2216</sup> Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 3, 106.

<sup>2217</sup> Namysło and Berendt, *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej*, 283; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 310.

<sup>2218</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją 1939–1945*, 52; Szymon Datner, "Materiały z dziedziny ratownictwa Żydów w Polsce w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 73 (January–March 1970): 133–38, at p. 133.

<sup>2219</sup> Stanisław Sojka, "Śp. Ks. Rektor Władysław Świder (1907–1995)," *Currenda: Pismo Urzędowe Diecezji Tarnowskiej*, no. 4 (1995).

- Rev. Mieczysław Kmita, curate of a parish church in Białystok, was warned of his impending arrest and fled to Śliwna, where he hid until the end of the war;<sup>2220</sup>
- Rev. Stanisław Próchniewicz, pastor of Rozbity Kamień, near Sokołów Podlaski, was arrested on September 13, 1943, along with the organist and several parishioners, on suspicion of sheltering and helping escaped Soviet prisoners of war and Jews. He was taken to Pawiak prison in Warsaw but released on October 6, 1943, probably for lack of hard evidence.<sup>2221</sup>

Catholic nuns were also targeted for coming to the aid of Jews. Eight Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul were executed in Warsaw's Wola district in August 1944, during the Warsaw Uprising, when they refused to surrender the Jewish children housed in their children's shelter on Dzielna Street.<sup>2222</sup>

- [1] Zofia Dziewanowska,
- [2] Helena Jezierska,
- [3] Zofia Kowalczyk,
- [4] Anna Apolonia Motz,
- [5] Maria (Marianna) Nadolska,
- [6] Józefa Ogrodowicz,
- [7] Aurelia Pomierny, the superior, and
- [8] Maria Florentyna Wilman.

According to other sources, the nuns refused to leave the shelter and abandon their charges, who included both Christian and Jewish children.<sup>2223</sup>

[9] and [10] Two Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary—Kazimiera Wołowska (Sister Maria Marta of Jesus), the superior of the convent; and Bogumiła Noiszewska (Sister Maria Ewa of Providence), a medical doctor—were arrested in Słomim (voivodship of Nowogródek) on December 18, 1942, for sheltering Jews. They were executed the following day in a mass execution of several hundred Poles—including the Jesuit

<sup>2220</sup> Kazimierz Litwiejko, "Działalność społeczno-oświatowa Kościoła w południowo-zachodniej części archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945," *Nasza Przeszłość: Studia z Dziejów Kościoła i Kultury Katolickiej w Polsce* [Kraków], no. 81 (1994): 303.

<sup>2221</sup> Engelking, Leociak, and Libionka, *Prowincja noc*, 498, n.215; Engelking and Grabowski, *Zarys krajobrazu*, 174, based on information published in *Agencja Informacyjna Wieś*, no. 36 (September 28, 1943): 4; Zbigniew Wąsowski, Tomasz Jaszczółt, and Grzegorz Wierzbicki, *Monografia parafii Rozbity Kamień* (Rozbity Kamień: Parafia Rzymskokatolicka pod wezwaniem św. Trójcy, 2004), 38.

<sup>2222</sup> Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 257 (Entry 591), based on Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych*, 103; Jacewicz and Woś, *Martyrologium*, vol. 5, 580–82, 585–87, 590.

<sup>2223</sup> Jadwiga Kisielska, "Heroiczne zaangażowanie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego a Paulo prowincji warszawskiej w dzieło ratowania ludności żydowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej," *Życie Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 78–85, at p. 80.

priest Fr. Adam Sztark, who was the chaplain at the Sisters' convent, where he had placed Jewish children.<sup>2224</sup> Their story is detailed earlier.

- [11] Sister Maria Klemensa (Helena Staszewska), superior of a convent of the Ursulines of the Roman Union in Rokiciny Podhalańskie, near Rabka, was arrested by the Gestapo on January 26, 1943, for sheltering Poles and Jews escaping to Hungary across the nearby border with Slovakia. She perished in Auschwitz on July 27, 1943.<sup>2225</sup>

- [12] Sister Maria Julia, born Stanisława Rodzińska, superior of a Dominican convent and director of an orphanage in Wilno, was arrested on July 12, 1943. She was imprisoned in Pravieniškės, a labour camp outside Kaunas, and then in the Stutthof concentration camp. She died of typhus there on February 20, 1945. According to a Jewish inmate, she shared her meagre food rations with fellow prisoners in the Jewish barracks and lifted their spirits by her inner strength.<sup>2226</sup>

The claim that Sister Jadwiga Assadowska, superior of the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary in Wołkowysk, in eastern Poland, lost her life during the war is not true. Working as a nurse at the local hospital, after the entry of the Germans in the summer of 1941, she was accused of caring for Soviets and Jews and arrested. She was released from jail after two weeks and survived the war.<sup>2227</sup>

<sup>2224</sup> Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 223 (Entry 463). See also Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 385–86, 390–91; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 247–49.

<sup>2225</sup> Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 445–51; Klemensa Misiurewicz, "Postawa Sióstr Urszulanek Unii Rzymskiej w czasie II wojny światowej wobec osób potrzebujących pomocy," *Życie Konsekrowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 131–39, at pp. 136–38. The nuns also operated a shelter for children from Warsaw with tuberculosis, among them Jewish children, which was shut down in July 1942. The transit point from the smuggling operation was located in Raba Wyżna, a village near the Slovak border, and was overseen by Rev. Stanisław Kądziołka, the local vicar, who acted as a liaison between the escapees and the smugglers. Rev. Kądziołka was arrested in September 1942, in a sweep of those involved in the transborder smuggling operation. He was imprisoned in Auschwitz and other camps, but survived. See Aleksander Marczyński, "Udział duchowieństwa w walce z okupantem w Górcach i Beskidach w latach 1939 do 1945," *Nasza Przyszłość: Studia z Dziejów Kościoła i Kultury Katolickiej w Polsce* [Kraków], no. 67 (1987): 197–236, at pp. 202, 223–24.

<sup>2226</sup> Moroz and Datko, *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939–1945*, 282–85. See also Dombek, *Moc w słabości*.

<sup>2227</sup> Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 275 (Entry 663); Frącek, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek Rodziny Marii w latach 1939–1945*, 144.

## The Price of Rescue

Despite repeated warnings, incessant anti-Semitic propaganda, and threats of sanctions, so many Poles were interacting with and assisting Jews that, in the fall of 1941, the Germans announced that henceforth providing any form of help to Jews would be a capital offence.<sup>2228</sup>

On October 15, 1941, Hans Frank, the Governor General of the Generalgouvernement, issued an ordinance that provided for the death penalty for Jews found outside the ghettos without permission, and for persons offering them shelter.<sup>2229</sup> On November 10, 1941, Governor Ludwig Fischer expanded the activities for which Poles faced the death penalty (in the Warsaw District) to include providing even a night's lodging, food or transportation to a Jew.<sup>2230</sup> Even selling food to Jews was covered by this prohibition.

Yet many Poles continued to trade with and shelter Jews, thereby frustrating German attempts to isolate the Jews, a necessary precondition for their annihilation. *Gazeta Lwowska*, an official German daily published in the Polish language, stated on April 11, 1942:

It is unfortunate that the rural population continue—nowadays furtively—to assist Jews, thus doing harm to the community, and hence to themselves, by this disloyal attitude. Villagers take advantage of all illegal ways, applying all their cunning and circumventing regulations in order to supply the local Jewry with all kinds of foodstuffs in every amount. ...

The rural population must be cut off and separated from the Jews, once and for all, must be weaned from the extremely anti-social habit of assisting the Jews.<sup>2231</sup>

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<sup>2228</sup> For the relevant German ordinances and public announcements, including offering rewards for those providing information about Jewish fugitives and Polish helpers, see Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 634, 639–44. For an in-depth analysis of the laws and measures implemented in the Generalgouvernement against Poles who came to the aid of Jews, see Bogdan Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Poznań: Zysk, 2019).

<sup>2229</sup> Governor General Frank's ordinance is reproduced in Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, at p. 632. The ordinance was subject to the following qualification: "In less serious cases the punishment may be imprisonment with hard labour or imprisonment." On November 10, 1941, in the Warsaw District, Governor Ludwig Fischer eliminated the possibility of a lesser sentence in less serious cases. *Ibid.*, 633.

<sup>2230</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 633.

<sup>2231</sup> Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 40.



A circular issued on September 21, 1942, by the SS and Police Chief in the District of Radom, outlined and justified the draconian measures that were being undertaken to put an end to this “problem.”

The experience of the last few weeks has shown that Jews, in order to evade evacuation, tend to flee from the small Jewish residential districts [i.e., ghettos] in the communities above all.

These Jews must have been taken in by Poles. I am requesting you to order all mayors and village heads as soon as possible that every Pole who takes in a Jew makes himself guilty under the Third Ordinance on restrictions on residence in the Government General of October 15, 1941 (GG Official Gazette, p. 595).

As accomplices are also considered those Poles who feed run-away Jews or sell them food-stuffs, even if they do not offer them shelter. Whatever the case, these Poles are liable to the death penalty.<sup>2232</sup>

The Germans felt compelled to introduce still harsher measures, in order to curtail contacts between Poles and Jews to the fullest extent possible. German law extended the threat of death not only to those who sheltered or assisted Jews in any way, but also to those who knew about a hidden Jew and did not report it to the authorities.<sup>2233</sup> Collective punishment was also imposed on villagers who tolerated rescue in their midst.<sup>2234</sup>

When the Germans started killing Polish “transgressors” more and more frequently, by hanging or executing them or by burning entire families alive in their homes, the population became increasingly fearful of helping Jewish fugitives. Sometimes, Jewish charges were told to leave.

How this played out can be illustrated by the following example from Siedliska, near Miechów, north of Kraków. In the early hours of the morning of March 15, 1943, armed Germans surrounded the house of Wincenty and Lucja Baranek, who were suspected of sheltering Jews. In addition to their two sons, 9-year-old Tadeusz and 12-year-old Henryk, Wincenty Baranek’s stepmother, Katarzyna also lived with them. The Germans summoned the head of the village, told him to gather local farmers, and ordered them to empty the hayloft and other storage areas around the farm, hoping to find hiding Jews. Four Jews were discovered in a hideout, taken behind

<sup>2232</sup> Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 40.

<sup>2233</sup> For example, the announcement issued by the Kreishauptmann of Dębica county on November 19, 1942, stated: “The Security Police will take measures against anyone who learns of a Jew staying outside a camp without authorization and fails to notify the police.” The measures for failing to notify the police of any Jew in hiding entailed deportation to a concentration camp. See Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 643–44.

<sup>2234</sup> In addition to executing on the spot individual Poles suspected of helping Jews, or arresting and sentencing them to prison terms, or sending them to concentration camps, the Germans sometimes imposed collective punishment on the helper’s family or village. A fine of 400,000 złotys, as well as food requisitions, was imposed on the village of Daleszyce near Kielce, where several Poles were seized for helping Jews. See Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 227–28.

the barn, and shot. The Germans entered the house and proceeded to question the family, beating them severely in the process. Immediately after, Wincenty and Lucja were shot, as were their sons after that. The Germans knew that Katarzyna also lived in the house, but they could not find her. They ordered the local farmers to have her brought to them; otherwise, they would shoot several dozen villagers. The terrorized farmers were faced with a diabolical “choice.” The next day, 58-year-old Katarzyna was delivered to the Germans. They murdered her as well.<sup>2235</sup>

Understandably, these draconian measures instilled tremendous fear in Poles and discouraged many from helping Jews. Some rescuers simply could not cope. A Jewish boy who was hidden by a Polish couple in Warsaw recalled the toll that the stress took on his host’s wife. She would leave home and sit in a field crying bitterly; her husband would follow her to make sure she was safe. Nonetheless, they continued to shelter the boy.<sup>2236</sup>

Sacrificing one’s life—or exposing oneself knowingly to that risk—is much more than a routine act of human kindness. Minor acts of service and sacrifice—even, or perhaps especially, when the recipient is a stranger—are generally regarded everywhere as a mark of character and decency. Hence, a degree of expectation exists regarding considerate behaviour on this level in almost any social context. But risking or losing *one’s very life* for another constitutes behaviour on an entirely different order of magnitude. No expectation, duty or requirement can be reasonably asserted in relation to such a sacrifice.

No one has the right to demand of others that they should help someone if it means laying down their lives. No moral or religious code imposes such an imperative or condemns those who are not willing to put their lives on the line for others. Otherwise, except for a handful of people, we would all fail this test.

For Christians, the gift of life itself is God’s most precious endowment. Indeed, the instinct of self-preservation is so strong that the apostle Peter denied his association with Christ three times on the day before Jesus died. Yet Jesus declared Peter to be the “rock” on which He would build His Church. Jesus Christ Himself pleaded with His Father to spare Him from imminent death on the cross, if at all possible.

“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13) is not a command; at the very most, it is an exhortation.

<sup>2235</sup> “Rodzina Baranków—zamordowana za pomoc Żydom,” Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/rodzina-barankow-zamordowana-za-pomoc-zydom>; Namysło and Berendt, *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej*, 352–53.

<sup>2236</sup> Alexander and Amelia Rosłan, RD.

Jewish religious law imposes no duty to risk one's own life in order to save the life of another.<sup>2237</sup> In fact, Jewish teaching fails anywhere to condone the sacrifice of one's own life.<sup>2238</sup> The Torah instructs that a person is obliged to help, and to share, but noting in the Torah supports endangering one's own life. Moreover, the Talmud looks askance on Jews who go out of their way to help non-Jews.<sup>2239</sup>

Honest Jewish survivors who were rescued by Poles have admitted that might have been reluctant or unwilling to rescue Poles under similar circumstances, if the roles were reversed. Some have said emphatically that they would not have undertaken such a risk. (A number of such testimonies can be found the final appendix.)

While Polish Catholic bishops encouraged and approved of rescue activities by the clergy, they did not compel their clergy to perform such deeds of heroism. They understood perfectly well that they had no moral authority to issue such commands.

It is in this light that we must view the actions of Poles who wondered, and often enquired of their priests, whether they should be risking their own lives and those of their family members to rescue a Jew. It is in this light also that we must view a conspicuous tenet of the dominant Holocaust narrative, namely, "too few" Poles risked their lives to save Jews. On January 27, 2020—at ceremonies commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz—Israeli President Reuven Rivlin delivered precisely that reproach, while neglecting to mention that

<sup>2237</sup> Aaron Kirschenbaum, "The Bystander's Duty to Rescue in Jewish Law," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 8 (1980): 204–26: "In Judaism, the bystander's duty to come to the rescue of his fellow man who is in peril is religious, ethical and legal. A citizen is expected to engage in the act of rescue both personally and with his financial resources. He is required, however, neither to give his life nor to place his life in substantial jeopardy to save his fellow." According to the Babylonian Talmud, there is no duty to self-risk for the sake of saving another person's life. See Yechiel Michael Barilan, *Jewish Bioethics: Rabbinic Law and Theology in Their Social and Historical Contexts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 120. For a fuller—but far from definitive—discussion, see Melech Westreich, "One Life for Another Life in the Holocaust: A Singularity for Jewish Law?," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2000): 341–67. The sources in these publications address the obligations of Jews with respect to other Jews, and not to non-Jews.

<sup>2238</sup> This comment was made by Dr. David Novak of the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto in March 2013, at a screening of *The Labyrinth: The Testimony of Marian Kolodziej*, an award-winning film by Ron Schmidt, SJ. *The Labyrinth* is widely regarded as one of the most compelling and evocative artistic portrayals of the fate of prisoners in Auschwitz. See Internet: <https://thelabyrinthdocumentary.com>.

<sup>2239</sup> In her study *Jews, Gentiles, and Other Animals: The Talmud After the Humanities* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), Rabbi Mira Beth Wasserman points out at p. 132 that, "According to the baraita [*Avodah Zarah* 26a-b] Gentiles and Jewish shepherds (generally reputed to be thieves) are two groups whom a Jew need not trouble himself to save from a pit, while *minim* [heretics] along with informers and apostates are not only not to be raised from the pit, they may actually be cast into it." See also p. 260. The baraita also appears in b. *Sanhedrin* 57a (p. 271).

Poles, uniquely in all of German-occupied Europe, faced a death penalty for any degree of assistance rendered to a Jew. Nor did he acknowledge the hundreds of Poles who paid the ultimate price for their altruism.

Yet despite the harshness and extent of German terror in occupied Poland, it is an indisputable fact that no other people made more extraordinary efforts or greater sacrifices on behalf of Jews in the Holocaust than did countless members of the Polish nation. All told, at least one thousand Polish women, men and children—often entire families, and sometimes even whole communities—were tortured to death, summarily executed, or burned alive for coming to the assistance to Jews. Hundreds more were imprisoned and sent to concentration camps.<sup>2240</sup> And no such list of victims, which includes dozens of members of the Catholic clergy, will ever be complete; it is all but certain that cases occurred which will never come to light.

While the absolute number of priests and other religious who were lost in this genocide may appear small in relation to the much larger number of total victims, it must be remembered that this group constituted a very small, spiritual elite; hence, their losses were in fact relatively large, while as a group their response to this immense collective ordeal was a genuine beacon of Christian love in those dreadful times.

It is necessary at some point to step back and make a broad comparison. There was no mandated death penalty for helping Jews in western Europe, and capital punishment was rarely imposed for helping Jews in eastern Europe outside of the German-occupied Polish territories.

<sup>2240</sup> See the following publications on this topic: Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 184–85; Zajęczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*; Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom*; Maria Pilarska, ed., *Those Who Helped: Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Warsaw: The Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation–The Institute of National Memory and The Polish Society For the Righteous Among Nations, Part 1 (1993), Part 2 (1996), and Part 3 (1997)). A portion of the last of the above publications is reproduced in Appendix B of Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Hippocrene, 1997), and an extensive list of Polish victims also appears in Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, 119–23. See also Poray, *Those Who Risked Their Lives*, posted online as *Polish Righteous: Those Who Risked Their Lives*, Internet: <https://www.savingjews.org>. For more recent efforts to document the extent of this phenomenon by Poland's Institute of National Remembrance, see Namysło and Berendt, *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej*, Internet: <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/dla-mediow/komunikaty/9879,Index-Polakow-zamordowanych-i-represjonowanych-przez-hitlerowcow-za-pomoc-Zydom-.html>; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1. The latter publication, which is the first volume of a series of such publications, chronicles the fate of 654 persons subjected to repressions for helping Jews.

Western Europeans under German occupation ran almost no risk of losing their lives for giving aid to persecuted Jews. Public executions of individuals caught helping Jews were unheard of. On very rare occasions, rescuers were deported to concentration camps. In most cases, however, if any punishment was meted out, it was a fine or a short term of incarceration.

Helping Jews was never outlawed in Denmark, and virtually no Dane ever faced punishment on that account. Contrary to the way a certain well-known myth has been spun, Danish rescuers did not risk their lives to save Jews, neither did they risk being deported to a German concentration camp. According to a Danish historian, not one of the 600–700 illegal transports carrying Jewish refugees to Sweden was seized by German police at sea. Any would-be rescuers the Gestapo caught after that exodus were handed over to the Danish police, who treated them with leniency.<sup>2241</sup>

Nor was helping Jews outlawed in Italy.<sup>2242</sup> Likewise, there were no specific ordinances or legislation against the hiding of Jews in France. Since arbitrary acts carried out by the Germans beyond legislative norms for such activities were rare, the risk of punishment in these reaches of German-occupied Europe was negligible. However, laws of general application could be invoked to prosecute those involved in activities such as providing or using false papers, or illegally crossing the demarcation line. In practice, those caught helping Jews could face three months' internment.<sup>2243</sup>

In the Netherlands, where conditions were the harshest of all in western Europe, short-term (up to six- months') "protective custody" was the standard punishment for sheltering Jews. Often, however, those who were caught, even repeatedly, went free. Only the most serious offenders wound up in a concentration camp.<sup>2244</sup>

In Belgium, on June 1, 1942, the local population was warned by decree against sheltering Jews, with "imprisonment and a fine" as the specified consequences.<sup>2245</sup> While many non-Jewish Dutch were imprisoned for helping Jews, few Belgians were.

In Germany proper, no death penalty was ever instituted for helping Jews. According to a German historian, "German law did not specifically prohibit helping Jews. ... In cases of violation, the non-Jewish German party was threatened with protective custody or three months in a concentration camp."<sup>2246</sup> Likewise,

<sup>2241</sup> Sofie Lene Bak, "Between Tradition and New Departure: The Dilemmas of Collaboration in Denmark," in Roni Stauber, ed., *Collaboration with the Nazis: Public Discourse After the Holocaust* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 110–24, at p. 116; Sofie Lene Bak, "From Rescue to Escape in 1943: On a Path to De-victimizing Danish Jews," in Marie Louise Seeberg, Irene Levin, and Claudia Lenz, eds., *The Holocaust as Active Memory: The Past in the Present* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 139–52, at p. 143.

<sup>2242</sup> Silvano Longhi, *Die Juden und der Widerstand gegen den Faschismus in Italien (1943–1945)* (Berlin and Münster: Lit, 2010), 97.

<sup>2243</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 121.

<sup>2244</sup> Marnix Croes, "The Holocaust in the Netherlands and the Rate of Jewish Survival," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 474–99.

<sup>2245</sup> Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust*, 131–32.

<sup>2246</sup> Beate Kosmala, "Facing Deportation in Germany, 1941–1945: Jewish and Non-Jewish Responses," in Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews*

in Austria (incorporated into the Third Reich) no specific penalty was established under law for concealing Jews. Yet rescue efforts there, as in Germany proper, were exceedingly rare.<sup>2247</sup>

The death penalty was on the books in several German conquests such as Serbia,<sup>2248</sup> Greece,<sup>2249</sup> Norway,<sup>2250</sup> and the Czech Protectorate<sup>2251</sup>—though not specifically for helping Jews (except in Serbia), but for other crimes, like using illegal documents and illegal border crossing (regardless of who was being helped). But the death penalty in such cases was rarely enforced.

Several Norwegian resistance fighters were executed for helping Jews escape to Sweden, and a number of persons were imprisoned.<sup>2252</sup> Several dozen individuals in the Czech Protectorate engaged in concealing Jews were charged by Nazi

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and *Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 35. According to another source, although there was no specific crime in Germany for hiding Jews, one could be punished for the broader crime of *Judenbegünstigung* (privileged treatment of Jews). The punishment for helping Jews varied considerably, ranging from incarceration in a concentration camp, to shorter prison sentences, to fines, to sometimes nothing at all. See Richard J. Lutjens, Jr., *Submerged on the Surface: The Not-So-Hidden Jews of Nazi Berlin, 1941–1945* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2019), 19, 69.

<sup>2247</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 8, xxix, liii.

<sup>2248</sup> The military commander in Serbia issued an order on December 22, 1941 imposing the death penalty for sheltering or hiding Jews or for accepting or buying from them objects of value. Little is known about the enforcement of this decree. See Raphaël Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944; Clark, New Jersey: The Law Book Exchange, 2005), 77, 250, 601.

<sup>2249</sup> Jason Chandrinou and Anna Maria Droumpouki, “The German Occupation and the Holocaust in Greece: A Survey,” in Giorgos Antoniou and A. Dirk Moses, eds., *The Holocaust in Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 15–35, at p. 27. Little is known about this decree and its enforcement.

<sup>2250</sup> The Norwegian decree penalized entering or leaving Norway without permission. It did not mention Jews specifically. See Samuel Abrahamsen, *Norway’s Response to the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1991), 20.

<sup>2251</sup> After the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, on Adolf Hitler’s orders Kurt Daluge issued a decree on July 3, 1942, directed primarily against the anti-German underground, to punish by death those who harboured elements hostile to the Reich. Those sentenced by Special Courts in Prague and Brno were cited in the press and over the radio. More than a dozen of those executed in Prague’s Pankrác prison, described as destructive elements (*Volkschädlinge*), were killed for helping Jews and thus “sabotaging the German order for the solution of the Jewish question.” See Livia Rothkirchen, “The Protectorate Government and the ‘Jewish Question’ 1939–1941,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 27 (1999): 331–62. According to an earlier article, the ordinance established “the death penalty for anyone aiding or failing to report persons engaged in activities hostile to the Reich, including sheltering Jews.” See Livia Rothkirchen, “Czech Attitudes towards the Jews during the Nazi Regime,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 13 (1979): 287–320, at p. 314.

<sup>2252</sup> Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous*, 365–66.



special courts and sentenced to death.<sup>2253</sup> Occasionally, rescuers were put to death summarily in Lithuania (approximately a dozen), Latvia, and in German-occupied lands of the Soviet Union.<sup>2254</sup>

Such laxity was virtually unheard of in occupied Poland, where the death penalty was meted out with utmost rigour.

The fact that Poles faced death at the hands of the German invaders for helping Jews is virtually ignored, or at best downplayed, by many historians. When acknowledged by them at all, it is usually done cursorily or halfheartedly. To their great shame, the Jewish community—and in particular Yad Vashem—has done nothing to identify and commemorate these Polish martyrs and their supreme sacrifice—one that merits profound respect and humility.

Some Holocaust historians who denigrate Polish rescue efforts, like Lucy Dawidowicz, have attempted to argue that, essentially, there was no difference in the risks that Poles and Western Europeans—she mentions the Dutch specifically—faced for helping Jews.<sup>2255</sup> But Dawidowicz's own preferred sources refute this claim. For example, Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg described the situation that prevailed in the Netherlands as follows: "If caught, they did not have to fear an automatic death penalty. Thousands were arrested for hiding Jews or Jewish belongings, but it was German policy to detain such people only for a relatively short time in a camp within the country, and in serious cases to confiscate their property."<sup>2256</sup>

By contrast, under German law in occupied Poland, people were subject to the death penalty not only for sheltering or helping Jews in any way, but also for neglecting to report to the authorities on Jews in hiding that they knew about. (The relevant German ordinances were set out earlier.)

American historian Jan Tomasz Gross argues that the Poles' fear of punishment for helping Jews was exaggerated. He points out that the number of Poles put to death for helping Jews numbered *only* in the hundreds, though it actually ran higher, and that this punishment was not meted out in every case. Thus latching on to the death penalty is but a flimsy alibi. In Gross's opinion, "hundreds of thousands" of Jews could easily have been saved had Poles wanted to help. Yet, at the same time,

<sup>2253</sup> Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, 218–27, 303–4. For a list of persons executed on charges of harbouring Jews, see *Heroes and Victims* (London: Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information Service, 1945).

<sup>2254</sup> Alfonsas Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003), 326–27 (Lithuania); Mikrut, *Perseguitati per la fede*, 530 (Latvia); Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 428, 438. See also Zajaczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 111–18, 284–86, 294, 295, for some other examples.

<sup>2255</sup> Lucy C. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 166.

<sup>2256</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books/Harper Collins, 1992), 210–11.

he is unconcerned with the fact that hiding more Jews would have doubtless resulted in considerably more loss of Polish lives.<sup>2257</sup> Apparently, for some historians, Polish lives are expendable.

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<sup>2257</sup> Gross, *Fear*, 179.



## Rescue Efforts of Christian Poles

There appears to be little if any correlation—however that might be measured—between the degree to which members of a host population were willing to put themselves on the line for persecuted Jews and the survival rate of Jews in that German-occupied country. Survival often came about through means other than being passively taken in, concealed and provided for by one or more rescuers.

Forced emigration of Jews from Germany and Austria continued until 1941, allowing tens of thousands to find refuge in safer parts of the world. From 1939 to 1941, an impressive 26,000 Jews left the Czech Protectorate legally.<sup>2258</sup> Many Jews from other countries were also able to flee in time.

Among the large Jewish population of Poland's eastern borderlands which were seized by the Soviet Union in 1939, tens of thousands were "saved" by being deported to the Gulag, or escaping into the Soviet interior ahead of the advancing German armies.

Once the Germans arrived in a particular country, flight was more problematic, though not impossible, especially if there was a safe haven nearby. Tens of thousands of Jews were smuggled out of danger zones, normally for considerable payment. However, countries of destination, like neutral Switzerland, often turned Jews away.

In Germany itself, certain categories of Jews were protected from German genocidal measures.<sup>2259</sup> A significant group of German citizens, defined as "mixed race" (*Mischlinge*)—as well as Jews in mixed marriages—could escape most of the Nazi regime's anti-Semitic policies, provided they and their children did not practice the Jewish faith.<sup>2260</sup> Some 4,700 Jews, married to non-Jews, lived legally in Berlin

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<sup>2258</sup> Legal emigration from the Czech Protectorate counted 19,016 in 1939, 6,176 in 1940, 535 in 1941, and 93 the following two years. Jews also fled the Protectorate illegally, above all to Poland and, after Poland was occupied, to Slovakia. It is estimated that a total of 30,000 Jews fled the Protectorate in all. See Rothkirchen, "The Protectorate Government and the 'Jewish Question' 1939–1941," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 27 (1999): 331–62.

<sup>2259</sup> Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 103, 111–13, 118, 165, 168, 236, 384, 388, 389, 409–10, 448.

<sup>2260</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich at War, 1939–1945*, 70–71, 251, 272–73.

throughout the war.<sup>2261</sup> A similar situation prevailed in other German-occupied countries, though not in occupied Poland. For example, several thousand half-Jews and quarter-Jews in the Netherlands were exempt from deportation.

Compensating helpers was a widespread practice, as the case of Denmark (described below) amply illustrates. A substantial portion of the rescue activities in France and Belgium was self help, in other words, the Jews themselves had to organize and absorb the costs of the rescue services.<sup>2262</sup>

Unfortunately, myth-building has been a staple of how countries are perceived in the Holocaust spectrum, to the detriment of those populations that allegedly did not live up to these high standards. Denmark has traditionally been held out as a country where virtually the entire population rushed to protect its Jews in defiance of harsh German measures against such activities.

In fact, the rescue was orchestrated by the German authorities (*not* in defiance of them), largely financed by the Jews themselves, and carried out by well-compensated Danish fishermen without no significant risk to their safety or anyone else's. Because of German collusion, neither rescuers nor the Jewish fugitives were threatened with any meaningful retribution.

Danish Jews were transferred to Sweden under a special agreement the Germans made with that country. Danish fishermen were mobilized by the underground, who had been given a signal by the German authorities to start transporting Jews by boat to Sweden. Virtually no German boats were actively policing the strait between Denmark and Sweden during October 1943. Consequently, not a single craft taking Jewish refugees to Sweden was interfered.<sup>2263</sup>

<sup>2261</sup> Richard N. Lutjens, Jr., "Jews in Hiding in Nazi Berlin, 1941–1945: A Demographic Survey," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2 (August 2017): 268–97.

<sup>2262</sup> Bob Moore, "Integrating Self-Help into the History of Jewish Survival in Western Europe," in Goda, *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust*, 193–208, at pp. 196–97.

<sup>2263</sup> Until the fall of 1943, Danish Jews were unmolested. SS general Dr. Werner Best, the German who ran Denmark, gave a free hand to Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, maritime attaché at the German embassy in Copenhagen, to do whatever was necessary to derail the planned deportation of Jews. Duckwitz flew to Sweden, where he secretly met with President Per Albin Hansson. The Swedish president assured him that should the operation against the Danish Jews take place, Sweden would in principle be ready to admit them.

When the round-up of Danish Jews was about to begin, Duckwitz made his way back to Sweden to alert the Swedish government to be ready to admit them. The local German naval command warned the Danish underground of the impending fate of the Jews, disabled the German harbour patrol, and turned a blind eye to the rescue operation. The Jews transported to Sweden by Danish boatmen were allowed entry. Since the rescue operation took place with the connivance of the local German naval command, there were no casualties among either Jews or boatmen. See Paldiel, *The Righteous Among the Nations*, 105–9; Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 589–99.

This was not charity work; the fishermen were handsomely rewarded. As one authority has stated, “it can no longer be ignored that money was the hinge on which the whole escape apparatus turned.” Money was needed to organize the fishermen and their boats and to ensure that there would be enough of them. In keeping with the law of supply and demand, some Danish fishermen made a killing off of the Jews’ predicament. Payments ranged from one to fifty thousand kroner per person, with ten thousand kroner for a family of four being about average.

These were windfall earnings. The average monthly wage for a skilled worker in 1943 was 414 kroner. But it has been argued—contrary to the hard evidence of actual risk—that exorbitant rates were fair and justified, considering the possibility of arrest, and that exposing the fishermen’s boats to harm would put their livelihood and families’ well-being in jeopardy.<sup>2264</sup>

Despite this, a whole mythos of heroism envelops the Danish rescue operation.

The purpose of this discussion is not to denigrate the Danish—or any other—rescue effort, but to put them in their proper perspective. The Danish rescue is universally extolled without reference to the minimal risk it entailed for the rescuers and the hefty compensation they took.<sup>2265</sup> (Holocaust historians usually suppress information about these matters, though not about demands for payment made by some impoverished Polish rescuers.)

To the contrary, and far too often, the Polish rescue effort is deprecated without reference to the death penalty the Germans imposed on Poles for providing any form of assistance to Jews and the fact that hundreds of Poles paid with their lives for helping Jews.<sup>2266</sup>

Pointedly, a Danish authority rejects those who, using Denmark as a benchmark, would hold other European nations in opprobrium for not saving their Jews:

<sup>2264</sup> Bak, *Nothing to Speak of*; Sofie Lene Bak, “From Rescue to Escape in 1943: On a Path to De-victimizing Danish Jews,” in Seeberg, Levin, and Lenz, *The Holocaust as Active Memory*, 139–52.

According to another source, during initial stages of the rescue operation, only well-to-do Danish Jews could afford the short passage to Sweden. Private boatmen set their own rates, prohibitive for many, as they ranged from 1,000 to 10,000 kroner per person (\$160 to \$1600 U.S., in the currency of that period). Later, when organized Danish rescue groups stepped in to coordinate the flight and to collect funds, the average price per person fell to 2,000, and eventually 500 kroner. The total cost of the rescue operation was about 12 million kroner, of which the Jews who benefited paid about 7 million, including a 750,000 kroner loan which they had to repay after the war. See Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*, 261–65, 269.

<sup>2265</sup> Peter Hayes, *Why?: Explaining the Holocaust* (New York and London: Norton, 2017), 237–38; Rees, *The Holocaust*, 338–41.

<sup>2266</sup> See, e.g., Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 64, 390–91. At the same time, Evans downplays German guilt. *Ibid.*, 555, 560.



The history of the Holocaust tells a different story, and the terms of occupation, local conditions, and much else differed radically from place to place and over time, making the situation unique in each case. The special Danish example cannot be used to reproach others who experienced the German occupation under far worse conditions than Denmark.<sup>2267</sup>

Similarly, in his comparative study of rescue in Western Europe, historian Bob Moore concluded: “The circumstances pertaining in Denmark in October 1943 were very different from those elsewhere in Western Europe fifteen months earlier when the deportations had begun, and comparisons using the Danes as an example to castigate the behaviour of bystanders in other countries cannot really be sustained.”<sup>2268</sup>

Columbia University historian István Deák is equally blunt:

The penalty for assisting or even trading with a Jew in German-occupied Poland was death, a fact that makes all comparisons between wartime Polish-Jewish relations and, say, Danish-Jewish relations blatantly unfair. Yet such comparisons are made again and again in Western histories—and virtually always to the detriment of the Poles, with scarce notice taken of the 50,000 to 100,000 Jews said to have been saved by the efforts of Poles to hide or otherwise help them ... one must not ignore the crucial differences between wartime conditions in Eastern and Western Europe.

No issue in Holocaust literature is more burdened by misunderstanding, mendacity, and sheer racial prejudice than that of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II.<sup>2269</sup>

The Polish lands experienced the longest and harshest of all German occupations; hence, any Jews trapped there would have faced long odds regardless of whatever other factors may have been at work. The existence of a national government (even a collaborationist one), or the lack of one, did make a big difference in survival rates. Poland ceased to exist as a country; what was not incorporated directly into the Reich, became a police state run by the Germans. No semblance of a national government existed. Thus Jews were bereft of even this nominal protection.<sup>2270</sup>

According to historian Laurence Rees,

it is a serious mistake to assume that the amount of pre-existing anti-Semitism in any country is a guide to the level of subsequent Jewish suffering under the Nazis. Other factors, such as the type of Nazi governance, the continuing presence of a functioning system of administration and the degree to which the Nazis desired to undertake anti-Semitic persecution within that specific territory all played an important role.<sup>2271</sup>

This was particularly evident in the case of Denmark, where the Germans orchestrated the exodus of the country’s Jews to Sweden. In occupied Poland, on the contrary, the Germans persecuted Jews relentlessly from day one until the bitter end, and punished ruthlessly anyone who dared to help Jews in any way.

<sup>2267</sup> Bo Lidegaard, *Countrymen* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 348.

<sup>2268</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 97.

<sup>2269</sup> István Deák, “Memories of Hell,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 26, 1997.

<sup>2270</sup> Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 386.

<sup>2271</sup> Rees, *The Holocaust*, 186.

Widespread poverty and poor living conditions also impacted the capacity of locals to shelter and feed destitute, fugitive Jews. Poland entered the war as one of the poorest countries in Europe, and conditions there deteriorated greatly under German rule. In Warsaw, 75 per cent of all abodes consisted of just one room. (A large part of the city was destroyed as a result of German bombing in September 1939.) In the countryside, half of the houses had but one room, usually with an earthen floor, no running water or electricity, and an average occupancy of five people per room. (While almost 70 per cent of abodes in German-Poland consisted of one or two rooms, in Germany itself, 80 per cent of abodes had three or four rooms.)<sup>2272</sup>

Affluent Denmark experienced a tranquil occupation, with extremely few civilian losses—far fewer, say, than London, which the Germans bombed repeatedly but never occupied. The only occupied country permitted to retain its government, Denmark was Germany’s “model protectorate.” It provided large numbers of recruits to support the German war effort and cooperated to the fullest economically. German soldiers went to Denmark for rest and recreation. British and American airmen shot down over Denmark were routinely handed over by the Danes, at least until the tide of war turned against Germany.<sup>2273</sup>

The Germans interfered very little in its internal affairs, and remarkably, the standard of living there actually improved during the war.<sup>2274</sup> As historian István Deák points out, “in general, Denmark remained serene and peaceful to the end, to the great benefit of the civilian population—and of the German war industry. ... if everybody in German-occupied Europe had behaved the way the Danes did, the war would have lasted much longer.”<sup>2275</sup> As another astute observer has pointed out, there is no telling how the Danes would have responded under an occupation as brutal as that experienced by the Poles.<sup>2276</sup>

While food, funding, false identity documents and a kaleidoscope of favourable circumstances were all essential to survival, long-term clandestine shelter was undoubtedly the most demanding and precarious form of rescue. In most coun-

<sup>2272</sup> Józef Kобрzyński, “Materiały I Kongresu Mieszkaniowego,” *Opiekun Społeczny*, no. 2 (1938): 16–18.

<sup>2273</sup> Anders Bjørnqvad, *De fandt en vej: Den allierede overflyvning af Danmark under besættelsen og hjælpen til nedstyrtede britiske og amerikanske flyvere* [*They Found a Way: Allied Flights over Occupied Denmark and Assistance to Downed British and American Airmen*] (Odense: Odense University Press, 1970).

<sup>2274</sup> Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 153.

<sup>2275</sup> István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2015), 134.

<sup>2276</sup> Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: A New History* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 217.

tries, it was exceedingly rare. Historians have even identified a “saturation point” for Jews in hiding.<sup>2277</sup>

In Norway, with a population of three million, only about 40 Jews survived by hiding in this manner. Almost 95 per cent of those who did not manage to flee the country were caught by the Norwegian police and handed over to the German authorities for deportation. Fewer than a hundred Jews survived by hiding inside Denmark, a nation of almost four million people, while at least 130 Jews who remained there after the evacuation to Sweden were betrayed. They were then handed over to the Germans by the Danish police and deported to concentration camps.<sup>2278</sup>

Among a population of some seven million Czechs, “At the end of the war, it is estimated that about 424 persons survived ‘underground’ in Bohemia and Moravia, some hiding with Czech friends and acquaintances, and others living under assumed names or with forged Christian papers.”<sup>2279</sup>

The Poles who put themselves on the line to shelter Jews made up, as in all countries under German control, a small minority. Those who extended help in other ways were far more numerous. Given that all the odds, all the institutions of power, were stacked on the side of the persecutors, there was a certain logic in the strategy of helping Jews to prolong their lives by providing food, identity documents, assisting them to pass as Poles, if possible, rather than actually hiding them (in one’s cramped lodgings) and risking the fatal consequences of their discovery.

Leading Holocaust historians have argued that the most effective form of resistance for the masses of impoverished Jews in ghettos was food smuggling.<sup>2280</sup> Given that the widespread participation of Poles in illegal trade with Jews put their very lives in danger under German rule, surely that activity is no less commendable than the safe-passage removal of Jews to Sweden by Danish boatmen (for substantial payment).

It must also be stressed that, next to the Jews and Roma, ethnic Poles were arguably the most persecuted and certainly among the most impoverished groups under German occupation. The resources they disposed of which might be shared with anyone else were, therefore, extremely limited, precious, and maybe even critical to their own survival.

Yet the hard evidence attests that Poles, both numerically and in proportion to their ranking in size among the nations of Europe, were no less likely to help a Jew in distress than the members of any other ethnic group.

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<sup>2277</sup> Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 441.

<sup>2278</sup> Moore, *Survivors*, 81, 96.

<sup>2279</sup> Rothkirchen, “Czech Attitudes towards the Jews during the Nazi Regime,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 13 (1979): 287–320, at p. 314. Of the 119 Czechs recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles (as of January 1, 2020), 30 (i.e., about one quarter) were citizens of interwar Poland who resided in Volhynia.

<sup>2280</sup> Hayes, *Why?*, 193.

Poles form the single largest national group honoured by Yad Vashem. Of the 27,921 “Righteous Gentiles” officially recognized by Yad Vashem—as of January 1, 2021—7,177, a little more than one fourth, are Polish.<sup>2281</sup> But that is just the tip of the iceberg.

The vast majority of Poles who—through some compassionate act, put their lives at risk, if only for a moment—has never been acknowledged, let alone “recognized,” by Yad Vashem. Most of those altruistic Poles have long since died, often in poverty; many were never contacted or remembered by the people whose lives they had saved.<sup>2282</sup> In some cases, the Jews they saved did not support the rescuers’ request for recognition.<sup>2283</sup>

Polish historians Władysław Bartoszewski and Teresa Preker (Prekerowa)—both of whom were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles—have credibly estimated that several hundred thousand Poles were at one time or another involved in administering various forms of assistance to Jews through a variety of means.<sup>2284</sup> According to historian Marcin Urynowicz, the most likely number of Polish rescuers is around 300,000.<sup>2285</sup>

<sup>2281</sup> For a list of Poles awarded by Yad Vashem as of January 1, 2021, see Internet: <https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/pdf-drupal/poland.pdf>. With few exceptions, this list includes only ethnic Poles, as persons from other ethnic groups who rescued Jews on the territory of interwar Poland are listed under various other countries such as Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia (e.g., Czechs from Volhynia), Germany, and Austria, as the case may be. Additionally, some 200 ethnic Poles are listed under Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine, Latvia, Germany, Austria (e.g., Danuta Czaplińska Kleisinger, Wanda Semrad), and France, even though in many cases their rescue activities took place on interwar Polish territory. For information about Polish rescuers from countries other than Poland, see Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, vol. 7: *Europe, Part 1, and Other Countries* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), 31–32, 70–71, 86–87, 115–16; vol. 8.—Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine; vol. 9 and vol. 10: *Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010).

<sup>2282</sup> See, e.g., Tammeus and Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People*, 21, 69–70; Stanisława Serafin, “List otwarty do Pana Weissa,” *Przegląd Kolbuszowski*, no. 69 (April 1998) (regarding the recognition of the Kosiorwski family from Kolbuszowa).

<sup>2283</sup> Marcin Urynowicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 262–63; Marcin Urynowicz, “Organized and Individual Assistance of Poles for Jewish People Exterminated by the German Occupants in the Second World War,” in Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Adam Sitarek, eds., *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations: Selected Issues* (Warsaw: The Institute of National Remembrance–Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, 2018), 332.

<sup>2284</sup> Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 222; Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust*, 150.

<sup>2285</sup> Marcin Urynowicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 209–79, at pp. 254–56,

Because of its place in the limelight, Yad Vashem's recognition of some 7,200 Poles as "Righteous" stands naturally as an absolute number—and therefore a reliable measure—in the minds of many. This number makes a small impression, however, in its context of the immense suffering and losses at issue here; hence, giving it prominence or authority works implicitly to diminish the public's awareness and recognition of a much more general and broad-based (yet no less real or essential) "righteousness."

Attempts to reduce Polish rescue efforts simply to the 7,177 Poles recognized by Yad Vashem (as of January 1, 2021), therefore, must be dismissed as ill-informed. As Urynowicz has pointed out, only a very small percentage of Poles identified as genuine, critical helpers in Jewish testimonies have been recognized by Yad Vashem.<sup>2286</sup>

One should also bear in mind that, out of approximately 23 million ethnic Poles in 1939, at least two million perished during the war. Some three million ethnic Poles languished in German camps and prisons or were deported to Germany as forced labour. At least 400,000 Poles were deported by the Soviets to the Gulag. Thus, the remaining population was about 18 million, twice that of the Netherlands.

The most comprehensive research findings available on the rescue of Jews in Warsaw were summarized two decades ago by their author, historian Gunnar Paulsson.

In the league of people who are known to have risked their lives to rescue Jews, Poland stands at the very top, accounting for more than a third of all the "Righteous Gentiles." ...

Of the 27,000 Jewish fugitives in Warsaw, 17,000 were still alive 15 months after the destruction of the ghetto, on the eve of the Polish uprising in 1944. Of the 23,500 who were not drawn in by the Hotel Polski scheme, 17,000 survived until then. Of these 17,000, 5,000 died in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and about 10,500 were still alive at liberation. ...

As it happens, there is an excellent standard of comparison, because it is estimated that in the Netherlands, 20–25,000 Jews went into hiding—about the same number as in Warsaw—of whom 10–15,000 survived—again, about the same number. ... The conclusion, then, is quite startling: leaving aside acts of war and Nazi perfidy, a Jew's chances of survival in hiding were no worse in Warsaw, at any rate, than in the Netherlands. ...

The small number of survivors, therefore, is not a direct result of Polish hostility to the Jews ... The Jews were deported from the ghettos to the death camps, not by Poles, but by German gendarmes, reinforced by Ukrainian and Baltic auxiliaries, and with the enforced co-operation of the ghetto police. Neither the Polish police nor any group of Polish civilians was involved in the deportations to any significant degree, nor did they staff the death camps. Nor did the fate of the Jews who were taken to their deaths depend to any significant degree on the attitudes and actions of a people from whom they were isolated by brick walls and barbed wire. ...

The 27,000 Jews in hiding in Warsaw relied on about 50–60,000 people who provided hiding-places and another 20–30,000 who provided other forms of help; on the other hand, black-

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278; Marcin Urynowicz, "Organized and Individual Assistance of Poles for Jewish People Exterminated by the German Occupants in the Second World War," in Grądzka-Rejak and Sitarek, *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations*, 245–58, at pp. 319–21, 357.

<sup>2286</sup> Marcin Urynowicz, "Organized and Individual Assistance of Poles for Jewish People Exterminated by the German Occupants in the Second World War," in Grądzka-Rejak and Sitarek, *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations*, 245–58, at pp. 319–21, 357.

mailers, police agents, and other actively anti-Jewish elements numbered perhaps 2–3,000, each striking at two or three victims a month. In other words, helpers outnumbered hunters by about 20 or 30 to one. The active helpers of Jews thus made up seven to nine per cent of the population of Warsaw; the Jews themselves, 2.7 per cent; the hunters, perhaps 0.3 per cent; and the whole network—Jews, helpers and hunters—constituted a secret city of at least 100,000: one tenth of the people of Warsaw; more than twice as many as the 40,000 members of the vaunted Polish military underground, the AK [Armia Krajowa or Home Army]. ...

How many people in Poland rescued Jews? Of those that meet Yad Vashem's criteria—perhaps 100,000. Of those that offered minor forms of help—perhaps two or three times as many. Of those who were passively protective—undoubtedly the majority of the population. All these acts, great and small, were necessary to rescue Jews in Poland.<sup>2287</sup>

A further study by the same author is even more emphatic.

For the sake of comparison, the case of the Netherlands might be examined. There, 20,000–25,000 Jews are estimated to have gone into hiding, mainly in Amsterdam, of whom 10,000–15,000 survived the war. The overall survival rate in Holland was thus 40–60 percent, and in Warsaw, after levelling the playing field, notionally 55–75 percent. Thus the attrition rate among Jews in hiding in Warsaw was relatively low, contrary to expectation and contemporary perceptions. The main obstacles to Jewish survival in Warsaw are seen to have been the Hotel Polski trap and the 1944 uprising and its aftermath, rather than the possibility of discovery or betrayal.

Despite frequent house searches and the prevailing Nazi terror in Warsaw (conditions absent in the Netherlands), and despite extortionists, blackmailers, and antisemitic traditions (much less widespread in the Netherlands), the chance that a Jew in hiding would be betrayed seems to have been lower in Warsaw than in the Netherlands.

... it is clear that Warsaw was the most important centre of rescue activity, certainly in Poland and probably in the whole of occupied Europe. The city accounted for perhaps a quarter of all Jews in hiding in Poland ... The 27,000 Jews in hiding there also constituted undoubtedly the largest group of its kind in Europe ...<sup>2288</sup>

Most Jews who survived the German occupation in hiding received assistance of various kinds from at least several and often an even larger number of sympathetic Poles. Most of that help was short term, and it came almost routinely at the hands of total strangers. That type of anonymous assistance is least likely to be acknowledged formally, since the benefactors are rarely known by name, and no effort has been made by Holocaust commemoration and research institutions

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<sup>2287</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, "The Rescue of Jews by Non-Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, vol. 7, nos. 1–2 (Summer–Autumn 1998): 19–44.

<sup>2288</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, "The Demography of Jews in Hiding in Warsaw, 1943–1945," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13 (2000): 78–103, at pp. 96, 99.

Other notable studies by Gunnar S. Paulsson are: "Evading the Holocaust: The Unexplored Continent of Holocaust Historiography," in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, eds., *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. 1 (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), 302–18; "Ringelblum Revisited: Polish-Jewish Relations in Occupied Warsaw, 1940–1945," in Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews During the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 173–92; *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).



to identify them. Yet this type of help was just as critical and just as necessary for survival as that which came from old and trusted friends. The following survivors attest to their experiences in this regard:

- Leonia Jabłonka (Maria Leonia Jabłonkówna), a stage director and theatre critic, credited some fifty Poles with saving her life.<sup>2289</sup> She wrote: “I am one of those persons who has a particular reason for making a declaration because my survival and health during the ‘days of contempt’ I owe not only to a single individual from among my closest friends but to a whole phalanx representing the most diverse social circles—people, often complete strangers, who, by exposing their own lives rendered me help and offered refuge during the entire occupation. Many of them remained anonymous; their behaviour was not guided by any personal friendliness to me—they were quite unknown to me—or even less by any prospects of return in the future. They followed the impulses of their heart and the dictate of their consciences in the name of fraternal solidarity, inflexible resistance to force and barbarity, in the name of mankind. The help I had was so general, it was manifested so invariably through every stage of the growing terror, that it must be acknowledged as a reflection of the general attitude of the entire Polish society.”<sup>2290</sup>
- In an open letter to B’nai B’rith, Joseph F. Kutrzeba wrote: “This may still be a very conservative view, for it is generally ascertained that it was impossible for anyone to singly save a Jew during World War II in Poland; rather, it had taken the cooperation of a number of persons to achieve this—Poland being the only country in Nazi-occupied Europe where a death penalty was mandated for assisting a Jew in any way. In my own case, it had taken the cooperation of nine persons to save my life, not including some 20 who’d aided me along the way. Only one (Rev. Stanisław Falkowski) has been recognized by Yad Vashem.”<sup>2291</sup>
- Hanna Krall, a well-known journalist and author, counted 45 Poles who risked their lives to rescue her.<sup>2292</sup> Franciszka Tusk-Scheinwechsler reported a similar number of Polish benefactors.<sup>2293</sup>
- Rose Gelbart (née Grosman), who passed through at least a dozen different hiding places, recalled, “There were so many places and so many people who did know I was Jewish but who didn’t give me away. It had to be at least fifty, even more than fifty.”<sup>2294</sup>

<sup>2289</sup> “Świadectwo prawdy,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Kraków], September 1, 1946, as cited in Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 293–94.

<sup>2290</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 255.

<sup>2291</sup> Letter dated February 7, 1996 (in the author’s possession).

<sup>2292</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 410–13. Two of her rescuers, Maria Ostrowska-Ruszczyńska and Tadeusz Stepniewski, were honoured by Yad Vashem.

<sup>2293</sup> Franciszka Tusk-Scheinwechsler, “The Price of a Single Life,” in Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 309–17. The following Poles were honoured by Yad Vashem: Janina Ojrzanowska, Maria Ojrzanowska, Klementyna Porowska, and Maria Winnicka.

<sup>2294</sup> Tammeus and Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People*, 79. Yad Vashem recognized Hanna Janczak-Żak and Adam Żak.

- Anna Forkasiewicz identified three Polish families (consisting of 11 people), three individual Poles, four priests, and a boarding school run by nuns.<sup>2295</sup>
- After her escape from the ghetto in Łosice, Stella Zylbersztajn took shelter in several villages in the vicinity of Łosice. In total, 25 Polish families helped her survive the war.<sup>2296</sup>
- Sonia and Abram Hurman, who moved about in the area southwest of Łuków, received help from dozens of Poles.<sup>2297</sup>
- Regina Kempieńska was sheltered by and received other forms of help from 40 individuals and families in and near her native village of Wojakowa, near Czchów.<sup>2298</sup>
- Halina Robinson, born Lina Trachtenberg, estimates that, over a two-year period, more than 100 persons helped her to hide in 13 separate locations.<sup>2299</sup>
- Henryk Szaniawski (Chaim Środa) mentions by name 15 individuals and families who helped him survive, he adds that there were many other Polish helpers whose names he cannot remember.<sup>2300</sup>
- One Jewish woman had to change hiding places 25 times, another woman 17 times.<sup>2301</sup> The renowned immunologist Ludwik Hirszfeld moved eleven times.<sup>2302</sup>
- When asked, "What help did the residents of Warsaw provide to people of Jewish origin who hid?" Władysław Szpilman replied, "A great deal. Poland is not an anti-Semitic country. Those who state the opposite don't speak the truth and perform a bad service that is hostile to Poland. Let us remember that for taking part in rescue activities on behalf of Jews one was threatened with death. Not everyone

<sup>2295</sup> See her testimony in Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland 1939–1945*, 26–27.

<sup>2296</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 287–96; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 685–92; Zylbersztajn, *A gdyby to było Wasze dziecko?*. Remarkably, in this case, Yad Vashem recognized 26 rescuers at the insistence of the rescued person: Kazimierz and Anna Gałęcki, Józef Izdebski, Wacława Jezierska, Aniela Kalicka, Helena Kaźmierczyk-Gruszka, Zygmunt and Halina Ługowski, Stanisław and Janina Mróz, Marian and Lucyna Piechowicz, Władysława Piotrowska, Wacław and Anna Radzikowski, Ezechiel and Irena Romaniuk, Jan and Józefa Ułasiuk, Franciszek and Rozalia Wielogórski, Józef and Józefa Zbucki, Andrzej, Józefa and Stanisław Zdanowski.

<sup>2297</sup> Abram and Sonia Hurman, as told to Halina Birenbaum, *Pod osłoną nocy: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1945* (Kraków and Oświęcim: Fundacja Instytut Studiów Strategicznych and Państwowe Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu, 2007). Yad Vashem recognized the following rescuers: Marianna Banasik, Jan and Józefa Kowalczyk, Stanisława Piątek, and Kazimiera Przybyłowicz.

<sup>2298</sup> Testimony of Regina Kempieńska, JHI, record group 301, no. 3733; Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 59–62. Yad Vashem recognized Franciszek, Józef, Maria and Stanisław Jarosz, and Anna Sokołowska.

<sup>2299</sup> Halina Robinson, "Survivor," in Schafer, *The Words to Remember It*, 291–304, at p. 298. See also Robinson's memoir, *A Cork on the Waves*. Yad Vashem recognized Meta Kemblińska, and Zygmunt and Maria Truchanowicz.

<sup>2300</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 390–93. See also the testimony of Henryk Szaniawski, JHI, record group 301, no. 5482.

<sup>2301</sup> Nathan Gross, "Unlucky Clara," *Yad Vashem Bulletin*, nos. 10–11 (1956): 34; Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość*, 129.

<sup>2302</sup> Hirszfeld, *Ludwik Hirszfeld*.

could muster up the strength to run this risk. Not everyone is born a hero. At least thirty Poles were engaged in rescuing me. At least thirty, at the risk of their lives.”<sup>2303</sup>

- Bernard Traub, his wife, Helena, and their daughter, Krystyna, were helped by numerous Poles in and around Proszowice, a small town outside Kraków, where Bernard was known as Władysław Józef Kulpa.<sup>2304</sup>
- After fleeing from the Kraków ghetto in December 1942, Sara Gross, her daughter, Klara, and her sons, Natan and Jerzy (Yoram), hid for four months, together or separately, in the homes of Polish acquaintances in Kraków. Afterwards, they moved to Warsaw, where they survived the war with the help of many Poles. All told, they stayed in 72 hiding places. Of their many rescuers, Yad Vashem recognized just four: Janina Kapias, Franciszek Turek (who also protected his Jewish-born wife, Maria Grünwald), Maria Kukulska, and her daughter, Anna Krzyżowska.<sup>2305</sup>

Of the approximately 700 Poles (alluded to in the list above) who came to the assistance of these 23 Jews specifically, the great majority remain nameless. About fifty of these Polish rescuers, that is, less than 10 per cent, have been honoured by Yad Vashem for risking their lives and the lives of their family members in the interest of rescuing Jews.

Nor has Yad Vashem acknowledged most of the rescuers identified in the testimonies gathered by the Central Jewish Historical Commission in the immediate postwar years.

For example, after escaping from the ghetto in Czyżew, Etką Żółtak made her way to the village of Helenów, where she was taken in by a farmer named Franciszek Świątkiewicz for two weeks, and then by another farmer, Jan Bogucki, for some ten days, before she moved on to Warsaw. The farmers were afraid to keep her longer. Their names are preserved only because Żółtak recalled them when her testimony was recorded.<sup>2306</sup> The vast majority of such ad hoc interventions—many of them doubtless vital to a fugitive’s survival—will remain forever hidden in the mists of time.

<sup>2303</sup> Tadeusz Knade, “Władysław Szpilman ostatni wywiad,” *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], October 12, 2002. Yad Vashem recognized Andrzej Bogucki, Janina Godlewska, and Czesław Lewicki.

<sup>2304</sup> Bernard Trawiński, *Przebłąski czarnej nocy: Wspomnienia 1939–1945: Kraków, Kościelniki, Proszowice* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka; Proszowice: Gmina i Miasto Proszowice, 2011).

<sup>2305</sup> Natan Gross, *Who Are You, Mr Grymek?* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001); Yoram Gross, *My Animated Life: The Story of How I Survived the German Occupation to Become Australia’s Legendary Animation Filmmaker* (Blackheath, New South Wales: Brindl & Schlesinger, 2011).

<sup>2306</sup> Marta Cobeł-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa, nora, grób: Wojenne kryjówki Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2012), 97, based on the testimony of Etką Żółtak, JHI, record group 301, no. 545.

Some Jews, of course, remained with the same protector long periods of hiding, and occasionally one rescuer (usually a family) sheltered several Jews. But even in such cases, critical assistance from several other persons was usually involved along the way.

Moving frequently from one hiding place to another was not unique to Poland. Each of the 250 children hidden by a rescue organization in the Netherlands required, on average, five hosts.<sup>2307</sup>

The fate of many Jewish fugitives was to wander the countryside, begging food and temporary lodging from terrorized, poverty-stricken Polish villagers. The fortunate ones eventually secured long-term shelter. A good number of other stories—elsewhere in the present, voluminous compilation—illustrate this same phenomenon.

In a context where it is impossible to survey, weigh and tabulate every such case, the following are offered to impugn the oft-heard charge that Polish farmers were eager to denounce Jews.

- After escaping from the ghetto in Skierniewice, Jakub and Towa Putermilch sought refuge in local villages. After wandering about in the fields for several days, they encountered Stefan Gawlikowski, who took them to his father's house in the village of Julków.<sup>2308</sup>
- Moshe Kestenbaum's two children, Yaakov and Esther, escaped during the liquidation of the ghetto in Annopol-Rachów and took refuge in the surrounding villages, obtaining help from people who had known their father. Eventually, in the village of Opoka Duża, they turned to the Judziński family, who took them in.<sup>2309</sup>
- Józef Goldberg (later Golan) escaped from the Warsaw ghetto as a 12-year-old boy and made his way to the rural area beyond the city. In the course of his wanderings, he reached the village of Goszczyn, near Grójec, where he happened to meet a farmer named Wacław Kołacz. Although Kołacz suspected the boy was Jewish, he offered him a job in exchange for room and board. He taught him to speak Polish with a proper accent and instructed him in basic Christian customs.<sup>2310</sup>
- Hana Cytryniarz (later Citrin) and her 12-year-old son fled the ghetto in Adamów at the time of its liquidation. They wandered for months in the surrounding villages until they happened on a certain farm in Wielkie Lendo, near Ryki. Although the woman's accented Polish accent instantly gave away her Jewish identity, the Latoszyński family made a place for her son, and she managed to hide someplace nearby.<sup>2311</sup>
- After fleeing the Otwock ghetto in the summer of 1942, Chana Reizman wandered for some weeks through the nearby towns and villages. When she turned to Józef

<sup>2307</sup> Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews*, 415.

<sup>2308</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 554.

<sup>2309</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 566.

<sup>2310</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 573.

<sup>2311</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 586–87.

Łysik, headman of the village of Wiązowna, he found a place, secured false identity documents, and sheltered her.<sup>2312</sup>

- Rina Eitani (11 years old at the time) and her mother and sister (10 years old) supported themselves by smuggling farm goods from the countryside to Warsaw. They worked separately to lessen the risk of discovery. While the Germans were ruthless toward smugglers, the natives treated them kindly: "One day I was buying something in a store. A little girl came in, warning me, 'The Gestapo are in the house where you live.' Right away, the owner of the store, a woman, put me in the cellar. She wouldn't let me go until the Gestapo left. ... We stayed a lot in the villages where we bought the produce. The peasants were nice to us. They would feed us and sometimes, in exchange, we worked for them."<sup>2313</sup>
- Chava Grinberg-Brown, from the village of Wiskitki, roamed the countryside near Żyrardów, outside of Warsaw, during the final years of the German occupation: "... at the end of each day, I would beg people to let me come in and sleep. I remember that once someone gave me a place to stay and offered me chicken soup ... In another home, one of the women gave me medication for my skin condition. They knew that I was Jewish ... it was obvious. As I wandered from one little place to another, people fed me and let me sleep in their homes or close to them; in barns, pigstys, etc." When a Pole who recognized her wanted to turn her in, "Some peasants who realized what he was after threatened to give him a beating he would never forget. That stopped him from bothering me." Her story continues: "I went to the place I had worked before [the war]. I stayed there for a few days. After that, I kept moving from one place to another. Some refused me work. Then a peasant offered me a more stable job. ... I remained with this peasant for most of the summer. Then I left and went to another village. I went from one village to another. Even during the summer I would change places. When the Poles sent me away, I was not angry. I understood that they were afraid or had not enough food and could not share the little they had. I did not particularly feel their anti-Semitism. ... Most people knew right away when I came in that I was Jewish, but they did not harm me. Only a few times did I have to run away. ... When I entered a village I would go first to the head of the village, and he would send me to a peasant. Usually they were not afraid if they had a note from the head of the village. ... I have no bad feelings toward the Christians. I survived the war thanks to them."<sup>2314</sup>
- A 31-year-old barber named Zimler wandered with his wife in the vicinity of Wiskitki, near Żyrardów, cutting hair for farmers. He wrote: "[T]he attitude of the farmers to us was extremely good." Farmers in the villages of Orszew, Wyczółki and Janówka, allowed them to stay in their homes, gave them food, washed their laundry, and even invited them to a wedding.<sup>2315</sup>

<sup>2312</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 590.

<sup>2313</sup> Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, 231–32.

<sup>2314</sup> Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, 225–27.

<sup>2315</sup> Marta Markowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Dzień po dniu Zagłady* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, Dom Spotkań z Historią, and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2008), 100–1.

- After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, the teenage brothers Zwi and Józef Ditman wandered the villages around their native village of Wiskitki, looking for a place to stay long term. At last they were given refuge by a family in the village of Skrzew.<sup>2316</sup>
- Franciszka Aronson, from a village near Mińsk Mazowiecki, wandered both in areas where no one knew her and through villages where she was known, begging for food, before a place was made for her by nuns at a convent in Ignaców.<sup>2317</sup>
- Three brothers—Josek, Pinkas and Hyman Federman—were given food by a series of farmers after leaving Działoszyce and wandering for weeks in fields and villages. They were taken in by the Matuszczyk family in the village of Bronów, where they remained until the war was over.<sup>2318</sup>
- After escaping from their respective ghettos, Mendel Tider and Józef Langdorf roamed the countryside for six months, begging for help, before the Mika family opened their home to them in the village of Zaborów, near Brzesko, where the two survivors remained until it was safe to come out of hiding.<sup>2319</sup>
- After she fled the ghetto in Zakrzówek, near Kraśnik, with her two-year-old daughter, Rachel Griner wandered through the nearby villages, knocking on people's doors to ask for food and shelter. They at last found sanctuary with the Piłat family in Kolonia Góry.<sup>2320</sup>
- The five-member Graudens family wandered near Staszów begging for help. By and by they found sanctuary with the Skuza family in the village of Solec Stary.<sup>2321</sup>
- In early 1943, after a German operation against the Trembowla ghetto, 10-year-old Sofia Kalski and her mother fled far from city. For about two months they wandered through the fields, living off gifts of food provided by kindhearted farmers gave them. Eventually, they were taken in by the Galoński family in the village of Humnisko.<sup>2322</sup>
- After escaping from Grodno in October 1942, 12-year-old Haim Shapiro wandered from village to village, offering his services to farmers or simply begging. At last, he was taken in by an elderly couple, the Litwińczyks, in 1943. He lived with them until 1951.<sup>2323</sup>
- After his escape from Ejszyski, 16-year-old Hirsz Michalowski (later Tzvi Michaeli) received extensive help as he wandered during four months through villages, forests and marshes until the Wojewódzki family gave him protection in the village of Dociszki.<sup>2324</sup>

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<sup>2316</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 541–42.

<sup>2317</sup> Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach*, 116.

<sup>2318</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 595–96.

<sup>2319</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 597–98.

<sup>2320</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 605.

<sup>2321</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 615–16.

<sup>2322</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 551–52.

<sup>2323</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 589–90.

<sup>2324</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 632–33.



- Other fugitives from Ejszyski—Mosze Michałowski and his young daughter—moved from village to village in the same area: Mieżańce, Januszyski, Jurele, Jasna Polanka, Dowgidańce. Mosze paid his way by working as a tailor.<sup>2325</sup>
- Murray Berger attests to receiving extensive help from numerous villagers after he left the ghetto of Wsielub, near Nowogródek, in December 1941. He joined the Bielski partisans in the following year.<sup>2326</sup>
- Sarah Fishkin recounts serial acts of kindness by villagers in the Rubieżewicze area.<sup>2327</sup>

Concerning the make-up and profile of Polish rescuers, Lawrence Powell offers the following astute observations:

There is a burgeoning literature on the sociology and psychology of “righteous gentiles,” but the sociological literature is frankly inconclusive. Rescuers do not cluster on one or two rungs of the social ladder. They derive in almost equal proportions from the working class and the middle class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia, the educated and the unlettered. Nor are they conspicuously religious or unusually politically active. There have been attempts to identify them as social marginals, people who marched to a different drummer and were impervious to the good opinion of friends and neighbors. But, apart from a psychological ability to act independently of social norms, *there is little evidence showing that rescuers were anything but organically embodied in the communities in which they lived.* [emphasis added]<sup>2328</sup>

Moreover, consistent with memoirs from the Warsaw area, Powell notes:

Almost without exception Jewish rescue occurred within networks. Minimally, it required ten rescuers to save one Jew. ... Several of these rescue operations were complex organizations, such as Żegota ... But most underground railroads were informal and ad hoc, carefully woven webs of associates whose involvement started out gradually and then, before they realized what was happening, metamorphosed into major commitments. ...

The challenge of starting a rescue network, however, was knowing whom to trust. Which friends and relatives were reliable, who was discreet? Routine intimacies had to be reevaluated, well-worn social conventions sifted through for clues as to who combined the right mixture of empathy and discretion.<sup>2329</sup>

Nevertheless, unfortunately, despite the circumstances in occupied Poland, where networks of rescuers emerged naturally as the most effective adaptation for helping Jews, almost all of the seven thousand or so Poles selected by Yad Vashem are honoured singly, either ignoring or greatly downplaying the many times more

<sup>2325</sup> Testimony of Mosze Michalowski, YVA, file O.3/2815 (Item 3560227).

<sup>2326</sup> Oral history interview with Murray Berger, USHMM, Accession no. 2017.262.4, RG-50.997.0001.

<sup>2327</sup> Anna Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Remember! A Collection of Testimonies* (Haifa: H. Eibeshitz Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1999), 285–306.

<sup>2328</sup> Powell, *Troubled Memory*, 281–82.

<sup>2329</sup> Powell, *Troubled Memory*, 279–80. In addition to its formal members and activists, Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews, relied on an extensive network of Polish helpers. See the testimony of Stefan Sendłak, JHI, record group 301, no. 3973.

that number of individuals whose participation would have also been essential to almost every successful rescue.

A good case in point is that of Stanisław Jackowski, who saved at least 30 Jews from Stanisławów. According to Yad Vashem,

Some years before the German occupation, Stanislaw [Stanisław] Jackowski (later Jackow) became well-known for his friendship to the Jews of Stanislawow [Stanisławów], his native city, in Eastern Galicia. This friendship found concrete expression in 1942, when the Germans began liquidating the local ghetto and Jackowski hid Jewish fugitives in his farmyard. [Actually, in a special cellar beneath his home; see his testimony below]. Despite his straitened circumstances and the hostile environment in which he lived, Jackowski helped no less than 31 refugees, without expecting anything in return. He provided his Jewish charges with handgrenades and four guns with which to defend themselves in case they were discovered. In saving his Jewish friends, Jackowski was guided by humanitarian motives, which overrode considerations of personal safety or economic hardship. The refugees who hid on his farm were liberated in July 1944 and, after the war, immigrated to Israel and the United States, where they were later followed by Jackowski. In the early 1960s, the World Association of Stanislawow Jews presented him with a gift as a token of their esteem and gratitude.<sup>2330</sup>

Under the best of circumstances, it would stretch credulity to propose that one person, acting alone, could feed and shelter such a multitude, for years, in complete secrecy at that. Eventually, Yad Vashem recognized two other individuals for their contribution to that rescue effort: Franciszek Uciurkiewicz, an employee of Jackowski's, and Bronisława Ogniewska, who worked at the local health clinic.<sup>2331</sup>

Marek Lessing, one of the Jews Stanisław Jackowski rescued, mentions other helpers, without whom the whole operation would have collapsed: an unidentified Pole who hid Jews in his attic before transferring them to one of Jackowski's bunkers; an unidentified mill administrator who provided flour; and the unidentified administrator of an estate that supplied butter and lard.<sup>2332</sup>

In his own testimony, Jackowski credits another Polish rescuer, one Bogdanowicz, and he describes the grim conditions under German terror—not a lack of empathy on the part of other potential rescuers—that inhibited the locals from doing even more.

Characteristic of those whom the performance of some high-minded act has forever distinguished, Jackowski is fierce in his unwillingness to blame or condemn the many others who declined to risk their lives. Who has the right to expect such a sacrifice? What safely-distanced observer can, without hypocrisy, judge anyone else who was put to such a test? Jackowski tells his remarkable story without embellishment:

<sup>2330</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 291–92.

<sup>2331</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 560, 834.

<sup>2332</sup> Testimony of Marek Lessing, JHL, record group 301, no. 4680, translated in Diatłowski and Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 2, 185–91, at pp. 190–91.

I lived in Stanisławów in eastern Poland, where there were fewer Poles than Jews and Ukrainians. I think there was far less anti-Semitism in central Poland than in eastern Poland. One big reason for this was the fact that thousands of Jews willingly cooperated with the Soviets after their occupation of eastern Poland in 1939. ....

It all started with my attempt to find and rescue an old school friend, Max Saginur. We had been friends for years, a friendship that both his parents and mine tried to discourage. Unless Jews were thoroughly assimilated, few of them wanted to have close personal relationships with Polish Gentiles. ...

Fortunately, I found my friend Max and his wife, Gitya, who along with Gitya's brother and sister-in-law, made their way to my home from the ghetto early in 1943. At first I hid them in a partitioned area behind the kitchen, but that didn't work out because they almost suffocated from lack of air. Besides it was possible to hear every move they made behind the partition. That's when I decided to build a bunker in the cellar.

Before it was all over, I ended up building three bunkers. Little by little, more and more Jews came to me for help. One group of Jews came from another "basket"—the name given to a place where Jews were hidden—that was maintained by another Polish rescuer. This Pole, Bogdanowicz, was afraid to keep his Jews any longer for fear of getting caught by the Gestapo. After all, any Pole caught helping a Jew was automatically executed. I even took in some Jews who had threatened to denounce me and their kinsmen whom I was hiding if I didn't help them.

I had made preparations to receive six Jewish physicians, but shortly before they were supposed to come to my home, the Gestapo arrested them. The unfortunate doctors took poison rather than wait to be shot by the Germans.

It wasn't easy looking after thirty-two people in a place that was a stone's throw from Gestapo headquarters, yet keep a secret of it. The bunkers were well equipped with water, electricity, beds, and stoves for cooking. ... The Jews in the bunker had water downstairs but I had no plumbing at all upstairs!<sup>2333</sup>

Apart from the threat of denunciation, another Pole from Stanisławów, Janina Ciszewska, who was recognized by Yad Vashem for having sheltered ten Jews,<sup>2334</sup> mentions yet another potential source of danger. Quarrelling or bickering among the charges could also attract unwanted attention, and so posed a mortal threat to the lives of everyone concerned.<sup>2335</sup>

The "black legend" of Polish-Jewish relations in the Holocaust is the very antithesis of the present argument. We do not pretend that helping Jews was a universal endeavour or one that most Poles participated in. Far from it. Rather we take issue with the narrative currently in vogue—pushed strenuously by historian Jan Grabowski—that Polish helpers "broke a certain consensus in their own community. Within this consensus there was no place for helping Jews."<sup>2336</sup>

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<sup>2333</sup> Lukas, *Out of the Inferno*, 76–78.

<sup>2334</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 151.

<sup>2335</sup> Testimony of Janina Ciszewska, JHI, record group 301, no. 2514.

<sup>2336</sup> Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 166. Historian Omer Bartov goes even further in his condemnation of Poles: "The majority of the non-Jewish population profited from the genocide and either directly or indirectly collaborated with the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Even if at times the non-Jews also resisted the occupation for their own reasons, only a minority was involved in rescue and feared the vengeance of the majority." See Omer Bartov, "Much Forgotten, Little Learned," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2007): 267–87, at p. 276.

More pointedly, historian Joanna Michlic claims that collective rescue efforts in Poland simply didn't occur.<sup>2337</sup> The root cause of the reluctance to help, one is given to understand, is anti-Semitism pure and simple. (It is instructive to mention here that most Poles did not join underground organizations or participate in armed struggle against the Germans, as those too were very perilous undertakings.)

Building on this narrative as its foundation, a new wave of historians has now linked the very mass murder of the Jews to the agency of the Polish population. Citing Jan Grabowski, historian Mary Fulbrook argues: "The mass murder of the Jews could not have taken place without the involvement of many ordinary Polish people ..." <sup>2338</sup> This narrative has also been embraced by German historians like

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Both Grabowski and Bartov greatly undercount the extent of rescue in their micro-studies. In *Hunt for the Jews*, Grabowski failed to identify 20 out of 34 Polish rescuers from Dąbrowa Tarnowska county recognized by Yad Vashem (i.e., almost 60 per cent); in *Anatomy of a Genocide*, Bartov failed to identify 62 out of 75 rescuers (51 Poles, 20 Ukrainians, 4 mixed Polish-Ukrainian) from the predominantly Ukrainian Buczacz county recognized by Yad Vashem (i.e., more than 80 per cent). Their success rate in identifying non-recognized rescuers is even worse. None of the many examples of communal rescue in their counties mentioned here can be found in those author's monographs. For a critique of the former book, see Mark Paul, *Another Look at Polish-Jewish Relations in Dąbrowa Tarnowska County: A Much Needed Corrective to Jan Grabowski's Hunt for the Jews*, Internet: <http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia>.

<sup>2337</sup> For example, Joanna Michlic, a prolific exponent of the "black legend" of Polish-Jewish relations, points to the rescue efforts of the Huguenot village of Le-Chambon-sur-Lignon, in Vichy France, as a means of denigrating Polish rescue efforts and, by insinuation, effectively denying the very existence of collective rescue in occupied Poland. Her juxtaposition of a case that is truly exceptional, by Western European standards, with sweeping generalizations about the Poles, who are condemned as an entire nation for the activities of a few, is typical of the animus that informs this genre of writing: "Therefore, one can argue that in the history of aid to Jews in Poland, we... hardly find an account similar to that of the successful collective rescue efforts in the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in France. Instead, one finds chilling accounts of solidarity in chasing away and murdering Jewish fugitives, and solidarity in condemning and undermining rescue operations and hurting and betraying the selfless rescuers of Jews." See Joanna B. Michlic, "I will never forget what you did for me during the war": Rescuer-Rescued Relationships in the Light of Postwar Correspondence in Poland, 1945-1949," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2 (2011): 169-207, at pp. 189-90. Jews residing in Vichy France feared both the French police and, from November 1942, the German authorities. On the rescue in Le-Chambon-sur-Lignon, with its access to significant foreign funding and incidents of betrayal at the highest level (several rescuers were arrested and some perished), see the entry in the *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, Internet: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/le-chambon-sur-lignon>. It is a pity that Michlic did not apply her keen wit to the question of why Polish Jews produced corrupt and brutal councils and police forces that engaged in widespread abuses of the ghetto population while French Jews did not.

<sup>2338</sup> See Mary Fulbrook, "Bystanders: Catchall Concept, Alluring Alibi, or Crucial Clue?," in Christina Morina and Krijn Thijs, eds., *Probing the Limits of Categorization: The Bystander in Holocaust History* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2019), 15-35, at p. 25.

Katrin Stoll, who are eager to share German blame for the Holocaust with the Poles. According to Stoll, it was the Poles' "attitudes and behavior" that were "decisive" [sic] in the "Nazi scheme to persecute and murder every Jew, without exception." Allegedly, this was rooted in an eliminationist, "anti-Semitic consensus in Polish society." (Interestingly, German historians took issue with Daniel Goldhagen's claim that Germans harboured eliminationist anti-Semitism.) In her worldview, even "passive observers" are raised to the level of agents or perpetrators of "Nazi"—rather than "German"—"crimes"<sup>2339</sup> Building on this momentum, historian Jan Burzlaff has divided Polish society into two camps: a tiny number of rescuers and a large mass of "perpetrators," either active or passive.<sup>2340</sup> Thus, any Pole who chose not to risk their life to help a Jew has now become a "passive perpetrator" of the Holocaust! Presumably this includes those languishing in German camps and prisons and those deported to Germany as forced labourers.

We have thus "progressed" to a level of understanding that would have shocked Yisrael Gutman, a prominent Jewish historian who actually lived through the German occupation of Poland. Gutman did not mince words in dismissing this narrative: "all accusations against the Poles that they were responsible for what is referred to as the 'Final Solution' are not even worth mentioning."<sup>2341</sup>

The historical record is quite different from what we are now being told. There are a great many recorded examples of entire Polish villages and communities sympathizing with Jews, and participating actively or passively in their rescue. Such occurrences would have been unthinkable in Germany and Austria—no Jew would have survived the collective scrutiny of local villagers in either of those countries.<sup>2342</sup>

<sup>2339</sup> Katrin Stoll, "Traces of the Holocaust in Nachman Blumental's Archives: The Murder of Maria and Ariel Blumental in Wielopole Skrzyńskie During the German Occupation," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2021).

<sup>2340</sup> Jan Burzlaff, "In the Shadow of the Gas Chambers: Social Dynamics and Everyday Life around the Killing Center at Bełżec (1941–1944)," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3 (Winter 2021): 445–63, at p. 454: "[the Polish] interviewees [from Bełżec] were not 'bystanders,' as scholars traditionally classified them, but themselves victims of Nazi violence, and thus either temporary supporters of Jewish escapees or passive perpetrators who refused to help." Not only is the sentence non-sensical on its face, but it also contains an internal non-sequitur. Burzlaff suppresses information about local rescuers who sheltered Jews with the knowledge of the inhabitants of the village of Bełżec. Although he mentions Julia Pępiak, he neglects to mention that her rescue activities were public knowledge. He fails to mention altogether the best documented case, the Brogowskis, who were recognized by Yad Vashem for rescuing Irena Szynger, a Jewish child with Semitic features who lived with them openly. These examples are referenced elsewhere.

<sup>2341</sup> *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (1987): 341.

<sup>2342</sup> This is quite apart from the earlier-noted leniency applied to mixed marriages, persons of partly-Jewish origin, and a small number of other, curiously favoured Jews. Such "privileged" categories of Jews could also be found in other occupied countries, but not in German-occupied Poland.

According to the “new understanding,” these cases did not—and should not—exist at all. However, there are just too many to ignore or to dismiss. It is also important to note that the vast majority of Poles mentioned in the following examples, which are by no means exhaustive, have not been recognized by Yad Vashem. So we are not talking about the behaviour of just a few thousand individuals, but a much broader, albeit not universal, phenomenon—one that undermines the notion of a societal consensus, allegedly grounded in anti-Semitism, to refuse to extend any help to Jews and to strike at those individuals who defied this consensus.

- Emanuel Ringelblum recorded: “I heard from Jews of Głowno [Główno] how peasants helped them during the whole of the winter. A Jew who went out to a village in search of food usually returned with a bag of potatoes ... In many villages, the peasants showed open sympathy for the Jews. They threw bread and other food [through the barbed-wire fence] into the camps ... located in their neighborhood.”<sup>2343</sup>
- The Michalak family, who lived in Boczek Domaradzkie, near Głowno, took in the Rajch family, who pretended to be Polish. Although the villagers suspected otherwise, no one betrayed the Jewish family.<sup>2344</sup>
- Tadeusz Kalski was one of several Jewish teenagers and young men who were openly working for Polish farmers in the village of Chruslin, near Głowno. It was only when the police started to come around looking for Jews that the farmers became afraid to keep them any longer.<sup>2345</sup>
- Hercek Cedrowski, Tojwje Drajhorm and Jankiel Borkowski wrote in 1947: “The Jews of Ozorków [near Zgierz] maintained contact with the Poles. The Polish population did not help the Germans in the liquidation of the Jews. They traded with the Jews and brought food to the ghetto. The Jews were afraid of speaking with Poles, and Poles were afraid of helping Jews, but there were no denunciations of Jews.”<sup>2346</sup>
- Isadore Burstyn, as a child of eleven, was able to survive through the kindness of people in the village of Głupianka, near Otwock (outside of Warsaw), where he passed as a local boy and herded cows. He hid in the forest when his presence threatened the family with whom he often stayed, and friends from the village would bring him food. “In my case, he recalled, the entire village sheltered me even though I know there were still about 20 per cent anti-Semites among them.”<sup>2347</sup>
- Abram Jakub Zand, a tailor from the village of Bolimów, near Skierniewice, “stole back to his village; the local peasants welcomed him back, and he was passed from

<sup>2343</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 116.

<sup>2344</sup> Józef Grabowicz, “Rzykować życie,” *Res Humana*, no. 3 (2004): 39–42. The Michalak family were recognized by Yad Vashem. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 508–9.

<sup>2345</sup> Testimony of Tadeusz Kalski, JHI, record group 301, no. 2987.

<sup>2346</sup> Grynberg and Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945*, 488.

<sup>2347</sup> “Edmonton survivor returns to Poland,” *The Canadian Jewish News* [Toronto], August 2, 1990, and “Return to Otwock brings back rush of memories,” *The Canadian Jewish News* [Toronto], August 30, 1990; Mary Kaye Ritz, “Holocaust Survivor Sees Own Childhood on Film,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, January 31, 2003. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 927.



house to house, working a week or two in each. ... 'If I were to thank everyone, whole villages would have to visit me.'" Both he and his sister survived in this way.<sup>2348</sup>

- Shmuel Eliraz, then known as Ludwik Poznański, was born in Warsaw in 1935. Confined in the Warsaw ghetto, his parents arranged for their little son to be removed to a safer place, entrusting him to his mother's former nanny. Maria Walewska was unmarried, had no children of her own, and after a long service with this family had moved to the village of Nowy Kawęczyn, near Skierniewice. Shmuel became Wiesiu, Maria's nephew. When Walewska first brought the boy home, her neighbours were distrustful, suspecting that she was hiding a Jewish child. However, they eventually left her in peace. The boy remained in the village under Walewska's care until the end of the war.<sup>2349</sup>
- A Polish Red Cross worker gave over to a Polish couple by the name of Kaczmarek, themselves refugees from western Poland living in the town of Żyrardów, near Warsaw, a young Jewish girl found abandoned in an empty death train: "Many of the neighbours knew that she was Jewish, yet no one informed."<sup>2350</sup>
- Ten-year-old Estera Borensztajn was sheltered by the villagers of Osiny, between Żelechów and Łuków: "the peasants arranged among themselves that each would hide a Jewish girl for a certain period so that 'everyone would be guilty and no one could inform.'"<sup>2351</sup> Since she was well known in the village, Estera eventually moved on, staying with other farmers, among them the Goławski family, until she reached the village of Kłoczew. She was taken in by the Pieniak family and remained with them for two years. Once again, her presence became widely known in the village. During anticipated German raids, she was sheltered by Rev. Stefan Kosmulski, the local pastor, who extended his protection to the child.<sup>2352</sup>
- Sara Bryn took up residence in the village of Adamów with her young child, passing as a Christian by the name of Stefania Romaniuk. Although it was widely suspected that she was Jewish, and she was told as much, no one betrayed her.<sup>2353</sup>
- After running out of money, Hanka Jeleń and her young son, Stanisław, wandered in the countryside near Łuków, begging for food and a place to stay. Usually they were put up in barns. For several months before the Soviet army arrived, Hanka

<sup>2348</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 27; Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 105, 123–24.

<sup>2349</sup> Maria Walewska, RD.

<sup>2350</sup> Zbigniew Pakula, *The Jews of Poznań* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 51.

<sup>2351</sup> Testimony of Estera Borensztajn, JHI, record group 301, no. 2989, as cited in Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 27.

<sup>2352</sup> Waldemar Piasecki, "Gdzie jesteś Teresko," *Dziennik Związkowy* [Chicago], March 9, 2009; Wojtek Maślanka, "Dlaczego, Teresko... dlaczego nie chcesz się spotkać...," *Nowy Dziennik* [Garfield, New Jersey], August 3, 2015; Wojtek Maślanka, "Szczęśliwy finał 44-letnich poszukiwań: Spotkanie po 44 latach," *Nowy Dziennik* [Garfield, New Jersey], November 26, 2016.

<sup>2353</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 165; Stefania Romaniuk, "Moja okupacja," *Odra*, no. 5 (1988): 24–32, at pp. 30–31.

worked for a farmer. The farmer's neighbours were aware of this, but no one betrayed them.<sup>2354</sup>

- The Latoszyński family of Lendo Wielkie, near Ryki, took in 12-year-old Artur Cytryniarz (later Citrin) from Warsaw as a farmhand, at the behest of his mother, who hid nearby under a false identity and visited her son from time to time. Although the boy had a good command of Polish, his mother's Jewish accent gave her away. No one at the farm ever stated openly that he was Jewish, but everybody knew it.<sup>2355</sup>
- Henryk Prajs survived the war, passing as a Pole in the village of Podwierzbie, near Magnuszew. It was widely understood that he was Jewish; the village head was personally committed to protecting him.<sup>2356</sup>
- Hana Grynberg, who was just ten years old when she escaped from the ghetto in Koźienice in 1942, lived openly with the Bratos family in the village of Trzebień, near Magnuszew, for some two years. It was widely known that she was Jewish.<sup>2357</sup>
- In the small village of Bokowo Wielkie, near Sierpc, four Jews were rescued by a number of Polish farmers.<sup>2358</sup>
- Mindzia Kirszenbaum (Mindze Kirschenbaum) was taken in by the family of Bolesław Topolewski in the village of Przeradz Mały, near Biezuń. She lived there openly for some two years and the villagers knew that she was Jewish. Previously she had lived with various farmers in the villages of Sadłów, Września and Lutocin, where her Jewishness was widely recognized.<sup>2359</sup>
- Natan Passe was sheltered by the Gosik, Bukowski, Woźniak, and Piórkowski Polish families in the village of Siemiątkowo, near Żuromin. Although his presence there was widely known, no one betrayed him.<sup>2360</sup>
- After being smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto with her brother and wandering around villages working for farmers as cowherds, 12-year-old Ester Rotfing (later Livny) began working for the Jankowski family in the village of Młyniec (?). She remained with them until the end of the German occupation; many of the villagers knew that she was Jewish.<sup>2361</sup>
- After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto in August 1942, 13-year-old Chana Ajzenfisiz and her 10-year-old sister, Chaya, wandered for two weeks from village to village in the countryside north of Warsaw. Unkempt and dirty, both their appearance and their Jewish accent quickly gave them away; nevertheless, the farmers on whose doors they knocked supplied them with enough food and temporary shelter

<sup>2354</sup> Testimony of Stanisław Jeleń, JHI, record group 301, no. 2997.

<sup>2355</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 586–87.

<sup>2356</sup> Testimony of Henryk Prajs, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/henryk-prajs>.

<sup>2357</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 112.

<sup>2358</sup> Leon Gongola, "O prawach i ludziach," *Polska* [Warsaw], no. 7 (1971): 170–72.

<sup>2359</sup> Artur K. F. Wołosz, ed., *Księga pamięci Żydów bieżuńskich* (Biezuń: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Bieżunia and Muzeum Małego Miasta w Bieżuniu, Oddział Muzeum Wsi Mazowieckiej w Sierpcu, 2009), 98–101, translation of *Sefer ha-zikaron le-kedoshei Biezun* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Biezun, 1956).

<sup>2360</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 80–81.

<sup>2361</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 563–64.

to keep them going. When they arrived in the village of Krzyczki-Pieniążki, near Nasielsk, about 50 kilometres from Warsaw, they were taken in by the extended Krzyczkowski family. The girls lived in the village openly, passing as distant family members, until the war ended. The villagers knew that they were Jewish, but no one betrayed them.<sup>2362</sup>

- After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto, Paweł Dutman, a young teenager, was apprehended by the Gestapo in 1942, as he crossed the border between the Generalgouvernement and the Reich on the way to his home town of Ciechanów. Warned by a Pole of his imminent execution, Paweł managed to escape from his work site. Poles he appealed to in the vicinity of Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, most of them complete strangers, gave him food and clothing. Paweł worked as hired hand on various local farms for the duration of the war.<sup>2363</sup>
- After marrying and converting to Catholicism shortly before the war, Władysław Gugła, a school teacher, settled in the village of Chociszewo, north of Warsaw, where his Jewish ethnicity was widely known. He survived with assistance of a number of villagers who sheltered him, as he moved from place to place, teaching village children clandestinely.<sup>2364</sup>
- Yisrael Golos, then a 12-year-old boy, managed to escape from the ghetto in Ciechanów during an Aktion. He took on an assumed Polish identity and began to wander in the area, hiring himself out to do farm work in villages where he was not known. Early in 1943, Golos arrived at the home of Stanisław and Maria Pajewski in the village of Mierzanowo, near Grudusk. They hired him in return for room and board. One day, a farmer from another village happened to arrive at their house. He recognized Golos and disclosed that he was Jewish. "To Golos's surprise, not only did his employers not treat him any worse as a result, they treated him even better. From that time on, the family took special precautions to safeguard Golos's life and the neighbors demonstrated solidarity with the Pajewski family and did not inform on them to the Germans."<sup>2365</sup>
- After escaping from a German camp, Margita (Miriam) Weiss-Löwy, a Czech Jew, made her way to the farm of Józef and Maria Sadurski in Końskowola, near Puławy. Although the neighbours were aware of her presence, she remained there without incident until the end of the German occupation.<sup>2366</sup>
- A Jewish man by the name of Duczy lived openly, without any problems, in his native village of Tarzymiechy, near Zamość, throughout the entire war. He had always been on good terms with the villagers and was so well liked that he lived there without

<sup>2362</sup> Leociak, *Ratowanie*, 123–24, 128–29, 131–35.

<sup>2363</sup> Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 73–74, based on the testimony of Paweł Dutman, JHI, record group 301, no. 4311.

<sup>2364</sup> Suzanne Rozdeba, "A Polish Village's Secret: A Farming Town Hid a Jewish-born Teacher During the Holocaust," *Tablet*, August 21, 2012.

<sup>2365</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 575.

<sup>2366</sup> "Jak można podziękować za życie: Sprawiedliwi wśród narodów świata z Lublina i Końskowoli," *Dziennik Wschodni*, April 26, 2015; Sadurski, RD.

fear of being betrayed to the Germans. He even arranged for several other Jews to hide on the farm of a Catholic family in that same village.<sup>2367</sup>

- Moshe Frank, a teenager from Zamość, was taken in by a poor farmer in Dębowiec who lived in a one-room hut with his wife and sister-in-law. When they realized that he was Jewish, they consulted with relatives and friends about what to do and decided to go on behaving as though Moshe were one of them.<sup>2368</sup>
- Jakub Hersz Griner (later Grzegorz Pawłowski), an 11-year-old boy from Zamość, wandered through nearby villages looking for work as a farmhand. He was taken in by poor Polish families in Białowola and Lipsko-Polesie. Although he pretended to be a Polish orphan, his flawed Polish and behaviour gave him away. He remained with the Bajak family for about a year, and then worked for another family by the name of Kuroń. Suspicions that Jakub was Jewish had spread in the village, but no one mentioned them openly. The boy remained there until the Germans were driven out.<sup>2369</sup>
- Adam Shtibel (then Abram Sztibel, b. 1928 in Komarów, near Zamość) worked for a local Polish farmer herding cows. At the end of 1942, when the farmers were ordered to surrender Jews they had been employing, Adam joined a group of Jewish children who wandered the countryside, sleeping in forests or barns and begging for food from farmers. In the summer of 1943, pretending to be an orphaned Polish child, he was expelled from Zamość, together with Polish residents, to make room for ethnic Germans to be resettled there. He was placed with a childless couple, Jan Szelağ and his wife, in the village of Borki, near Stoczek Łukowski. Dark-haired and circumcised, unable to speak Polish fluently and unfamiliar with Catholic prayers, he soon aroused concern among the neighbours, who reminded the Szelağs of the danger they were putting everybody in, but the couple stood by him, and no one betrayed them to the authorities. Adam remained with them for more than two years after the end of the war.<sup>2370</sup>
- Sala Zylberbaum of Zamość (b. 1931) found employment with two farmers in the nearby village of Huszczka Duża. Even though she was recognized as Jewish by the villagers, she was not denounced.<sup>2371</sup>
- The case of author Jerzy Kosinski and his parents, who lived openly in Dąbrowa Rzeczycka, near Stalowa Wola, is by now a well-known example. The Kosiński family attended church in nearby Wola Rzeczycka, obtained food from villagers in Kępa

<sup>2367</sup> Philip "Fiszel" Bialowitz with Joseph Bialowitz, *A Promise at Sobibór: A Jewish Boy's Story of Revolt and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 141–42.

<sup>2368</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 88–89, 97. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 718.

<sup>2369</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 530–31; "Historia rodziny Bajaków," Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka—Teatr NN," Internet: <https://teatrnn.pl/sprawiedliwi-lubelszczyzna/historia-rodziny-bajakow-bialowola-k-zamoscia/>.

<sup>2370</sup> Rachel Shtibel and Adam Shtibel, *The Violin / A Child's Testimony* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation and Centre for Jewish Studies at York University, 2007), vii–viii, 178–212; Testimony of Abram Sztibel, JHI, record group 301, no. 3683.

<sup>2371</sup> Orzeł, *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady*, 283.

Rzeczycka, and were sheltered temporarily in Rzeczyca Okrągła. Local villagers also assisted other Jews as well.<sup>2372</sup>

- A network of Polish families was instrumental in rescuing the eight-member Krüger (Krueger) family, consisting of two parents and six children from Sowina, a village north of Jasło, and Jacek Klec, a tailor from the Warsaw area. The rescuers included two families from Sowina who were recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles, namely, Stanisław and Anna Kopeć, and Jan and Kunegunda Frączek with their daughter, Adela Liszka, as well the Stasiowski and Hendzel families and others.<sup>2373</sup>
- Marcin and Maria Brykczyński had an estate in Skołyszyn, a village west of Jasło, where they lived with their four children. In 1940, they took in a Polish family who had been expelled by the Germans from Poznań. Feliks Sandauer (b. 1928) was brought there from Lwów by Maria Brykczyńska's sister in 1941, and passed off as their nephew, Feliks Sawicki. Although word of this spread among the villagers, no one betrayed them.<sup>2374</sup>
- Józef and Józefa Marć hid at least twelve Jews in the attic of their house in Jedlicze, near Krosno, among them many members of the Fries family. They were assisted by their son and by the Zub family, who lived in the neighbourhood. Many inhabitants of the village were aware of this, but not one betrayed them.<sup>2375</sup>
- Zila Weinstein-Beer (later Cipora Re'em or Zippora Ram, b. 1939) was taken in by Maria and Stanisław Dudek, a childless couple in the village of Odrzykoń, near Krosno. She was able to pass as a Catholic with the solidarity of the Dudeks' community and assistance from the local pastor, who baptized her and preached the duty of helping one's neighbours, and the solidarity of the Dudeks' neighbours. Most of the villagers knew where the little girl, the daughter of a local sawmill owner, had come from, but they kept it to themselves.<sup>2376</sup>
- Abraham and Regina Bigajer of Przybówka, along with their daughters, were sheltered by five Polish families in the neighbouring villages of Przybówka and Niepla, between Jasło and Krosno. They were the Obara, Zajchowski, Stefanik, Pomprowicz, and Faryniarz families.<sup>2377</sup>

<sup>2372</sup> Sloan, *Jerzy Kosinski*, 7–54; Siedlecka, *The Ugly Black Bird*, 21–37. After the village came under attack, Sala Zylberbaum was transferred to a relative of one of the villagers living in Zamość.

<sup>2373</sup> Anna Kopeć, The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, Internet: <http://www.jfr.org/pages/rescuer-support/stories/poland/-anna-kopec>; The Kopeć Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-kopec-family>; Testimony of Anna Kopeć, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/audio-list?&page=26>.

<sup>2374</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 153; Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 2, 214–18. The Brykczyńskis were recognized as Righteous by Yad Vashem in 2010.

<sup>2375</sup> Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 92.

<sup>2376</sup> Stanisław and Maria Dudek, RD; The Dudek Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-dudek-family>.

<sup>2377</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 601; Rączy and Witowicz, *Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945 / Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945*, 158.

- Several dozen Polish families sheltered Jews in the villages of Ropa, Moszczenica and Rzepiennik Strzyżewski, near Gorlice.<sup>2378</sup>
- The entire village of Ciechania, south of Jasło, near the Slovak border, rescued a local Jew. She was moved from one farmer to another.<sup>2379</sup>
- Two Jewish sisters of the Gershen family, and the husband of one of them, were sheltered by the Adamiak family in the village of Pakoszkówka, near Sanok. They would leave at night to beg food from other Polish families.<sup>2380</sup>
- On the day that local Jews were told to report for “transport to the labour camps,” Paul Axer, an elderly music teacher from Przemyśl, removed his yellow armband, gathered up his stool and balalaika, and set out on foot. After reaching the banks of San River, he sat down on his stool until dark, gazing into the water. A couple of shepherds, a brother and sister, found him and took him into their home. The whole village knew about it, but nobody turned him in. Axer died of natural causes before the end of the war.<sup>2381</sup>
- Although it was widely known that the young daughter of Reb Moshe Kestenbaum was sheltered in an orphanage run by nuns in his native village of Grodzisko Dolne, near Przeworsk, no one betrayed her.<sup>2382</sup>
- Menachem Superman, who survived in the Rzeszów area, wrote: “the entire village knew that I was Jewish, but [my rescuer] always said to me that I shouldn’t be afraid, because no one will hand me over to the Germans.”<sup>2383</sup>
- Jan Tojanowski of Nowy Borek, near Rzeszów, hired the teenager Józef Leichter as a farmhand. It became widely known among Trojanowski’s acquaintances that the boy was Jewish, but the farmer allowed him to stay on. The village headman advised him not to venture outside. Despite some threats, no one actually denounced him.<sup>2384</sup>
- From 1942 to 1944, Stanisław and Maria Grocholski hid fifteen members of the extended family of Isaac and Leah Gamss in the attic of their farmhouse. Villagers in the vicinity of Urzejowice, near Przeworsk, knew the Grocholskis were hiding Jews because theirs was the only house that had no snow on its roof in the winter months, and because members of the Gramss family called on them to ask for food.

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<sup>2378</sup> Kalisz and Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945*, 87–89.

<sup>2379</sup> Zuzanna Schnepf-Kołacz, “‘In the Ciechania Presbytery’: The Story of Saving Zofia Trembska: A Case Study,” *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 2 (2010): 367.

<sup>2380</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 227.

<sup>2381</sup> Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence*, 52. Otto Axer, Paul Axer’s son, loathed the peasants his whole life for their anti-Semitism and was always saying that they denounced Jews during the war. “And then it turned out it was peasants who’d saved his father and the whole village knew about it.” *Ibid.*, 52–53.

<sup>2382</sup> Bertha Ferderber-Salz, *And the Sun Kept Shining...* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 199. For other rescues in Grodzisko Dolne and vicinity, see Lukas, *Out of the Inferno*, 62–64.

<sup>2383</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 128.

<sup>2384</sup> Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 68–72, based on the testimony of Józef Leichter, JHI, record group 301, no. 891.



According to Leslie Gilbert-Lurie, the daughter of one of the hidden Jews: "I would say it took a whole village of people for my mother's family to survive."<sup>2385</sup>

- Faiga Rosenbluth, a penniless teenager from Kańczuga, roamed the countryside from one village to the next for some two years. She was obviously Jewish, yet many peasants helped her, and she was never betrayed.<sup>2386</sup>
- Marian Gołębiowski, who was awarded by Yad Vashem, arranged a hiding place for Dr. Bernard Ryszard Hellreich (later Ingram) and Hellreich's future wife, Irena Szumska, in the village of Czermina, near Jasło. Going by the names of Zbigniew and Irena Jakobiszyn, the fugitive couple were protected by the owners and manager of a local estate, and all the villagers knew of their presence.<sup>2387</sup>
- The Kądziołka family of Więckowice, near Jarosław, took in two siblings, Mojżesz and Blima Katz, from the neighbouring village of Czelatycze. Mejer Blau joined them later, and the Katz brother, Icek, occasionally stopped by for meals. Neighbours suspected the Kądziołkas were hiding Jews, but they said nothing.<sup>2388</sup>
- Barbara Mikłasz, an elderly woman from Pruchnik, near Jarosław, sheltered Elżbieta Roserman (b. 1940) at the behest of her parents, whom the Germans soon afterwards deported. This was no secret to the villagers, for the child lived there openly throughout the occupation. She remained with her adoptive family after the war.<sup>2389</sup>
- The case of Olga Lilien offers yet another example of solidarity among Polish villagers. A survivor from Lwów, with a very marked Jewish appearance, Dr. Lilien lived openly with a Polish family in Mokrzeszów, near Tarnobrzeg. Germans came looking for a fugitive, summoned the villagers to a meeting, and questioned them. Dr. Lilien recalled, "Suddenly he looked at me and said, 'Oh, but this is a Jewess.' The head of the village said, 'Oh, no, she cooks at the school. She is a very good cook.' Nobody said, 'Oh, well, she is Jewish. Take her.' He let me go. The population of the village was about two thousand. They all knew there was something 'wrong' with me. Any one of them could have sold me to the Germans for two hundred deutsche marks, but out of two thousand people nobody did it. Everybody in the village protected me. I had very good relations with them."<sup>2390</sup>
- The villagers of Czajków, near Staszów, were known for the support they gave to Jewish fugitives. "[I]t was something exceptional to see the humane way the villa-

<sup>2385</sup> Gilbert-Lurie and Rita Lurie, *Bending Toward the Sun*, 46–47, 58, 293.

<sup>2386</sup> Fay Walker and Leo Rosen (with Caren S. Neile), *Hidden: A Sister and Brother in Nazi Poland* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), passim; Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 249–50; Testimony of Fela Walke-Rozenblit, JHI, record group 301, no. 2981.

<sup>2387</sup> Piotr Zychowicz, "Ratowali Żydów i nie godzą się na kłamstwa," *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], October 30, 2009; Marian Gołębiowski, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-golebiowski-marian>.

<sup>2388</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 567–68.

<sup>2389</sup> *Sprawiedliwa wśród narodów świata—Barbara Mikłasz*, Gimnazjum Publiczne im. Ks. Bronisława Markiewicza w Pruchniku, Internet: <http://www.gimnazjumpruchnik.pl/projekty/sprawiedliwa.pdf>.

<sup>2390</sup> Land-Weber, *To Save a Life*, 246.

gers behaved. These simple people helped us of their own free will, and without receiving any money in return. From them we often heard some kind words, quite apart from the money, loaves of bread and boiled potatoes they gave us from time to time.”<sup>2391</sup> Yad Vashem has recognized more than a dozen Czajków villagers as Righteous Gentiles.<sup>2392</sup>

- Villagers were suspicious, but two families in Rytwiany, near Staszów, nevertheless managed to successfully protect and provide for the Mandel family, consisting of parents with four children.<sup>2393</sup>
- Many villagers in Głuchów, near Łańcut, took an active part in sheltering Maria Blazer and her son Tadeusz; the entire community supported the effort.<sup>2394</sup>
- An illiterate Jewish woman who survived in a village near Lublin acknowledged that, “the entire village rescued me. They all wanted me to survive. And when the Germans were routed, I left the village and shall never return there.” When asked why she didn’t want to see the people who saved her life, she replied, “Because I would be beholden to the entire village. So I left and won’t return.”<sup>2395</sup>
- Marianna Krasnodębska (née Jarosz), whose family was awarded by Yad Vashem for rescuing thirteen Jews in Piaski, near Lublin, stated: “With absolute confidence and with a clear conscience, I can say that none of the residents of Piaski ever betrayed the Jews in hiding. They might have been too afraid to help, but [they] would not sell one out. There were two informers, but they were executed by the Home Army.”<sup>2396</sup>
- Hanka Drescher recalled how a group of Jews hiding in the forest near Piaski survived by begging for food from farmers.<sup>2397</sup>
- The villagers of Wola Przybysławska, near Lublin, took turns sheltering and caring for a young Jewish survivor of a German raid on a forest bunker. She was passed from one home to another, thus implicating many in the “crime,” and thereby strengthening the bond of complicity among all who were aware.<sup>2398</sup>
- A Jewish woman named Berkowa (née Zelman) was rescued by Jan Łoś in the village of Żabno, near Żółkiewka. Although this was widely known, no one betrayed her.

<sup>2391</sup> Gabriel Singer, “As Beasts in the Woods,” in Elhanan Ehrlich, ed., *Sefer Staszow* (Tel Aviv: Organization of Staszowites in Israel with the Assistance of the Staszowite Organizations in the Diaspora, 1962), xviii (English section).

<sup>2392</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 197, and vol. 5, 670.

<sup>2393</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 609–10.

<sup>2394</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 63.

<sup>2395</sup> Klara Mirska, *W cieniu wiecznego strachu: Wspomnienia* (Paris, n.p.: 1980), 455.

<sup>2396</sup> *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2008), 79.

<sup>2397</sup> Wang, *Los niños escondidos*, 125–26.

<sup>2398</sup> Shiye Goldberg (Shie Chehever), *The Undefeated* (Tel Aviv: H. Leivick Publishing House, 1985), 166–67; Zofia Krzyżanowska, “W naszym domu ukrywana była mała Żydóweczka,” Ośrodek “Brama Grodzka—Teatr NN,” Internet: [http://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/swiadek/Krzy%C5%BCanowska%2C\\_Zofia\\_%281942-%29?tar=85329](http://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/swiadek/Krzy%C5%BCanowska%2C_Zofia_%281942-%29?tar=85329); “Polacy na ratunek Żydów: Historie niezwykłe: Wola Przybysławska,” May 10, 2018, TVP 3 Lublin, Internet: <http://lublin.tvp.pl/37148503/10-maja-2018>.

- The Wajc family—Mendel, Ryfka, and their two young sons, Jankiel and Zygmunt—survived in the village of Rożki, near Żółkiewka. All of the villagers knew that they were there.<sup>2399</sup>
- Hershel Mostyzer and Sara Fuks were directed by a mailman to the home of his mother, Franciszka Rybak, in the village of Rogalin, near Hrubieszów. A tailor by profession, Mostyzer did odd sewing jobs for his rescuer's tenants and her neighbours in order to help with their support. Despite misgivings this gave rise to among some villagers (because of the danger this created for the village), the arrangement was not disrupted.<sup>2400</sup>
- A seven or eight-year-old Jewish boy named Abraham tended geese for a farmer near Sandomierz. The peasants referred to him as "Żydek" (the little Jew); he survived the war unharmed.<sup>2401</sup>
- The Idasiak family took in a teenage Jewish boy by the name of Dawid, whom they sheltered for almost two years near Jedwabne. Neighbours, aware that he was Jewish, contributed to his care. He herded cows and played with the village children.<sup>2402</sup>
- A nine-year-old Jewish boy by the name of Wintluk (Wintel) had lost his mother and had three fingers shot off by the Germans while escaping. He found refuge with a poor Polish family in Mulawicze, near Bielsk Podlaski. Eventually, the whole community took part in caring for and protecting him. "The entire village, which was more aware of the danger, took responsibility for his survival. The village administrator gave warning of visits by the Germans, who were stationed in the village school. Thanks to this collective effort, the boy survived the war."<sup>2403</sup>
- Alfreda and Bolesław Pietraszek sheltered several Jewish families—eighteen persons all told—on their farm in Czekanów, near Sokołów Podlaski, for two years. If only just to feed that many people, the Pietraszeks obviously needed help. In fact, they did rely on the assistance of neighbours to feed their charges. All it would have taken was one individual to betray them. Yet, although the presence of the Jews was known to many villagers, no one betrayed them.<sup>2404</sup>
- Two young Jewish men were passed from farmer to farmer in the village of Zdziebórz, near Wyszaków. Eventually they were accepted into the Home Army.<sup>2405</sup>

<sup>2399</sup> Chaim Zylberklang, *Z Żółkiewki do Erec Israel: Przez Kotłas, Buzułuk, Ural, Polskę, Niemcy i Francję*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (Lublin: Akko, 2004), 169, 171–72.

<sup>2400</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 684.

<sup>2401</sup> Feldenkreis-Grinbal, *Eth Ezkera—Whenever I Remember*, 544.

<sup>2402</sup> B. Idasiak, "Jedwabne: Dlaczego kłamstwa?," *Nasz Dziennik*, February 26, 2001.

<sup>2403</sup> Alina Cała, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1995), 209–10.

<sup>2404</sup> "A Race for Life—Rescued: Ben Zion Sela (Solarz)," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/race-life-rescued-ben-zion-sela-solarz>; Testimony of Josek Kopyto, JHI, record group 301, no. 4085. Two Jewish families consisting of six people were also sheltered in Czekanów by the Fink family. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 215–16.

<sup>2405</sup> Krystian Brodacki, "Musimy ich uszanować!," *Tygodnik Solidarność*, December 17, 2004.

- Yitzhak Kuniak of Kałuszyn did sewing for the peasants among whom he hid. He moved about in several villages that gave him food and shelter.<sup>2406</sup>
- A teenaged boy, Sven Sonnenberg, lived with his mother in a damaged, abandoned house in Drzewica, where he openly played and mingled with the village boys. He survived the war despite his Semitic appearance.<sup>2407</sup>
- A poor Jewish tailor moved from home to home in the village of Dąbrowica, near Ulanów. He lived to see the end of the war.<sup>2408</sup>
- Jerzy and Irena Krępeć (awarded by Yad Vashem) sheltered and otherwise assisted a number of Jews on their farm in Gołębki, near Warsaw. Their son, in his mid-teens at the time, recalled, "[T]he fact that they were hiding Jews was an open secret in the village. At times, there were 20 or 30 people living on the farm. Many of the visitors were urban Jews who spoke Polish with an accent. Their children attended underground schools that moved from house to house. 'The neighbors knew. It would have been impossible to manage this without people finding out. But everyone knew they had to keep quiet—it was a matter of life or death.'" In fact, many of the Krępeć's Polish neighbours helped, "if only to provide a meal."<sup>2409</sup>
- Hinda Żaboklicka was rescued by the Salicki family in the village of Złotokłós, near Warsaw. The rescuers had been her teachers before the war. They smuggled her out of the ghetto in Kałuszyn and brought her to their home. They obtained false identification for her and kept her throughout the occupation, even though neighbours suspected she was Jewish and some expressed concerns about the risk this posed.<sup>2410</sup>
- After living in Warsaw on Aryan papers, passing as a Christian, Joseph Dattner moved to a village outside Warsaw in May 1944. He moved from house to house, working as a tailor in exchange for food and lodging. Dattner recalls: "I survived, like my brothers, by pretending to be Christian. I took the name Poluk but I was well-known and most people knew I was Jewish."<sup>2411</sup>
- After leaving the ghetto in Jeżów, Nathan Gold received extensive support from Poles in the nearby villages of Przybyszyce and Słupia. "Some 10 families in the villages

<sup>2406</sup> Layb Rochman, "With Kuniak in Hiding," in Arie Shamri and Sh. Soroka, eds., *Sefer Kaluszyn: Geheylt der khorev gevorener kehile* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kaluszyn in Israel, 1961), 437 ff., translated as *The Memorial Book of Kaluszyn*, Internet: <http://jewishgen.org/Yizkor/kaluszyn/Kaluszyn.html>.

<sup>2407</sup> Sonnenberg, *A Two Stop Journey to Hell*.

<sup>2408</sup> Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 2, 161–62.

<sup>2409</sup> Peggy Curran, "Decent people: Polish couple honored for saving Jews from Nazis," *Montreal Gazette*, December 10, 1994; Janice Arnold, "Polish widow made Righteous Gentile," *The Canadian Jewish News* [Montreal], January 26, 1995; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 1st ed., 141–43; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 2nd ed., 131–32; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota*, 3rd ed., 140–43.

<sup>2410</sup> Joanna Michlic, "Stories of Rescue Activities in the Letters of Jewish Survivors about Christian Polish Rescuers, 1944–1949," in Dynner and Guesnet, *Warsaw*, 530–31.

<sup>2411</sup> Interview with Joseph Dattner, December 20, 1988, Phoenix Holocaust Survivors' Association in affiliation with the Cline Library of Northern Arizona University; Al Sokol, "Holocaust Theme Underscores Work of Artist," *Toronto Star*, November 7, 1996.

took turns hiding him, each one not knowing about the other's activities. They were poor people, many of the older ones illiterate, but all opened their hearts and their homes to him."<sup>2412</sup> Would it have been possible to keep this rescue a secret?

- Ludwika Fiszer was one of three women who escaped naked from an execution pit where Jews from the Poniatowa labour camp were taken. Roaming from village to village, despite their dishevelled appearances, they were helped in various ways, even though the peasants were clearly terrified of retaliation from the Germans and Ukrainian guards. Although peasants were reluctant to have them around, and few would let them stay for any length of time, no one betrayed them. After several weeks, they met up with a Polish woman who took them to Warsaw.<sup>2413</sup>
- In June 1943, Hary (Tzvi) Norich (b. 1928) left the ghetto in Będzin and found shelter with Andrzej and Maria Skop in the village of Woźniki, south of Częstochowa. He stayed with the Skops for eight months, despite the fact that quite a few residents of Chorzów could have recognized him as Jewish—indeed, that happened several times—and many people in Woźniki had known his parents, who lived there for a while after their wedding, and they recognized his resemblance to them. Norich understood that he must look for a different hideout so as not to endanger the Skops excessively. He survived the war with the help of another Polish family.<sup>2414</sup>
- David Danieli, a nine-year-old boy from Rybnik, was taken in by a Polish family who looked after him devotedly and saw to all his needs. Much later, he realized that many people had known he was Jewish. He appreciated their collective restraint, as (obviously) not one of them ever compromised his adoptive parents.<sup>2415</sup>
- After escaping from the Sosnowiec ghetto, Adela Grünfeld and her son, Leon, took up residence in Bujaków, near Bielsko-Biała, in the Beskid Mountains. She was recognized by Bolesław Blachura, a friend from before the war and an underground member hiding in the same village with the Wawak and Porębski families. Adela brought many other Jews to the village, including her sister and brother-in-law. They stayed in the barn or in the attic, and only her son, Leon, lived openly in the house. When asked about the danger of being denounced because of this large movement of people, Władysław Porębski answered: "I was only afraid of [being denounced by] Germans, not Poles, because one of them [the Poles] was in Auschwitz, another in forced labour, transported to Germany, another one was a partisan, yet another left in 1939 and never came back... These things united people."<sup>2416</sup>
- Hania Gross was taken in by the Matlak family of Przeciszów, a village near Oświęcim, at the age of nine. They passed her off as a distant relative, but neighbours

<sup>2412</sup> Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 1st ed., 143–44; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 2nd ed., 133; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota*, 3rd ed., 43.

<sup>2413</sup> Account of Ludwika Fiszer in the web site *Women and the Holocaust* (Personal Reflections—In Ghettos/Camps), Internet: <http://www.interlog.com/~mighty/personal/ludwika.html>.

<sup>2414</sup> Skop Family, RD.

<sup>2415</sup> Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 62–63.

<sup>2416</sup> *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2009), 115. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 634–35.

became suspicious. Notwithstanding the danger it posed to their lives and the lives of others, the Matlaks continued to care for Hania as if she were their own flesh and blood. "They were afraid they might get denounced. Fortunately, no one did." Hania lived a normal life, playing with other children, attending church—not in hiding at all.<sup>2417</sup>

- A Jew from Kraków by the name of Gelbart settled in the nearby village of Wyciąże with his wife and child. He provided tailoring services in exchange for board as they moved from cottage to cottage. They were known to hundreds of people ... and they survived the occupation.<sup>2418</sup>
- Jan Wlazło, a farmer who lived in Liszki, near Kraków, took in as tenants a Jewish family passing as Poles. Although they looked Jewish, and everybody knew about their presence, they survived the German occupation.<sup>2419</sup>
- The Pinkies family was rescued by the residents of the hamlet of Czyżyczka, on the outskirts of Gierczyce, near Bochnia.<sup>2420</sup>
- Lidia Parecka, descended from a family of converts in Lwów, lived openly with Jadwiga and Stanisław Skarżyński in Piaski, near the village of Czchów, not far from Brzesko. Although she had marked Semitic features, and her Jewish origin was widely suspected, no one betrayed her.<sup>2421</sup>
- Bogusława Lifszyc was smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto and brought to the village of Laskowa, near Nowy Sącz, where she was taken in by the Kraśny family. Though posing as a Catholic, under the name Halina Pisz, her dark features made her stand out, and it was evident to the villagers that she was Jewish. Nevertheless, she survived the war.<sup>2422</sup>
- It was an open secret that Ewa Rajec, the two-year-old child being cared for by Mieczysława Foryniak in the village of Dursztyn, near Nowy Targ, was the daughter of the local Jewish doctor. To assist her cover, the child was baptized by a local priest. Her parents were in hiding nearby.<sup>2423</sup>
- A lay orphanage (run by Jadwiga Strzałecka and financed by the Central Relief Council), which moved from Warsaw to Poronin, near Zakopane, after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, included both children (about a dozen) and staff members who were Jewish. The director's Polish staff either knew or surmised the truth. Not one of their Jewish children or personnel was fell into German hands.<sup>2424</sup>

<sup>2417</sup> *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2008), 97.

<sup>2418</sup> Krystyna Samsonowska, "Pomoc dla Żydów krakowskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 856.

<sup>2419</sup> Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 346.

<sup>2420</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 815.

<sup>2421</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 371–72.

<sup>2422</sup> Knap, "Jak ci się uda uratować, pamiętaj", 37–38.

<sup>2423</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 171–78

<sup>2424</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 87, 93; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 760 (Jadwiga Strzałecka and Janusz Strzałecki). One of the Jewish charges, Janina Hescheles Altman from Lwów (b. 1931), penned a memoir, *Oczyrna dwunastoletniej*



- Alter Szymaszynowicz survived by making soap for villagers near Opoczno and Końskie in exchange for food and shelter.<sup>2425</sup>
- In the village of Dziurków, near Radom, a local Jew lived openly throughout the war with one or the other of two Polish families. His assumed identity was furnished by the Home Army, and he even did seasonal work for the Germans without getting caught.<sup>2426</sup>
- In the village of Tarłów, between Zwoleń and Sandomierz, Józef and Wiktoria Krawczyk agreed to shelter Ewa Górecka, the three-year-old daughter of a Jewish woman whom they did not know. They passed her off as their granddaughter, even though their two adult sons were childless, and the neighbours knew she was not their granddaughter. They kept the child until 1949, when she was taken from them by a Jewish agent.<sup>2427</sup>
- A Jew passing as a Christian became a driver and had to transport some German officials to his hometown of Wierzbnik. "How come no one recognized me?" he wondered. "There are many gentiles who knew me in the town where I was born and raised and still I was not exposed." After the war, it dawned on him that he had indeed been recognized. He just wasn't exposed because none of his former acquaintances gave him away.<sup>2428</sup>
- The Konarski and Mermer families sheltered seven Jews who escaped from the Hassag labour camp for twenty-two months. They kept them in the attic of their house in the village of Komorniki, on the outskirts of Częstochowa. Their neighbours were aware of what was going on, but no one gave them away.<sup>2429</sup>
- In the village of Olsztyn, near Częstochowa, four Jewish families passed as Polish Christians with the collusion of the villagers.<sup>2430</sup>
- After escaping from the Częstochowa ghetto, Ignacy Jakobson and his colleagues joined a partisan unit near Koniecpol. They could count on the help of a priest and a number of his parishioners in Kościelna. "[T]he farmers in that village were most favourably disposed to us," he recalled.<sup>2431</sup>
- Another eyewitness writes: "In Kielce Voivodship I know of cases where an entire village knew that a Jew or a Jewess were hiding out, disguised in peasant clothes,

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*dziewczynski*, which translated as: Janina Heschels, *My Lvov: Holocaust Memoir of a Twelve-Year-Old Girl* (Oegstgeest, The Netherlands: Amsterdam Publishers, 2020).

<sup>2425</sup> Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 125–26.

<sup>2426</sup> Tadeusz Kozłowski, "Spotkanie z żydowskim kolegą po 50 latach," *Gazeta* [Toronto], May 12–14, 1995.

<sup>2427</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 579–80.

<sup>2428</sup> Menachem Mincberg, "In the Jaws of Destiny," in Schutzman, *Wierzbnik-Starachowitz*, 201ff, translated as *Wierzbnik-Starachowitz: A Memorial Book*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/wierzbnik/wierzbnik.html>.

<sup>2429</sup> "Sprawiedliwy Wśród Narodów Świata," *Puls Regionu* [Częstochowa], May 2008 <http://region.czyst.pl/cz50/sprawiedliwy.php>.

<sup>2430</sup> Morgens, *Years at the Edge of Existence*, 97, 99.

<sup>2431</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 588–89.

and no one betrayed them even though they were poor Jews who not only could not pay for their silence but had to be fed, clothed and housed.”<sup>2432</sup>

- A similar attitude in several villages near Łowicz is described by Joseph Szmekura.<sup>2433</sup>
- Hanna Mesz, along with her mother, spent the period of September 1944 to February 1945 in the village of Korzeniówka, near Grójec, working for various farmers who would have been suspicious (and probably understood) that they were Jewish.<sup>2434</sup>
- Zygmunt Sruł Warszawer lay low for 26 months, moving from place to place among numerous villages (such as Wielki Las) in the triangle formed by Łaskarzew, Sobole and Wilga, “visiting every farm because he figured that if everyone helped him no one would turn him in—to do so would mean self-destruction.” Not only did no one turn him in, but no one turned him away, empty handed. “No one ever refused to help you?” “No, not food! In twenty-six months, not once. Sometimes they were afraid to let me into the house, or into the barn. It varied, but their food they shared.”<sup>2435</sup> In another testimony, Warszawer mentions additional villages: Kownacica, Gończyce, Leokadia, Sośninka, Izdebno, Zygmunt, Romanów.<sup>2436</sup>
- Jankiel Grynblat (Grynblatt) found shelter with farmers he knew in the villages of Koryczany, Sokola, Kokoszka and Feliksin, east of Żelechów. He worked for their families as a tailor. His presence was also known to other villagers, and they treated him well.<sup>2437</sup>
- The young sons of Janina Dulman—Jerzy and Władysław, whose mother had married a Jew and converted to Judaism before the war—were sheltered by Janina’s younger sister (their aunt), Władysława Kaszubska of Żelechów. She hid them with different people in the surrounding villages until the war was over.<sup>2438</sup>
- Lea Starowiejska, a young girl with Semitic features, somehow made her way from Warsaw to Żeliszew Podkościelny, a village between Mińsk Mazowiecki and Siedlce. She was taken in there by Rev. Julian Borkowski, the local pastor, who taught her Catholic prayers so she could pass for a Polish orphan. The Górczyńskis answered his appeal for a Polish family to accept her. They lived in the hamlet of Łęki, and they treated her like a daughter. Everyone there knew that the child was Jewish. No one betrayed them.<sup>2439</sup>

<sup>2432</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 361.

<sup>2433</sup> Gedaliah Shaiak, ed., *Łowicz, A Town in Mazovia: Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: Lowitcher Landsmanshaften in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, 1966), xvi–xvii.

<sup>2434</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 120–23.

<sup>2435</sup> Małgorzata Niezabitowska, *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland* (New York: Friendly Press, 1986), 118–24.

<sup>2436</sup> Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 80.

<sup>2437</sup> Testimony of Jankiel Grynblat, JHI, record group 301, no. 4800, reproduced in Diatłowski and Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 2, 140.

<sup>2438</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 569–70.

<sup>2439</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 557; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1021; Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 304; *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2008), 53.

- Eva Safszycka, not yet 20 when she left the Siedlce ghetto, obtained false identity documents with the help of a Pole, a stranger she happened to encounter, and took a position as a domestic on the estate that was owned by another Pole. She recalled, “I met with so much kindness from the Poles, so many were decent and helpful that it is unbelievable. ... They hid other Jews, one of them a girl of eleven.”<sup>2440</sup>
- Dressed as a peasant, Tema Rotman-Weinstock of Frampol, near Biłgoraj, roamed the familiar countryside—Trzęsiny, Gorajec, Czarnystok, Smoryń, Kajetanówka—moving from employer to employer, most of whom were hungry themselves and had little to share with her. She met a cousin who lived with his wife in a bunker in the forest, but he refused to let her join them. Once, when she was on the verge of collapse, kind peasants took her into their home. After a month, afraid to keep her any longer, they directed Tema to a woman who lived on a farm with her daughter in the village of Kajetanówka. Neighbours became distressed, yet she remained there for the duration of the war. “Fortunately, no bad consequences followed because she found a powerful protector in the local priest. He baptized Tema and defended her ... ‘The priest stood up for me, arguing that conversion was a wonderful Christian deed.’”<sup>2441</sup>
- In another village named Kajetanówka, near Bychawa, four-year-old Rózia Bejman was taken in by the Dudziak family, who passed her off as a relative and enrolled her in the village school. The child had Semitic features, people suspected she was Jewish, and she survived the war in that setting.<sup>2442</sup>
- Three farmers from the villages of Kajetanówka and nearby Bystrzyca Stara participated in the rescue of Lejzor Zandberg, who stayed with the Dziedzic, Niezgoda and Woś families, spending several weeks at a time with each family.<sup>2443</sup> Zandberg recalled that he looked for help with Polish acquaintances: “[I]n Strzyżewice, Bystrzyca Stara and Nowa, as well as in surrounding places where I knew almost everyone, especially the young people. The Poles who helped me to survive were well-known to me and easy for me to contact. In autumn, winter and early spring, I hid in attics and sheds. In other times of the year, especially during summer, I hid in the crop fields, amongst bushes and in other remote places.”<sup>2444</sup>
- A number of Jews were sheltered by villagers in a small unidentified locality outside Warsaw; the entire village—including the village head and local priest—was complicit.<sup>2445</sup>

<sup>2440</sup> Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, 224.

<sup>2441</sup> Tec, *Resilience and Courage*, 227–29; Testimony of Tema Wajnsztoł, JHI, record group 301, no. 7214.

<sup>2442</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 192; The Dudziak Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-dudziak-family-0>.

<sup>2443</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 201.

<sup>2444</sup> The Niezgoda Family and The Woś Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/it-was-awakening-humanity-story-niezgoda-family>; <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/their-calm-healed-our-sick-heart-story-wos-family>.

<sup>2445</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 572–73.

- Józefa Grzegorek of the village of Nowa Wieś, near Sochaczew, took in Jadwiga Becker (b. 1932), a Jewish girl from Zwierzyniec. She sheltered Jadwiga from 1942 until 1945 with the full awareness of the entire village.<sup>2446</sup>
- Brindla (Bronka) and Mojżesz Siekierka and their two sons were sheltered without compensation by the Bronisław Bylicki family in the village of Żwirówka, near Mińsk Mazowiecki. Stanisława Roś, a friend of Brindla's, brought them food and money for fuel on a regular basis, and Brindla would make the rounds in surrounding villages begging for food.<sup>2447</sup>
- Dr. Zofia Szymańska, who was sheltered by the Grey Ursulines in Ołtarzew (Ożarów), received material care and an abundance of spiritual comfort from many nuns and priests, free of any effort on their part to convert her. Her presence with the nuns was widely known among the villagers. A German military unit was, at one point, quartered in the convent. Dr. Szymańska's 10-year-old niece, who had a very Semitic appearance, was sheltered by the Sisters of the Immaculate Virgin Mary in Szymanów, along with more than a dozen other Jewish girls. All of the nuns were in on the secret, as were the lay staff, the parents of non-Jewish children, and Szymanów villagers. None of the Christian parents removed their children from the school, and in fact many of them contributed to the upkeep of the Jewish children. Dr. Szymańska wrote: "The children were under the protection of the entire convent and village. Not one traitor was to be found among them."<sup>2448</sup>
- Another example is provided by Mary Rolicka, whose mother, one other Jewish woman and two Jewish men were sheltered by the Sisters of Charity at the Helcel Institute in Kraków and later at an old age home in Szczawnica.<sup>2449</sup> The nuns' chaplain, Rev. Albin Małysiak, who assisted in the rescue, recalled, "All of the charges of the institute as well as the personnel (nuns and lay staff) knew that there were Jews hidden among us. It was impossible to conceal that fact, even though it was known what danger faced those who were responsible for sheltering Jews. After the passage of weeks and months many of the residents of Szczawnica learned of the Jewish boarders. No one betrayed this to the Germans who were stationed in the immediate vicinity."<sup>2450</sup>
- When Henryk Schönker was fingered in Wieliczka, near Kraków, by a boy who started chasing after him, passers-by ignored the boy's cry to "catch the Jew." No one made an effort to apprehend Henryk. One of the onlookers grabbed the boy and admonished him.<sup>2451</sup>

<sup>2446</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 210. In the 1960s, Jadwiga Becker, then Bekin, visited the Grzegorek family with her husband to express her gratitude. Józefa Grzegorek was recognized posthumously by Yad Vashem in 2017.

<sup>2447</sup> Justyna Kowalska-Leder, "Pomaganie skazanym na Zagładę jako źródło destrukcji—na podstawie dokumentów osobistych Brandli Siekierkowej," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 8 (2012): 176–87.

<sup>2448</sup> Szymańska, *Byłam tylko lekarzem...*, 149–76.

<sup>2449</sup> Mary Rolicka, "A Memoir of Survival in Poland," *Midstream*, (April 1988), 26–27.

<sup>2450</sup> Albin Małysiak, "Zakład Helclów a ratowanie Żydów," *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Kraków], March 15, 1987.

<sup>2451</sup> See Schönker, *Dotknięcie anioła*, 135–36; Schönker, *The Touch of an Angel*, 120.

- Marian Małowist, who survived the war in the village of Jabłoń, near Parczew, said: “The family with whom I lived knew everything about me—in fact, two families knew. After the war it came out that more families knew, and also the chief of the navy-blue police, a Pole, a very decent person. [Professor] Juliusz Kleiner was hiding in the neighbourhood; in the next village there was a Jewess; in that area many were hiding.”<sup>2452</sup>
- Jewish partisan Gustaw Alef-Bolkowiak identifies the following villages in the Parczew-Ostrów Lubelski area as places where “almost the entire population was actively engaged in helping fugitives from the ghettos”: Rudka, Jedlanka, Makoszka, Tyśmienica and Bójki. He also mentions the village of Niedźwiada, near Opole Lubelskie, where foresters sheltered several Jewish families with the knowledge of the entire village.<sup>2453</sup>
- Some one hundred and fifty Poles were killed in mass executions in Białka in the Parczew forest, and in Sterdyń, near Sokołów Podlaski, for the extensive help those villages had been giving to fugitive Jews.<sup>2454</sup>
- More than a dozen villagers in Mętów, near Głusk, outside of Lublin, sheltered Jews.<sup>2455</sup>
- Several survivors recall the helpfulness and solidarity of the villagers of Lendowo, near Brańsk:  
 Liba Goldberg-Warobel (Luba Wrobel): “This village Landowa [Lendowo] had a good name among the Jews who were hiding in the area around Sokoly [Sokoły], and they regarded it as a paradise. Many Jews began to stream there. After two weeks, there wasn’t a house in Landowa where there weren’t three or four Jews.”<sup>2456</sup>  
 Tzipora Tabak-Burstein: “Finally, we came to the village of Landowa [Lendowo]. ... we knocked on the door of a house, not far from the forest. An old farmwoman brought us into the house. She gave us permission to sleep next to the warm stove. ... I remained alone with the old farmwoman. ... Over time, it became known to all of [the villagers] that I was not related to her family and that I didn’t even know how to speak Polish. The farmwoman did not hesitate to admit that she had adopted me, a Jewish girl, as her daughter. ... The farmwoman began to teach me Christian

<sup>2452</sup> “Marian Małowist on History and Historians,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 13 (2000): 338.

<sup>2453</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 533–34.

<sup>2454</sup> Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 123–24, 228.

<sup>2455</sup> Dariusz Libionka, “Polska ludność chrześcijańska wobec eksterminacji Żydów—dystrykt lubelski,” in Dariusz Libionka, ed., *Akcja Reinhardt: Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2004), 325.

<sup>2456</sup> Liba Goldberg-Warobel, “In a Struggle for Life,” in Kalisher, *Sokoly*, 188–200, translated as *Sokoly: In the Fight for Life*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokoly/sokoly.html>. See also Goldberg, *A Sparkle of Hope*, at p. 63: “This village Lendowo became a refuge for a lot of wandering Jews, they called this village the Garden of Eden. ... here they opened wide the doors without having any fear. Soon there were Jews in every house.”

prayers, and on Sundays I went with her to church. ... The *goyim*, residents of the village who knew I was Jewish, did not hand me over to the Germans.”<sup>2457</sup>

- Several Jews, among them Ida Lewartowska and her daughter, were hidden in a forest bunker near the village of Leńce, just north of Białystok. They survived with the help of Poles. The villagers in the area from Nowe Aleksandrowo, Dobrzniewo Fabryczne and Letniki knew about these Jews, but no one denounced them.<sup>2458</sup>
- A number of Jewish fugitives took refuge in a forest near the village of Jaświły, near Mońki, where many villagers brought them food.<sup>2459</sup>
- Szymon Datner recalled that his Jewish partisan group “*Forojs*” (Forward), consisting of escapees from the Białystok ghetto, was assisted by nearly all of the villagers of Dworzysk. *Yad Vashem* recognized only three of them. Among those Datner mentions as offering food and shelter to the partisans were Alfons and Stefania Radziwanowski, Zachariasz and Józef Słowiński, Afanazy Kaczanowski, and the Tur, Cholewski, Czaban, Kuklik and Kwiatkowski families. In truth, the entire village took part in or was aware of this assistance, and no one betrayed the partisans or rescuers.<sup>2460</sup>
- Maria Kazuczyk, a widow who lived alone in a small house on the edge of the village of Janowicze, near Białystok, sheltered Mira Kwasowicer. Villagers became aware of Mira’s presence, but no one betrayed them. The village headman, who was responsible for registering all residents under pain of death, feared for the lives of his villagers and wanted Mira to leave. Maria Kazuczyk appealed to the local priest, in the nearby village of Juchnowiec Kościelny. He stood up for Maria, protected her charge, and the arrangement was allowed to persist.<sup>2461</sup>
- Rywka Chus and her husband, a grain merchant from Ostrów Mazowiecka, were protected by the villagers of Króle Duże. Rywka and her husband survived the war.<sup>2462</sup>
- Kalmen Wewryk describes the assistance he received, after his escape from the Sobibór death camp, from numerous peasants—decent but frightened Catholic

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<sup>2457</sup> Tzipora Tabka-Bustein, “The Shepherdess Returns to Her People,” in Kalisher, *Sokoly*, 201–7, translated as *Sokoly: In the Fight for Life*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokoly/sokoly.html>.

<sup>2458</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 741–42; Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych*, 61.

<sup>2459</sup> Waldemar Monkiewicz and Józef Kowalczyk, “Pomoc Żydom w regionie białostockim podczas II wojny światowej,” *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 2 (1989): 362–79, at p. 372.

<sup>2460</sup> Szymon Datner, “Szkice do studiów nad dziejami żydowskiego ruchu partyzanckiego w Okręgu białostockim (1941–1944),” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 73 (January–March 1970): 3–46, at pp. 45–46; Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 348–50; Rogalewska, *Getto białostockie*, 196.

<sup>2461</sup> Kazuczyk Family, RD; Testimony of Mira Kwasowicer-Glikfeld, JHI, record group 301, no. 2007; Marianna Kazuczyk, *Memory and Identity*, Internet: <http://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/marianna-kazuczyk-her-husband-son-zygmunt-maria-kazuczyk>.

<sup>2462</sup> Andrzej Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego: Żydzi na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej. Wrzesień 1939–lipiec 1941* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2006), 69.



Poles and some Ukrainian Baptists—as he wandered from village to village in an area south of Chełm. A family of five Jews hid in Teresin, near Chełm: “Everybody in the hamlet knew that this family was hiding, but nobody knew where and they didn’t want to know. Moishe told me how they were loved in that hamlet—there were decent people there.”<sup>2463</sup>

- The teenaged Marian Finkielman worked as an itinerant farmhand in the vicinity of Dubeczno. “In 1941 and 1942 many young Jews wandered from village to village, offering their services in exchange for room and board. The peasant farmers knew who they were, and for some time took advantage of their help, just as the farmer in the village of Kozaki benefited from my situation. ... Luckily, during my stay there from April through July 1942, ... none of the inhabitants of the village, Ukrainians or Poles, informed on Jurek’s [a Jewish boy from Warsaw who also worked as a herdsman] or my existence. It seemed that there were no informants in this village ...”<sup>2464</sup>
- Cypora Frydman, the daughter of a mill owner in Nowy Orzechów, near Ostrów Lubelski, hid in a hut near a lake. She recalled, “All the peasants in the village knew me because all of them used to come to our mill, but not one of them denounced me even though everyone knew I was hiding near the lake. Sometimes they gave me bread for free, sometimes a little milk ... I used to return from the village late at night and hid in my hut.”<sup>2465</sup>
- The villagers of Kubra, near Radziłów, north of Łomża, did not betray the family of Helena Chilewicz when the Gestapo came looking for them in July 1942. Though penniless, moving from village to village, she and her mother survived the war.<sup>2466</sup>
- Chaya and Yisrael Finkielsztejn and their four children posed as Christian Poles in the village of Konopki-Błonie, near Radziłów, moving around among several farmers they knew in the area.<sup>2467</sup> They survived the war.
- Irena Sznycer, a young Jewish girl with strikingly Semitic features, was sheltered by the Brogowski family in the village of Bełżec, within site of the death camp. “I was well cared for by that lady [Cecylia Brogowska] and was not afraid of anything,”

<sup>2463</sup> Kalmen Wawryk, *To Sobibor and Back: An Eyewitness Account* (Montreal: The Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies, and The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, 1999), 66–68, 71.

<sup>2464</sup> Marian Finkielman, *Out of the Ghetto: A Young Jewish Orphan Boy’s Struggle for Survival* (Montreal: The Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies and The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, 2000), 34–36; Marian (Finkielman) Domanski, *Fleeing from the Hunter* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2010), 34–35.

<sup>2465</sup> Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 89.

<sup>2466</sup> Danuta and Aleksander Wroniszewski, “... aby żyć,” *Kontakty–Łomżyński Tygodnik Społeczny*, July 10, 1988.

<sup>2467</sup> Waldemar Monkiewicz and Józef Kowalczyk, “Pomoc Żydom w regionie białostockim podczas II wojny światowej,” *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 2 (1989): 362–79, at p. 365; Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 317 n.58; Testimony of Israel and Chaia Finkelstein, YVA, file O.3/3033 (Item 3556665).

Irena recalled. "Although the neighbours knew I was Jewish, this lady had no enemies so nothing [bad] could happen."<sup>2468</sup>

- Julia Pępiak, also of Bełżec, sheltered and successfully protected Salomea Helman, her friend and former neighbour, and Salomea's young daughter, Bronia. The Helmans' presence was an open secret in the village.<sup>2469</sup>
- In Majdan Nepryski, west of Tomaszów Lubelski, several families took part in caring for a Jewish girl thrown from a train on its way to Bełżec.<sup>2470</sup>
- Mirla Frydlich (Szternzys) of Żółkiewka was shot in the thigh when she jumped from a train headed for the Bełżec death camp. A Pole who happened to be driving by took her in his carriage and nursed her to health, with the help of another Pole. As Mirla returned to Żółkiewka, she received assistance from a number of Poles in several nearby villages.<sup>2471</sup>
- About 12 miles outside Lwów, Abraham Trasawucki, dressed only in rags, jumped from a death train on its way to Bełżec in the middle of winter. Although he was easily identifiable as a Jew on the run, rather than betray him, Polish villagers at the farmsteads he randomly called on offered temporary shelter, food, clothing, and even money. He was given rides in the wagons of Polish farmers, sold a train ticket by an official, allowed on the train by a guard who checked his ticket, and ignored by passengers who instantly identified him as a Jew.<sup>2472</sup>
- Ryfka Goldiner, a newborn at the time, was sheltered by Stanisław and Helena Wiśliński in Bełżyce, near Lublin. Although the villagers were aware of Ryfka's origin, no one took it to the authorities. The local priest would not formally baptize the child because he thought that her parents might survive the war. In fact, they did survive, and eventually they reclaimed their daughter.<sup>2473</sup>
- After her parents were shot by the Germans, villagers urged Edwarda Kleinfeld (later Rorat, b. 1935) and her older sister to run away. The head of the village of

<sup>2468</sup> Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu—Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35 (1993): 104, based on the testimony of Irena Schnitzer (Sznycer), JHI, record group 301, no. 4638. The rescuers of Irena Sznycer, Maciej and Cecylia Brogowski, were recognized by Yad Vashem in 2008. See Brogowski Family, RD; The Brogowski Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-brogowski-family-0>; "Zagłada Żydów Biecha—Sprawiedliwi wśród Narodów Świata," Internet: <http://krzyprzy.zso4.gliwice.pl/zaglada/sprawiedliwi/sprawiedliwi.htm>.

<sup>2469</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 597; Zuzanna Schnepf-Kolacz, "Pomoc Polaków dla Żydów na wsi w czasie okupacji niemieckiej: Próba opisu na przykładzie Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata," in Engelking and Grabowski, *Zarys krajobrazu*, 236; Karolina Dzieciołowska, "'I forgot about the terror, the fear and the consequences.' The Story of Julia Pępiak," PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/i-forgot-about-terror-fear-and-consequences-story-julia-pepiak>.

<sup>2470</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 709–10.

<sup>2471</sup> Żylberklang, *Z Żółkiewki do Erec Israel*, 181–84.

<sup>2472</sup> Abraham Tracy, *To Speak for the Silenced* (Jerusalem and New York: Devora, 2007), 165–72.

<sup>2473</sup> Dąbrowska, *Światła w ciemności*, 56–61.

Olszanka, near Lublin, a prewar acquaintance of Edwarda's father, took an interest in the girls' fate. He arranged for each of them to work on separate farms. Edwarda was eventually taken in by Jan and Stefania Rorat, a poor, elderly couple who treated her like their own daughter. Her Jewishness was an open secret in Olszanka and the nearby village of Krzczonów, where she attended school. Edwarda enjoyed the protection of her teachers, who would hide her when the Germans came to the village. The parish priest, who was very fond of her, did not press her to convert. Both Edwarda and her sister survived the war.<sup>2474</sup>

- Luba Hochlerer, ten years of age, lived openly with Józef and Bronisława Zajac in the hamlet of Witoldów, near Wojsławice, where she attended the village school. She survived the war there.<sup>2475</sup>
- According to three separate testimonies of Jewish escapees from the death camps of Treblinka and Sobibór, they "walked about the villages" and were "known to everybody," without betrayal or harm at the hands of the local Polish inhabitants.<sup>2476</sup>
- After escaping from Treblinka, Szymon Goldberg made his way to the villages of Kukawki, Basinów and Kiciny, just beyond Łochów, where farmers protected him. He recalled, "There were good people, they helped, they gave me food."<sup>2477</sup>
- Mieczysław Grajewski (later Martin Gray), who escaped from the Treblinka death camp, recalled the help he received from peasants: "I was free. I walked to a village. ... I knocked to ask for bread. The peasants looked at me in silence. 'Bread, bread.' They saw my red hands, torn jacket, worn-out slippers, and handed me some hard, gray crusts. A peasant woman, huddled in shawls, gave me a bowl of hot milk and a bag. We didn't talk: my body had turned red and blue from the blows and the cold, and my clothes, everything proclaimed Jew! But they gave me bread. Thank you Polish peasants. I slept in a stable near the animals, taking a little warm milk from the cow in the morning. My bag filled with bread."<sup>2478</sup>
- A Jew from Serock, north of Warsaw, escaped from a German execution site badly wounded. A great many of the villagers where he sought refuge took part in caring for him.<sup>2479</sup>

<sup>2474</sup> Rorat Family, RD; Oral history interviews with Edwarda Rorat, April 15, 1995 and February 25, 1996, USHMM, RG-50.030.0319 and RG-50.549.01.0010, respectively.

<sup>2475</sup> Dąbrowska, *Światła w ciemności*, 106–7.

<sup>2476</sup> Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu—Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35 (1993): 108.

<sup>2477</sup> Testimony of Szymon Goldberg, JHI, record group 301, no. 656, noted in Józwick, Mahorowska, and Umińska, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue*, vol. 1, 227.

<sup>2478</sup> Martin Gray and Max Gallo, *For Those I Loved* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1972), 178.

<sup>2479</sup> Michał Grynberg, *Żydzi w rejencji ciechanowskiej 1939–1942* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 134.

- Numerous families from the village of Szreńsk, near Mława, extended help to Jews: Lendzion, Gross, Olczak, Siemiątkowski, Goczewski, Nydziński, Zarecki, and Miłobędzki.<sup>2480</sup>
- Izaak Zemelman of Płock recalled the assistance provided by a strikingly large number of persons in the village of Sikórz, where he and his family found shelter. He specifically mentioned the Stawiarski, Romanowski, Górski, Danielak, Adamski, Kłosiński, and other Polish families.<sup>2481</sup>
- In 1942, Fr. Jerzy Mirewicz, a Jesuit priest, escorted a Jewish fugitive by train from Biłgoraj to Milanówek, near Warsaw, so that he could join members of his family who were being hidden by a Christian family. Even though the priest had permission to travel, officials were constantly checking the papers of passengers. When the train reached Dęblin, a policeman came into the car and demanded to know if his companion was a Jew. Fortunately for the priest and the fugitive, the whole compartment came to their rescue by insisting that the priest was escorting a “lunatic” to a hospital asylum.<sup>2482</sup>
- Irena Bakowska, then a teenager, was in a group of six Jews being smuggled from Warsaw to the countryside: “We entered into a single train compartment occupied already by the Christian Poles ... We were greeted in a friendly manner, and the man sitting by himself moved over and sat with his four companions. ... The conductor, a Christian Pole, entered the compartment to check the tickets. ... we uncovered our armbands to identify ourselves. I watched the reaction of the Christian Polish passengers with great apprehension. ... But the attitude of the Christian passengers was sympathetic and not at all hostile. They started talking with us, and urged us to throw away our armbands and our Jewish identity. ... Those five people seemed truly to care about my survival, repeating over and over again that I could be saved and survive as a Pole. They persuaded me that all Poles did not hate us, did not wish us to perish.”<sup>2483</sup>
- Historian Raul Hilberg wrote: “A friend of mine, Bronia Klebanski, who is Jewish but lived on the ‘Aryan’ side of society and was an active member of the Jewish underground in the Białystok [Białystok] area, once told me a story of how she at a time took the train during the war, and was suddenly pointed out by a little girl who yelled ‘Jew!’ All the Polish passengers sat quietly, and nobody said anything to instigate further interest. This account is a small example of the general practice of non-collaboration among the Poles during the war.”<sup>2484</sup>
- A scene similar to the one described by Bronia Klebanski was observed by Szmul Zygielbojm, a respected Jewish member of the Polish National Council in London.

<sup>2480</sup> Grynberg, *Żydzi w rejencji ciechanowskiej 1939–1942*, 133, 134; Juskiewicz, *Losy Żydów mławskich w okresie II-ej wojny światowej*, 121–22.

<sup>2481</sup> Jan Przedpełski, *Żydzi płoccy: Dzieje i martyrologia, 1939–1945* (Płock: Fraza, 1993), 52.

<sup>2482</sup> Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich*, 130.

<sup>2483</sup> Irena Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost: A Young Woman's Memoir, 1939–1946* (Kingston, Ontario: Karijan, 1998), 142–44.

<sup>2484</sup> Interview with Professor Raul Hilberg, June 20, 2005, Internet: [http://www.maxveritas.com/pb/wp\\_1add70b0.html?0.611384753320024](http://www.maxveritas.com/pb/wp_1add70b0.html?0.611384753320024).

Zygielbojm recalled that when he was on his way to Kraków, he heard a Pole sermonizing on the Jews in the presence of other Poles. Finally, one of the Polish peasants who had heard enough of the anti-Semitic diatribe asked the man, "And where did you learn to preach so well in German?" The anti-Semite tried to respond but was drowned out by the laughter of the pro-Jewish Poles.<sup>2485</sup>

- Several Jews were hiding in the village of Osieczny, near Myślenice, south of Kraków. This was widely known, yet no one betrayed them.<sup>2486</sup>
- Janina Katz (b. 1939) was adopted by the Kapłański family of Dobczyce, south of Kraków. The Kapłańskis were prominent in their community, so it was impossible for the truth about Janina to have been obscure. The child lived unharmed with the Kapłańskis throughout the war.<sup>2487</sup>
- A number of Jews took refuge in a forest near the village of Kornatka. The entire village became aware of their presence. The priest from the nearby parish in Dobczyce urged his parishioners to help the Jewish fugitives, and not to betray them. Villagers provided them with food. During the winter months, they allowed them to stay overnight in their homes, barns and stables.<sup>2488</sup>
- A local Jewish farmer named Eichhorn was hidden by a Polish farmer in Stróža, near Limanowa for quite a long time. When a treacherous policeman learned of this, neighbours of the farmer took the fugitive in, passing him among themselves until the occupation ended.<sup>2489</sup>
- Alexander Bronowski and his family were passing as Poles in the village of Imbramowice, near Wolbrom. Although their true identity became known to the priest and other villagers, no one interfered with or molested them.<sup>2490</sup>
- A Jewish lawyer was able to continue his practice in Mielec, in defiance of a Nazi ban, with the collusion of the town's entire legal profession, until he was denounced by a fellow Jew, first to the Gestapo and then to the Justice Department.<sup>2491</sup>
- In the village of Czajkowa, near Mielec, the brothers Zygie and Sol Allweiss were sheltered by Maciej and Zofia Dudzik. The Dudziks' neighbours were aware that they were hiding Jews, but they had no intention of betraying them. "In the village, if one knows something, everyone knows," the rescuers said. "They were our neighbors and they were good people."<sup>2492</sup>

<sup>2485</sup> Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust*, 142–43.

<sup>2486</sup> Marek Stoszek, "The History of Jews in Myślenice County During the Second World War," in Wierzbieniec and Rączy, *Righteous Among Nations*, 49–50.

<sup>2487</sup> Marek Stoszek, "The History of Jews in Myślenice County During the Second World War," in Wierzbieniec and Rączy, *Righteous Among Nations*, 50.

<sup>2488</sup> Przemysław Miśkiewicz, interview with Tadeusz Jakubowicz, "Dzięki nim żyję, dla mnie to bohaterowie," Dodatek Narodowy Dzień Pamięci Polaków ratujących Żydów, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, *Dziennik Zachodni*, March 26, 2018. See also Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 263–66; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 234.

<sup>2489</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 74.

<sup>2490</sup> Bronowski, *They Were Few*, 38–39.

<sup>2491</sup> Mark Verstandig, *I Rest My Case* (Melbourne: Saga Press, 1995), viii, 109–13, 130–32.

<sup>2492</sup> Tammeus and Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People*, 22.

- A Jewish woman who had converted to Catholicism when she married a Pole continued to live in her village near Mielec throughout the war with the acquiescence of the local community.<sup>2493</sup>
- Then in his teens, Menachem Kuperman wandered into the village of Borki Nizińskie, north of Mielec, without any documents. He entered the home of Eugeniusz Pieróg, a farmer whom he had never met before, and introduced himself as a Polish boy looking for farm work. Pieróg agreed to take him on. One day, when they were collecting wood in the forest, they came across German soldiers. Pieróg warned Kuperman not to approach them and on the way home said to the boy, "Did you think I didn't know you were Jewish?" With time, Kuperman understood that others in the village had figured out that he was Jewish. Whenever Kuperman became frightened that someone in the village would inform on him, Pieróg reassured him that he, Pieróg, had no enemies in the village who would want harm him, and that Kuperman therefore had nothing to fear from the villagers. Kuperman remained with Pieróg, unharmed, until the war was over.<sup>2494</sup>
- Several Polish families in the villages of Bobrowa, Wola Bobrowska and Nagoszyn, near Dębica, sheltered various members of the Knie family. Among the rescuers from Nagoszyn recognized by Yad Vashem are Michał Dygdoń and Józef Cholewa. Although villagers were not blind to the rescue going on, they supported it with a wall of silence.<sup>2495</sup>
- A teenage boy with a Semitic appearance, the son of a Jewish beggar woman, lived openly in the village of Głowaczowa, near Dębica, with the Polish farmer who had taken him in. Nobody betrayed him.<sup>2496</sup>
- A Jewish boy named Jusek Mansdorf was allowed to stay on as a farmhand in a village in the township of Ryglice, near Tarnów, even after his Jewishness became evident to the villagers.<sup>2497</sup>
- In November 1941, the Jewish Social Self-Help organization in the town of Proszowice, near Miechów, solicited food supplies from 20 Polish estates in the vicinity for the soup kitchen in the ghetto; 19 owners promptly responded, agreeing to supply produce free of charge.<sup>2498</sup>
- In the village of Goszcza, near Miechów, everyone was aware that Jews, some of them with a marked Semitic appearance, were being sheltered in their midst. No one betrayed them.<sup>2499</sup>
- After fleeing during the liquidation of the Szczucin ghetto, Shiyer Mutzenmacher ran to the farm of Anna and Stanisław Jaje in the nearby village of Lubasz. Everyone

<sup>2493</sup> Tomasz Frydel, "Powiat dębicki," in Engelking and Grabowski, *Dalej jest noc*, vol. 2, 434.

<sup>2494</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 605.

<sup>2495</sup> Adam Kazimierz Musiał, *Lata w ukryciu*, vol. 2 (Gliwice: n.p., 2002), 535–37; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 719–20.

<sup>2496</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 640.

<sup>2497</sup> Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 109, based on the testimony of Jusek Mansdorf, JHI, record group 301, no. 570.

<sup>2498</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 552.

<sup>2499</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 643–44.



in the village knew that a young man of Jewish descent was hiding with the Jajes. He did tailoring for the neighbours and other villagers, thus contributing towards his upkeep. Nobody denounced him.<sup>2500</sup>

- Similar reports come from the villages of Gałuszowice and Chrzastów, near Mielec.<sup>2501</sup> In the latter village, it was widely known that the Markowski family was sheltering the Verstandig family, and that several other Polish families there were hiding Jews.<sup>2502</sup>
- In Grodzisk, a small town outside Warsaw, an elderly Jewish teacher was able to live openly with his wife, a Polish Catholic woman, throughout the war. "Everybody knew my uncle was Jewish but no one reported him to the Gestapo." This family took in other Jews, also without incident.<sup>2503</sup>
- A foundry in Wołomin, outside of Warsaw, engaged a Jew whose appearance and manner of speaking readily gave him away, yet he remained among them as if undetected.<sup>2504</sup>
- After receiving a great deal of sporadic help from Poles as he wandered in the countryside around Garwolin, Meir Herc was introduced, through a Jewish friend and his Christian intermediary, to a farmer in the village of Jagodne who agreed to shelter him. Herc was one of six Jews the farmer hid in his pigsty. Herc was able to pay for his upkeep with the money he received from Poles to whom he had entrusted his property. The money was collected by an intermediary and delivered to Herc. The entire group of six Jews survived this way for 23 months. Meir Herc writes: "I only survived thanks to more than a dozen Poles who sold our goods and would send the money to me. They even knew the village in which I was hiding but did not betray me."<sup>2505</sup>
- Another resident of Garwolin, Chana Karpman-Rozenberg, received a great deal of help from many local residents before she decided to move to Warsaw. As she travelled by train to Warsaw, pretending to be a smuggler, she encountered many Poles from Garwolin whom she knew, and not one of them so much as gave a sign that would have blown her cover. She was helped by a number of Poles in Warsaw. While passing as a Pole there, she met other Poles from Garwolin, among them Home Army members and a policeman; they were glad to see her.<sup>2506</sup>
- Other examples of communal rescue in the Generalgouvernement include: Niedźwiada (near Opole Lubelskie); Runów (near Grójec); Przydonica, Ubiad, Klimkówka,

<sup>2500</sup> Jaje Family, RD; Musiał, *Lata w ukryciu*, vol. 2, 344–49.

<sup>2501</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 721–22.

<sup>2502</sup> Krempa, *Zagłada Żydów mieleckich*, 2nd rev. ed., 98.

<sup>2503</sup> Rothchild, *Voices from the Holocaust*, 225.

<sup>2504</sup> Antoni Marianowicz, *Życie surowo wzbronione* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1995), 159–60, translated as Antoni Marianowicz, *Life Strictly Forbidden* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004).

<sup>2505</sup> Meir Herc, "My Experience in September," in Zaltsman and Shein, *Garwolin yisker-bukh*, 187–93. Rubin Rudolf Steckman was sheltered by several farmers near Garwolin, moving from house to house. See the testimony of Rubin Rudolf Steckman, JHI, record group 301, no. 1753.

<sup>2506</sup> Chana Karpman-Rozenberg, "On the Aryan Side," in Zaltsman and Shein, *Garwolin yisker-bukh*, 208–15.

Jelna, Słowikowa, and Librantowa (all near Nowy Sącz); Rakszawa (near Łańcut),<sup>2507</sup> Medynia Głogowska, Siedlecza, and Sokołów Małopolski (all near Rzeszów),<sup>2508</sup> two villages near Parczew,<sup>2509</sup> Piszczac (near Biała Podlaska) and Kolonia Dworska,<sup>2510</sup> several villages near Lublin,<sup>2511</sup> Mchy (near Krasnystaw),<sup>2512</sup> villages near Skierniewice, Rożki (near Krasnystaw), villages near Zamość, Radzymin, and Otwock.<sup>2513</sup>

- Even when neighbours were displeased with the fact that they were put at risk because of the Jews sheltered in their midst, and were justifiably fearful of German retaliation, this did not usually result in denunciations, as is shown by a number of cases.<sup>2514</sup>
- Finally, it must be noted that the terrifying spectacle of public executions of Polish rescuers did not bring rescue activity to a halt.<sup>2515</sup>

Assistance from Polish villagers in Volhynia, where Poles constituted a small minority of the mostly Ukrainian population, was also plentiful.

- In Woronówka, near Ludwipól, “the collusion of the peasants was cemented by blood ties: every villager was either a Kuriata or a Torgoń.”<sup>2516</sup>
- Almost every Polish family in the hamlet of Zawołocz, near Ludwipól, sheltered or helped Jews. None of the Jews who took refuge there was betrayed.<sup>2517</sup>
- Jews hiding in the forests in the vicinity of Berezne (Bereźne), near Kostopol, received extensive assistance from Polish villagers and partisans.<sup>2518</sup>
- A number of Jews were sheltered in the Polish colony of Święte Jezioro, near Olesk, some even living there openly. The villagers also provided food to still other Jews that were living in the forests, and Poles in nearby villages knew of these activities.<sup>2519</sup>

<sup>2507</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 269, 322, 349, 353, respectively.

<sup>2508</sup> Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, 63.

<sup>2509</sup> Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945*, vol. 3, 308.

<sup>2510</sup> Armstrong, *Mosaic*, 576–81; Roman Soszyński, *Piszczac: Miasto ongiś królewskie* (N.p.: n.p., 1993), 95, 97; Andrzej W. Kaczorowski, “Danusia z miasteczka Piszczac,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 8 (March 2009): 69–73.

<sup>2511</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 95, 317, 326.

<sup>2512</sup> Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor*, 207 ff.

<sup>2513</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 343–44, 452, and vol. 5, 647, 673 and 692, 927, respectively. Regarding Rożki, see also Sabina Leszczyńska, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-leszczynska-sabina>.

<sup>2514</sup> See, e.g., Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 192–93.

<sup>2515</sup> See, e.g., Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 1, 21 (Mariampol).

<sup>2516</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 45.

<sup>2517</sup> Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 2, 77–78.

<sup>2518</sup> Testimony of Seweryn Dobroszkłanka, JHI, record group 301, no. 1222; Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 324–25; Orzeł, *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady*, 79–82.

<sup>2519</sup> Suzanne Ginsburg, *Noike: A Memoir of Leon Ginsburg* (San Francisco: Avenger Books, 2012), 93–99, 120–24, 127–37, 141–58. This book refers to the Polish colony as “Podswientne” and mentions several helpful families by name.

- Polish villages in the vicinity of Korzec helped Jews that were hiding in the nearby forests.<sup>2520</sup>
- After leaving the home of a Ukrainian Baptist family in the village of Charałów, Haya Tessler, her brother Israel and their nephew, Mordechai Tennenbaum, all from Międzyrzecz Korecki, “got to a village where Poles lived ... we stayed in their midst for a while, and when [fearful of Ukrainian partisan attacks] they decided to abandon the village for the safety of the dense forests, ... we joined them.”<sup>2521</sup>
- A report about the village of Stara Huta, near Szumsk, states: “The people of a small Polish village named Stara Hota [sic] welcomed a group of Jews to stay and hide in their homes. The Ukrainians found out about the Jewish presence in the village. They informed the Germans right away. The Poles had managed to help the Jews run into the fields, but they were all caught and killed during their escape.”<sup>2522</sup>
- Dawid Sasower recalls: “Near Zaturne [near Łuck], there was a Polish village in which about twenty Jews lived. In the daytime they worked in the fields and at night the Poles gave them rifles so that they could protect themselves from the banderovtsy [i.e., Ukrainian nationalist partisans].”<sup>2523</sup>
- Polish villagers in Netreba, Okopy, Dołhań, Borowskie Budki (or Budki Borowskie), and Snowidowicze, all near Rokitno, are mentioned in several accounts: “In the village of Netrebe [sic], tens of Jews from Rokitno and the area found shelter. They were helped by the villagers who not only did not harm them but also hid them near the village during the day. At night they took them to their homes. Many Jews survived there until the liberation by the Red Army. In the Polish village of Budki some Jews survived ... In the same area, in the Polish village of Okopi [sic], some tens of Jews were saved thanks to two special individuals... the Catholic priest [Rev. Ludwik Wrodarczyk] and the village teacher [Felicja Masojada]. The priest used to give sermons to his followers telling them not to be involved in the extermination of Jews. He asked them to help the Jews to survive ... The village teacher also had compassion for the unfortunate Jews. Their suffering touched her heart and she helped in any way possible. She was killed by a Ukrainian gang on the way from the village of Rokitno where she was helping a Jewish family. The priest was

<sup>2520</sup> Nyuma Anapolsky, “We survived thanks to the kind people—Ukrainians and Poles,” in Boris Zabarko, ed., *Holocaust in the Ukraine* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005), 10–11.

<sup>2521</sup> Mordechai Tennenbaum, “The Life History of a Holocaust Survivor from Mezirich,” in Israel Zinman, ed., *Memorial for Greater Mezirich: In Construction and Destruction* (Haifa: n.p., 1999), Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Mezhirichi/Mezirich.html>.

<sup>2522</sup> Ruth Szejnman Halperin, “The Last Days of Shumsk,” in Chaim Rabin, ed., *Szumsk: Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Szumsk*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/szumsk/szumsk.html>, translation of *Shumsk: Sefer zikaron le-kedoshei Shumsk* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Szumsk in Israel, 1968), 29 ff.

<sup>2523</sup> Rima Dulkanienė and Kerry Keys, eds., *Su adata širdyje: Getų ir koncentracijos stovyklų kalinių atsiminimai; With a Needle in the Heart: Memoirs of Former Prisoners of Ghettos and Concentration Camps* (Vilnius: Garnelis and Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, 2003), 319–20.

burned alive in his church.” “[I]n a Polish village near Snovidovich [Snowidowicz], we found a few Jewish families working in the houses and fields of the villagers.”<sup>2524</sup>

- After escaping from the ghetto in Rokitno, Rachela Sznuler moved from village to village, sewing farmers who took her in.<sup>2525</sup>
- In Huta Sopaczewska, near Sarny, and other Polish villages near Berezołupy, near Rożyszcze: “When I arrived in the Polish village, someone told me that five kilometers from there, here was another Polish village where I might find my brother ... I went there and asked the farmers about him. They told me where to go, and I found him in a forest, with a group of six other Jews. ... They too had spent the winter in the forest, and at night they had brought potatoes and bread from the Polish village. ... I was accepted by an older couple ... My brother also got a job with another Polish farmer, about four kilometers from the village where I was. ... I stayed with that farmer for almost a year, until the Russians freed our area in April 1944.”<sup>2526</sup>
- In Tresteniec, a Polish settlement near Aleksandria, all the villagers knew about and assisted the sisters Cypa and Rywa Szparberg and their father.<sup>2527</sup>
- In Karaczun, near Kostopol, Polish villagers and the Polish underground were extremely helpful to Jews that hid in the forest.<sup>2528</sup>
- In October 1942, after the liquidation of the ghetto in Zdołbunów, the Germans and Ukrainian militiamen combed the town to locate any signs of survivors: “[Fritz] Germ would point to a certain house, always one occupied by Polish citizens, and the guards would crash through the door or a window, emerging with a family and the Jews whom they had hidden. The fate was the same for the rescuers as it was for the Jews. This occurred at four or five different homes.”<sup>2529</sup>

<sup>2524</sup> Leoni, *Rokitno*, 317 ff., 327 ff., 334 ff., 342 ff., 351, translated as *Rokitno-Wolyn and Surroundings: Memorial Book and Testimony*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rokitnoye/Rokitnoye.html>; Yehuda Bauer, “Sarny and Rokitno in the Holocaust: A Case Study of Two Townships in Wolyn (Volhynia),” in Katz, *The Shtetl*, 273. The following Poles from Okopy have been recognized by Yad Vashem: Rev. Ludwik Wrodarczyk, Felicja Masojada, Weronika Kozińska-Romaniewicz, and Aniela Romaniewicz. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 594–95, 611.

<sup>2525</sup> Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 125.

<sup>2526</sup> Denise Nevo and Mira Berger, eds., *We Remember: Testimonies of Twenty-four Members of Kibbutz Megiddo who Survived the Holocaust* (New York: Shengold, 1994), 209, 257.

<sup>2527</sup> Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 309.

<sup>2528</sup> J. Peri, “Death and Sorrow,” in Ganuz, *Our Town Stepan*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/stepan/Stepan.html>, translation of *Ayaratenu Stepan* (Tel Aviv: Stepan Society, 1977), 213 ff.; Stanisław Siekierski, ed., *Żyli wśród nas...: Wspomnienia Polaków i Żydów nadesłane na konkurs pamięci polsko-żydowskiej o nagrodę imienia Dawida Ben Guriona* (Płońsk: Zarząd Miasta Płońsk, Miejskie Centrum Kultury w Płońsku, and Towarzystwo Miłośników Ziemi Płońskiej, 2001), 121; Andrzej Leja, “Urodzona w ZSRS,” Internet: <https://www.salon24.pl/u/polismpc/157657,urodzona-w-zsrs-andrzej-leja>; Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 363, 368.

<sup>2529</sup> Douglas K. Huneke, *The Moses of Rovno: The Stirring Story of Fritz Graebe, a German Christian Who Risked His Life to Lead Hundreds of Jews to Safety During the Holocaust* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1985), 84. See also *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*:

- In a number of Volhynian villages, Jewish fugitives who were protected by Poles joined the Polish self-defence in defending their villages from attacks by Ukrainian partisans: Huta Stepańska (near Kostopol);<sup>2530</sup> Kurdybań Warkowicki, Bortnica, Pańska Dolina, Żeniówka (Ziniówka), Przebraże (all near Dubno).<sup>2531</sup>
- Additional examples of communal assistance by Poles have been documented in the following locales in Volhynia: Władysławówka (near Swojczów);<sup>2532</sup> Konińsk (near Sarny), Pańska Dolina (near Dubno), Świnarzyn (near Dominopol), the vicinity of Bereżne (near Kostopol), Woronówka (near Ludwipol), Obórki (near Łuck), Wólka Kotowska (near Łuck), Przebraże (near Łuck);<sup>2533</sup> a village near Horochów;<sup>2534</sup> Głęboczyca (near Włodzimierz Wołyński);<sup>2535</sup> Wodzinów (near Włodzimierz Wołyński).<sup>2536</sup>

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*Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 605; Edward Prus, *Holocaust po banderowsku: Czy Żydzi byli w UPA?* (Wrocław: Nortom, 1995), 82.

- <sup>2530</sup> Ganuz, *Our Town Stepan*, 287; Testimony of Motel Waks, JHI, record group 301, no. 2363, as cited in Czajka, Młodkowska, and Umińska-Keff, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue*, vol. 3, 154, and reproduced in Orzeł, *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady*, 265–66. See also Daniel Kac, *Koncert grany żywym* (Warsaw: TU, 1998), 183.
- <sup>2531</sup> Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, 250–52 (Kurdybań Warkowicki, Bortnica, Pańska Dolina, Ziniówka or Żeniówka); Tadeusz Piotrowski, ed., *Genocide and Rescue in Wołyń: Recollections of the Ukrainian Nationalist Ethnic Cleansing Campaign Against the Poles During World War II* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2000), 214–16; Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941–1944*, 251, 259–60, 266–67 (Huta Stepańska, Przebraże, Pańska Dolina, Kurdybań Warkowicki, Bortnica, Żeniówka). Compare with Władysław Siemaszko and Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: von borowiecky, 2000), 60 (Bortnica), 92–94 (Pańska Dolina), 107–8 (Kurdybań Warkowicki), 109 (Ziniówka or Żeniówka), 284–93 (Huta Stepańska), 650–54 (Przebraże).
- <sup>2532</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 1027; Testimony of Jacek Grębicki in Edmund Mazur, “Po prostu człowiek: Materiały dotyczące pomocy niesionej Żydom w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej w Warszawie,” *Palestra*, no. 11 (1968): 65–104, at p. 84.
- <sup>2533</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 263, 265, 266, 324–25, 327, 361 and 389, 386 392, respectively. Regarding Konińsk, see also Tarmon, *Memorial Book*, 39–40, 67–68, 74, 85. Regarding Przebraże, see also Kac, *Koncert grany żywym*, 183, and the testimony of Estera Kac, JHI, record group 301, no. 2890, English translation: Boaz Cohen and Beate Müller, “A Teacher and His Students: Child Holocaust Testimonies from Early Postwar Polish Bytom,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2016): 68–115, at pp. 96–97.
- <sup>2534</sup> Sonya Tesler-Gyraph, “Memories from the Nazi Period,” in Yosef Kariv, ed., *Horchiv Memorial Book* (Tel Aviv: Horchiv Committee in Israel, 1966), 63.
- <sup>2535</sup> Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia, 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 872.
- <sup>2536</sup> Orzeł, *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady*, 104–5. Dwojra Frymet (b. 1930) states that, after the war, she wanted to convert and be a Pole because Poles had helped her during the German occupation, whereas Jews had never treated her decently.

Assistance from Polish villagers was also widespread in Eastern Galicia.

- In Kretowce, near Zbaraż, Tarnopol voivodship, “several dozen Jews were able to move about almost freely because the whole village shielded them from the Nazis.”<sup>2537</sup>
- Michael Zipper was one of thirteen Jews who hid for eight months in a forest bunker not far from the predominantly Polish village of Zabojski, near Tarnopol. The group included five children and two of Michael’s cousins: Fella Sieler and Maria Goldhirsh with her daughter Ruzia (later Rose Slutzky), according to whom: “The whole village kept us a secret, and when they could, they shared some food with us. ... good Polish people who gave us a bit of food, when they themselves were hungry.”<sup>2538</sup>
- Sixteen Jews were rescued in the predominantly Polish village of Draganówka, near Tarnopol.<sup>2539</sup>
- Farmers in Kościejów, north of Lwów, located near the railway line leading to the extermination camp in Bełżec, “tended to Jews who jumped out of the ‘death trains.’ They not only brought them food and clothing but also sent word to Jews in the nearby village of Kulików to come and fetch the heavily injured immediately; the rest were taken by the peasants themselves to Kulików under cover of darkness.”<sup>2540</sup>
- In Bar, near Gródek Jagielloński, “villagers supplied a group of 18 Jews hiding in the neighbouring woods with food; they came into the village at night for their provisions and thanks to this help were able to hold out until the area was liberated by the Soviet Army.”<sup>2541</sup> One of the rescued Jews praises the “noble attitude of the entire population, without exception, of the Polish village of Bar,” who made it possible for more than twenty people hiding in nearby forests to survive.<sup>2542</sup>

<sup>2537</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 46. According to Marek Szmajuk, some 70 Jews from Zbaraż were rescued by Poles; the village of Kretowce, where more than 20 Jews were saved, stood out in this respect. Jews there lived openly and their presence was known to the entire village. See the testimony of Marek Szmajuk, JHI, record group 301, no. 2571, cited in Czajka, Janczewska, and Umińska-Keff, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue*, vol. 3, 233–34 (Kretowce), and reproduced in Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 3, 268–69 (Kretowce). The following Poles from Kretowce have been recognized as “Righteous” by Yad Vashem: Agnieszka Mazurkiewicz, Helena Sokalska and her daughter, Janina Szkilnik (who rescued Marek Markus Szmajuk and his family), and six members of the Zalwowski family.

<sup>2538</sup> Testimony of Rose Slutzky in Belle Millo, ed., *Voices of Winnipeg Holocaust Survivors* (Winnipeg: Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, 2010), 364; Testimony of Rose Slutzky, SFV, Interview code 23960.

<sup>2539</sup> Testimony of Jakub Zajd, JHI, record group 301, no. 2166.

<sup>2540</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 45.

<sup>2541</sup> Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945*, 45.

<sup>2542</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 444, based on Gerszon Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich* (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1946), 62. For a Polish account, see Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 2, 115–16.



- While hiding with the Beck family in Żółkiew, Gerszon Taffet was astonished to see two youngsters arrive unexpectedly at the hideout: "in broad daylight, at 10 a.m., two Jewish children went down the street where they had lived since they were born, where everybody knew them, and nobody stopped them."<sup>2543</sup>
- The Polish villagers of Stanisłówka, near Żółkiew, fed and sheltered Jews who moved from place to place.<sup>2544</sup>
- In the Polish village of Czukiew, near Sambor, a farmer sheltered 18 Jews; most of the villagers were aware of what was going on.<sup>2545</sup>
- Several Jews were sheltered by Polish villagers in Święty Stanisław, near Stanisławów. No one betrayed them.<sup>2546</sup>
- With reference to the small, predominantly Polish town of Kozowa, near Brzeżany, Bronia Beker (née Rohatiner) states: "My aunt didn't have to hide. She was so well loved and respected by all because she always helped the poorest of the poor, that while she was walking around freely, living among the ruins nobody gave her away. ... The people in the town also made sure she had food at all times."<sup>2547</sup>
- Samuel Eisen, then a teenager, survived in a forest near Tłuste. "We had no money, but in the village nearby lived a lot of Poles who knew us and were good to us. They were afraid to hide us but they [always] gave us food."<sup>2548</sup>
- Maria Fischer Zahn survived the war and occupation near Zborów with the help of Polish villagers. "Everybody in the neighborhood knew we were hiding, but nobody told the Germans. The people in Jezierna were good people. They didn't give us away. They helped us with food. We couldn't have survived without them."<sup>2549</sup>
- Shlomo Berger passed as a Pole in a small town near Czortków. He worked for a company whose Polish director, Tadeusz Duchowski, knew that he was Jewish. "I rented a room in Niżniów with one of the Polish workers. I learned from him that the man who was in charge of the office was the son of a judge who was a Jew who had converted to Catholicism. The son was probably raised as a Christian, but by German criteria he was still Jewish. The people at the office knew who he was, but nobody said anything."<sup>2550</sup>
- Markus Lecker, who joined up with a large group of Jews living in a forest bunker in the vicinity of Borszczów, describes their relations with a Polish settlement that provided them with food. "The colony ... consisted of six houses with six Polish families living there. ... These 6 Polish families were the main support for

<sup>2543</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 444.

<sup>2544</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 172–74.

<sup>2545</sup> Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 825, based on the testimony of Meyer Lamet, July 15, 1945, JHI, record group 301, no. 4967.

<sup>2546</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 620; Knap, "Jak ci się uda uratować, pamiętaj", 101–3.

<sup>2547</sup> Bronia Beker's account in "Women of Valor: Partisans and Resistance Fighters," Internet: [www.interlog.com/~mighty/personal/bronia.htm](http://www.interlog.com/~mighty/personal/bronia.htm), originally published in the *Journal of the Center for Holocaust Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4 (Spring 1990).

<sup>2548</sup> Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 206, based on the testimony of Samuel Eisen, JHI, record group 301, no. 197.

<sup>2549</sup> Vogel, *We Shall Not Forget!*, 2nd ed., 280, and also 276.

<sup>2550</sup> Berger, *Constructing a Collective Memory of the Holocaust*, 55.

us Jewish outcasts who lived in the bunker. We used to go to the Polish colony at night and exchange whatever we had left for food ... But I must say these Polish colonists did supply us with some food ... even if we didn't have what to give them in return ..."<sup>2551</sup>

- Hundreds of Jews were helped by Polish villagers in Biłka Szlachecka,<sup>2552</sup> about 20 kilometres east of Lwów, and in Hanaczów and Świrz,<sup>2553</sup> about 40 kilometres east of Lwów. More than 200 Jews were sheltered or helped by Poles in Hanaczów. Jews joined with the Polish Home Army to fend off attacks by Ukrainian partisans.<sup>2554</sup>
- Of Ostra Mogiła, a predominantly Polish village near Skala, Jewish survivors wrote: "The people in this village were friendly to the Jews and provided them with whatever they could. ... Twenty-nine Jews survived in Ostra-Mogila."<sup>2555</sup> A Jew who

<sup>2551</sup> Marcus Lecker, *I Remember: Odyssey of a Jewish Teenager in Eastern Europe* (Montreal: The Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies, and The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, 1999), 56.

<sup>2552</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 483; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 602–3.

<sup>2553</sup> Jerzy Węgierski, *W lwowskiej Armii Krajowej* (Warsaw: Pax, 1989), 77–78, 147–48, 151–52, 201; Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 227–28; Dorota Szwarcman, "Żywoć Klemzera: Wywiad z Leopoldem Kozłowskim," *Midrasz*, January 2003; Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 3, 12–13 (testimony of Edmund Adler), 346–50; Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 2, 204–7; *Na Rubieży* [Wrocław], no. 1 (1997): 21; *Na Rubieży* [Wrocław], no. 59 (2002): 18; *Na Rubieży* [Wrocław], no. 73 (2004): 6–22; Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 286–90, 774–78, 789–91, 798–99; Dariusz Libionka, "ZWZ-AK i Delegatura. Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 112–13; Ewa Koper, "Partyzantka żydowska na terenach objętych deportacjami do niemieckiego nazistowskiego obozu zagłady w Bełżcu: Zarys problematyki," in Tomasz Domański and Edyta Majcher-Ociesa, eds., *Żydzi i wojsko polskie w XIX i XX wieku* (Kielce and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2020), 251–64, at pp. 255–60; Testimony of Edmund Adler, JHI, record group 301, no. 808 and YVA, file O.62/143 (Item 3732334); Testimony of Feiga Pfeffer, JHI, record group 301, no. 1356, as cited in Czajka, Jóźwik, Mahorowska, and Umińska-Keff, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue*, vol. 2, 154. The Home Army unit also cooperated with a Jewish partisan unit in that area. The leaders of the Jewish unit (Captain Fryderyk Staub "Proch," Isaac Braun) were decorated for their valour by the head of the Lwów district of the Home Army, and the Wojtowicz brothers (Alojzy, Kazimierz, and Antoni), local Home Army members, were recognized by Yad Vashem as "Righteous Among the Nations." See Shmuel Krakowski, "The Polish Underground and the Jews in the Years of the Second World War," in David Bankier and Israel Gutman, eds., *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority and The International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2003), 226; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 886–87.

<sup>2554</sup> This remarkable story is described in Joshua D. Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 314–17.

<sup>2555</sup> Abraham Weissbord, *Death of a Shtetl*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skalat1/skalat.html>, translation of *Es shtarbt a shtetl: Megiles Skalat* (Munich: Central

was given shelter by the Firuta family said that almost every one of the ten houses on their street sheltered Jews, and that the entire street merited recognition.<sup>2556</sup>

- A group of 28 Jews took refuge in the forests near their hometown of Skała Podolska, on the River Zbrucz, in Tarnopol voivodship. They turned for food and other necessities to a Polish colony known as Mazury. “There was a small village at the edge of the Skala [Skała] forest, called Mazury. ... I vividly remember the late June of 1943, when my two cousins and I, along with a handful of other young men and women, escaped to the forest during a week-long rainy weather spell. We were cold, wet and starving for days. Our first ‘meal’ in the forest, was a slice of cold corn pudding we all shared, that my cousin, Nechamia Stock of blessed memory, brought from the Mazury colony after sneaking out of the forest and knocking at the door of a Polish colonist, a total stranger. Later that summer, my cousin Malcia Rothstein (née Stock) made a deal with a woman colonist to knit sweaters with wool provided by her in exchange for bottles of milk, a rare luxury at the time. In the fall of 1943, after German troops raided our section of the forest, killing scores of Jews, we decided to build underground bunkers for the winter. The Mazury colonists were those who lent us the necessary construction tools—saws, picks, shovels and hammers—no questions asked. Those tools eventually made our survival possible! Regretfully, the names of those individual Polish colonists lie buried in the graves of the survivors who dealt with them at the time, but their deeds are still remembered with gratitude.”<sup>2557</sup>
- Żeniów, near Gliniany: “The few Jews of Gliniany who saved their lives were hiding in the woods near Żeniów [Żeniów]. The Polish peasants of that village supplied their food.”<sup>2558</sup>
- Hucisko Olejskie (or Huta Olejska), near Złoczów: “It is a Polish village ... The gentiles were also very kind. We were there. We slept in barns. We slept here a day, here a day, here a night.”<sup>2559</sup>
- The villagers in nearby Majdan Pieniacki, near Brody, supplied scores of Jews from that and other villages living in forest bunkers with food. Some of the Jews participated in the village self-defence to fend off raids by Ukrainian nationalist partisans.<sup>2560</sup>
- Gila Shmulowitz recalled her family’s reception by the villagers of Dźwinogród, near Buczacz:

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Historical Commission of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in the U.S. Zone of Germany, 1948), 65.

<sup>2556</sup> Firuta Family, RD.

<sup>2557</sup> Max Mermelstein (Weidenfeld) and Tony Hausner, eds., *Skala on the River Zbrucz: A History of the Former Skala Jewish Community* (United States: Skala Research Group and Skala Benevolent Society, 2009), 397–98, also 183–90.

<sup>2558</sup> “Letter of Chayeh Kanner,” in *Khurbn Glinyane* (New York: New York: Emergency Relief Committee for Gliniany and Vicinity, 1946), 10, translated as *The Tragic End of Our Gliniany*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/gliniany1/Gliniany1.html>.

<sup>2559</sup> Account of Rose (Raisel) Meltzak in Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds*, 164.

<sup>2560</sup> Bernard Scharf, *Courage* ([Canada]: Mark Scharf, 2011), 39, 44, 50, 54.

We went into the fields. We spent the whole summer there, and yet, since we knew everyone in Winogród [Dźwinogród], we were coming to their places at night and got some food. After they had gone to bed, we sneaked into the cowsheds and the stables for the night. ... In November, when the peasants collected everything from the fields we found shelter in a dugout. In the evenings we also went to get food. More often than not my sister [who had a distinctive Jewish appearance] did this. She used to bring back bread, sugar and potatoes. ... Winter came. ... We entered the village and went round to one Polish peasant, who was forty or forty-five, called Wacek; his wife's name was Michalina. I don't remember their surname. They had children—don't know how many and two cows. 'You will be warm in my stable, stay here,' said Wacek to my father [Ajzyk]. He used to bring us bread and soup. ... We stayed at Wacek's for about a month. We left his stable when the Russkies came."<sup>2561</sup>

- Etunia Bauer Katz describes the help her family—consisting of her parents and four siblings—received from a number of villagers in Mateuszówka, near Buczacz.<sup>2562</sup>
- Israel M., together with his mother, took refuge in Wojciechówka, a Polish village near Buczacz; he stated: "Good people lived there."<sup>2563</sup> According to another account, the inhabitants of Wojciechówka forged an alliance with Jews, whom the villagers had protected, to defend the village from attacks by Ukrainian partisans.<sup>2564</sup>
- Another Polish village near Buczacz, Nowosiółka Koropiecka, is mentioned in the same context.<sup>2565</sup>
- In another village near Buczacz: "There were approximately fifty to sixty Jews in different bunkers. The Jews who were hiding near the village were working with Polish farmers to protect the area from the *Banderowcy* [i.e., Ukrainian partisans], whose goal it was to burn down all the Polish villages. The Poles and Jews would be on guard throughout the night. It was very interesting to listen to their conversations. Jews were helping the Polish Christian farmers, and in return, the farmers would help the Jews."<sup>2566</sup>
- Other Polish villages in that area:

The last months before the liberation, our security was very compromised. The Ukrainians organized big, armed groups known as Bendrovitches [Banderowcy], who wanted badly to catch us. The roads were full of them. Our wanderings from place to place became almost impossible. At the same time, the Ukrainians started killing the Polish population, finishing off

<sup>2561</sup> Isakiewicz, *Harmonica*, 106–8; Isakiewicz, *Ustna harmonijka*, 96–98.

<sup>2562</sup> Katz, *Our Tomorrows Never Came*, 73–99.

<sup>2563</sup> Cited in David Ravid (Shmukler), ed., *The Cieszanow Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2006), 190–91. Regarding Wojciechówka, see also Munio Wurman, "Local Population," in Blond, *Memorial Book of Tlumacz*, col. clxxiv (English section); Oral history interview with Pepa (Sternberg) Gold, March 26, 1987, Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center; Testimony of Pepa Gold, SFV, Interview code 39449 (misidentified as Wojciechowice).

<sup>2564</sup> Testimony of Alicia Appleman-Jurman, cited in Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 107, 185 n.2. See also Alicia Appleman-Jurman, *Alicia: My Story* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 149, 157.

<sup>2565</sup> Yehuda Bauer, "Buczacz and Krzemieniec: The Story of Two Towns During the Holocaust," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 33 (2005): 298; Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 107.

<sup>2566</sup> Maxwell Smart, *Chaos to Canvas* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2018), 79.

entire villages. One night, we got an interesting offer. We were staying with Polish friend when a Polish delegation came and asked us to help organize a Polish resistance against the Ukrainians. We accepted the offer. They appreciated our courage and gave us a beautiful welcome. In turn, they promised to protect us and help us in any way. We mentioned how many of the people helped the Germans kill our brothers and sisters. They replied that every nation has its bad element, but most of Polish people felt sorry for the Jews!

It is interesting to note that we found the Polish people to be unarmed, but the Ukrainians had a lot of ammunition. We spent some time in the Polish villages. Many people from hiding in nearby villages joined us. They treated us very well, as they had promised, and had a big dinner for us every night. We went about our business at night and in the day stayed in hiding. Only on Sunday would we go out with our automatic guns to guard the church where everybody was praying. Before we came to the village they had been afraid to go to church for fear of raids by the Ukrainians. They priest told them: "Today we can pray in peace because there is a power outside the building, guarding us from all evil." We stayed in the Polish village until the liberation.<sup>2567</sup>

- Additional examples of communal assistance by Poles have been documented in the following locales in Eastern Galicia: Rakowiec and Hołosko Wielkie (both near Lwów);<sup>2568</sup> Adamy (near Busk);<sup>2569</sup> Huta Brodzka (near Brody);<sup>2570</sup> Dzwonica (near Złoczów);<sup>2571</sup> Ułaszowce (near Czortków);<sup>2572</sup> an unidentified village near Złoczów;<sup>2573</sup> Horyhlady (near Tłumacz);<sup>2574</sup> Hucisko (near Brzeżany), a Home Army base;<sup>2575</sup> a village near Zaleszczyki.<sup>2576</sup>

Spontaneous—and often anonymous—assistance was much more frequent than is often assumed. In response, the Germans issued public announcements warning the population not to engage in such activities. In order to instil fear into the popu-

<sup>2567</sup> Yehoshua Vermut, "How I Survived," in Sh. [Shimshon] Meltzer, ed., *Sefer Horodenka* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Horodenka and Vicinity in Israel and the USA, 1963), 296 ff., translated as *The Book of Horodenka*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/gorodenka/Gorodenka.html>.

<sup>2568</sup> Stepan Makarczuk, "Straty ludności w Galicji Wschodniej w latach II wojny światowej (1939–1945)," in *Polska–Ukraina: Trudne pytania*, vol. 6 (Warsaw: Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej, Związek Ukraińców w Polsce, and Karta, 2000), 240.

<sup>2569</sup> Bronisław Szeremeta, "Zagłada wsi Adamy—rok 1943," *Semper Fidelis* [Wrocław], no. 1 (14) (1993): 19; Testimony of Leokadja Bochner, JHI, record group 301, no. 234; Prus, *Holocaust po banderowsku*, 144.

<sup>2570</sup> Prus, *Holocaust po banderowsku*, 167.

<sup>2571</sup> Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe*, 450; "Letter of Chayeh Kanner," in *Khurbn Glinyane*, 10, translated as *The Tragic End of Our Gliniany*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/gliniany1/Gliniany1.html>.

<sup>2572</sup> Abraham Morgenstern, *Chortkov Remembered: The Annihilation of a Jewish Community* (Dumont, New Jersey: n.p., 1990), 83–84, 98.

<sup>2573</sup> Testimony of H. Fromer, JHI, record group 301, no. 1793/6.

<sup>2574</sup> Blond, *Memorial Book of Tłumacz*, col. clxxiv.

<sup>2575</sup> Hersch Altman, *One the Fields of Loneliness* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2006), 139 ff.

<sup>2576</sup> Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 260.

lation, the Germans conducted public executions—like those in Tarnopol (described below) and Stryj<sup>2577</sup>—of those who dared to help Jews.

In Tarnopol, the Germans erected gallows in the town's main square, announced the event through loud speakers, and forced residents to come out of their homes to witness the execution. In the countryside, they simply pacified Polish villages suspected of helping Jews.

- Irene Gut Opdyke, a Polish rescuer who is credited with saving at least 17 Jews,<sup>2578</sup> recalled, "There was a priest in Janówka [near Tarnopol]. He knew about the Jews' escape—many of the Polish people knew about it. ... Many people brought food and other things—not right to the forest, but to the edge—from the village. The priest could not say directly 'help the Jews,' but he would say in church, 'not one of you should take the blood of your brother.' ... During the next couple of weeks there were posters on every street corner saying, 'This is a Jew-free town, and if any one should help an escaped Jew, the sentence is death.'"<sup>2579</sup>
- The terrifying reality behind that warning was impressed to the fullest possible extent on the consciousness of the population as they were forced to watch the public execution of rescuers in nearby Tarnopol. The town square "was choked with a milling, bewildered crowd," Irene Gut Opdyke recalled. "SS men abruptly pushed me into the middle of the square, just as they had the others, with a command not to leave. A scaffold had been erected in the center of the square, and what appeared to be two separate families were slowly escorted through the crowd to the block. A Polish couple, holding two small children, were brought up first, followed by a Jewish couple with one child, all three wearing the yellow Star of David. Both groups were lined up in front of dangling nooses. They were going to hang the children as well! Why didn't somebody do something? What could be done? Finally, their 'crimes' were announced—the Polish family had been caught harboring the Jewish family! Thus we were forced to witness the punishment for helping or befriending a Jew."<sup>2580</sup>
- In Huta Werchobuska or Werchobudzka, near Złoczów, and Huta Pieniacka, near Brody, both in Eastern Galicia, the Polish villagers were simply annihilated, and their homes and farmsteads were burned down in German pacifications. Ukrainian SS Galizien forces were among the perpetrators. The long-standing assistance provided to Jews by many of the locals was undoubtedly a factor in provoking this bloody reprisal.<sup>2581</sup>

<sup>2577</sup> Zajęczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 229 (Entry 482).

<sup>2578</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 261.

<sup>2579</sup> Rittner and Myers, *The Courage to Care*, 47–48.

<sup>2580</sup> Opdyke with Elliot, *Into the Flames*, 139.

<sup>2581</sup> Zajęczkowski, *Martyrs of Charity*, 154–55, based on Tsvi Weigler, "Two Polish Villages Razed for Extending Help to Jews," *Yad Washem Bulletin*, no. 1 (April 1957): 19–20; Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe*, 450–53. See also Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, 66–71 (Huta Pieniacka), 499–500 (Huta Werchobudzka). According to another account, 35 Jews hidden by Polish villagers escaped



- Feiweł Auerbach, a Jew from Sasów, made the following deposition shortly after the war: “There were 30 of us [Jews] in the forest. We hid in Huta Werchobuska and Huta Pieniacka. The Polish inhabitants of those villages helped us. The peasants were very poor and were themselves hungry but they shared with us their last bits of food. We stayed there from July 1943 until March 1944. Thanks to them we are alive. When there were manhunts, the village reeve warned us. Once 500 Germans encircled the forest, but since they were afraid to enter deep into the forest they set their dogs on us. We were saved because our Polish friends warned us of the impending danger. Because of a denunciation [by the Ukrainian police] all of the villagers of Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska were killed. Some of them were burned alive in a barn. The village was burned to the ground.”<sup>2582</sup>
- About twenty residents of Berecz, in Volhynia, were killed during a pacification of that Polish settlement by Ukrainian police in November 1942. The locals had been assisting Jewish escapees from the ghetto in Powursk (Powórska).<sup>2583</sup>
- In Polesie (Polesia), a largely Belorussian region to the north of Volhynia, Kopel Kolpanitzky describes the helpfulness of the residents of Zahorie [Zahorze], a small village of Polish Catholics three kilometers from Łachwa. The Germans burned Zahorze to the ground.<sup>2584</sup>

Collective rescue of Jews was widespread as well in the in northeastern corner of German-occupied Poland (i.e., the prewar provinces of Wilno and Nowogródek).

- Shulamit Schreyber Żabinska, a teenage girl who was sheltered by Poles in the Wilno countryside, recalled that many Poles brought food to the ghetto, “otherwise everyone would have starved to death. It was dangerous, and people were shot for this.” After escaping from the Wilno ghetto she was taken in by Weronika (“Wercia”) Stankiewicz and her mother, passing as Wercia’s niece. The Polish villagers knew perfectly well that she was Jewish. She survived the German occupation.<sup>2585</sup>

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during the pacification of Huta Werchobuska. See Scharf, *Courage*, 50, 54 (misidentified as Wutawakabusta).

<sup>2582</sup> Testimony of Fajwel (Feiweł) Auerbach, JHI, record group 301, no. 1200. Irving Guttman, a native of Złoczów who was given sanctuary by a Christian woman in Huta Pieniacka, recalled the raid that took the lives of hundreds of villagers, among them a number of Jews who were hidden there. Based on his personal experiences, Guttman has only good things to say about the Poles in this area. See the testimony of Irving Guttman, April 25, 1995, Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Mills, Michigan, and SFV, Interview code 24374.

<sup>2583</sup> Siemaszko and Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia, 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 363.

<sup>2584</sup> Kopel Kolpanitzky, *Sentenced To Life: The Story of a Survivor of the Łachwa Ghetto* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 89–96.

<sup>2585</sup> Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 1st ed., 117–18; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Żegota*, 2nd ed., 110; Tomaszewski and Werbowski, *Code Name: Żegota*, 3rd ed., 117.

- Similarly, Estera Bielicka found safe harbour with the Mysłicki family in Motejkany, near Ejszyski, where she lived openly. No one drew attention to her Jewish origin.<sup>2586</sup>
- After miraculously surviving a mass execution in Ponary, Ita Straż wandered in the countryside without documents near Nowa Wilejka, Witaniszki and Gajluny, sewing for farmers with whom she stayed in exchange for food.<sup>2587</sup>
- A female pharmacist survived in the vicinity of Kiemieliszki, near Wilno, by healing sick villagers and livestock.<sup>2588</sup>
- The neighbours of a Polish family in Białozoryszki, near Wilno, were aware that they were sheltering a Jewish boy.<sup>2589</sup>
- Khyene Izrailsky Katsev (Chana Israelski Kacaw) and her sister, Frida, from Podbrzezie were sheltered by a number of Polish families—Orszewski, Gładkowski, Matyas, Matulaniec, and others—in the village of Borskuny, near Meszajgoła.<sup>2590</sup>
- Pola Wawer of Wilno recalled the help that she and her parents, Don and Dr. Maria Komaj, received from all of the inhabitants of Zameczek, a hamlet north of Nowa Wilejka. The families of five cousins—Aloszko and Nieścierowicz—made up the entire population there.<sup>2591</sup>
- Joanna Malberg, under an assumed identity, worked as a private French teacher and lived openly in the town of Niemenczyn. She had a marked Semitic appearance and was widely suspected of being a Jew.<sup>2592</sup>
- Chana Mirski (later Hana Shachar) was born at the end of 1939 or in early 1940. Her paternal grandfather, Nathan Mirski, entrusted her for safekeeping to his acquaintance, Stanisław Świetlikowski, who smuggled her out of the Podbrodzie ghetto, northeast of Wilno, in September 1941. The Świetlikowskis' neighbours would have figured out the sudden new addition to their family was a Jewish child. Nobody denounced them.<sup>2593</sup>
- Estera Bielicka lived with the Mysłicki family in Motejkany, near her hometown of Ejszyski, in plain sight of all of the residents of this village. Not only did the villagers know about her, but she was also seen at church services in town. No one betrayed her.<sup>2594</sup>

<sup>2586</sup> Wiktor Noskowski, "Czy Yaffa Eliach przeprosi Polaków?," *Myśl Polska* [Warsaw], July 20–27, 1997; Testimony of Gita Giliat, YVA, file O.71/92.

<sup>2587</sup> Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 124.

<sup>2588</sup> Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 126.

<sup>2589</sup> Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny*, Part 1, 104–9.

<sup>2590</sup> Testimony of Mikhoel (Michael) Potashnik, in Sandler, *The Lithuanian Slaughter of Its Jews*, 281.

<sup>2591</sup> Wawer, *Poza gettem i obozem*, 69, 71–73. One of the families, Wincenty and Paulina Aloszko and their two sons, were awarded by Yad Vashem for sheltering Izaak and Celina Melcer and their daughters, Raya and Helena. See *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 57.

<sup>2592</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 58–59; Antonowicz Family, RD; Testimony of Wacława Dobrzyńska, JHI, record group 301, no. 5427.

<sup>2593</sup> Świetlikowski Family, RD.

<sup>2594</sup> Wiktor Noskowski, "Czy Yaffa Eliach przeprosi Polaków?," *Myśl Polska* [Warsaw], July 20–27, 1997, reproduced in *The Story of Two Shtetls, Brańsk and Ejszyski*, Part 2, 154–55.

- Another Jew from that area recalled the assistance he and his father received on a number of occasions from the villagers of Powiańce. “The village was composed of some forty houses strung out side by side on a single street. Each house was inhabited by Poles, but my father knew many of them and had done favours for them in the past. At each house, we knocked and explained our plight. Only a few turned us down ... Very soon our wagon was filled with butter and eggs and flour and fresh vegetables, and my father and I wept at their kindness and at the realization that we had been reduced to beggars. The people of Powielancy [Powiańce] were so generous ... Now we sent out a food gathering group each evening to beg in the neighbouring villages where most of the people felt kindly toward us. One of the villages in this area was Powielancy whose people had filled our cart with food when father and I had come from the Radun [Raduń] ghetto. They helped us again most willingly for they sympathized with our plight.”<sup>2595</sup>
- Meir Stoler escaped the German massacre of Jews in Raduń on May 10, 1942. He managed to reach the tiny Polish hamlet of “Mizhantz,” actually Mieżańce, where the villagers took him in and fed him.<sup>2596</sup> Other accounts also portray Mieżańce as friendly to Jews.<sup>2597</sup>
- Boris and Gitel Smolnik were sheltered by the Korobiec family in Porzecze, near Grodno. Not one of their neighbours or other local persons in the know informed on them to the German authorities.<sup>2598</sup>
- The Krepski family of Helenów, near Stołpce, sheltered Shimon Kantorowicz for two years. Almost the entire village was aware of this, but nobody betrayed them.<sup>2599</sup>

Jews passing as Polish Christians in cities were often recognized by people who knew them or who recognized them as Jews. Such encounters did not usually result in betrayal. Open displays of sympathy were also evident. The following accounts pertain to Warsaw.

- Stefan Chaskielewicz, passing as a Christian in Warsaw, unexpectedly ran into many Poles whom he knew—and who knew that he was Jewish—without their giving him away. “I often met people I knew who either looked at me without greeting me, or greeted me with open sympathy. ... Occasionally, I did not even realize that the person I met knew me.”<sup>2600</sup>

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See also the testimony of Gita Giliat of Ejszyszki, who was sheltered by a farmer in Motejkany with a female friend, YVA, O.71/92 (Item 3552495).

<sup>2595</sup> Leon Kahn (as told to Marjorie Morris), *No Time To Mourn: A True Story of a Jewish Partisan Fighter* (Vancouver: Laurelton Press, 1978), 55, 124.

<sup>2596</sup> Gilbert, *The Righteous*, 19.

<sup>2597</sup> Testimony of Beniamin Rogowski, YVA, file O.3/2820 (Item 3556535); Testimony of Mosze Michalowski, YVA, file O.3/2815 (Item 3560227).

<sup>2598</sup> Emilia Korobiec, RD.

<sup>2599</sup> Krepski Family, RD.

<sup>2600</sup> Chaskielewicz, *Ukrywałem się w Warszawie*, 35–36.

- Henryk Lewandowski, one of a number of Jews from Zamość who took refuge in Warsaw, recalled, “[M]any Polish families in Warsaw knew about me and my acquaintances; but none of us experienced the slightest trouble because of this.”<sup>2601</sup>
- Marcus David Leuchter, who lived in “Aryan” Warsaw for more than two years, attested: “Having escaped from the [Kraków] Ghetto, I assumed a Polish gentile identity. While everybody around me knew, or at least suspected, that I was a Jew, nobody betrayed me.”<sup>2602</sup>
- The well-known writer Jan Brzechwa, who was of Jewish origin, lived openly in Warsaw, frequenting the same places he used to frequent before the war. No one turned him in.<sup>2603</sup>
- When Wiera Gran, a well-known singer, was hospitalized in Warsaw, all of the staff, other patients and visitors knew that she was Jewish. Nobody said a word.<sup>2604</sup>
- Henryk Grabowski, the famed liaison officer between the Polish and Jewish underground, smuggled scores of Jews out of the Warsaw ghetto. Many of his neighbours were aware that he often used his small, crowded apartment in Warsaw to hide the fugitives.<sup>2605</sup>
- Edward Reicher, who resided with a group of Jews on Waliców Street in Warsaw, recalled, “Petty incidents led us to quarrel constantly and without dignity. We fought not just with words but also with our fists. It was obvious that we were living there, but days, weeks, and months went by and nobody denounced us, even though the entire apartment complex, which was home to several hundred people, knew of our presence. Even the Polish prostitutes who received German clients in the same building did not betray us.”<sup>2606</sup>
- Wanda Jedlicka (then Grossman or Grosman), her husband, Wilhelm, and their two young sons did not relocate to the Warsaw ghetto when it was created in 1940; they remained in Warsaw proper. Although they had converted to Calvinism several years before the war, they were still considered to be Jews under German law. Wilhelm managed to obtain false identity documents for the family under the name of Jedlicki, and they did not go into hiding. They survived the war with the help of a number of Poles. As Jedlicka pointed out, dozens of persons knew or surmised the truth, yet only once did they encounter problems—with a gang of professional blackmailers. Eventually, that gang was liquidated by the Polish underground.<sup>2607</sup>
- An entire apartment building in Warsaw’s working-class district of Mokotów was aware that an extended Jewish family resided in their midst. Some of family members were very Jewish-looking, and some spoke with a Yiddish accent.<sup>2608</sup>

<sup>2601</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 68.

<sup>2602</sup> Marcus David Leuchter, “Reflections on the Holocaust,” *The Sarmatian Review* [Houston, Texas], vol. 20, no. 3 (September 2000).

<sup>2603</sup> Mariusz Urbanek, *Brzechwa: Nie dla dzieci* (Warsaw: Iskry, 2023), 98 ff.

<sup>2604</sup> Agata Tuszyńska, *Oskarżona Wiera Gran* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010), 142.

<sup>2605</sup> Barbara Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych* (Warsaw: ABC, 1997), 91.

<sup>2606</sup> Reicher, *Country of Ash*, 198, 201.

<sup>2607</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 675–81.

<sup>2608</sup> Marek Halter, “Tzedek,” *Wprost*, June 13, 1993.

- Fryderyka Godlewska (Szulemit Karmi), then a six-year-old child with obvious Semitic features, was taken in by the Domański family and passed off as their daughter. The entire tenement house in the Mokotów district was aware of this, and no one betrayed them.<sup>2609</sup>
- Juliusz and Jadwiga Saloni took in Irena Dąb, a seven-year-old fugitive from the Warsaw ghetto. Because the child unwittingly performed a Jewish dance in public—and because her features made it obvious—the neighbours in their apartment building in Warsaw's Saska Kępa suburb realized that she was Jewish. None of them caused her any harm.<sup>2610</sup>
- Fanny Gothajner and her teenage son lived with the Słowakiewicz family on Powińska Street in the Czerniaków district. Many of the residents of the apartment building recognized that she was Jewish. Far from betraying her, though, they made it clear that they were favourable disposed.<sup>2611</sup>
- The journalist Rafał Praga and his wife were sheltered by Franciszek and Klementyna Olbrychski in their apartment on Nowogrodzka Street in Warsaw. Although the Pragas' Jewish origin was common knowledge, and Rafał Praga, who had a distinctly Jewish appearance, used to frequent a nearby café, no one betrayed them.<sup>2612</sup>
- Zofia Rosen lived undisturbed in her Warsaw apartment, with the knowledge and assistance of the building's residents, until the Warsaw Uprising broke out in August 1944.<sup>2613</sup>
- Liliana Alter, a girl who looked Jewish, lived openly with the Stupnicki family in an apartment building on Mickiewicz Street in the Żoliborz district of Warsaw without any adverse reaction from its many residents.<sup>2614</sup>
- Other Warsaw tenement houses whose residents acted in tacit unison to protect one or more Jewish neighbours are mentioned in testimonies, e.g., 11 Wielka Street, and 45 Morszyńska Street.<sup>2615</sup>
- A Jewish woman who had to find new lodgings in Warsaw for herself and a friend with a Jewish appearance recalled, "Maria's physician paid a house call, bringing some medication and an injection. It was only one of several visits for which he never asked payment or information of any kind. ... We combed the neighborhood, asking in the storefronts if there might be a room to let. We gave many in those streets occasion to wonder about the two forlorn young women, one with a black-

<sup>2609</sup> Piotr Zychowicz, "Są nowi sprawiedliwi," *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], December 21, 2011.

<sup>2610</sup> Juliusz Bożydar Saloni, Archiwum Historii Mówionej, Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, Internet: <https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/juliusz-bozydar-saloni,2273.html>. The Salonis were recognized by Yad Vashem for rescuing Irena Dąb and her parents.

<sup>2611</sup> Testimony of Fanny Gothajner, JHI, record group 301, no. 2011.

<sup>2612</sup> Justyna Kobus, "Wykołysał mnie Drohiczyn," *Sukces*, March 28, 2008; Ewa Bağlaj, *Słoneczna dziewczyna: Opowieść o Klementynie Sołonowicz-Olbrychskiej* (Warsaw: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie Muza, 2007).

<sup>2613</sup> Stanisław Piątkowski, "W mrokach kamienic," *Kuryer Kielecki*, July 6, 2020.

<sup>2614</sup> The Stupnicki Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-stupnicki-family> (see Anna Bando's audio account "Dissection of Neighbours").

<sup>2615</sup> Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 533; Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 93; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 208–9.

-and-blue face. But no one denounced us as Jews or escapees from the ghetto. In fact, one morning the owner of a barber shop on Rakowiecka Street offered Maria his shop to stay in. All he asked was that she come late and leave early, before his help arrived.”<sup>2616</sup>

- Tomasz Prot, who was accepted into the Stefan Czarnecki Boarding School for Boys in Warsaw run by the Main Welfare Council, wrote: “At that time my looks were very characteristic. I was a dark-haired boy, the features of my face were clearly Semite. ... seeing my looks ... would hardly have any doubts on me being a hiding Jewish boy. Nevertheless, during my stay at the school, ... none of the teachers, nor even my schoolmates made me feel that they knew I was Jewish.”<sup>2617</sup>
- A network of Poles in the Warsaw suburb of Żoliborz was engaged in finding rooms among trusted persons for Jews who were attempting to pass as Poles.<sup>2618</sup> As one Jew remarked, “in the small houses in Warsaw’s Żoliborz district inhabited mostly by the Polish intelligentsia there were hidden many Jews who had escaped from the ghetto. I was in such a home which belonged to a known prewar Endek [nationalist]. Having learned that he was sheltering two Jewesses I asked with surprise: ‘You who before the war were an anti-Semite are now harbouring Jews in his home???’ He replied: ‘We have a common enemy and I am fighting in my way. They are Polish citizens and I have to help them.’”<sup>2619</sup>
- Feliks Tych, a historian at the Jewish Historical Museum in Warsaw, survived the war as a teenager. “Not infrequently, I would see individuals on the tramway or on the street who were, rather doubtless, Jews, looking about themselves anxiously, but the other passengers paid no attention to them, or pretended not to. ... For most of the time I was in hiding, I lived with my adopted family in the Warsaw suburb of Miedzeszyn. The neighbours could must have known that several Jews were hidden in that building. No one was denounced. They all survived.”<sup>2620</sup>
- Employees of the Warsaw Department of Social Welfare were heavily involved in the rescue of Jewish children, placing hundreds of them in Catholic convents. “Once we were informed that two boys were hidden in a cubbyhole in [the suburb of] Praga. One of them was running a high fever and it was imperative to move them. A nun took the sick boy on a streetcar and he started to scream out something in Yiddish. The driver was astute enough to sense the danger and yelled out: ‘This

<sup>2616</sup> Rosenberg, *To Tell at Last*, 122.

<sup>2617</sup> Ceremony of Awarding Medals and Honorary Diplomas “Righteous Among the Nations,” Warsaw, June 14, 2010.

<sup>2618</sup> Marian Turski, ed., *Losy żydowskie: Świadectwo żywych*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 1999), 150.

<sup>2619</sup> Zdzisław Przygoda, *Niezwykłe przygody w zwyczajnym życiu* (Warsaw: Ypsilon, 1994), 49.

<sup>2620</sup> “O ukrywaniu się po ‘aryjskiej stronie’: Z profesorem Feliksem Tychem rozmawia Barbara Engelking,” *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 1 (2005): 234; Barbara Engelking, “Rozmowa z prof. Feliksem Tychem,” *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 2 (2006): 340.



streetcar is going to the depot. Everyone out.’ At the same time he signalled to the nun that she and the boy should remain.”<sup>2621</sup>

- A Jewish woman who was being pursued by a blackmailer in Warsaw turned to the conductor of the streetcar she had boarded with a plea, “‘Sir, that man is an extortionist and he’s persecuting me.’ Without hesitating, the conductor went over to the intruder and slapped him twice across the face.” In the ensuing confusion, she managed to jump off unmolested by the other passengers.<sup>2622</sup>
- Zdzisław Przygoda, who was passing as a Christian, described a scene he witnessed during the 1943 Warsaw ghetto revolt: “On my way home from work in the street car, I listened to the loud discussions amongst the passengers. ‘The ghetto is burning! The Jews are burning, and we will finally be rid of them!’ said one. The majority of passengers reacted quickly by beating him as he made a quick exit from the moving carriage. It was clear that the majority of passengers were upset by the German action, and pleased that the ghetto inhabitants were beginning to fight.”<sup>2623</sup>

Bernard Nissenbaum, a Jewish survivor, wrote with admiration about the Polish prisoners of Pawiak prison, located inside the ghetto. Their acts of kindness brought the Jewish prisoners “comfort and encouragement,” both “physically and morally.”

The behavior of other [Pawiak prison] inmates, all political prisoners—towards us, Jewish prisoners, deserves high praise. They showed good comradeship and solidarity with us. When passing the street of the prison, they threw us their bread rations through the prison windows. On Sunday, when we were brought to the prison for [delousing], the kitchen personnel, with the inmates’ agreement, had kept for us the entire rations of soup and bread for distribution among us: What that meant to us, only people who have suffered acute hunger as we had under the Nazis know.<sup>2624</sup>

Almost all of the Jews who survived the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, numbering at least several thousand, were evacuated long with the Polish population to a transit camp in Pruszków, some 20 kilometres away. As historian Gunnar Paulsson points out, this included people with a conspicuously Semitic appearance who had, therefore, previously been at pains to keep themselves out of sight. If “hostile, anti-Semitic” Poles were going to denounce covert Jews to the Germans, they had

<sup>2621</sup> “Traktowałem to jako obowiązek chrześcijański i polski” (an interview with Jan Dobraczyński), *Słowo-Dziennik Katolicki* [Warsaw], no. 67 (1993).

<sup>2622</sup> Gross, *Who Are You, Mr Grymek?*, 249–50.

<sup>2623</sup> Przygoda, *The Way to Freedom*, 54.

<sup>2624</sup> Bernard Nissenbaum, “My Deportation,” p. 28, USHMM, Accession no. 1984.066, RG-02.005.01, cited in Michael Berkowitz, *The Crime of My Very Existence: Nazism and the Myth of Jewish Criminality* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), 87.

no shortage of opportunities. However, no evidence exists that a single Jew was betrayed by Poles, either during this exodus or later at the Pruszków camp.<sup>2625</sup>

Among those injured during the uprising there were Jews. They too were taken to the make-shift hospital in Podkowa Leśna, where Polish doctors and nurses treated all their patients with indiscriminate care and devotion. There is no record of any betrayals by fellow patients or personnel.<sup>2626</sup>

Jews who survived the German occupation by hiding in Polish cities other than Warsaw reported similar experiences.

- Helena Ziemba, one of several Jews rescued in Kalinowszczyzna, a suburb of Lublin, stated that many Poles knew she was being hidden, and some even brought food to her hideout. A Polish housekeeper who had an illegitimate son by her Jewish employer was not, likewise, betrayed by anyone.<sup>2627</sup>
- An entire street in the city of Przemyśl was aware of a Jewish hideout which was not betrayed.<sup>2628</sup>
- Nine Jews lived for two years behind a false wall in the attic of a flour mill in Tarnów. Some of the Jewish men used to leave the hideout at night to forage for food. It is unclear how many Poles knew about that situation. Israel Unger, one of those hidden there as a child, at first estimated the number to be about ten. "Who knew about the Jews in the attic? I am not sure even to this day. Probably the Dagnans, and the Skorupas, and the Drozds. ... Likely about ten non-Jewish people knew about the Jews in hiding and no one told on us." However, as Unger learned much later, the Jews in the attic were an open secret among Poles who worked at the flour mill.<sup>2629</sup>
- Mordecai Peleg, who was passing as a Pole, remained in his native Tarnów for a time and then returned on several occasions. He was well known, and therefore undoubtedly sometimes recognized. No one betrayed him. "Among the Poles, as it turned out, I had no enemies and no-one bothered me."<sup>2630</sup>
- The fact that Frederick Weitzenblum Baar did not look Jewish helped him to pass as a Pole, as he moved from place to place in his native Kraków. Many acquaintances knew that he was Jewish, and of course he ran into these people from time to time. No one turned him over to the Germans.<sup>2631</sup>

<sup>2625</sup> Paulsson, *Secret City*, 191–92.

<sup>2626</sup> Testimony of Róża Dobrecka, JHI, record group 301, no. 2274.

<sup>2627</sup> Jerzy Jacek Bojarski, ed., *Ścieżki pamięci: Żydowskie miasto w Lublinie—losy, miejsca, historia* (Lublin and Rishon LeZion: Norbertinum, Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka-Teatr NN," Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko-Izraelskiej w Lublinie, Stowarzyszenie Środkowoeuropejskie "Dziedzictwo i Współczesność," 2002), 35.

<sup>2628</sup> Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 307.

<sup>2629</sup> Gammon and Unger, *The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger*, 14–15, 199.

<sup>2630</sup> Peleg-Mariańska and Peleg, *Witnesses*, 4.

<sup>2631</sup> Frederic B. [Baar] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2016), FVA.

- Henryk Meller hid for a time on the Aryan side of Kraków, where he became one of those iconic children who sold cigarettes for a living. According to his testimony, he made enough money to allow himself to dress properly and eat well and even attend a cinema in the evening. The local Polish youths viewed him as an equal; if they were short of merchandise, they would shout to him, “Jew-boy, give us a Sport” (a well-known cigarette brand). They knew he was a Jew, but they accepted and respected him as a member of their own community, and no one among them informed on him.<sup>2632</sup>
- The following story of solidarity emerged from Radom.

My parents along with the other Jews of Radom, Poland were imprisoned in the ghetto in March of 1941. My grandfather’s huge leather factory, located a mile or so outside the ghetto, was seized by the Nazis and the Polish workers who had been employed by my grandfather were forced to work in the factory under harsh Nazi supervision. The leather they were producing was being turned into combat boots for German soldiers fighting on the Eastern front.

As the Radom ghetto was being “liquidated” by the Nazis in October 1942, my mother was nine-months pregnant with me. A few of the factory’s Polish workers came into the ghetto and smuggled my mother to the factory. There, in the factory’s attic, with Gestapo officers one floor below closely supervising the Polish workers preparing the leather used to make the boots for Nazi soldiers, my mother gave birth to me with the help of a Polish midwife, and was guarded by a cluster of Polish workers. During all this time, not one of the hundred workers in the factory or the hundreds of Poles living in the village nearby, betrayed my mother to the Nazis. These brave Poles risked their own lives to save the life of my mother and me, her newborn child. My mother was then smuggled back to the ghetto and one of the Polish workers immediately took me to his home; there he and his wife raised me as their own child for three years, risking their own lives and that of their 19-month-old daughter since the Nazi were killing Poles on sight who were harboring Jews.

Then, back in the Radom ghetto, as my parents, together with other Jews, were being marched to the cattle train, Polish partisans—probably employees of my grandfather’s factory—pulled my parents out of the line and, hiding them in a horse and carriage, smuggled them up to Warsaw where another Polish family hid them in their basement for three years.<sup>2633</sup>

In Poznań, a stronghold of the right-wing National Party (Endek), relations between Polish political prisoners and the Jews imprisoned in the Stadion labour camp in 1941–1943 were amicable.

- Samuel Bronowski, who appeared as a witness in the trial of Arthur Greiser, Gauleiter of the so-called Wartheland, said the following in his deposition before the Supreme National Tribunal:

The only help possible was aid in kind by supplying food. In the camp we received 200 grams of bread and one litre of turnip soup per day. Obviously, those who had no help from outside were bound to die within a short time. A committee was formed in Poznań for the collection of food. This was no easy matter since everything was rationed under the food coupon sys-

<sup>2632</sup> Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 66.

<sup>2633</sup> Andrew Griffel, “Did the Poles Who Saved My Parents Do It For Money?,” *The Times of Israel* (blog), February 19, 2018. Andrew Griffel’s parents, Henryk and Paulina Griffel, were sheltered in Warsaw by Helena and Piotr Spus. See the testimony of Helena Spus, SFV, Interview code 49133.

tem. Many a time, we received bigger parcels which reached us secretly at the construction sites where we worked and met the Polish people. Parcels were also thrown into the camp by night. It is not easy to describe the attitude of the civilian population outside the camp—to say that it was friendly, would be too little. There was marked compassion. There has not been a single case in Poznań of a Pole who would betray a Jew escaping the camp. There has not been a single case on the construction site of a foreman striking a Jew without immediate reaction on the part of the Polish co-workers. Those Jews who survived did so only thanks to the help from the Polish population of Poznań.<sup>2634</sup>

- Maks Moszkowicz, another inmate of the Stadion labour camp, made this statement in his deposition for Yad Vashem: “I wish to stress that the behaviour of the Polish population in Poznań towards us, the Jewish prisoners, was very friendly and when our labour battalions were coming out of the camp, people—mostly women—waited for us in the street in order to throw us food in spite of severe interdictions and punishment.”<sup>2635</sup>
- People readily recognizable as Jews who spoke poor Polish were able to survive in the Western Polish countryside, an area that was incorporated directly into the German Reich (from which Jews had been removed at the beginning of the German occupation), without being betrayed. “[Alexander] said that he had gone through the war with a false identity. It sounds like a joke with his Yiddish accented Polish, with his looks. ‘I presented myself as a Lithuanian [he said], I had no papers, I had no money, but I was young and strong. ... I escaped westward, to the Poznan [Poznań] region where Jews were hardly known. I worked in the village, at the farm of somebody ... He didn’t pay me anything. ... What matters is that he fed me, gave me some rags to wear, and I lived like a king.’”<sup>2636</sup>

**S**tories of solidarity among prisoners come from other German camps as well. Although such encounters were far from routine in the repressive and fearful atmosphere created by the German authorities, they attest to a broader understanding of human relations.

Many Jewish testimonies mention Polish prisoners of Auschwitz in a very favourable light. The vast majority of such cases would never have been recorded given the very high mortality rate among Jewish prisoners. These are just some examples that were recorded.

- Yad Vashem has recognized seven Polish prisoners who came to the assistance of Jewish prisoners as “Righteous”: Jerzy Bielecki, Romualda Ciesielska, Maria Kotarba, Jerzy Pozimski, Jerzy Radwanek, Stanisława Sierzputowska-Grodzicka, and Marianna Sowiar-Chodnikiewicz.<sup>2637</sup>

<sup>2634</sup> Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 225.

<sup>2635</sup> Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us*, 225.

<sup>2636</sup> Ephraim F. Sten, *1111 Days In My Life Plus Four* (Takoma Park, Maryland: Dryad Press, in association with the University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 66–67.

<sup>2637</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 90 (Bielecki), 148 (Ciesielska), 256 (Grodzicka); vol. 5, (Pozimski), 658 (Radwanek), 742 (Sowiar-Chodnikiewicz); *Encyclopedia of the Righteous: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005)*, vol. 2, 577–78 (Kotarba).

- Jerzy Bielecki, one of the first prisoners of Auschwitz, met and befriended Tzila Cybulska, a young Jewish woman prisoner. They used to meet in secret, despite the fact that it was forbidden to do so, and grew fond of each other. Bielecki arranged their escape in July 1944 and, with assistance of various Poles, took Tzila to the home of his relatives in the village of Muniakowice. She was later transferred to a neighbouring village, where she was cared for devotedly by the Czernik family until the Germans were expelled from the area.
- Romualda Ciesielska and her husband, Feliks, provided assistance to a number of Jews in Kraków. They were both arrested by the Gestapo. Romualda was interrogated, tortured, and sent to Auschwitz, where she continued helping Jewish prisoners. Her husband was interned in the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he perished.
- Maria Kotarba, who was part of the Polish resistance movement at Auschwitz, used her position to help several Jewish female prisoners who were passing as Poles with the connivance of Polish prisoners.
- Jerzy Pozimski used his position at Auschwitz to help many prisoners, among them Jews.
- Jerzy Radwanek, a member of the Polish underground at Auschwitz, used his position as camp electrician to provide widespread assistance to Jewish prisoners. He came to be known by them as the “Jewish uncle” of Auschwitz.<sup>2638</sup>
- Stanisława Sierzputowska-Grodzicka used her position at Auschwitz to save at least three Jewish female prisoners.
- Marianna Sowiar-Chodnikiewicz helped to conceal the identity of a Jewish woman who was passing as a Pole, and threatened to report any snitch to the Polish underground in the camp.
- Halina Nelken, a Jewish woman from Kraków, writes of the solidarity of Polish and Jewish prisoners in the Płaszów concentration camp and the help provided by Polish inmates of Auschwitz, the camp’s first inmates, to later transports of prisoners including Jews. These anonymous benefactors, who may not have been the “norm,” were known by the name of *kochany* (darling). While they did not have much to offer—perhaps some scraps of food or clothing—their attitude had a great impact on the new arrivals. Nelken relates similar displays of solidarity shown to her by Polish women inmates at Ravensbrück.<sup>2639</sup>
- Dr. Peta Welian, who was deported from the Białystok ghetto in September 1943, first to Stutthof then to Auschwitz, recalled that she and the Jewish prisoners who arrived with her were helped by Polish political prisoners: “They had big hearts, they helped us as much as they could and risked a lot.”<sup>2640</sup>
- Sigmund Gorson (Zygmunt Gruszkowski), taken to Auschwitz as a 13-year-old Jewish boy, recalled that Fr. Maximilian Kolbe was “like an angel to me. Like a mo-

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<sup>2638</sup> See also the profile of Jerzy Radwanek under “Poland,” The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, Internet: <http://www.jfr.org>.

<sup>2639</sup> Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 232, 248, 272.

<sup>2640</sup> Testimony of Peta Welian, JHI, record group 301, no. 1856.

ther hen, he took me in his arms. He used to wipe away my tears. ... he gave away so much of his meager rations that to me it was a miracle he could live." Another Jewish survivor, Eddie Gastfriend, recalled warmly the scores of Polish prisoner priests who were subjected to particular forms of degradation in the camp: "They wore no collars, but you knew they were priests by their manner and their attitude, especially toward Jews. They were so gentle, so loving."<sup>2641</sup>

- Sigmund Gorson also reported that Polish doctors imprisoned in Auschwitz stole medication from the infirmary to treat his gangrene-infected leg and to help other Jews.<sup>2642</sup>
- One such doctor was Janusz Makowski.<sup>2643</sup> Dr. Ludwik Fleck credits Dr. Włodzimierz Ławkowicz with saving his life when he fell ill by sharing his food.<sup>2644</sup>
- Max Eisen was only 15 years of age when he was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau from Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1944. He was immediately assigned to a work detail draining swamps in the vicinity of the camp. One day, Eisen received a terrible blow from an SS guard and was knocked unconscious. Severely injured, he was left at the camp infirmary. Tadeusz Orzeszko, the Polish doctor in charge of the clinic, took pity on Eisen and saved him from certain death. Patients who could not return to work were being taken to the gas chamber. Dr. Orzeszko operated on Eisen, nursed him back to health, and engaged him as his assistant. What Eisen did not know was that Dr. Orzeszko was a member of the Polish resistance, carrying on activities even in the heart of this notorious death camp.<sup>2645</sup>
- Dr. E. Szor, a Jewish inmate of Auschwitz, confirmed the helpfulness of fellow prisoner, Jan Kledzik, who was a hospital attendant at the camp: "He displayed a father's devotion to his fellow sufferers, irrespective of race and nationality." Kledzik, in turn, acknowledged the helpfulness of other Poles who collaborated with him: "As a former inmate of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, I wish to state how Poles saved and helped the Jews in the camp. Jews were hidden in hospitals; food that other prisoners received in parcels were shared with them. This was how the people working with me in the hospital gave help. They were: Andrzej Białecki, Stach Bukowski, Tadeusz Radomski, Marian Czerwiński, Bogdan Kolasinski. And in this way, thanks to our help, the following people regained their liberty: Doctors Knoch, Szor, Gabej, August, Dizerej, and [Ludwik] Fastman, the pharmacist Gotlieb, Zukier, Zieliński. The last two had already been selected for the gas chamber and, thanks, to Zygmunt, the *Schreiber* [clerk], they were taken from the hospital to the workers' camp. They all survived. When I was in the workers' *lager* before I started

<sup>2641</sup> Treece, *A Man for Others*, 138, 152–53.

<sup>2642</sup> Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 375.

<sup>2643</sup> Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 3, 90.

<sup>2644</sup> Testimony of Ludwik Fleck, JHI, record group 301, no. 1175.

<sup>2645</sup> Max Eisen, *By Chance Alone: A Remarkable True Story of Courage and Survival at Auschwitz* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2016); "Canadian Max Eisen's stories of surviving Holocaust," CBC, Internet: [https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/holocaust-survivor-hologram-1.5436430?\\_vfz=medium%3Dsharebar](https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/holocaust-survivor-hologram-1.5436430?_vfz=medium%3Dsharebar). See also the story of Dr. Tadeusz Orzesko, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-orzeszko-tadeusz>.



to work in the hospital, Father [Wawrzyniec] Wnuk from Gniezno and I saved Jews, who were so exhausted during roll call, that they collapsed and lay in the mud. Their co-religionists could not save them since they were afraid of the Nazis, but we Poles carried them on our shoulders to the block. There the Poles washed and fed them.”<sup>2646</sup>

- Zofia Hauswirt, another Jewish inmate of Auschwitz, worked with imprisoned medical staff. She recalled the helpfulness to Jews of a number of Polish inmates: Dr. Alina Tetmajer, Dr. Stefania Perzanowska, Dr. Katarzyna Łaniewska, Dr. Rudolf Diem, Dr. Stanisław Kłodziński, Dr. Jan Nowak, Dr. Mieczysław Kościelniak, Dr. Stefan Stolarzewicz, Janina Palmowska, Wiktoria Klimaszewska, Teodozja Piątkowska, Ludwik Wrona, Jadwiga Dąbrowska, Maria Zielińska, Adam Kopyciński, Zygmunt Rzążewski, and others.<sup>2647</sup>
- Dr. Stanisława Leszczyńska, who assisted in the delivery of hundreds of children in Auschwitz, gave over the Jewish children to their mothers in contravention of camp regulations and succeeded in concealing the origin of some of the Jewish children in order to prevent them from being killed.<sup>2648</sup>
- Other Polish doctors and medical staff who helped Jews—Adam Kuryłowicz, Władysław Fejkiel, Jan Grabczyński—were identified by Frank Stiffel, who was assigned to work in the infirmary for prisoners in Auschwitz I.<sup>2649</sup> Stiffel also reported that he was helped by a Polish block leader,<sup>2650</sup> and that a Pole protected a Jewish barber from Marseilles from being sent to the Birkenau death camp.<sup>2651</sup>
- Mieczysław Maślanko and Wolf Glicksman, Jewish inmates of Auschwitz, attest to the help provided to Jews by the following Polish Christian prisoners: Józef Cyraniewicz, Jan Mosdorf, and Adam Kuryłowicz.<sup>2652</sup>
- In a letter published in the *New York Times* on December 27, 1998, Marianne Sann wrote: “I want to, and must attest, to the fact that I was saved by Catholic fellow prisoners, at their great personal risk, in Auschwitz and again in Mauthausen.”<sup>2653</sup>

<sup>2646</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 478–79.

<sup>2647</sup> Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 670–71.

<sup>2648</sup> Erin Blakemore, “The Midwife at Auschwitz Delivered 3,000 Babies in Unfathomable Conditions,” Internet: <https://www.history.com/news/auschwitz-midwife-stanislaw-leszczynska-saint>; “Stanisława Leszczyńska,” Medical Review Auschwitz, Internet: <https://www.mp.pl/auschwitz/journal/english/206159,stanislaw-leszczynska>.

<sup>2649</sup> Frank Stiffel, *The Tale of the Ring: A Kaddish: A Personal Memoir of the Holocaust* (Toronto and New York: Bantam Books, 1985), chapter 10.

<sup>2650</sup> Testimony of Frank Stifel, YVA, O.3/5741 (Item 3555270).

<sup>2651</sup> Stiffel, *The Tale of the Ring: A Kaddish*, 289.

<sup>2652</sup> Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, 114; Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 10–11, 16; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, 2nd ed., 91, 668–70.

<sup>2653</sup> This was part of a longer letter which read: “As a Jewish woman and a survivor of Auschwitz, I am deeply disturbed by the feud over the crosses there. ... Because the Nazis preferred to incinerate more Jews than Roman Catholic Poles does not mean that Polish non-Jewish victims do not deserve a cross of remembrance and place of honor among their fellow Jewish victims. The Polish inmates felt the icy winds of doom just as acutely as I did. I want to, and must attest to the fact that I was saved by Catholic fellow prison-

- Berek Latarus from Łódź recalled, “One time I stole a bread and they took me to shoot me, but a non-Jewish guy from Cracow, he was my friend, and he ran and took me away from the Germans! This non-Jew was on good terms with the S.S., he used to smuggle them cigarettes, and we called him the ‘Jewish father’ because he was sticking up for us all the time.”<sup>2654</sup>
- Ada Omieljanczuk, a Jewish woman prisoner, attributes her survival to Polish fellow prisoners of Auschwitz who shared their food parcels with her.<sup>2655</sup>
- Two Jewish survivors from Ciechanów recalled that Polish prisoners in Auschwitz who received food parcels from home gave their camp-issued portions away to Jews and other prisoners.<sup>2656</sup>
- Two Jewish sisters who were imprisoned in Auschwitz recalled with gratitude the extra bread they received from a Polish prisoner.<sup>2657</sup>
- Historian Yisrael Gutman credits a Polish prisoner who hid him and fed him without expecting any reward with saving his life when he was imprisoned in Auschwitz for several months.<sup>2658</sup>
- Szymon Laks, an acclaimed composer and musician, identifies three Poles who helped him: Tadeusz Jawor, Ludwik Żuk-Skarszewski, who used his connections to pull Laks out of a work crew, and Jan Stojakowski, a supervisor in the food warehouse who provided Laks with extra food.<sup>2659</sup>
- Benjamin P. credits Bronisław Staszak, an orchestra conductor, with saving his life by providing him with extra food.<sup>2660</sup>
- Moishe Kantorowitz credits the Polish prisoner Leon Kulowski with saving his life by arranging his transfer, with the agreement of a Polish Kapo, from a hard labour task whose only exit was death, to an inside mechanic shop job and by giving some of his food to Kantorowitz.<sup>2661</sup>

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ers, at their great personal risk, in Auschwitz and again in Mauthausen, Austria. I hope the Polish government will not be pressured to remove these symbols of respect. ...” On the controversy surrounding the Carmelite convent on the perimeter of the camp, see Władysław T. Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz* (London: Bowerdean Press, 1990).

<sup>2654</sup> Lewin, *Witnesses to the Holocaust*, 60.

<sup>2655</sup> Tadeusz Andrzejewski, “Wileńscy strażnicy oświęcimskiej pamięci,” *Tygodnik Wileńszczyzny*, February 3–9, 2005.

<sup>2656</sup> Noach Zabłudowicz, “My Experiences in World War II,” and Moshe Kolko, “Ciechanow Jews in the Uprising in Auschwitz,” in A. Wolf Yassini, ed., *Memorial Book for the Community of Ciechanow*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/ciechanow/Ciechanow.html>, translation of *Yiskor-bukh fun der Tshekanover yidisher kehile* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Ciechanow in Israel and in the Diaspora, 1962), 337, 382.

<sup>2657</sup> See Rena Kornreich Gelissen, with Heather Dune Macadam, *Rena’s Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz*, expanded ed. (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015), 67.

<sup>2658</sup> Piotr Zychowicz, in conversation with Israel Gutman, “To nie Polacy założyli obozy, tylko Niemcy,” *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], May 30, 2012.

<sup>2659</sup> Szymon Laks, *Music of Another World* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 40–41, 104–5, 107.

<sup>2660</sup> Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds*, 131–32.

<sup>2661</sup> Moishe Kantorowitz, *My Mother’s Bequest: From Shershev to Auschwitz to Newfoundland* (Canada: n.p., 2004), book 4.

- Walentyna Konopska and Wanda Marossanyi conspired to change the ethnic identity of Maria Kozakiewicz, a Jewish prisoner, from Jewish to Polish, and have her sent to a different camp (Flossenbürg), thereby saving her life.<sup>2662</sup>
- Czech prisoner Valter Hoffman describes how Polish prisoner Antonina Piątkowska used her position to help Jewish prisoners avoid selections for the crematoria and medical experiments, and provided them with food. Hoffman also mentions the assistance provided to Jewish prisoners by Polish prisoners Zofia Barto and Franciszek Buczyński.<sup>2663</sup>
- Szaja Gertner describes how a Polish prisoner who was a military officer trained a group of Jews from Birkenau on the tactics of how to escape from the camp. The Jewish prisoners staged a breakout in January 1944.<sup>2664</sup>
- There are a number of Jewish testimonies that recall Polish *Kapos* and block supervisors at Auschwitz in favourable light.<sup>2665</sup> Anna Kovitzka (Kaletska) credits her block elder, a Polish political prisoner, with saving her life when she fell gravely ill. This Polish woman tried to protect Jewish prisoners from being sent to the ovens and helped other prisoners as well.<sup>2666</sup>
- A Jewish prisoner recalls how a Polish *Kapo* protected a well-respected rabbi from his hometown: "As it turned out, the father had been the rebbe in the Galician shtetl where the *Kapo* had lived. He had been greatly respected by the entire population, even by the Christians. He had been called 'the Holy Father,' and many Poles had gone to him when they needed advice. ... The *Kapo* had recognized him and his son in Block 16, the death block ... and brought them directly over to his *Kommando*. ... The *Kapo* supplied the rebbe and his son with food so that they would not have to eat the blood sausage and the nonkosher soup from the pot."<sup>2667</sup>
- Another Jewish inmate mentions a Polish *Kapo* who allowed Jewish inmates to hold a religious service and guarded the entrance to the barracks to watch out for the SS.<sup>2668</sup>

<sup>2662</sup> Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, and Christoph Dieckmann, eds., *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Entwicklung und Struktur*, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1998), 966.

<sup>2663</sup> Testimony of Valter Hoffman, JHI, record group 301, no. 6306.

<sup>2664</sup> Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 3, 94–95.

<sup>2665</sup> The impression conveyed in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, a very popular graphic novel used as an educational tool in American and Canadian elementary and high schools, that *Kapos* were invariably brutal Poles is demonstrably false. The first *Kapos* were German prisoners; as more Polish prisoners arrived, a small number of them became *Kapos*. When the number of Jews grew dramatically, there was no shortage of Jewish *Kapos*, whose reputation was no better than their predecessors. See *Poles as Pigs in MAUS: The Problems with Spiegelman's MAUS*, Appendix 1, Internet: <http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia>.

<sup>2666</sup> Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds*, 15, 205, 210; Account of Anna Kaletska, Internet: [https://voices.library.iit.edu/interview/kaletskaA?search\\_api\\_fulltext=kaletska](https://voices.library.iit.edu/interview/kaletskaA?search_api_fulltext=kaletska).

<sup>2667</sup> Konrad Charmatz, *Nightmares: Memoirs of the Years of Horror under Nazi Rule in Europe, 1939–1945* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 101–2.

<sup>2668</sup> Judy Weissenberg Cohen, "The Kol Nidre I always remember," *The Canadian Jewish News* [Toronto], September 24, 1998.

- Walter Plywaski, formerly Władysław Pływacki, who was transferred with his twin brother from the Łódź ghetto to Birkenau in the summer of 1944, recalled, “I remember being overly clever with my brother in going to a barracks where we heard that there were double or triple food rations to all underage twins. We lied that we were fraternal twins. The barracks was, of course, a holding pen for Dr. Mengele’s so-called medical experiments. One of the Polish Gentile Kapos in that barracks took me aside and told me what my brother and I were facing there. He told me that he would try to get us out as soon as he can manage, and he did just that probably on the third day there. He was a total stranger to me. He smuggled us out and we rejoined our father and the men’s camp barracks.”<sup>2669</sup>
- Polish workers and nearby residents were also known to have helped Jewish prisoners by providing them with food and assisting in their escape.<sup>2670</sup>
- Józef Wrona, a civilian employee in the Buna chemical plant of the I.G. Farben Industry Concern, which was in Monowice (Auschwitz III), orchestrated the escape of two Jewish prisoners whom he hid in his home in the village of Nowa Wieś near Kęty.<sup>2671</sup>

In an inhumane and poisonous environment like Auschwitz, one should not take these acts of kindness for granted. Israel Lior, a Polish Jew, recalled, “I saw people stealing the last possessions of people who were dying ... I was ashamed of what one Jew did to another; that he would report on or try to steal from his comrades.”<sup>2672</sup>

A Hungarian survivor, a rabbi, recalled:

The Polish Jews discriminated terribly. They blamed us that we had the privilege of living such a good life in our own homes while they were taken into Auschwitz two years earlier than us. “Now we should suffer!” they said. “We should work and they shouldn’t have to work.” And they kept constantly picking on us, for no reason. We are Jews too; we didn’t send them to Auschwitz.<sup>2673</sup>

Helen Lewis, a Czech Jew who was an inmate of Birkenau, which held primarily Jews, did not have fond memories of the Jewish prisoners from Poland, “some of whom had become completely brutalized with the years they had been there, and who were more frightening and dangerous than the SS.”<sup>2674</sup>

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<sup>2669</sup> Walter Plywaski, “I Remember,” *Jewish Magazine*, September-October 2007.

<sup>2670</sup> Świebicki, *Ludzie dobrej woli*, 66–67, 70, 78, 351, 501–2 (Merka Szewach), 506–7 (Jenny Spritzer), 513–14 (Kurt Julius Goldstein), 516–17 (Géza Schein Kozma).

<sup>2671</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 904.

<sup>2672</sup> Lauren Lior-Lichtenstein and Philippe Lichtenstein, *Remember Never to Forget: The Story of Israel Lior* (Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris, 2010), 101–2.

<sup>2673</sup> William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 176–77.

<sup>2674</sup> Gill, *The Journey Back From Hell*, 411.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of Polish Jews—passing as Christians—survived in Germany as forced labourers. Most of them were women, and many of them were recognized as Jews by Polish labourers, yet not betrayed by them.

- Sarah Blattberg-Cooper, who was rescued by Poles near Mielec, states that one of her daughters and a niece, who volunteered to go to Germany posing as Polish workers, spent two years there in separate labour camps. Polish workers recognized that they were Jews, but they did not betray them to the German administration.<sup>2675</sup>
- After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto with the help of Polish smugglers, Zosia Goldberg was—after passing as a Christian in “Aryan” Warsaw for some time—caught in a German street dragnet as a Pole, taken to detention centre along with young Christian Poles, and deported to Germany for forced labour. Her story illustrates the many dangers faced by Jews who tried to pass as Poles, right from the moment she left the ghetto. It also compels one to confront prejudicial generalizations about the behaviour of Poles.

When we got on the tramway, we were so smelly, so dirty, the conductor took one look and then looked away. He started to drive the tramway fast, as fast as he could. He started to sing songs like he was coming back from work. ... The smugglers got an idea to sing an insulting song about a Jewess ... the conductor knew who these two girls were. He saw how we looked. One thing certain about the tramways. All the conductors were socialists from Pilsudski's [Pilsudski's] party. They helped the Jews. They helped anybody. They were very good in this way. ... these conductors were very helpful.<sup>2676</sup>

Once, later, when I was living in the Aryan section, I saw one woman, a Gentile, a neighbor who used to live in our building before the ghetto was formed. She recognized me, but she made believe that she didn't see me. She could have turned me in, yet she didn't.<sup>2677</sup>

- Zosia Goldberg recounts how Franka, her Jewish “friend” from the ghetto in whom she had confided, worked closely with a Volksdeutscher plainclothes policeman to squeeze jewelry out of her after she escaped to the “Aryan side.”<sup>2678</sup> She also recounts several other close calls.

I was almost exposed three times when I was on the street. Several times I saw the trucks with the *placowka* [*placówka*, an outpost for Jewish labor forces from the ghetto], the Jews who worked outside the ghetto, and many times they would holler, “Zosia, how are you?” I made believe I didn't know them when they yelled from the trucks because ... They were not doing it on purpose to give me away, they were just hollering hello, happy to see someone they knew.

Another time there was one fellow by the name of Lifszitz whom I had known from before the war. He was tall and skinny, with curly, kinky, blond hair, and he worked for the Germans. I was told that he would go into the Aryan section and he would look for Jews to denounce. One

<sup>2675</sup> Sarah Blattberg-Cooper, “My Memories from the Bloodiest Era of My People's History,” in *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Mielec: Sipur hashmadat ha-kehila ha-yehudit* (New York: Mielec Yizkor Book Committee, 1979), translated as *Remembering Mielec: The Destruction of the Jewish Community*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/mielec/Mielec.html>.

<sup>2676</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 60.

<sup>2677</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 41.

<sup>2678</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 62–63.

day I saw Lifszitz on the street, and he was heading in my direction. So I went up to him, right up to him, and I said, "You know, I have a knife. I will stab you if you try to give me away. Get away!" He ran away from me; otherwise I would have been in big trouble.

Then one day I met my old history teacher, Mrs. Dinces, who was also the wife of the director of my *gymnasium*. Mr. Dinces had changed his faith and become a Catholic, but that wouldn't keep his wife safe. She spoke Polish, not Yiddish, and her Polish was so beautiful it was like music, yet now she was running away with her daughter. She had blond hair with very thick braids in the back. When she saw me I almost went over to her to say hello, but she got so scared that she crossed the street and ran away from me. I don't blame her—she was afraid of me, she didn't know who I was. These were the three times that I met people, and each time I could have been exposed or denounced.<sup>2679</sup>

- Zosia Goldberg was deported to Germany from Warsaw by train together with other Poles caught by the Germans. "When the train started we sang the Polish anthem, crying. I was crying like a baby, too. This was the last time I saw Poland. ... I saw Jews wearing yellow stars working the fields. I took my bread and I threw it out the window. And we all started to throw our bread to the Jews through the windows."<sup>2680</sup> Once in Germany, she encountered many friendly Polish workers: "The Polish, when they were nice, they were really nice. They pretended they did not know. They did not ask questions."<sup>2681</sup>

One day I met a fellow from Warsaw, from the Old Town. So many of those Warsaw Gentiles were fantastic, helping Jews wherever they were. The smugglers also came from that same part of town. The workers in the towns, especially from Warsaw, were far from ignorant. ... They did not have that hatred of the Jews and saw the Jews more as fellow citizens.<sup>2682</sup>

- When Zosia was arrested, a Pole who worked as an interpreter and suspected she was Jewish counseled her on her appearance and the "story" she should give to her German interrogators.<sup>2683</sup> She also encountered several Jews (and a Ukrainian interpreter) who wanted betray her, and several other Poles who helped her.

We were always brought back by truck for interrogation. ... One time, those two German Jewish girls saw me in the truck on the way to the Gestapo.

The one that was not pretty told the policeman, "She is Jewish. She's from Warsaw, I know. I recognize her. She is from Warsaw. She is Jewish!" ...

The policeman was not paying much attention, but he reported it to the Gestapo anyway. Now they had a lead.

One day, I was sitting, waiting to be interrogated. They brought in a Jewish woman with a yellow star who was also being questioned. An older woman. She had been caught on the train. A German Jewess, she was married to a Gentile man. ...

We each understood who the other was without asking. She spoke into my ear. "You know I have this star that I took off. I have to sew it back on. Do you have a needle and thread?"

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<sup>2679</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 74–75.

<sup>2680</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 83.

<sup>2681</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 88.

<sup>2682</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 98.

<sup>2683</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 129.



I happened to have it and gave it to her. They saw. They had purposely put me with a Jewish woman to see how I would act toward her ... They observed and saw that I gave her a needle and thread and that I ate the sandwich she gave me.

When they called me in for questioning, they asked, "Why did you eat food from that Jewish woman? Aren't you disgusted?" ...

The next time they tried to trick me into admitting I was Jewish we were cleaning the offices. ... there was some Jewish fellow who was working with us. I was sorry for him and gave him a bunch of *shtumels* [cigarette butts] for a smoke. I made contact without realizing that this Jew was a damn traitor. He was working for the Gestapo.

He came over to me. "What is your name?" he asked. "I am from Wilno. What is your father's name?" He was talking so softly, and with a Jewish accent. ...

I found out that he sewed suits for the Gestapo men. He was a tailor. He sewed their clothing, and he translated whenever they needed it. He was a denouncer.<sup>2684</sup>

The Treblinka death camp, which was in operation from July 1942 until October 1943, was the place of extermination of an estimated 900,000 Jews.<sup>2685</sup> Several hundred Jews managed to escape during the revolt of August 2, 1943. Most of the fugitives were captured in manhunts conducted by German forces (hundreds of SS soldiers dispatched from Małkinia, Sokołów Podlaski, Kosów Lacki, and Ostrów Mazowiecka) and Ukrainian guards;<sup>2686</sup> about 100 were still alive at the end of the war thanks to assistance received from Poles. Short-term help was particularly frequent—and, of course, critical.<sup>2687</sup>

Abundant credible sources testify to the support Christian villagers and railway workers gave to Jewish escapees. This help occurred in various settings: for those on trains headed to Treblinka, and especially for those who jumped off trains; for those who escaped during the camp's operation; and for those who fled during the revolt in August 1943. According to three separate testimonies by Jewish escapees from Treblinka and Sobibór, they "walked about the villages" where they were "known to everybody," including the farm-hands and school children, without being denounced.<sup>2688</sup>

<sup>2684</sup> Goldberg, *Running Through Fire*, 132–34.

<sup>2685</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum recorded in his diary that Christian servants—some involuntarily, others voluntarily—were taken to Treblinka from the Warsaw ghetto together with the families they worked for. See Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations*, 33.

<sup>2686</sup> Hundreds of SS soldiers dispatched from Małkinia, Sokołów Podlaski, Kosów Lacki, and Ostrów Mazowiecka to search for the fugitives with the help of the camp's Ukrainian guards. They conducted a thorough search of the entire area, setting up checkpoints on the roads, combing nearby villages, and searching villagers' homes. See Treblinka Museum, *Extermination Camp History: "Defiance and Uprising,"* Internet: [http://www.treblinka.bho.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=48&Itemid=48](http://www.treblinka.bho.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=48&Itemid=48).

<sup>2687</sup> Mark Paul, "The Rescue of Jewish Escapees from the Treblinka Death Camp," in Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński, and Paweł Styrna, eds., *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold? Studies on the Fate of Wartime Poles and Jews* (Washington, D.C.: Leopold Press, 2012), 117–37.

<sup>2688</sup> Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biule-*

The most significant impediment to helping Jews was the fear of German retaliation. A Jew who escaped from Treblinka and managed to return to Warsaw recalled:

The peasants near Treblinka didn't want to shelter me even for just one night. They happily gave me food and even money, but they wouldn't hear of my spending the night, because the Ukrainians who were permanently stationed in Treblinka often showed up ... The local peasants told of things that were unbelievable but unfortunately true. ... Everyone I talked to near Treblinka spoke of nothing else. They all told the same thing, in horror. The ones closer to Warsaw let me stay the night, but there was no question of staying there permanently.<sup>2689</sup>

Polish railway workers were known to open train doors during stops allowing Jews to escape, provided them with water, and supplied pliers, hammers and crowbars with which to break open doors and cut the barbed wire covering the small openings in the wagons. Poles who approached stationary trains to give Jews water or food to Jews—something that was strictly forbidden—were brutally beaten or shot at by German guards, and railwaymen were threatened with deportation to the death camp. Jan Maletka, a railroad worker, was gunned down on August 20, 1942 for bringing water to Jews locked up in a death train. His two colleagues, Stanisław Maletka and Remigiusz Pawłowicz, managed to escape.<sup>2690</sup> Karol Socha, a switchman, sheltered a Jewish fugitive for several days; he travelled to Sandomierz to obtain false identity documents and money for him.<sup>2691</sup> Stanisław Wójcik, a railway machinist who lived with his wife in Wólka Okrąglik, provided clothes to a naked Jewish fugitive that knocked on his door at night.<sup>2692</sup>

- Yosef Haezrahi-Bürger—one of those operatives of Jewish organizations that, after the war, tracked down Jewish children sheltered by Christian Poles—described the fate of two Jewish teenagers who had managed to escape from a train on its arrival in Treblinka and were sheltered in a village near the camp.

[I]n one of the transports, two siblings—a boy and a girl—were among the Jews in the wagons that reached the Treblinka village railroad station before they could be moved to the extermination camp. While they were waiting, the people in the wagon broke through the wooden

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*tyn Główniej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu—Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35 (1993): 100–14, at p. 108, translated as “The Attitude of the Polish Population Towards Jewish Escapees from the Treblinka, Sobibór, and Bełżec Death Camps in Light of Jewish and Polish Testimonies,” in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold?*, 97–116.

<sup>2689</sup> Michał Grynberg, ed., *Words To Outlive Us: Voices From the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2002), 210.

<sup>2690</sup> Jan Maletka, Pilecki Institute, Internet: <https://instytutpileckiego.pl/en/zawolani-po-imieniu/upamietnieni/jan-maletka-ok-1921-1942>. The commemoration of Jan Maletka in the village of Treblinka in November 2021 gave rise to an ugly campaign of disparaging Polish rescuers and rescue efforts led by Jan Grabowski.

<sup>2691</sup> Franciszek Ząbecki, *Wspomnienia dawne i nowe* (Warsaw: Pax, 1977), 46–47, 49–50, 75–76.

<sup>2692</sup> Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 426–28.

floor and several escaped. The guards chased and fired at them but the two children managed to reach a house in the village and hide there, terrifying the owner, whose own children were playing in the yard. When she saw the guards pursuing them, the woman directed the guards to her own house. The guards shot the woman's children, assuming that they were the fugitive Jewish youngsters who were hiding in the house. The terrified woman regained her composure quickly and decided that if this was her fate, she had no choice but to raise the Jewish youngsters. The operative did not know the source of the information about these children after the war but was told that emissaries had been sent to remove them several times, failing each time. In 1947, when he was asked to deal with their removal, the children were sixteen and seventeen years old. They knew they were Jewish but refused to leave their 'mother,' as they called their rescuer, since she had lost her own children and had saved them. The mother left the decision up to them: both persisted in their refusal and remained in the village.<sup>2693</sup>

- Libicz Herkowitz of Pińczów escaped from a train with the help of railway men when it arrived at Treblinka; some women provided him with food, clothing and directions, and he made his way back to his hometown.<sup>2694</sup>
- Sura Bursztyn (Barbara Tyl), a native of Wołomin, was deported with her parents to Treblinka in 1942. On arrival at the camp, in the ensuing chaos, the young girl managed to escape. She wandered in the vicinity until she arrived at the home of Jakub and Janina Krajewski in the village of Krajewo Budziły, near Zambrów, dishevelled, injured and hungry. The Krajewski family took her in, and she remained with them until 1948.<sup>2695</sup>
- Viliam Fried, a native of Czechoslovakia, escaped with some other Jews as their train was pulling into Treblinka. He and a Jew from Poland ran together and took shelter in a stable where they were discovered by the proprietor's son, who fed them and allowed them to stay for a day. They were then directed to a person in the next village, a railroad worker who was in the underground and helped escapees. Fried went alone and was allowed to stay in this man's stable and was given food. When he left, he was given a shovel to allow him to pass as a worker. He went from village to village until he arrived in Międzyrzec Podlaski. On the way, a village woman, who gave him food, warned him of the presence of German gendarmes who were looking for escapees, and she pointed him in a different direction.<sup>2696</sup>
- Just before reaching Treblinka, in January 1943, Miriam Gutholtz and her boyfriend jumped out of the speeding train into the snow. They were met with a barrage of machine-gun fire from the guards in the end carriage, and her boyfriend was killed. Suffering from frostbite and other difficulties, she dragged herself to a nearby farmhouse, where a compassionate farmer offered to help her. The farmer contacted Marian Hamera, a friend of Miriam's from their hometown of Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. Hamera came to Miriam's aid and brought her back to Ostrowiec.

<sup>2693</sup> Gafny, *Dividing Hearts*, 202–3, 281.

<sup>2694</sup> Ross R. Olney, *Danik! A Holocaust Survivor: The Amazing True Story of David ben Kalma (David Zaid), a Jew in Poland* (U.S.A.: Lulu.com, 2014), chapter 4.

<sup>2695</sup> Righteous Medal Award Ceremony, May 28, 2019, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/righteous-ceremony-held-warsaws-royal-lazienki-park>.

<sup>2696</sup> Oral history interview with Viliam Fried, April 10, 1992, USHMM, RG-50.030.0073.

She survived the war, including deportation to Auschwitz, and eventually settled in Israel.<sup>2697</sup>

- David Lieberman of Częstochowa escaped from Treblinka by cutting a hole in the fence with pliers he had stolen. He and his friend ran all night until they encountered a woman in a field who recognized them as escapees and warned them to go away because the Germans were making their rounds to requisition milk and eggs from the farmers. They continued walking and arrived at a farmhouse: “The woman was very nice to me. She came out and walked with me and my friend almost for an hour, showed us to go to another road ... where the police is not there. ... she took her cross out and made a prayer, God should be with you. And we went on our way.” They walked another mile or two and entered another farmhouse. “We told the farmer we want to go to a railroad station. He says he’s going to take us, but he’s not going to walk with us ... [but] a distance away. And he opened a barn. He says, ‘In case the SS comes, you just walked in yourself. I had nothing to do [with it].’ So he walked with us. ... And we followed him. Finally, he came to a small little village. The village name was Sadowne.” The fugitives then gave the villager some money with which to purchase train tickets, which he did, and they boarded the train for Warsaw. They received more help from farmers in the vicinity of Częstochowa, their hometown.<sup>2698</sup>
- Michal Lizervitch, with a similar story, also escaped from Treblinka by cutting the barbed wire fence with pliers. After his escape, Lizerovitch hid in a village close by, and with the help some of the local Poles, managed to obtain a train ticket to Warsaw. From there, he took a train to Częstochowa, where he hid out for the rest of the war.<sup>2699</sup>
- Marian (Maniek) Płatkiewicz, a native of Płock, who escaped during the uprising in Treblinka, recalled that the Germans encircled the forest with troops and the majority of the escapees were killed by the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators by the morning. Płatkiewicz and a few of his friends avoided detection. For several months they occupied a hideout behind the barn of a sympathetic farmer in a nearby village. Later they joined a partisan group.<sup>2700</sup>
- Notwithstanding summary capital punishment for rendering the slightest assistance to Jews, Polish peasants helped Samuel Willenberg on no less than nine separate

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<sup>2697</sup> Rubin Katz, *Gone to Pitchipoi: A Boy’s Desperate Fight for Survival in Wartime* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 89–90.

<sup>2698</sup> Oral history interview with David Lieberman, USHMM, Accession no. 1990.421.1, RG-50.030.0132.

<sup>2699</sup> Itay Blumenthal, “A Daring Escape from Treblinka,” March 3, 2016, Internet: <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4772963,00.html>.

<sup>2700</sup> Marian Płatkiewicz, “A Revolt in Hell,” in Eliyahu Eisenberg, ed., *Plotzk: Toldot kehila atikat yomin be-Polin* (Tel Aviv: World Committee for the Plotzk Memorial Book, 1967), 79–81, translated as *Plotzk: A History of an Ancient Jewish Community in Poland*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/plock/Plock.html>.

occasions in the first days after his escape from Treblinka. Willenberg stresses the risks involved in assisting Jewish fugitives.<sup>2701</sup>

- After escaping from Treblinka, Jakub (Abraham) Krzepicki and his two companions offered large sums to farmers for food and temporary lodging. Almost all of them declined to help, out of fear, even for such large sums, yet no one betrayed them. Some farmers who provided assistance did so for payment, while others refused to accept payment or took very little. One peasant who provided temporary shelter stated that, if he were not afraid of the Germans, he would help free of charge. On one occasion, a peasant took money but did not provide help as promised; on another occasion, Krzepicki's travelling companion, Anshel Mędrzycki, claimed he had been robbed. He then conned other Jewish escapees to give him money to make up for his loss, even though he had some money hidden away. Krzepicki described him as "an exploiter; a creature without a moral sense ... from the Warsaw underworld ... he tried to take advantage of me as much as he could." When Krzepicki took shelter in the ghetto in Stoczek, where life seemed to continue fairly normally at the time, he found that Jews took advantage of the fugitives from Treblinka, who came with lots of money and valuables, and that the Judenrat and Jewish police tried to weed them out for fear of German repercussions—proving that Jews were capable of treating each other as badly as some Polish farmers. Krzepicki reserved his highest praise for an elderly peasant woman who lived in the village of Wielgie Ogrodniki, near Ostrówek, who, together with her husband, hid the fugitives in their barn for 8 days. "This was the first time since my escape from Treblinka that anyone, Jew or Gentile, helped me get to safety without trying to extort money from me," he recalled. The woman's relatives in Warsaw were equally helpful when Krzepicki arrived there together with his travelling companion, with the help of the farmer's brother-in-law, who acted as a guide.<sup>2702</sup>
- Abraham Bomba and his colleagues, Yankel Eyzner (Jacob Eisner), Moshe Rapaport (Rappaport), Yechiel Berkovitch (Berkowicz), and Yechezkal Kofman (Kaufman, Cooperman), received help from several farmers in the area after their escape from Treblinka.

Lying in the field, we saw a peasant in a wagon go by. We called him over and told him that we had escaped from Treblinka and, perhaps, it would be possible if he could take us into his barn. ... In the end, we convinced him and he showed us his barn in the distance and we went inside. But he doesn't know of anything. And if they would ask, we should say that we sneaked in. That is what we did. We were there the entire day. At night, the head of the village came and told us that he would lead us out of the village and show us the way to go. He indeed took us to the main road, and we traveled all night until the morning. In the morning, we came to a village. We saw, in front of a house, that a woman opens the door. We went over to the house and the woman told us to come in. We were there for a week. The second week, we were at the friend of the peasant in the same village. I remember this peasant's name: Piotr Supel [Sopel?]. ... This

<sup>2701</sup> Samuel Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1989), 25, 143–48.

<sup>2702</sup> Alexander Donat, ed., *The Death Camp Treblinka: A Documentary* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 134–35, 137–44; Wiatr, Engelking, and Skibińska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 13, 198–207; Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 173, 174.

was in the village Zagradniki [Zagrodniki] near Ostrovek Vengravski [Ostrówek Węgrowski]. The peasant traveled with us to Warsaw.<sup>2703</sup>

- After his escape from Treblinka, Chil Rajchman was helped by several farmers in the vicinity of the camp before he made his way back to Warsaw, where he received help from Poles in and near the city.<sup>2704</sup>
- After escaping from Treblinka during the uprising, Aron Gleit managed to return to Siemiatycze, where survived in the Jesieniówka forest with the help of Poles.<sup>2705</sup>
- Mieczysław Grajewski (later Martin Gray) recalled the help he received from local peasants after escaping from Treblinka: "I was free. I walked to a village. ... I knocked to ask for bread. The peasants looked at me in silence. 'Bread, bread.' They saw my red hands, torn jacket, worn-out slippers, and handed me some hard, gray crusts. A peasant woman, huddled in shawls, gave me a bowl of hot milk and a bag. We didn't talk: my body had turned red and blue from the blows and the cold, and my clothes, everything proclaimed Jew! But they gave me bread. Thank you, Polish peasants. I slept in a stable near the animals, taking a little warm milk from the cow in the morning. My bag filled with bread."<sup>2706</sup>
- Hershl Sperling was part of a group of three or four Jews who succeeded in escaping from Treblinka. About twelve kilometres from the camp, they turned to a family of Polish farmers who fed them and helped them make their way towards Warsaw.

Slowly and cautiously, uncertainly and with a hammering heart, I emerge from the forest and I approach a peasant's house which stands free and separate. It is about 30 kilometres from Treblinka. With a prayer and a glance toward heaven, I step onto the threshold of the house. With my first glimpse of the woman, I understand that she recognises me [as an escapee from Treblinka] "You have certainly escaped from Treblinka," she calls out to me. My condition, my clothing and, most of all, the desperate expression on my face exposes me. But the woman calms me down immediately and says that I need not be at all afraid, that she will help me as much as possible. However, she cannot hide me. The SS is searching and hunting in all the surrounding little towns. And she does not want to put herself and her family in mortal danger. She gives me bread and milk, and tells me to return at 11 at night. At the arranged time all three of us come to her house. This time her husband and daughter are present. We consult each other, and we decide that the best thing would be to go to a particular spot and to jump onto a moving train. At that particular spot the train travels at no more than 10 kilometres per hour. We have no other way out, and we decide to try this. They give us a satisfying dinner and they give us also

<sup>2703</sup> Abraham Bomba, "My Escape from Treblinka," *Czentochov: A New Supplement to the Book "Czenstochover Yidn"*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/czestochowa/Czestochowa.html>, translation of Samuel D. Singer, ed., *Tshenstokhover: Naye tsugob-material tsum bukh "Tshenstokhover Yidn"* (New York: United Relief Committee in New York, 1958), 57 ff.

<sup>2704</sup> Chil Rajchman, *Treblinka: A Survivor's Memory, 1942-1943* (London: MacLehose/Quercos, 2011), 106-11; Oral history interview with Chiel Rajchman, USHMM, Accession no. 1988.H.0179, RG-50.030.0185.

<sup>2705</sup> Testimony of Aron Gleit, YVA, file O.3/3989 (Item 3558403).

<sup>2706</sup> Gray and Gallo, *For Those I Loved*, 178. In her article, "The Men Who Whitewash Hitler," *The New Statesman*, November 2, 1979, historian Gitta Sereny alleged that Martin Gray was never in Treblinka.



bread and eggs for the way. As an expression of our thanks, we leave 20 gold dollars. Under cover of the night's darkness we take to the road. We arrive at the appointed place, but we decide not to jump onto the moving train; we might fall under the train itself. We continue on foot. We arrive in Rembertov [Rembertów, near Warsaw].<sup>2707</sup>

Sperling mentions the following Treblinka escapees he encountered in Germany after the war: Shmuel Reizmann from Węgrów; Kodlik (Kudlik) from Częstochowa; Schneidermann; and Turovsky.

- After their escape from Treblinka, Samuel (Shmuel) Rajzman (Reisman) and his friend Arie Kudlik approached a farmer's cottage in Ceranów, about twelve kilometres from the camp. Since this was in the middle of the German manhunt, the woman asked them to leave, fearful of being shot herself. They implored her for some bread and a pitcher of water, which she gave them without accepting payment. She said, "Please bring the pitcher back because it's the only one I have." After spending several days in a potato field, the two fugitives went on their way. In Brzozów (?), they received food and temporary shelter from Rajzman's father's friend, Paweł Pieniak and his son. They then went to a village near Węgrów, where Edward Gołoś, another friend of Rajzman's father and member of a "rightist-nationalist organization," agreed to help them live in the forest and, in the winter, hid them in his barn. The rescuer and his family shared their meager fare with their charges without expecting anything in return, until the area was cleared of Germans in August 1944.<sup>2708</sup>
- A group of six Jews who escaped from Treblinka, among them Berek Rojzman, built an underground shelter in a forest and relied on a Polish famer named Staszek for their food supply; Gitta Sereny remarks, "Rojzman said no more about the man Staszek, thanks to whom they had survived. The implication was that he was paid for what he did. He probably was, but considering the risk he had taken, one did wonder whether that degree of help could ever be paid for in money."<sup>2709</sup>
- Despite the massive German hunt for escaped Jews, some of them found shelter with farmers living nearby. Gustaw and Weronika Diehl lived with their four children on an estate in Jasieniec, about four kilometres from the Treblinka death camp; they sheltered Estera Geist, who escaped from the Warsaw ghetto in 1942. The Diehls, who were awarded by Yad Vashem, also provided temporary shelter and assistance to escapees from Treblinka.<sup>2710</sup>

<sup>2707</sup> Hodge, *Tragedy and Triumph*, 99 (testimony of H. Shperling (Sperling)). See also Mark S. Smith, *Treblinka Survivor: The Life and Death of Hershl Sperling* (Stroud, United Kingdom: The History Press, 2010), 251–52.

<sup>2708</sup> Donat, *The Death Camp Treblinka*, 245–49; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 245; Arnon Rubin, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Communities in Poland and Their Relics Today*, vol. 2: *District Lublin* (Tel-Aviv: A. Rubin, 2006), 385.

<sup>2709</sup> Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killing To Mass Murder* (New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Deutsch, 1974), 149–56, 242–44.

<sup>2710</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 174; Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 214–15, 269–70.

- Abraham (Abram) Kolski was among a group of prisoners who escaped during the uprising in Treblinka. Gustaw Boraks, Heniek Klein, Henoch Brenner (Henry Brenner), Stasiek Kohen, Albert Kohen, Erich (Shaya) Lachman, along with Kolski and two other fugitives were hidden for the remainder of the war in Orzeszówka, a village south of the camp, on a farm belonging to Julian Pogorzelski and his elderly father. Throughout the entire period, the Pogorzelskis provided the nine fugitives with all their needs, cared for their health, and obtained medicine for them when they fell ill. (Heniek Klein had tuberculosis and passed away in the hiding place.) When the fugitives emerged from hiding as the Soviet front passed through, their presence became known to the neighbours. Yet no one betrayed them when the Germans returned for a brief period of time.<sup>2711</sup>
- The family of Jan and Aleksandra Góral, who owned a farm on the outskirts of Kosów Lacki, sheltered eleven Jews for some twenty months in a bunker constructed under their barn. There were four members of the Koenig (Koenigstein) family (Isadore and Mary, and their two sons, Jerry and Michael); the brothers Abram and Mendel Rzepka; Gitel Głownia and her daughter Feiga, and three escapees from Treblinka—Szymon Grynszpan, Berek Gersztajn, and Wolf Szajnberg (Szejnberg).<sup>2712</sup>
- The Roguszewski family of Łochów helped Oscar Strawczyński, who escaped from Treblinka during the revolt in Treblinka in August 1943. The daughter-in-law, who met him by chance, immediately realized that he was an escaped prisoner and, despite the danger, brought him home. Strawczyński hid with the Roguszewskis for several weeks until he recovered. Afterwards, he joined other Jews who were hiding in the surrounding forests and had also been helped occasionally by the Roguszewskis.<sup>2713</sup>
- Dawid Nowodworski escaped from Treblinka and made his way back to Warsaw; Poles in Dębe, near Kosów Lacki, helped him along the way.<sup>2714</sup>
- After his escape from Treblinka during the revolt in August 1943, Isadore Helfing was first taken in by a farmer, and then stayed with a partisan group until Soviet forces liberated the area.<sup>2715</sup>

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<sup>2711</sup> Oral history interview with Abraham Kolski, USHMM, Accession no. 1990.368.1, RG-50.030.0113; Testimony of Abram Kolski, SFV, Interview code 49970; Testimony of Gustaw Boraks, YVA, file O.3/3061 (Item 3556574); *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 625–26.

<sup>2712</sup> Tammeus and Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People*, 105–12 (Jerry Koenig); Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 285; Testimony of Szymon Grynszpan, JHI, record group 301, no. 1185. Jan Góral had to turn away four members of the Zylberman family because he could not take in any more fugitives. Jerry Koenig states, “I don’t hold it against him in any way at all.”

<sup>2713</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 672; Israel Cymlich and Oscar Strawczynski, *Escaping Hell in Treblinka* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project, 2007), 188.

<sup>2714</sup> Wiatr, Engelking, and Skibińska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 13, 128.

<sup>2715</sup> Oral history interview with Isadore Helfing, USHMM, Accession no. 1994.A.0447.14, RG-50.042.0014.

- Szymon Goldberg made his way to the villages of Kukawki, Basinów and Kiciny, just beyond Łochów, where farmers protected him. He recalled, "There were good people, they helped, they gave me food."<sup>2716</sup>
- The following Polish families living in the vicinity of Treblinka provided shelter and food to escapees: Jaźwiński (Żochy), Sobotka (Treblinka), Ołowski (Trzciniec Mały), Góral (Kosów Lacki), Socha, Matusik (Maliszewo).<sup>2717</sup>
- Julian and Stanisława Serafinowicz sheltered Shlomo (Szloma) Helman and Yeshayahu (Szyja) Warszawski after their escape from Treblinka, on a farm in Mostówka, a small village south of Wyszaków.<sup>2718</sup>
- After escaping from Treblinka with the help of bribed Ukrainian guards, Chaim Gradel (Grabel) made his way back to his native town of Bełżyce. He joined his brother-in-law, and the two of them found shelter with a farmer, Zygmunt Chlebicki, in the village of Ratoszyn. Later, Gradel joined up with a Soviet partisan group before returning to the ghetto in Bełżyce, from where he was taken to a series of German camps. He survived the war.<sup>2719</sup>
- After their escape from Treblinka, a doctor from Warsaw and his daughter took refuge with Stefan Nowak, the village head in Stoczek Węgrowski. The girl's mother had been killed in Treblinka, and her father died of a stroke while in hiding. The young girl survived.<sup>2720</sup>
- After wandering in forests for about a month following his escape from Treblinka, Josef Czarny was warmly received by Polish farmers near Parysów, northwest of Garwolin. Szymon and Helena Całka sheltered and cared for Czarny as well as two Jewish women.<sup>2721</sup>
- After his escape from Treblinka, Moshe Kleiman (Klajman) made his way to the village of Sobienie-Jeziory, near Góra Kalwaria, south of Warsaw, where he was sheltered by a Pole named Bojańczyk (or Bojeńczyk).<sup>2722</sup>

<sup>2716</sup> Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu—Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35 (1993): 108; Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 3, 107; Testimony of Szymon Goldberg, JHI, record group 301, no. 656.

<sup>2717</sup> Agnieszka Dąbek and Kinga Mrozek, "Mieszkańcy Kosowa Lackiego i okolic ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady," in Artur Ziótek, ed., *Żydzi Kosowa Lackiego* (Kosów Lacki: Miejsko-Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Kosowie Lackim, 2016), 285–307.

<sup>2718</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 703.

<sup>2719</sup> Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 225, based on the testimony of Chaim Grabel, JHI, record group 301, no. 228.

<sup>2720</sup> Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 257; Grądzka-Rejak and Sitarek, *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations*, 324.

<sup>2721</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 128; Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous*, 205.

<sup>2722</sup> Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki*, 297, based on the memoir of Mosze Klajman, JHI, record group 302, no. 118.

- Henryk Poswolski, who was injured while escaping during the revolt in Treblinka yet made his way back to Warsaw, was sheltered and restored to health by Feliks and Marta Widy-Wirski in Podkowa Leśna and nursed back to health.<sup>2723</sup>
- Simche Poliakewicz escaped from Treblinka hidden in a transport train. He jumped from the train near Kosów Lacki. Naked and injured from the fall, he was given clothing and food by a woman he encountered; he was hidden briefly in the attic of a barn by a farmer, who also provided him with clothing and food. When he arrived in Sokołów Podlaski, Poliakewicz sought refuge with the Józef Rogoziński family. With the help of some Poles, including one Piotrowski who was also hiding a Jew, the Rogoziński family obtained false identity documents for Poliakewicz. Before leaving for Warsaw, he stayed briefly in the home of the Pajka family, former benefactors of his.<sup>2724</sup>
- Jakub Szmulowicz managed to escape from Treblinka in a train wagon full of rags, which he was tasked with sorting, and made his way back to Warsaw, where he was sheltered by Antonina Borucka.<sup>2725</sup>
- Józef Gutman escaped from Treblinka, after a two-week stay there, in a railroad wagon full of clothes together with five other Jews. His companions tried to suffocate him because he was ill. Upon his return to the Warsaw ghetto, Gutman was disbelieved and even physically attacked for spreading false stories. After escaping from the ghetto, he and his wife were sheltered by the Wolf family.<sup>2726</sup>
- Polish railway workers brought news of what was happening in Treblinka to the ghettos, but there was little if anything that could be done to save Jews from the mighty German liquidation machinery in place. Most often, the news was disbelieved. A Jew from Wołomin near Warsaw recalled:

The German tactics against the Jewish population was always a secret, and no one could know the method or the terms of transfer from one place to another. The officials always gave false information to calm the Jews down, saying that no harm would come to them. It did not occur to anyone that the Warsaw Ghetto would suffer first. We were the first to know the bitter truth about transport to Treblinka. The Germans told everyone that the transports were headed east, where work camps were set up and there would be better conditions. The Wołomin [Wołomin] ghetto lay along the railroad tracks, so that we saw each transport that went once or twice a day to Treblinka. We heard the cries that emanated from the cars. It happened that a transport stopped at the station and we heard complaints and pleas for a little water; but by each car stood soldiers with rifles in their hands, ready to shoot anyone who tried to approach the cars. On the way back, Polish rail workers yelled at us and showed us in gestures what was done to the Jews. It would happen that a Wołomin train worker would enter the ghetto and tell us that when the trains arrived at Treblinka, German rail workers would take over and lead the train into the camp. On the way back, the cars were filled with clothing headed for Warsaw. The Germans who were in charge of the empty transports once told the Poles what had been done to the Jews.

<sup>2723</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 863.

<sup>2724</sup> Simche Polakewicz [Simche Poliakewicz], *A tog in Treblinke: Khronik fun a yidish lebn* (Buenos Aires: Dos Poylishe Yidntum, 1948), translated as *Dzień w Treblince*, Internet: <https://sokolow.jewish.pl/simche-poliakewicz/dzien-w-treblince/>.

<sup>2725</sup> Testimony of Mieczysław Bortensztajn, JHI, record group 301, no. 3495.

<sup>2726</sup> Testimony of Józef Gutman, JHI, record group 301, no. 2226.

At first people reacted to this news with disbelief. People did not want to believe in all these horrors. Even the most pessimistic could not bring themselves to believe that these things could happen. We took what the Polish rail worker said to be a nightmarish fantasy. There were some who held that he spoke with the intention of scaring us. There was even a case of a Wolomin shoemaker, who came from Vogrov [Węgrów] and did not look like a Jew. He often went to the Aryan side. He himself spoke with a Jew who had managed to return from the camps by hiding in the clothing that was being taken to Warsaw. He related that the Jews who were being taken in the transports were told to take off their clothes and were then led to the gas chambers, where they were gassed, after which their bodies were burned. That Jew had been in a labor battalion, which had to sort the clothing of those who had been gassed. That gave him the opportunity to get into a train car and cover himself with clothes. When the transport had left the camp, he jumped out of the car. Most of the Jews in the ghetto held that his story was a false rumor.<sup>2727</sup>

- Escapees from Treblinka who managed to make it back to their towns were usually disbelieved. No one in Radom believed escapee Nathan Berkowitz's story where the deportation trains were taking all those people: "I gave a detailed report to the head of the Jewish Council, but he called me a liar and chased me out of his office."<sup>2728</sup> David Bayer recalled:

Max Rosenblum was in Treblinka. He was deported from my hometown of Koźienice to Treblinka with all the people. He sneaked into Pionki camp where I was, because he had a sister who was there. He told everybody that in Treblinka, everybody was killed, and we didn't believe him. All the people who the Germans took to Treblinka, [they] gassed them. And we called him crazy: "He's crazy, he must have been crazy. Why would they kill everybody, women and children, for nothing?" And he was telling us, "Believe me! I saw it. They killed everybody—nobody's alive!"<sup>2729</sup>

- Numerous examples of help given to Jews who jumped out of trains headed to Treblinka have also been recorded. Most of the helpers offered immediate or short-term assistance, and they remain anonymous. Waclaw Iglicki (then Szul Steinhendler) from Żelechów, who some place near Łuków or Siedlce jumped off a train that was bound for Treblinka, testified as follows:

People used to really help out. I have to say that objectively: when it came to bread or something else, they shared. But finding a place to sleep was a problem. People were afraid. They wouldn't really agree to have us over for a night, or for a longer stay. That was understandable, because if you consider that in every village, in every community, there was a sign saying that for hiding, for any help given to a Jew, there was the death penalty, it's hard to be surprised that people didn't want to have Jews over and so on. They could tell by my clothes that I was a Jew. Because I looked poor, obviously. Ragged, dirty. Wandered around, as they say, aimlessly,

<sup>2727</sup> Kopel Berman, "My Experiences in the Ghetto," in Kanc, *Sefer zikaron kehilat Wolomin*, 405–28, translated as *Volomin: A Memorial to the Jewish Community of Volomin*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/wolomin/wolomin.html>.

<sup>2728</sup> Alfred Lipson, ed., *The Book of Radom: The Story of a Jewish Community in Poland Destroyed by the Nazis* (New York: The United Radomer Relief of the United States and Canada, 1963), 57.

<sup>2729</sup> Oral history interview with David Bayer, June 16, 2009, USHMM, RG-50.999.0263.

didn't know where to go. ... Because of that, many knew immediately they were dealing with a person of Jewish origin.<sup>2730</sup>

- Shmuel Goldring, who jumped out of a train in Łuków with a colleague, recalled:

I jumped out ... as the train had just left the Lukow [Łuków] station and was progressing slowly. ... In the distance we saw an isolated house. The old Polish lady let us rest to the morning. Come the 10/08/1942 morning she fetched fresh milk from the barn. ... The lady told us: The Germans send a patrol following each train to Treblinka, you better leave. We just left her house when we saw from distance two German soldiers entering in.<sup>2731</sup>

- In his account (reproduced in this compilation), Joseph Kutrzeba writes:

During the first days of September 1942, at the age of 14, I jumped out of a moving train destined for Treblinka, through an opening (window) of a cattle car loaded to capacity with Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. Wandering over fields, forests and villages, at first in the vicinity of Wołomin, and later of Zambrów, I found myself, in late November, in the area of Hodyszewo (near Łomża). Throughout my wandering, the peasants for the most part were amenable to put me up for the night and to feed me—some either suspecting my origins or pressing me to admit it.<sup>2732</sup>

- As a teenager, Jurek Kestenberg was deported from the Warsaw ghetto. He managed to jump off the train headed to Treblinka and make his way back to the Warsaw ghetto with the help of Poles, complete strangers who agreed to help him without any remuneration, even though this put their entire family in mortal danger. Kestenberg recalled, during an interview in 1946:

I decided to jump. This is it! What will be will be. ... And so I got out on the roof. I was lying down, afraid that the Ukrainians might see me. I lay that way until I saw that the train was going up a hill. Here it was better to jump, because if one jumps on a level stretch, one can fall under the train. ... And so, I thought it over well and jumped. I don't remember any more, but I felt a sharp pain in my legs. And I heard a shot. After perhaps two or three hours I came to, and I saw two children playing nearby ... I started yelling, and the children ran away and brought an old Gentile with them—it must have been their father. The father took me into the house. ... And he made me a ... bandage on the leg, because it appeared that I had a bullet in my leg as far as the bone. The woman bandaged me. The peasants there had various medicines. They brought it, and put it on, and I was with them four days. They gave me good things to eat and drink. ... I still had on me a few zlotys [złotys]. I had money. I wanted to pay. They wouldn't take it. After four days—this was eighteen kilometers from Warsaw—I said that I wanted to go back home. And so the Gentile took a cart with two horses. He drove me about ten kilometers, [and then] I walked to Warsaw. I still had money.<sup>2733</sup>

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<sup>2730</sup> Testimony of Waclaw Iglicki, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropastudent.org/biography/waclaw-iglicki>.

<sup>2731</sup> Meir G. Gover, *Yizkor to Jewish Konstantynow Podlaski*, 4th ed. (Israel: Second Generation, 2018), 308.

<sup>2732</sup> See also Kutrzeba, *The Contract*, 50 ff.

<sup>2733</sup> Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds*, 109–10.



- Hersh Blutman jumped from a train only three kilometres from Treblinka. Bruised and limping, Blutman returned to his hometown of Ciechanowiec, asking local farmers from whom his father used to buy produce for help. Although they all fed him and allowed him to rest, no one was willing to put him up. After many days of wandering, he reached the village of Winna-Chroły, where he was taken in by Aleksander and Helena Komiążyk. They invited him into their home and offered to hide him on their farm. The Komiążyks were already hiding Laib Slowczyk and his two brothers, Josef and David. A fortnight later, Komiążyk came to the refugees one evening and told them that the authorities had been informed that he was hiding Jews on his farm. The four Jewish refugees escaped, just in time. Soon after, the Germans raided the Komiążyks' farm, brutally interrogated them, and burned down the barn where the refugees had been hiding.<sup>2734</sup>
- On the way to Treblinka, Stanisław Aronson managed to escape through a hole in the ceiling of a boxcar. He went to the home of a local farmer who welcomed him in his home, served him breakfast, and asked no questions. The farmer later took Aronson to a local train station and, twenty minutes after boarding the first train, Aronson was in the centre of Warsaw. He then went to the home of his sister's close Polish friend, who received Aronson warmly but told him that staying there was out of the question because she suspected that the Gestapo were closely watching the building for hidden Jews. She sent Aronson on to her aunt's house in Warsaw, where he remained for several weeks. Afterwards, he joined the Home Army and survived under their protection.<sup>2735</sup>
- After the Kosów Lacki ghetto was liquidated in February 1943, Hersh and Chana Kreplak escaped from the transport on its way to Treblinka. Wandering through the surrounding villages, they reached the village of Adolfów, where Stanisława Kołkowska, a devout Catholic widow and an old friend of theirs, lived with her son, Ludwik. They prepared a hiding place for the Kreplaks in a farm building and looked after them, seeing to all their needs until August 1944, when the Red army drove out the Germans. The Kołkowskis provided temporary shelter to other Jews as well, among them Inka Akselrod, who jumped off a train on its way to Treblinka.<sup>2736</sup>
- Two train jumpers from a transport to Treblinka joined at least seven other Jews sheltered by the Postek family, farmers in Stoczek Węgrowski, from the summer and fall of 1942. Stanisław Postek, his wife, Julianna, and their sons, Wacław and Henryk, were arrested on September 5, 1943, for sheltering Jews. Stanisław and his sons were imprisoned in Warsaw's Pawiak prison. The father was sent to Auschwitz, where he perished in March 1944. The sons were released from Pawiak in November 1943 but re-arrested the following June. Their mother, Julianna, died

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<sup>2734</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 366–67.

<sup>2735</sup> Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945*, 330–31.

<sup>2736</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 362–63.

on September 6, 1943, from the beatings she endured at the hands of German gendarmes.<sup>2737</sup>

- Ruth Altbeker Cyprys was injured when she jumped, together with her young daughter, from a deportation train from Warsaw headed for Treblinka. She recalled various instances when they were helped by compassionate railway guards, villagers, passers-by, passengers, and even a gang of robbers.<sup>2738</sup>
- Helen Ostrowska-Zuckerwar was also injured when she jumped from a deportation train that left Warsaw headed for Treblinka. She was found by a farmer who took her to his home and, with the help of his wife, nursed her back to health before helping her to return to Warsaw, where she found shelter with the Kijkowski family.<sup>2739</sup>
- Maria Bregman jumped out of a train from Warsaw headed for Treblinka, injuring her head. When she regained consciousness, she dragged herself to a village where, posing ineptly as a Polish woman, she obtained treatment for her wounds from the villagers. When German gendarmes arrived the next day, looking for Jewish escapees, she was told to leave.<sup>2740</sup>
- After jumping from a train bound for Treblinka, Edmund Stanberg found shelter in the village of Łojów, near Łochów, where two farmers cared for the wounded fugitive before he returned to Warsaw.<sup>2741</sup>
- When Adam Kapitańczyk jumped off of a transport train from Warsaw headed for Treblinka, he was shot by German guards and left for dead. Lying by the side of the tracks badly wounded, unable to walk and barely conscious, he was found by relatives of the Sasin family and taken to their farm in Franciszków, near Tłuszcz. The Sasins removed the bullets still lodged in his arm and legs, dressed his wounds, fed him, and slowly nursed him back to health. They built a hiding place for him in the attic of their farmhouse. He remained until liberation.<sup>2742</sup>
- The brothers Leibel and Efraim Tchapowicz, who jumped from the Treblinka-bound train during the liquidation Aktion in Kałuszyn, were hidden for a few months by

<sup>2737</sup> Namysło and Berendt, *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej*, 261–62; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 268–69.

<sup>2738</sup> Altbeker Cyprys, *A Jump for Life*, 97, 102–10.

<sup>2739</sup> Jerzy Jurandot, *Miasto skazanych: 2 lata w warszawskim getcie* (Warsaw: Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich, 2014), 188–89, translated as *City of the Damned: Two Years in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Warsaw: Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2015).

<sup>2740</sup> Testimony of Fruma Bregman, JHI, record group 301, no. 1984, at p. 14.

<sup>2741</sup> “A Mysterious Crime in Łojew,” April 2, 2017, Pilecki Institute, Internet: <https://instytut-pileckiego.pl/en/poznaj-historie-z-czasow-okupacji/a-mysterious-crime-in-lojew/>.

<sup>2742</sup> Sasin Family, RD; The Sasin Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-sasin-family>.

a Pole named Strychalski, who continued to provide them with necessities while they were living in the forest.<sup>2743</sup>

- The brothers Sandor and Shalom Spector jumped out of two separate trains headed for Treblinka. Both of them survived with the help of friendly Poles.<sup>2744</sup>
- When the brothers Henry and Abe Feigelbaum escaped from the train taking them to Treblinka, they hid in nearby forests for several weeks before they made their way at night to the home of Czesław Głuchowski in the village of Czołomyje, near their hometown of Mordy. They survived in a bunker dug under the granary.<sup>2745</sup>
- After jumping out of a train transporting Jews to Treblinka, Leon Grynberg made his way back to Białystok, where he was sheltered by the Skalski family.<sup>2746</sup>
- Sabina Zisser and her parents were deported to Treblinka from Sandomierz in January 1943. As the train slowed down, she jumped out onto snowy ground near Wohyń, narrowly avoiding German bullets. As part of a group of three women and five men, and later in a smaller group of three escapees, she approached Polish farmers who provided food and even allowed overnight visitors into their barns. On the way to Warsaw, Sabina met a Polish woman who invited her to stay at her home in Mińsk Mazowiecki. After she arrived in Warsaw, Sabina ran across a Polish acquaintance from Szczucin, her hometown, and was invited to stay with her.<sup>2747</sup>
- The above overview is not exhaustive. There are many other accounts of Jews who escaped from Treblinka, or from trains headed there, and who returned safely to their homes owing at least in part to the aid of Poles met randomly along the way.<sup>2748</sup>

<sup>2743</sup> Leibel and Efraim Tchapowicz, "Hiding," in Shamri and Soroka, *Sefer Kaluszyn*, 397 ff., translated as *The Memorial Book of Kaluszyn*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/kaluszyn/Kaluszyn.html>.

<sup>2744</sup> Sandor Spector, "I Jumped From the Death Trains," in Yerachmiel Moorstein, ed., *Zelva Memorial Book* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 1992), 81–82.

<sup>2745</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 239.

<sup>2746</sup> Śliwowska, *The Last Eyewitnesses*, vol. 1, 183–84.

<sup>2747</sup> Rozenblum, *Les temps brisés*, 83–88.

<sup>2748</sup> Account of David Wolf in *Entertainment and Ball Given by the United Wisoko-Litowsker and Woltchiner Relief*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Vysokoye/Vysokoye.html>, translation of Samuel Levine and Morris Gevirtz, eds., *Yisker zhurnal gevidmet diumgekumene fun Visoka un Voltshin* (New York: United Wisoko-Litowsker and Woltchiner Relief, 1948); Feivel Wolf, "After the Departure from Treblinka," in *Memorial Book of Krynki*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Krynki/Krynki.html>, translation of D. [Dov] Rabin, ed., *Pinkas Krynki* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Krynki in Israel and the Diaspora, 1970), 290; Donat, *The Death Camp Treblinka*, 135, 142, 248–89; Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, 100, 123; Benjamin Mandelkern, with Mark Czarnecki, *Escape from the Nazis* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1988), 59, 66–67, 73–75; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych*, 438–39, 481; Richard Glazer, *Trap With a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 149–53 (the author passed through a long series of localities; when he was finally caught, it was not by a Pole but by a Volksdeutsche); Goldberg, *A Sparkle of Hope*, 98; Alina Bacall-Zwirn and Jared Stark, *No Common Place: The Holocaust Testimony of Alina Bacall-Zwirn* (Lincoln and London:

Many Jews who perished during the German occupation of Poland had also received help from Poles. Most of those stories will never be known.

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University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 32–35; Grynberg, *Drohobycz, Drohobycz and Other Stories*, 151–52; Eddi Weinstein, *Quenched Steel: The Story of an Escape from Treblinka* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002); Irene Shapiro, *Revisiting the Shadows: Memoirs from War-torn Poland to the Statue of Liberty* (Elk River, Minnesota: DeForest Press, 2004), 189–90; *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 246, 348, 362–63, 364, 366–67, 461, and vol. 5, 703; Maik, *Deliverance*, 87; Grubowska, *Haneczko, musisz przeżyć*, 73–74; Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 310; Krzysztof Czubaszek, *Żydzi z Łukowa i okolic* (Warsaw: Danmar, 2008), 203, 206, 251; *Amidah: Standing Up: Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust* (Darlinghurst, New South Wales: Sydney Jewish Museum, 2011), 6; Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 231–34 (rescue of Anna Ożarów in Celestynów-Cegielnia), 349–54 (rescue of Mosze Smolarz in Płosodrza near Mordy—see also Helena Szmurło, RD; Franziska Bruder, *Das eigene Schicksal selbst bestimmen: Fluchten aus Deportationszügen der 'Aktion Reinhardt' in Polen* (Hamburg and Münster: Unrast, 2019); Adek Stein (Bulkowstein), Australian Memories of the Holocaust, Internet: [http://www.holocaust.com.au/mm/j\\_adek.htm](http://www.holocaust.com.au/mm/j_adek.htm) and Testimony of Adek Stein, SFV, Interview code 3169.



## (Non)Recognition and (In)Gratitude

This next compilation canvasses Jewish attitudes regarding Poles and the Holocaust, both positive and negative, based entirely on Jewish sources. The quotations have not been made up and are representative of a broad spectrum of views. Nonetheless, they have irked some intrepid sleuths of “Polish anti-Semitism”—of which there are far too many, one trying to outdo the other in coming up with novel “insights”—because they do not fit in with their views.

Joanna Michlic, a Jewish apologist historian and purveyor of anti-Polish stereotypes, has claimed that this compilation perpetuates the “myth” of the “ungrateful” Jew. Allegedly, this myth is the invention of Polish Communists, perpetuated by “ethnonationalists,” and has no basis in fact.<sup>2749</sup>

Michlic herself advances two myths: (1) universal gratitude on the part of Jewish rescuers (the notion that Jewish survivors are incapable of ingratitude has been amply debunked); (2) the sole reason for cutting off contact by Jews with their rescuers after the war was invariably to protect the rescuers from their violent and abusive anti-Semitic neighbours (in fact, in many cases, after leaving their hosts, Jews made no contact with their rescuers at all).

“Yes, it’s true that many Jews broke off contact with their rescuers,” Michlic says. Citing no evidence she continues, “but that was done deliberately to protect them because anti-Semitism was so rampant at the time that had suspicions been raised that they had saved Jews, they would have been punished by their neighbors for being traitors. So while many Jews would have like [sic] to stay in contact with their rescuers after the war, they decided it was best to stay away.”<sup>2750</sup>

The testimonies of Polish rescuers do not support such a sweeping alibi. If established at all, contact was usually broken off fairly early and unilaterally by the rescued Jews, often to the dismay of their rescuers, and had nothing to do with the rescuers’ alleged fear of retaliation by their neighbours. In quite a few cases (some of which have already been cited in this study), the rescued Jews simply left and

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<sup>2749</sup> Joanna B. Michlic, “‘I will never forget what you did for me during the war’: Rescuer–Rescued Relationships in the Light of Postwar Correspondence in Poland, 1945–1949,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2 (2011): 169–207, at p. 204 n.85.

<sup>2750</sup> Judy Maltz, “Debunking the Myth of the ‘Ungrateful’ Holocaust Survivor,” *Haaretz*, June 18, 2014.



never contacted their rescuers again.<sup>2751</sup> Occasionally, the Communist authorities intimidated rescuers to cut off ties with rescuers who lived in the West.

Hymen (Chaim) Federman was one of three brothers rescued by the Matuszczyk family in the village of Bronów, near Działoszyce. The Federman brothers maintained no contact with their rescuers after emerging from their hiding place after the war. In the 2004 documentary *Hiding and Seeking: Faith and Tolerance after the Holocaust*, when asked whether he would have undertaken the risk that his Polish benefactors did, Federman answered unreservedly that he would not have done so.<sup>2752</sup>

Liwa Gomułka, the wife of Communist leader Władysław Gomułka, “refused to see an old Polish woman who had hidden her during the Nazi occupation and had come to her for some small favour.”<sup>2753</sup> Hersz Siedlecki, who survived in Warsaw with the help of several Poles (he lived at the Albertine Brothers’ shelter on Jagiellońska Street in the Praga district for two years), recalled:

The butcher’s brother-in-law lived in the next house. He worked at the Warsaw gas works. A Jew and his wife hid with him, obviously for money. When the Warsaw Uprising broke out, the whole family, including the Jews, came to the butcher’s house. During the uprising, everything was very expensive, if you could get things at all. The Jew took out much gold and dollars and wanted to give them so that he could continue to stay there. According to the butcher, he said, “I’m no speculator and I won’t take anything from you. When the war ends, you can pay me back for everything.” The family stayed with him until the liberation.

The butcher asked me to go to the Jewish family. They had established a factory in their house, and he wanted me to ask them for money, because he was in a bad way. I asked what he needed and he said 1500 zlotys [zlotys].

I went to the Jew. A serving [servant] girl answered the door and asked me in. When I told the wife that I had come from Benju (that was the butcher’s name), she was so happy and confirmed his story that he had told me (which I had earlier doubted). She simply called him an angel.

I conveyed the request of her “angel” and she said that her husband was not at home but she would take care of it. A month later I accidentally ran into her at the Jewish Committee. She came up to me and asked if I was going to Benju. She said that 1500 zlotys was too much,

<sup>2751</sup> See the following additional examples: Tammeus and Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People*, 21, 69–70; Marcin Urynowicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, 262–63; Marcin Urynowicz, “Organized and Individual Assistance of Poles for Jewish People Exterminated by the German Occupants in the Second World War,” in Grądzka-Rejak and Sitarek, *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations*, 332; Sebastian Piątkowski, “Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków zamieszkających we wsiach Lubelszczyzny w latach 1939–1944: Wybór materiałów źródłowych,” in Marcin Przeglęta, et al., eds., *Polska pod okupacją 1939–1945*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2016), 205–57, especially pp. 217, 220, 225, 238–39, 241, 246, 251, 253, 255.

<sup>2752</sup> *Hiding and Seeking* opens with director Menachem Daum playing a tape for his two sons, who are both Orthodox Jews like him. It is a recording of a Brooklyn rabbi instructing his followers that the “only good goyim is a dead goyim.”

<sup>2753</sup> Michael Checinski, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism* (New York: Karz-Cohl, 1982), 143.

but she could give 500. I was embarrassed and walked away from her. I didn't go back to Benju out of shame. It makes me sad to have to write such a thing. It's a sad fact.<sup>2754</sup>

All too often, as honest survivors acknowledge, Poles are accused of doing nothing or next to nothing by people who themselves would likely never have risked their own lives in similar circumstances. Dismissive of Jews (with lived experience) who hold balanced views that undermine her take on these matters, a Polish cultural anthropologist claims this compilation sets up a "childish" dichotomy. Apparently, it does not live up to her "sophisticated" scholarly standards.<sup>2755</sup>

All of this begets the eye-opening question, why has Yad Vashem done next to nothing to acknowledge that as many as 1,000 Poles were put to death for helping Jews? Why is there no monument to honour their memory anywhere? (The erection of such a monument in Warsaw was strenuously opposed by the Center for Polish Holocaust Research.)

When pondering opinions (generalizations) about the behaviour of Poles, one should bear in mind what French-Jewish intellectual Pierre Vidal-Naquet has aptly decried as "the sort of primitive anti-Polish sentiments that too often characterize those whom I shall call 'professional Jews'."<sup>2756</sup>

Szymon Datner, long-time director of Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute and survivor of the Holocaust:

In my research I have found only one case of help being refused [by nuns]. No other sector was so ready to help those persecuted by the Germans, including the Jews; this attitude, which was unanimous and widespread, is deserving of recognition and respect.<sup>2757</sup>

Yehuda Bauer, Israeli historian:

Nor was the Catholic clergy any help at all. With some very honorable exceptions, the clergy by and large not only echoed the antisemitic sentiments, but led them. ... Against the background of church antisemitism in an overwhelmingly Catholic country, the action of the Uniate archbishop of Lwow [Lwów], Count Andreas Szeptycki, who ordered his clergy to save Jews despite his antisemitic views, stands out. So do the actions of the Ursuline sisters, and other individual monastic houses and occasional village priests.<sup>2758</sup>

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<sup>2754</sup> Tzvi Shedletski, "A Saga of Pain and Heroism," in Kanc, *Sefer zikaron kehilat Wolomin*, 485–549, translated as *Volomin: A Memorial to the Jewish Community of Wolomin*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/wolomin/Wolomin.html>.

<sup>2755</sup> Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Pogrom Cries: Essays on Polish-Jewish History, 1939–1946*, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), 46.

<sup>2756</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Jews: History, Memory, and the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 182.

<sup>2757</sup> Szymon Datner, "Wydział ochrony człowieka," *Znak* [Kraków], no. 347 (1983): 1607.

<sup>2758</sup> Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*, 57, 59–60. According to Bauer, Jewish citizens owed Poland no loyalty: "... from the perspective of most Jews, interwar Poland was an oppressive regime and could hardly demand loyalty from its badly treated Jewish population." See Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, 37.

Yitzhak Arad (Rudnicki), former partisan and Israeli historian:

It was a period in which the morality of the Church was tested. The clergy should have voiced their objections to the murders and extended help to the victims, despite risks to themselves. An outcry on their part would not have changed the Germans' annihilation policies ...<sup>2759</sup>

Testimonials by Jews rescued by Poles:

I do not accuse anyone that did not hide or help a Jew. We cannot demand from others to sacrifice their lives. One has no right to demand such risks.<sup>2760</sup>

Everyone who states the view that helping Jews was during those times a reality, a duty and nothing more should think long and hard how he himself would behave in that situation. I admit that I am not sure that I could summon up enough courage in the conditions of raging Nazi terror.<sup>2761</sup>

One Polish Jew who often asked this question of Jewish survivors recalled: "The answer was always the same and it is mine too. I do not know if I would have endangered my life to save a Christian."<sup>2762</sup>

"I am not at all sure that I would give a bowl of food to a Pole if it could mean death for me and my daughter," a Jewish woman admitted candidly.<sup>2763</sup>

A Jewish woman who was rescued as a child by a poor Polish family: "Today I would like to talk about my saviors and about the great heroism it requires to give the same amount of food to a third child who isn't yours. Even at times of great hunger they shared each slice of bread—which was so rare—into three equal parts. I have three children and I don't know if in the same circumstances I would be able to give my child less in order to feed someone else's child. It is the greatest heroism one can ever imagine."<sup>2764</sup>

Today, with the perspective of time, I am full of admiration for the courage and dedication ... of all those Poles who in those times, day in, day out, put their lives on the line. I do not know if we Jews, in the face of the tragedy of another nation, would be equally capable of this kind of sacrifice.<sup>2765</sup>

I'm not surprised people didn't want to hide Jews. Everyone was afraid, who would risk his family's lives? You can accuse the ones who kept a Jew, exploited him financially, and later gave

<sup>2759</sup> Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 449–50.

<sup>2760</sup> Pola Stein, cited in Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*, 129.

<sup>2761</sup> Hanna Wehr, *Ze wspomnień* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2001), 64.

<sup>2762</sup> Cited in Marc Hillel, *Le massacre des survivants: En Pologne après l'holocauste (1945–1947)* (Paris: Plon, 1985), 99.

<sup>2763</sup> Cited in Niezabitowska, *Remnants*, 249.

<sup>2764</sup> Shoshana (Rozalia) Ronen née Wassner cited in The Nawłoka Family, PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-nawloka-family>.

<sup>2765</sup> Janka Altman, cited in Marek Arczyński and Wiesław Balcerak, *Kryptonim "Żegota": Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945*, 2nd ed. (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 264. Rina Scharf Chełmicka, who survived in Lwów with the help of several Poles, expressed a similar sentiment: If the situation were reversed, how many Jews would have risked their lives to rescue Poles? Very few. See the testimony of Rina Chelmska, SFV, Interview code 20694.

him away or killed him. They're murderers. But you absolutely can't blame an average Pole, I don't know if anyone would be more decent, if any Jew would be more decent.<sup>2766</sup>

We did survive thanks to some Polish people. And we are grateful to the Polish Home Army, the leaders, the people directly involved with us who saved many other Jewish people, poor people, without any compensation. Risked their own lives, and I said it before, could anyone of us? Try to inspect my own soul. Could I do the same thing what those Polish people did? I honestly don't know. I was never a hero. Maybe I'm a coward, I don't know. But they were heroes in my eyes, they were.<sup>2767</sup>

When I later traveled in the world and Jews would talk to me about how badly Poles behaved with respect to Jews, that they didn't hide them, I always had this answer: "All right, they could have done more. But I wonder how many could one find among you, the Jews, who would hide a Polish family knowing that not only you, but your children, your whole family, would get shot were you found out?" After that there was always silence and nobody said anything more.<sup>2768</sup>

To tell the truth, I don't know whether today ... there are many Jews who would do the same for another nation. We were another nation ...<sup>2769</sup>

As for the Poles: I do not bear a grudge because many of them did not want to incur danger for us [Jews]; I do not know how we would have behaved [towards them if our roles were reversed].<sup>2770</sup>

When we come to Poland with Israeli youth and I tell them about what happened during the war, I say to them: "I know that if I had to risk my own life, and my family's, for a stranger, I probably wouldn't have the courage to do so."<sup>2771</sup>

I say this without needless comments, because I've been asked before: If I had a family I would not shelter a Jew during the occupation.<sup>2772</sup>

And what right did I have to condemn them? Why should they risk themselves and their families for a Jewish boy they didn't know? Would I have behaved any differently? I knew the answer to that, too. I wouldn't have lifted a finger. Everyone was equally intimidated.<sup>2773</sup>

If I were in their place, would I act like them [i.e., his Polish rescuers]? This is the question that I have been asking myself from the days of my youth, and until this very day I have not come up with an answer. I believe that even if I were to give a positive answer to this question, it

<sup>2766</sup> Testimony of Henryk Prajs, 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/henryk-prajs>.

<sup>2767</sup> Oral history interview with Felix Horn, July 19, 1994, USHMM, RG-50.030.0294.

<sup>2768</sup> Ewa S. (Stapp), September 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org> (Biographies).

<sup>2769</sup> Testimony of Bencjon Drutin in Marzena Baum-Gruszowska and Dominika Majuk, eds., *Światła w ciemności: Sprawiedliwi wśród narodów świata: Relacje historii mówionej w działaniach edukacyjnych* (Lublin: Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka-Teatr NN," 2009), 58.

<sup>2770</sup> Testimony of Emilka Rozencwajg (Shoshana Kossower Rosenzweig), a Home Army and Jewish underground liaison officer in Warsaw, interviewed by Anka Grupińska, "Ja myślałam, że wszyscy są razem," *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Kraków], May 6, 2001.

<sup>2771</sup> Testimony of Ada Lubelczyk Willenberg, Interview with Samuel and Ada Willenberg, "To, o czym pisze Gross jest prawdą," Polska Agencja Prasowa (PAP), January 10, 2011.

<sup>2772</sup> Testimony of Marek Oren (Orenstein), in Piotr Głuchowski and Marcin Kowalski, "Żyd miły z bliska," *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Duży Format, September 11, 2007.

<sup>2773</sup> Frister, *The Cap, or the Price of a Life*, 194. A similar sentiment was expressed by Natalie Sterngast to her Polish benefactors. See the testimony of Natalie Sterngast, SFV, Interview code 1043.

is most doubtful if I would act accordingly, were I to find myself in a similar situation as the Righteous Among the Nations.<sup>2774</sup>

If not for the Poles, none of us would have survived .... A lot of Polish people were murdered, hung, shot, and had their homes burned because they were hiding Jewish people. ... It would be [the] opposite ... Jewish people wouldn't do that for the Polish people.<sup>2775</sup>

A Jew who survived with the help of Czech villagers in Volhynia: "I do not know if a Jew would do for them what they did for us."<sup>2776</sup>

### Other Jews rescued by Poles go on to explain their position:

One must pay tribute to those Poles who lost their lives rescuing Jews. Moreover, one cannot blame those who did not rescue Jews. We should not forget that one cannot demand heroism from ordinary, average people. True there are times and causes that demand heroism, but only certain individuals can aspire to that. One cannot harbour ill-feelings towards or have grounds for complaining about someone for not attaining that level.<sup>2777</sup>

I always protest when I hear that Poles did "too little." How can one judge people who found themselves in such a difficult situation? Human nature is such that one is concerned foremost about one's own life and the lives of close ones. It is their safety that is the most important thing. One has to have great courage to risk death—one's own and one's children—in order to rescue a stranger. To require this of ordinary people terrorized by the occupiers is to ask too much. The Jewish people themselves didn't pass that test either. Who knows how many heroes like the Polish Righteous would be found among the Jews.<sup>2778</sup>

Heroism is something extraordinary, something that one cannot demand from anybody, something, moreover, that cannot even be expected. An individual becomes a hero not because this is what is demanded of him, or even less so because that is what he is forced to do. Heroism is a matter of personal decisions and personal courage. And if someone complains that there were not very many righteous heroes, he should think of whether he himself would have acted heroically in the [same] situation: what would you have done if somebody else, rather than yourself, had been sentenced to extermination? Would you have come running to save him at the peril of death? This is an abstract question, essentially a rhetorical one, but I think it needs to be asked all the same. Even though there is no answer to it, for heroic deeds are done in particular, for most part unpredictable situations.<sup>2779</sup>

<sup>2774</sup> Testimony of Dr. Avraham Horowitz, Świda Family, RD.

<sup>2775</sup> Oral history interview with Leon Lepold, July 25, 1989, for William B. Helmreich's book *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Transaction Publishers, 1996). Leon Lepold, who, like his future wife, survived with the assistance of Poles in southeastern Poland, took issue with those Jews who blamed the Poles for the Holocaust. Helmreich notes, however, that most of his interlocutors "were even more hostile, on the whole, toward Poles, often comparing them unfavorably to Germans." Ibid., 252.

<sup>2776</sup> Testimony of Sonia Resnick-Tetelbaum, SFV, Interview code 9702 (Czeskie Nowosiółki, near Beresteczko).

<sup>2777</sup> Henryk Bryskier, *Żydzi pod swastyką, czyli getto w Warszawie w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Aspra-Jr, 2006), 231.

<sup>2778</sup> Szewach Weiss, "Polacy pozostali niezłomni," *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], January 26, 2011.

<sup>2779</sup> Michał Głowiński, "O sprawiedliwych / About the Righteous," in *Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady / Poles Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (2013), 9. Surprisingly,

Would Roman [Frayman] risk his own life now to save others? "It's funny that you should ask that question," he said, "because when I teach the children, sixth graders, and I tell them how Maria saved my life, I say to the children, 'How many of you would be willing to risk your life to save someone else, knowing that if you're caught you'll be put to death?' And, of course, after hearing my story, many of them say, 'Oh, we would, Mr. Frayman, we would.' But I say, 'Put your hands down.' Let me tell you honestly, if someone asked me if I'd do it, my honest answer is, 'I don't know.' Would I be willing to sacrifice my children, my grandchildren, I don't know. You don't know that until you are in that circumstance. I don't know how gutsy I am."<sup>2780</sup>

These honest Jewish survivors raise thought-provoking questions. If the situation were reversed, how many Polish fugitives would have been sheltered in shtetls? How could they have blended in? What if the Germans imposed the death penalty for rescuing them? How many Poles would have been turned away? We know from Jewish testimonies that denunciation of fellow Jews was a serious problem. What if the Germans ordered the Jewish police to search out Polish fugitives or risk punishment? How many Poles would have been handed over?

Those who argue that hundreds of thousands of more Poles should have risked their lives, and use this argument to question the decency and morality of those who weren't prepared to put their lives on the line under such circumstances, necessarily invite a close scrutiny of their own demonstrated track record. What have they *done* that demonstrates they would have behaved heroically in such circumstances?

Only someone who has risked his or her life for another person has the moral right to chastise others for their failure to undertake such life-threatening actions. This proposition is entirely hypothetical because true heroes would never compromise their moral values and ethical convictions by demanding such behaviour of others. Eugeniusz Bradło, a member of a family that was awarded by Yad Vashem for rescuing thirteen Jews, does not disparage his neighbours for not sheltering Jews.

"No one found the courage to take them in for a longer period. People were good, but they were afraid of the Germans and said, 'Here is some food, and leave. Don't admit to anyone that we gave it to you.'"<sup>2781</sup>

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questions along these lines are not put to survivors interviewed for the Shoah Foundation—The Institute for Visual History and Education at the University of Southern California.

<sup>2780</sup> Cited in Tammeus and Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People*, 69. Roman Frayman states: "But the thing I feel guilty about today is that we never maintained a relationship [with his rescuer, Maria Bałagowa], while she was living." Ibid., 70.

<sup>2781</sup> Musiał, *Lata w ukryciu*, vol. 2, 330. The presence of the Jews became widely known or suspected because of their frequent and loud quarrelling, because of the chance discovery of their hideout by a neighbour who hid in the Bradłos' barn during a German raid, and because of their nocturnal expeditions to obtain food from other farmers since the Bradłos were in no position to feed so many people. Ibid., 331. Another family of rescuers, the Styrnas, hid two penniless siblings whose presence became known to their neighbours despite the precautions the Styrnas took to conceal their charges. Although the Styrnas trusted their neighbours and did not experience denunciation, they were nonetheless



Heroism is a purely personal and self-effacing choice. No one else can make that decision for another person, let alone impose it. No one has that right. But, unfortunately, it is done all too frequently when it comes to Poles. At best, those crude generalizations are a display of self-righteous indignation. At worst, it reveals a darker side about that person—a deep-seated contempt for others and valuing their life above another person's.

What other survivors have to say:

"Now you see why we hate the Polacks," one survivor concluded her account, in which she presented many instances of Poles' help. There was no word about hating the Germans.<sup>2782</sup>

The Wanderers were among the luckiest Jewish families in town. Both parents and the girls survived the war. They were hidden successively by several Polish families. After the war, the Wanderers emigrated to America. I sent the Wanderer sisters information about the Regulas, one of the Polish families in whose house on the outskirts of Brzezany [Brzeżany] they had hid after the Judenrein roundup. I hoped that they would start the procedure of granting them the Righteous Gentiles award, but nothing came of it. ... When I called Rena, the older one, and asked whether a young Polish historian, a colleague of mine who was doing research in New York, could interview her for my project on Brzezany, her reaction was curt and clear: "I hate all Polacks." ... Rena advised me not to present the Poles in too favorable a way "for the sake of our martyrs."<sup>2783</sup>

Berek Rojzman was part of a group of six Jews who escaped from Treblinka and built an underground shelter in a forest, where they relied on a Polish famer named Staszek for their food supply. Gitta Sereny, herself a Holocaust survivor, remarks, "Rojzman said no more about the man Staszek, thanks to whom they had survived. The implication was that he was paid for what he did. He probably was, but considering the risk he had taken, one did wonder whether that degree of help could ever be paid for in money."<sup>2784</sup>

After his escape from the German death camp in Sobibór, Stanisław Szmajzner and his two companions took refuge with a Polish family, where they survived the war.<sup>2785</sup> Szmajzner said the following in a 1983 interview given in German, in a country where he apparently feels quite comfortable:

I will never return to Poland, ever. Had the Poles been different, more like the Danes, the Dutch or the French, I think 70, 80 or possibly even 90 per cent of the Jews would still be alive today. Because the Germans had no idea who was Jewish and who wasn't. ... I don't want to speak

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afraid that a weak person might betray them out of fear. Despite their assurances, after the war, their charges showed little gratitude. Ibid., 335–36.

<sup>2782</sup> Cited in Hoffman, *Shtetl*, 245.

<sup>2783</sup> Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany*, 22.

<sup>2784</sup> Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, 242–44.

<sup>2785</sup> Stanisław Szmajzner, *Inferno em Sobibor: A tragédia de um adolescente judeu* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Bloch, 1968), 296–301.

Polish and I don't want to return to Poland. This is my sixth visit to Germany and believe me: I really don't want to go to Poland. ... If they [i.e., the Poles] wanted to kill Jews they could always find a pretext. ... That's what the Poles are like. Can you ever like these people? It's impossible. ... Poland was never, and never will be, a country where Jews can live. I would like to make an appeal to those few Jews still in Poland: Leave. This is not a country where you can live. ... It is not necessary for all Germans to atone for all of this. Many Germans were opposed to fascism.<sup>2786</sup>

Ephraim Sten (Sternschuss), one of the more than forty Jews rescued by a number of Polish families in the village of Jeleschowice:

They (the Poles) had no objection to the job being perpetrated by the Germans ... That is why the overwhelming majority did not lift a finger to help. ... Poland was the perfect center for the Jewish liquidation.<sup>2787</sup>

Raoul Harmelin, who survived in his native Borysław with the help of a Pole named Jankowski, a Home Army member:

And generally, I would consider Poles much worse than the Germans.<sup>2788</sup>

Peter Gersh, who was captured by the Gestapo in Kraków and imprisoned in several German concentration camps:

...if I hated anyone, I would hate the Polish people. The priests and the Catholic Church, they instilled hate in the Polish people ... in the war they [Poles] had a field day. ... When I heard that the Russians occupied Poland, I thought, God should see to it that they're there for a thousand years!<sup>2789</sup>

Gitel, the granddaughter of Rabbi Efraim Reich (of Brooklyn), one of thirteen Jews rescued by the Mikołajków family in Dębica (whose story is described earlier):

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<sup>2786</sup> Sobiborinterviews.nl—Survivors of an Extermination Camp, Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, Internet: <https://www.sobiborinterviews.nl/en/interviewees/2-profielen/12-stanislaw-szmajzner>. Polish Jews were required to wear distinctive armbands and most were readily identifiable by their appearance. Almost 80 per cent of Dutch Jews, it must be remembered, were murdered by the Germans with considerable Dutch collaboration. Most of those who attempted to hide were betrayed. Many Dutch Jews (e.g., part Jews and converts) were able to survive because they were exempted from Nazi genocidal measures.

<sup>2787</sup> Sten, *1111 Days In My Life Plus Four*, 31–32. Yet the author records, at p. 75, a raid on the village of Jeleschowice where several Polish families were sheltering more than 40 Jews (including him): "Today was some panic because last night Hryc informed us about the police arriving ... looking for Jews. ... there were area combings, the Wehrmacht arrived, as well as the foresters and police, and they went from house to house, from forest to forest, because Jews were hiding in the environs."

<sup>2788</sup> Interview with Raoul Harmelin, April 26, 1992, Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive, 47.

<sup>2789</sup> Cited in Lewin, *Witnesses to the Holocaust*, 35.

I think that if I was to step into Poland I would feel like blood was seeping through my shoes. Most of the Poles were sitting around, they saw the smoke from Auschwitz and smelled it, and they knew that people were dying there and did nothing. So I think that even after the war, nowadays people have generally a view of Poles as people who helped and abetted what happened in killing children, mothers, men, and families, they do deserve it. The few people that did help let's honor them. ... They showed that they are people. And the other people are not people. They are murderers and they have to pay now for what they did.<sup>2790</sup>

The Christian spouses of Jews who immigrated to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s—mostly Polish women who had saved the lives of their Jewish husbands—were perceived to constitute a threat to Jewish national identity. They often experienced discrimination and abusive treatment at the hands of Jewish Israeli society.<sup>2791</sup>

Some of the most abusive comments emanate from Israeli politicians. Menachem Begin, former Israeli Prime Minister:

What concerns the Jews, the Poles have been collaborating with the Germans. ... only at most one hundred people have been helping Jews. ... Polish priests did not save even one Jewish life.<sup>2792</sup>

The scandalous remarks of Yitzhak Shamir, Prime Minister of Israel, spoken in 1989, were renewed in February 2019 by Israeli Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz:

Poles collaborated with the Nazis, definitely. As [former prime minister] Yitzhak Shamir said, they suckle anti-Semitism with their mothers' milk.<sup>2793</sup>

<sup>2790</sup> *Druga prawda*, Documentary film by Jagna Wright and Aneta Naszyńska, Lest We Forget, 2008.

<sup>2791</sup> Ofer Aderet, "The Polish Women Who Saved Jews in WWII, Only to be Called 'Russian Prostitutes' in Israel," *Haaretz*, August 30, 2020. For an account of a Polish woman attesting to such mistreatment experienced by her as well as by her children in the 1950s see Boćkowski, Rogalewska, and Sadowska, *Kres świata białostockich Żydów*, 85. Stefan Raczyński, whom Yad Vashem recognized as a Righteous Gentile for saving his future wife, Shoshana Dezent, and a number of other Jews, moved to Israel with his wife in 1960. Shoshana recalled how he was mistreated there: "Stefan has changed a great deal since we came to Israel. They injured him; he felt humiliated and he became cynical. When our son went to the army he wanted to be a pilot. They told him, 'Your father is a Polish Catholic, you won't be a pilot.' One day a few religious Jews were throwing stones at our house screaming, 'Go away, goy.'" See *Rescuers Bios*, "Shtetl," PBS Frontline, Internet: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shtetl/righteous/stephan.html>.

<sup>2792</sup> Said on Dutch television in 1979. Cited in Stevens, *The Poles*, 317. Stevens, a Jew, described this outburst as "a disgraceful statement in which Begin disgraced himself and dishonored his own people."

<sup>2793</sup> "Poland Cancels Participation in Israel Summit over FM Katz's 'Racist' Remarks," *The Times of Israel* (blog), February 18, 2019. The disturbing phenomenon of anti-polonism was explored by Steve Paiken, in his article "Poland Striving to Shake Off an Anti-Semitic Past," *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], May 29, 1992: "And many Jews around the world blame the Poles nearly as much as the Germans for the Holocaust. They say it wasn't coincidental that the majority of the death camps were on Polish soil—that anti-Semitism

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, in an address to the March of the Living participants, April 2018:

The country of Poland allowed the implementation of the horrific genocidal ideology of Hitler. ... Not for nothing we describe the death camps as the camps of Nazis and their helpers ... we cannot deny the fact that Poland and the Poles lent a hand to the annihilation of Jews.<sup>2794</sup>

Yair Lapid, alternate Prime Minister of Israel since 2021:

No Polish law will change history, Poland was complicit in the Holocaust. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were murdered on its soil without them having met any German officer. There were Polish death camps and no law can ever change that. I am a son of a Holocaust survivor. My grandmother was murdered in Poland by Germans and Poles.<sup>2795</sup>

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in Poland made Hitler's Final Solution in Poland achievable. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir once summed up that view by saying that Poles drink anti-Semitism with their mother's milk. ... The signs of change are even prompting some to challenge the long-held view that Poles were just about as guilty as the Germans for the Holocaust. That view is 'ingrained,' says Nathan Leipciger, chairman of the Canadian Jewish Congress Holocaust Remembrance Committee, and a survivor of Auschwitz. 'How can you say that? I was in camps where 90 per cent of the inmates were Poles. ... Most of this [anti-Polish] feeling is just based on myth.'"

This assessment proved to be too optimistic. Scarcely criticized when spoken, the prevalence of such remarks are clearly indicative of views that are widespread, albeit not universal, among Jews.

<sup>2794</sup> Ofer Aderet, "Israeli President to Polish Counterpart: We Cannot Deny That Poland and Poles Participated in the Holocaust," *Haaretz*, April 12, 2018; "Poles Helped in Nazi Extermination, Rivlin Tells Polish Counterpart," *The Times of Israel* (blog), April 12, 2018. At the ceremonies commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz held on January 27, 2020, Israeli President Rivlin renewed his charge that "many Poles ... assisted in the murder of Jews" and, without acknowledging that Poles uniquely faced the death penalty for helping Jews, reproached them because "too few" Poles risked their lives to save Jews. See Ofer Aderet, "Rivlin Told Poles What Netanyahu Wouldn't," *Haaretz*, January 27, 2020. The "unvarnished truth" that emerges from this narrative, seemingly endorsed by Yad Vashem, is that Poles' wartime purpose was to put their lives at risk to rescue Jews (and ran no greater risk than other Europeans for doing so); otherwise, Poles were hateful anti-Semites (usually), indifferent (at best), or collaborators/murderers (very often).

<sup>2795</sup> TOI Staff and AP, "Lapid: Poland Was Complicit in the Holocaust, New Bill 'Can't Change History,'" *The Times of Israel* (blog), January 27, 2018. Since Lapid's two grandmothers actually lived through the Holocaust (one in Palestine, the other in Budapest), he later had to "clarify" that it was his father's grandmother who was killed, and explained—in terms many Jews, unfortunately, fully endorse—why Poles were responsible for her death: "My father's grandmother, Hermione, was arrested by the Germans in Serbia. She was sent to Auschwitz, where she was murdered in the gas chambers. Why did she make that long journey to her death? Why were most of the camps set up in Poland? The Germans knew that at least some of the local population would cooperate. ... The new law that the Polish government is trying to pass denies all this. So that we'll know that 'fake news' has

## Gideon Meir, Israeli diplomat:

The Germans wouldn't have built the camps in Poland without the corporation [sic] of the polish [sic] people.<sup>2796</sup>

Regrettably, such perverse and odious views are still being disseminated by Israeli officials (and others) even though they have been discredited long ago by leading

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reached Poland, they spun the law with a false headline. 'There is no such thing,' they said, 'as Polish extermination camps. The camps were German.' It's an absurd statement. No one ever says the death camps were built by the Poles. The Germans built them. But they built them on Polish land, with Polish help, in the face of Polish silence. ...Three million Polish Jews were murdered (and another three million Jews from other countries). The Germans managed the extermination and bear ultimate responsibility but they could not have done it alone. ... We have not forgotten and not forgiven. ... We will not accept the re-writing of history. We will not accept the attempt to avoid responsibility." See Yair Lapid, "The Truth about Poland and the Holocaust," *The Times of Israel* (blog), January 29, 2018. The purpose of Poland's so-called anti-defamation law was not to whitewash Polish history or to shut down debate, as is often alleged. The law is directed specifically at the following false claims: blaming Poland and the Poles as a nation for Nazi German war crimes and crimes against humanity such as death camps and the Holocaust, *contrary to the facts*. That is the plain meaning of the law. The law does not prevent anyone from writing or speaking about the actions of individual Poles or even specific groups of Poles during the Holocaust. The opinion editor of the Jewish American journal *Forward*, made that very point in response to Ronen Bergman's audacious attack on Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, whom he called "a liar." "The thing is, Bergman had not understood the law correctly," Batya Ungar-Sargon stated. "Bergman may discuss the individual Poles and even the group of Poles who betrayed his family with impunity." See Batya Ungar-Sargon, "What Israel and Poland Are Really Fighting Over," *Forward* [New York] February 27, 2018.

Unfortunately, as is often the case, moderate voices were few and far between. Commenting on the avalanche of rancorous comments this law generated, Seth J. Frantzman, wrote: "Over the last few days there has been an extreme outpouring of hatred in Israel and on social media against Poland over a law about the Holocaust; what's strange is that the comments aren't against the law, just hatred and blame for Poland and Poles. And what's even more strange is the constant claim that the death camps were built in Poland are somehow the fault of Poland rather than the German Nazi occupying regime. It's all the more surprising because in other countries in the 1940s there were active collaborationist governments such as Vichy in France or Ustache [Ustashe] in Croatia. Yet anger and hatred is reserved for Poland, not just about the law; but deep antipathy. Is this because of bad education about the Shoah? Or is it about something deeper; anger that has sat quietly and is bursting forth with the law as a symbol of a larger issue? I find it difficult to believe if there was a similar law in Croatia or Hungary or elsewhere that there would be the same level of anger." See Seth J. Frantzman, "Setting History Straight: Poland Resisted Nazis," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 29, 2018.

<sup>2796</sup> "Skandaliczne i kłamliwe słowa b. ambasadora Izraela we Włoszech," November 25, 2019, wPolityce.pl, Internet: <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/474503-byly-ambasador-izraela-klamie-ws-polakow>.

Holocaust historians such as Yisael Gutman and Lucy Dawidowicz. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance has condemned, as Holocaust distortion, “attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups.”<sup>2797</sup>

Jewish leaders have been equally strident in condemning the Poles, as have prominent Jewish activists at every level.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith (who was rescued by his Polish Catholic nanny):

European governments under German domination ... Poland ... betrayed or abandoned their Jewish populations ... the Polish government failed to halt the methodical liquidation of its Jewish population.<sup>2798</sup>

Jack Rosen, President of the American Jewish Congress:

... without the complicity, whether direct or indirect, of ordinary Poles, the Nazi extermination of three million Polish Jews would not have been possible. The term “Polish death camps” may not be technically correct, but the vast majority of Nazi death camps in Europe were built on Polish soil.<sup>2799</sup>

Steve Cohen, U.S. Democratic Congressman:

It’s sad to see that Members of Congress have gotten to this low level that they don’t understand history, they don’t understand the Holocaust. You know, it was not just Nazi Germany. It was Poland where some of this more severe, serious concentration camps were Auschwitz and Birkenau.<sup>2800</sup>

Dr. David Rakowski of Toronto, member of The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Senate:

The Poles’ complicity in the mass murders of European Jewry easily allowed the Nazis to operate concentration and death camps because of the rampant anti-Semitism of the majority of the Polish population at the time.<sup>2801</sup>

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<sup>2797</sup> 2013 Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Internet: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-holocaust-denial-and-distortion>.

<sup>2798</sup> Abraham Foxman, “Reflections,” in Carol Rittner and Leo Goldberger, eds., *Rescue of the Danish Jewry: A Primer* (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, 1993).

<sup>2799</sup> Jack Rosen, “I Take Poland’s Holocaust Revisionism Personally,” *Haaretz*, February 25, 2018.

<sup>2800</sup> Interviewed by Anderson Cooper, CNN, May 24, 2021, Internet: <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/2105/24/acd.01.html>.

<sup>2801</sup> Dr. David Rakowski, letter, “Let’s not repeat the past,” *National Post* [Toronto], November 16, 2019.



Isaac Glick, Thornhill, Ontario, former Lieutenant-Colonel in the Israeli Defence Force:

Although it is generally believed that Germans, as a nation, were responsible for the Holocaust, it is very important to state that people in Germany were more resistant to Jewish repression than those in the neighbouring occupied countries, including Poland ... The reason Germans established ghettos and concentration camps in these countries was because the local populations not only didn't object, they were often seen as righteous. The anti-Semitism in Poland actually rivalled that in Germany.<sup>2802</sup>

Freda Wineman, a French Jew, was arrested by French policemen and sent to the Drancy internment camp near Paris, which was run by the French police. French policemen loaded her and her family onto a train operated by French railroad workers and deported them to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Wineman has taken to teaching impressionable students and the public in the United Kingdom about Polish "complicity" in the Holocaust, even though she never encountered a Polish collaborator—only many French ones:

When the Nazis invaded, Poland had the largest Jewish population in Europe, and yet they were rounded up so quickly into the ghettos within a short frame of time that there must have been some complicity with the local Polish population, and only very few actually stood up and tried to help Jews they had lived alongside for a long time. They were almost pleased to be able to take over their homes and things that the Jews had to leave behind.<sup>2803</sup>

Authors and journalists have also weighed in. Elie Wiesel, author and Nobel Prize winner, accused Poles who helped Jews of being mercenaries at best:

We had so many enemies! ... the Poles betrayed them. True, here and there a "good" citizen was found whose cooperation could be bought with Jewish money. But how many good-hearted, upright Poles were to be found at the time in Poland? Very few.<sup>2804</sup>

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<sup>2802</sup> "The Poles Are Not Without Blame," Letter to the Editor, *National Post* [Toronto], December 30, 2011.

<sup>2803</sup> Tamara Zieve, "What Do Holocaust Survivors Think of 'Polish Death Camps'?", *The Jerusalem Post*, February 3, 2018. Unfortunately, there are many such pronouncements by Jews involved in Holocaust education and the March of the Living, a program that has come under severe criticism repeatedly since the 1990s. The dark side of the March of the Living was exposed by Israeli author Yishai Sarid through his novel's narrator: "They didn't hate the Germans, the kids in my groups; not at all, not even close. The murderers barely registered in the narrative they created for themselves. They sang sad songs, wrapped themselves in flags, and said prayers for the ascent of the souls of the victims, as if their death had been a divine decree, but never pointed an accusing finger at the perpetrators. They hated the Polish much more. When we walked around the streets in cities and villages, whenever we met the local population, they would mutter words of hatred at them, about the pogroms they had committed, their collaboration, their anti-Semitism." See Yishai Sarid, *The Memory Monster* (New York: Restless Books, 2020), 32. Notwithstanding, Poland's recent suggestion to provide input into the content of this program has met with hostility.

<sup>2804</sup> Introduction to Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall*, 3–4.

Mark S. Smith, American author and journalist:

It was difficult to fight the rising hatred I suddenly felt for these peasants. My sense of justice wanted to reject such feelings, because it dishonoured those Poles who found ways to resist the Nazi tyranny and assist the persecuted—but the courageous were too few, and Poland's guilt is that of a nation that could have saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, in spite of the Germans, but did not.<sup>2805</sup>

Many historians and academics joined in with equally outrageous accusations.

Max I. Dimont, American historian:

Poland's action was the most shameful. Without a protest she handed over 2,800,000 Jews to the Germans.<sup>2806</sup>

Norman F. Cantor, American historian:

The complicity of the ... Poles ... was very great, and indisputable. Without their help the Germans would logistically not have been able to annihilate as many as six million Jews ...

The same indictment pertains to the Catholic Church in Poland, which was thoroughly inhibited by its centuries-long hostility to the Jews from doing anything significant to oppose the Nazi death camps. Polish Catholics worked in the concentration camps and for the death squads by the thousands. The Church hierarchy never advised them not to accept such employment. Poland was turned into the most savage killing field in modern history while the Church hierarchy looked on quietly.<sup>2807</sup>

David I. Kertzer, an American historian, asks rhetorically:

... could there be any link between the efficiency of the slaughter of millions of Jews in Poland and the deep anti-Semitism inculcated in the Catholic population there?<sup>2808</sup>

Howard L. Adelson, professor of history at the City University of New York:

It was not by chance that the inhuman Nazi murderers chose Poland as the charnel house for European Jewry. With forethought they recognized that within Poland the neighbors of the Jews would assist in the slaughter. ... Even the Home Army, the Armja Krajowa [sic], which was supposedly struggling against the Nazis, pursued the slaughter of the Jews with greater vigor than the war against the German conquerors. The local peasantry displayed an atavistic savagery that is unequalled in the annals of human history. Jews died while their neighbors exulted in their suffering.<sup>2809</sup>

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<sup>2805</sup> Mark S. Smith, "Escape from Treblinka," *The Herald* [Scotland], May 31, 2010.

<sup>2806</sup> Max I. Dimont, *Jews, God and History* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 387.

<sup>2807</sup> Norman F. Cantor, *The Sacred Chain: The History of the Jews* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 345, 347.

<sup>2808</sup> David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Knopf, 2001), 10.

<sup>2809</sup> Introduction to Samuel Gruber, as told to Gertrude Hirschler, *I Chose Life*, 6.

## Omer Bartov, Israeli-American historian:

... the very term “bystander” is largely meaningless. The majority of the non-Jewish population profited from the genocide and either directly or indirectly collaborated with the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Even if at times the non-Jews also resisted the occupation for their own reasons, only a minority was involved in rescue and feared the vengeance of the majority. In this sense no one was passive or indifferent.<sup>2810</sup>

## Jan Grabowski, Canadian historian:

But no one, in these circumstances, could remain a neutral, emotionally detached witness, often described by historians as a “bystander to the Holocaust.” ... each rural inhabitant—each man, woman, and child [sic]—had a role to play in this horrible theatre of death.<sup>2811</sup>

The motivations of rescuers varied from case to case. If the helpers, however, acted out of compassion, they broke a certain consensus in their own community. Within this consensus there was no place for helping Jews.<sup>2812</sup>

## Barbara Engelking, sociologist and director of Polish Center for Holocaust Research:

Death ... for Poles was merely a biological event, something quite natural—one death was just like any other. But for Jews it was a tragedy, a dramatic experience, metaphysics, a meeting with the highest. It is difficult to imagine how they experienced this death.<sup>2813</sup>

## Yoram Lubling, Israeli professor of philosophy:

Personally, it was only after I met the Polish people that I could finally understand how the Holocaust happened. It is not the case, as some argued, that it was the largest concentration of Jews that motivated the Nazis to build their extermination camp in Poland. Rather, the Germans constructed all their major extermination camps in Poland because they understood the deep and religiously motivated hatred that the Polish masses held against their Jewish neighbors; neither were the death-camps built in Poland for the purpose of exterminating the Polish nation, as Polish historians want us to believe.<sup>2814</sup>

<sup>2810</sup> Omer Bartov, “Much Forgotten, Little Learned,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2007): 267–87, at p. 276.

<sup>2811</sup> Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 83.

<sup>2812</sup> Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, 166.

<sup>2813</sup> “Kropka nad i,” TVN24, February 9, 2011: “Ta śmierć żydowska wynikała z całkowitej niemożności porozumienia. Dla Polaków to była po prostu kwestia biologiczna, naturalna—śmierć jak śmierć, a dla Żydów to była tragedia, to było dramatyczne doświadczenie, to była metafizyka, to było spotkanie z najwyższym, czy nie wiem, w jaki sposób oni przeżywali tą śmierć.” Engelking’s words are eerily reminiscent of Talmudic teachings—still voiced by some today—that the soul of a Gentile (goy) is inferior to that of a Jew. Eli Ben Dahan, an Orthodox rabbi and then Deputy Religious Services Minister, stated in an interview published in *Maariv*, a leading Israeli Hebrew-language daily newspaper, in December 2013, that “a Jew always has a much higher soul than a non-Jew.” See “The Gospel According to Eli Ben Dahan,” Editorial, *Haaretz*, December 30, 2013.

<sup>2814</sup> Yoram Lubling, *Twice-Dead: Moshe Y. Lubling, the Ethics of Memory, and the Treblinka Revolt* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 107.

Adding a “religious” dimension, rabbis condemned Poles and “Nazis” (not Germans) in the breath.

Yisrael Meir Lau, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel (1993–2003), who survived the war in hiding:

The Gentiles ... are interested in one thing only: to see the Jews devastated. ... Take such a big country as Poland before World War II. The Jews made it fruitful and turned it into a blooming country, with a flourishing economy, industry and agriculture. And look at it now, after WWII, after 3.5 million Jews abandoned her. It is an island of destruction, a country failing in all areas, in its economy, its industry, and socially as well. Nevertheless, a great many Poles cooperated with the Nazis in the annihilation, G-d forbid, of the Jewish people. The six largest extermination camps were located on Polish territory. They knew that with the loss of the Jews they would suffer dearly. But it did not deter them, for this is the nature of anti-Semitism—to destroy the Jewish nation, instead of benefiting from them.<sup>2815</sup>

Reb Moshe Shonfeld, prominent Hassidic rabbi:

The Jews in Poland had an expression: if a Pole meets me on the wayside and doesn't kill me, it is only from laziness.

The Poles ... were fanatical Catholics, and all had unsatiable appetites for Jewish blood. Those cruel pythons, the Polish clergy, instigated—after the fall of the Nazis—pogroms of those Jews who'd miraculously survived.<sup>2816</sup>

Rabbi Zev K. Nelson, American rabbi:

The Poles were ready and willing to join the Nazis in the annihilation of three million Jews in their land.<sup>2817</sup>

Rabbi Sholom Klass, co-founder, publisher and editor of Brooklyn The Jewish Press:

Three million Polish Jews died under the hands of the Nazis with the active or silent help of many Poles, including Catholic priests.<sup>2818</sup>

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<sup>2815</sup> An adaptation of a Dvar Torah on Arutz 7. Cited in *The Jewish Press*, August 13, 1993. Elsewhere, Rabbi Lau explains why Poland, the land of the death camps, and the Poles are a ‘cursed’ nation: “There are people who are suitable for a particular country and not for another, and there are lands than can absorb one type of people and not another. A case in point is the Land of Israel. ... It is suitable for the Jewish People. ... This proves there is a bond between the people and the land—to each land its nation. ... The land flourishes only when we dwell here.” Adapted from a Dvar Torah on Arutz 7, cited in *The Jewish Press*, December 22, 1995.

<sup>2816</sup> Shonfeld, *The Holocaust Victims Accuse*, 13, 16.

<sup>2817</sup> Shonfeld, *The Holocaust Victims Accuse*, 13, 16.

<sup>2818</sup> *Jewish Advocate* [Boston], November 4, 1982.

Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka of Ottawa, March of the Living chaperone and chair of the interreligious affairs committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress:

How can one go to Poland, to the country so steeped in anti-Semitism that it eagerly cooperated with the Nazis in the cold-blooded murder of the Jews?<sup>2819</sup>

Rabbi Menachem Levine of San Jose, California, the grandson of Holocaust survivors:

Yad Vashem makes it clear that it was Poles who made the Nazi Holocaust in Poland possible. Without the cooperation of the local citizenry, sometimes passively observing and many times enthusiastically supportive, a program of mass murder would have been impossible. ...

Nearly all of the death camps in occupied Europe were built in Poland. There were no crematoria or gas chambers in occupied France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark, Czechoslovakia or any other nation invaded by Nazi troops. Auschwitz, Birkenau, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka and others were built in Poland. Why?

The answer is that the Nazis knew that Poland had been anti-Semitic for centuries and the Germans were convinced that the Poles would not protest against the death camps for Jews on their soil. As history shows, they were correct ... Poland ... both allowed and assisted in the Holocaust.<sup>2820</sup>

Rabbi Zev Friedman, dean of Rambam Mesivta for Boys (Lawrence, New York) and Shalhevet High School for Girls (North Woodmere, New York):

Many [Jews] believe that the major killing camps were specifically located in Poland—because it was fertile ground for antisemitism, and it was thought that the murder of Jews would be readily accepted there.<sup>2821</sup>

Rabbi Joseph Polak, director of the Florence and Chafetz Hillel House at Boston University:

While Poland boasts the largest number of righteous Gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust, it has still not fully embraced the moral challenge of why it did so little to save so many others.<sup>2822</sup>

Rabbi Charles Grysman of Vaughan, Ontario, child of a Holocaust survivor:

True, there were indeed thousands of Righteous Gentiles ... But there were also many Poles who ... watched passively while Jews were disenfranchised, humiliated, abused and confined to

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<sup>2819</sup> Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, "Poles Apart," *The Canadian Jewish News* [Toronto], May 11, 1995.

<sup>2820</sup> Menachem Levine, "Why Poland's New Holocaust Law Is a Mockery," *Washington Times*, February 20, 2018.

<sup>2821</sup> Zev Friedman, "Why Would Any Jews Spend Money in Poland?," *The Algemeiner*, February 25, 2018.

<sup>2822</sup> Joseph Polak, "The Silence lifts on Poland's Jews," *The Boston Globe*, July 28, 2007.

ghettos or simply were able to turn their heads away as entire Jewish populations were deported from towns and villages to labour and death camps.<sup>2823</sup>

On the other hand ...

Rabbi Abraham D. Feffer of Toronto, Holocaust survivor from Drobin:

Yet many fortunate survivors from my own shtetl, remember well and with great fondness and admiration the help of the brave Christian farmers who lived in nearby villages where we worked on cold winter days. (In Poland, hiding a Jew, or feeding him was punishable by death, usually hanging). We remember how these men and women, at great peril, opened their poor "chatkis" [cottages] to share with us warm soup, bread and potatoes.<sup>2824</sup>

Rabbi Icchok Wolgelernter, a survivor from Działoszyce:

The simple peasant did not feel hatred toward us—on the contrary, he always willingly contacted a Jew and trusted him in every matter. ... The peasants sympathized with us in our suffering and misfortune. They demonstrated this by giving us bread and water. To be sure they were afraid to take us into their homes, because in every village notices were put up warning that anyone who takes in a Jew or gives him a piece of bread will pay for it with his life. Despite this, when things quietened down a little, they allowed us to sleep in their barns, and even took women and children into their homes.<sup>2825</sup>

Cantor Matus Radzivilover, a survivor from Warsaw:

I never had the tendency to be a nationalist. I am positively devoted to my Jewish brethren and I am proud of my heritage, but I also loved the country of my birth, Poland. I loved my neighbors, the Poles I grew up with and lived with in love and peace. I never accused them of failing to help us because they were in great danger themselves. Hundreds of thousands of them were killed or deported to concentration camps. They paid their price under Nazism, too. Hitler's intentions were to exterminate the Poles after he was done with the Jews.<sup>2826</sup>

David Klin, member of the Jewish underground in Warsaw and liaison officer between the Polish Home Army and Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews, addressing a meeting of former Israeli servicemen:

"As a whole, the Polish Nation acted heroically in their attitude to the Jews." Immediately he was shouted down that this was not true.

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<sup>2823</sup> Rabbi Charles Grysman, "Not All Poles Were Innocent," *National Post* [Toronto], May 16, 2008.

<sup>2824</sup> Rabbi Abraham D. Feffer, *My Shtetl Drobin: A Saga of a Survivor* (Toronto: n.p., 1990), 22.

<sup>2825</sup> Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień...*, 52–53, based on Rabin Icchok Wolgelernter, *Dziennik pisany w ukryciu*, JHI, record group 302, no. 46.

<sup>2826</sup> Matus Radzivilover, *Now or Never: A Time For Survival* (New York: Frederick Fell, 1979), 82.



"I know it is true because I was there," he replied. "If the situation was reversed, how many of you would hide a Pole and so risk your life?" asked David Klin. Sudden silence was the answer. "Well! You see for yourselves!" he said and ended his address.<sup>2827</sup>

Hanna Szper Cohen, a native of Lublin, who was rescued by unknown Poles on several occasions:

To this day I say—since Jews have bad feelings about Poles—I assert that we who survived, a small percentage though it be, none of us would have survived if in some moment he did not get help, usually without ulterior motives, from some Pole. It was impossible to survive otherwise.<sup>2828</sup>

Nika Kohn Fleissig, a native of Wieliczka near Kraków, who was saved by a number of Polish Christians:

I learned that one cannot generalize: I was once endangered by a nasty Jewish woman, who sent a policeman to arrest me to free herself. I met a number of Christians who saved my life when they could have turned away. So there were good people and bad ones. In tough times, one discovers the truth about people, and it has nothing to do with religion.<sup>2829</sup>

Szymon Datner, former director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and Holocaust survivor:

The Second World War is a period that I have been dealing with for several decades, and I obstinately maintain that one must be very careful in passing judgment. ...

... the Holocaust was such a specific, though unimaginable, crime. But it cannot be charged against the Poles. It was German work and it was carried out by German hands. The Polish police were employed in a very marginal way, in what I would call keeping order. I must state with all decisiveness that more than 90% of that terrifying, murderous work was carried out by the Germans, with no Polish participation whatsoever. ...

... Every form of aid was forbidden under pain of death for oneself and one's whole family. To us today the choice seems altogether clear. And yet I was shocked not long ago by a girl I know, a Jew. She is a person my age, someone I value highly for her honesty and courage. And she told me, "I am not at all sure I would give a bowl of food to a Pole if it could mean death for me and my daughter."

It was a truly satanic moral trial that Poles were subjected to. I do not know if anyone else would have emerged victorious from it. ...

On the other hand, to speak concretely of the attitude of Poles toward Jews: the majority of Poles behaved passively, but that can be explained by the terror and also by the fact that Poles, too, were being systematically murdered on a mass scale by the Germans.<sup>2830</sup>

<sup>2827</sup> Cited in Chciuk, *Saving Jews in War-Torn Poland, 1939–1945*, 18.

<sup>2828</sup> Julian Cohen, *Escape from Belzec: Saved By a Pair of Heels*, Internet: <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ar/belzec/belzecescape.html>.

<sup>2829</sup> Alicia Fleissig Magal, *From Miracle to Miracle: A Story of Survival* (Parker, Colorado: Outskirts Press, 2011), 93.

<sup>2830</sup> Interview with Szymon Datner in Niezabitowska, *Remnants*, 247–49.

Raul Hilberg, preeminent Holocaust historian:

Overall, the general Polish population is not mentioned in German documents in respect of its participation as harassing Jews and helping the Germans. To the contrary; many German reports indicate that Poles felt anxiety for their own safety after the Jews disappeared. There are some German documents that mention some Poles, notably Polish police, railroad-workers and low-level employees in German offices but there was no Polish central authority collaborating with the Germans, as we find in e.g. Norway and its Quisling government or France and its Vichy regime. This was never the case in Poland.

As was the case in many European countries, there were also Polish individuals that played extortion games with Jews, but then there were also Poles that helped Jews under risk of facing death penalty from the German occupants. Both categories were relatively small in comparison to the general population, albeit one must take into consideration that most survivors made it through the war by Polish help and protection. A friend of mine, Bronia Klebanski, who is Jewish but lived on the "Aryan" side of society and was an active member of the Jewish underground in the Bialystok [Białystok] area, once told me a story of how she at a time took the train during the war, and was suddenly pointed out by a little girl who yelled "Jew!".

All the Polish passengers sat quietly, and nobody said anything to instigate further interest. This account is a small example of the general practice of non-collaboration among the Poles during the war.

... In Ukraine, contrary to Poland, where the Germans built secluded death camps, Jews were often massacred on the spot. The Nazi death camps in occupied Poland such as Treblinka, Belzec [Bełżec], Sobibor [Sobibór] and Chełmno [Chełmno] were all hidden to the public.<sup>2831</sup>

Israel Gutman, former chief historian at Yad Vashem, editor-in-chief of *The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Warsaw ghetto fighter, and prisoner of Auschwitz:

This feeling of identification of Poles from all social spheres and their anti-German solidarity is a previously unheard of historical achievement and one of Europe's greatest under Nazi occupation. I should like to make two things clear here. First, all accusations against the Poles that they were responsible for what is referred to as the "Final Solution" are not even worth mentioning. Secondly, there is no validity at all in the contention that ... Polish attitudes were the reason for the siting of the death camps in Poland.

Poland was a completely occupied country. There was a difference in the kind of "occupation" countries underwent in Europe. Each country experienced a different occupation and almost all had a certain amount of autonomy, limited and defined in various ways. This autonomy did not exist in Poland. No one asked the Poles how one should treat the Jews.<sup>2832</sup>

<sup>2831</sup> Interview with Professor Raul Hilberg, June 20, 2005, Internet: [http://www.maxveritas.com/pb/wp\\_1add70b0.html?0.611384753320024](http://www.maxveritas.com/pb/wp_1add70b0.html?0.611384753320024).

<sup>2832</sup> *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (1987): 341. Other well-informed historians have also argued compellingly that the decisive factor in staging the Holocaust in occupied Poland was not native attitudes, but total subjugation of the terrorized population. The Germans had no respect for Polish attitudes, as evidenced by their policy of liquidating Poles. There was nowhere and to no one to object; moreover, any objection would have been counterproductive. As James Hawes pointed out in *The Shortest History of Germany* (London: Old Street Publishing, 2017): "The SS needed somewhere no turbulent priests would interfere, where their work could be kept really secret, where European civilisation had already ceased to exist. By late 1941, with Poland and swathes of western Russia in their hands, they had just the place. When, on 20 January 1942, senior Nazi officialdom gathered to coordinate strategies for the eradication of Europe's Jews (the so-called

Only in Poland did the Germans impose such draconian punishments (i.e., death) for helping Jews. Yet despite that, Poles constitute the largest number of “Righteous.” To a great extent, it is the “Righteous” who have changed the Israelis’ perception of Poland. That is what influenced me. I too, at first, accepted these negative stereotypes as truth. Collaborators, blackmailers, neighbours who wouldn’t help. That’s what was said in all articles, in books. But when Yad Vashem published its Encyclopedia of the Righteous—I was the editor—I was forced to examine this again through the stories told by Jews who were saved. I don’t change my opinions readily, but these testimonies brought about a diametrical change in opinion. ... Gradually, they (i.e., Israelis) are learning about this. It enables them to see Poles as real people, made of flesh and blood. The same as Jews. In the archives of Yad Vashem I found testimonies of such deeds, deeds that I myself would not be able to do. And that disturbs my peace. It was a trial, a test of one’s humanity. Would we pass this test if placed in that situation? All of us—both Jews and Poles—we are only human. We are not saints. Yes, there were blackmailers in Poland. There were also heroes. People like (Irena) Sendlerowa, of whom you may be very proud.<sup>2833</sup>

Sometimes I hear Jews accusing the Poles of deliberately not helping them even though they could have done so. Such observations are expressions of pain, which eclipse a sensible attitude. More could certainly have been done to save Jews, but the Poles in the conditions of the occupation could not fundamentally have changed the fate of the Jews. ... I shall permit myself to say more—there is no moral imperative which demands that a normal mortal should risk his life and that of his family to save his neighbour. Are we capable of imagining the agony of fear of an individual, a family who selflessly and voluntarily, only due to an inner human impulse, bring into their home someone threatened with death? ... The Poles should be proud that they had so many just lights, of whom Ringelblum spoke, who are the real heroes of the deluge. And we can never do enough to thank these rare people.<sup>2834</sup>

The latter selection of moderate comments pales in comparison with the former, of which only a small number is given here to illustrate a massive outpouring that shows no sign of abatement.

The following is a characteristic excerpt from a Jewish memorial book that, unfortunately, informs much of Jewish historiography on Polish-Jewish relations, demonizing Poles and turning them into the primary target of a broad-based assault on Christianity and, in particular, the Catholic Church.

The anti-Semitic propaganda, which was being conducted in Poland before the outbreak of the Second World War, trained the hearts and prepared the ground for the deeds so horrifying in their cruelty and ruthlessness during the war. When Hitler’s minions invaded Poland they found Poles who already agreed with them, for regarding the destruction of the Jews there were Poles

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Endlösung, or Final Solution) at the Wannsee Conference, the SS No. 2 Reinhard Heydrich spoke pointedly of ‘our new prospects in the East.’ In that conquered and shattered wasteland, his words implied, no one was going to object.”

<sup>2833</sup> “Poles Can Be Very Proud of Sendlerowa,” Israel Gutman interviewed by Piotr Zychowicz, *Rzeczpospolita* [Warsaw], May 13, 2008.

<sup>2834</sup> Contribution to the discussion “Ethical Problems of the Holocaust in Poland: Discussion Held at the International Conference on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry in Jerusalem on Monday 1 February 1988,” reproduced in Antony Polonsky, ed., *My Brother’s Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust* (London and New York: Routledge, in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1990), 203–4.

who were of one mind with the Nazis. The Poles were well trained by the fifth column, Hitler's agents, who spread hatred of the Jews. The Nazis found in the Poles not opponents, but loyal assistants in the act of destruction. All circles of Poles participated in this project of mass-murder, from the laborer to the priest. ...

Due to this attitude of the Poles regarding the Jews, can it be surprising that Poland was chosen by the Devil and his demons of destruction to be the arena for the destruction of European Jewry. The ground here had been worked and prepared enough for the task. The Nazi monster was certain that its satanic enterprise would have a one hundred percent success rate here. ...

This is the Christian ethic, which aspired to be the most exalted ethic for all of humanity. With regard to the Jews, Christianity—of which the Poles were considered its most devoted practitioners—was revealed in all of its despicableness and lowliness. Christianity did not purify their souls: they remained wild, blood thirsty, just as they had been a thousand years before when they were still sunk in the ignorance of paganism.<sup>2835</sup> The moral and humane imperative of our prophets: "My refugees shall live among you, hide the refugees and do not reveal the wanderer!" [Isaiah 16/3]—such an imperative was strange and foreign to our Polish neighbors.<sup>2836</sup>

Unfortunately, the poisonous pathology of anti-polonism runs deep and has infected "artistic" pursuits. In a spiteful parody of a "Passion play" titled "Rebbe," Israeli authors have, contrary to the documented historical record, recast Polish priests as the instigators of the death of a rabbi—a Jesus figure—in the Warsaw ghetto.

At this point the invasion of Poland by the Nazis begins and a series of short scenes with ominous and sad music depict the occupation of the city and the sealing off of the Jewish Quarter which now becomes the Warsaw Ghetto. Now the Nazis lock the Jewish Quarter and force the Czerniakow character to come to them and cut a deal to get the key, which he does by appointing Yehudah as the head of the Jewish police who will co-operate with the Polish police and the German occupation authorities.

The last maamar (Chassidic version of Last Supper Yn 13-17 OJBC) of Rebbe (who is now wearing a Star of David armband, as are the rest of Rebbe's talmidim) comes as a reply to Shimon the Zealot. Shimon the Zealot speaks in the upper room to all the Rebbe's talmidim (disciples) in an impassioned manner about the boxcars leading to a death camp and the need for underground resistance fighters. When the other Shimon (Kefa or Peter) vows his part in protecting the Rebbe (Yn 13:37 OJBC), Rebbe goes to the window and looks out. With a revelatory flutter-cut Rebbe sees the tarnegol (rooster) in the wooden crate cage in the back of the passing truck, and Rebbe announces prophetically the coming betrayal. Yehudah, wearing his Chassidic garb, departs into the Warsaw night.

In the next scene Shimon Kefa and Rebbe pass the security point where Yehudah is able to flag them through, checking their passes, which are "work permits" allowing them to leave the

<sup>2835</sup> Jewish historiography, for the most part, and indeed almost all Jews who write about contemporary Polish-Jewish relations, are tellingly silent on the earliest contacts between Jews (depicted as paragons of virtue and righteousness, consistently oppressed by evil Christians) and Poles (depicted as innately and endemically "despicable," "lowly," "wild," "bloodthirsty," and "ignorant"). As mentioned earlier, Jews first came to Poland in the 10th century as traders in—among other commodities, but primarily—Christian slaves, which certainly did not augur well for mutual relations between Poles and Jews.

<sup>2836</sup> "Relations Between the Poles and the Jews," in Pinchas Cytron, ed., *Sefer Kielce: The History of the Community of Kielce. From Its Foundation To Its Destruction* (Tel Aviv: Organization of Immigrants from Kielce in Israel, 1957), 47 ff., translation of *Sefer Kielce: Toldot Kehilat Kielce: Miyom Hivsuduh V'ad Churbanah*.

Jewish Ghetto. Yehudah gives Rebbe a kiss on the cheek. The Polish police at the checkpoint see this and look at each other knowingly. Shimon Kefa accompanies Rebbe to a Cathedral and waits outside while Rebbe goes up to the door to knock.

Inside the Cathedral, a Catholic S.S. officer is leaving the confessional booth where he has been confessing to Father Kayafenski. Father Nikodimski follows him out and ushers Rebbe into the vestibule of the Roman Catholic church to have a meeting with Father Kayafenski. Since it is Pesach season, Father Nikodimski hopes that the senior priest will use his ecumenical influence with a Catholic S.S. officer to have the food rations increased for the Jewish people in the Ghetto. Father Nikodimski leaves Rebbe alone in the vestibule with Father Kayafenski.

In this scene between Rebbe and Father Kayafenski, Rebbe is invited to enter the sanctuary, but he refuses because of the tzelamim (idols, images, any physical object or statue worshiped as deity). The scene that unfolds is similar in some respects to the Grand Inquisitor scene in the Brothers Karamazov. Finally, Father Kayafenski becomes angry and exits the vestibule, going outside through the front door. Rebbe begins to tear down the tzelamim, using a tall white metal candelabrum to shatter the images including that of a San Gennaro statue with the money fastened all over it). Then the Catholic S.S. Officer and Father Kayafenski burst into the sanctuary with other soldiers and police and Rebbe is bound and taken out of the Catholic church.

On the steps outside a Nazi soldier seizes Shimon Kefa, shouting, "You were with him!" Shimon Kefa curses Rebbe, and just then a truck goes by with a tarnegol (rooster) in the wooden crate cage in the back of the passing truck. Then Kefa stares at Rebbe in shock and remorse.

At the railroad terminal, in front of several empty boxcars, the Nazi soldiers cut Rebbe's payos with their bayonets and beat him up, shouting, "You killed our G-d, we kill you." They force Rebbe to put on a striped Holocaust death camp prison uniform, then take him to the top of a gallows, then pierce his wrists and feet with their bayonets and put him on a gallows with two other Jews in stripped Holocaust death camp prison uniforms where they leave him hanging in the middle. As a shot of Warsaw reveals the horrific evil going on throughout the city, the body of Rebbe is tossed in the boxcar with the other two Jews. We see the boxcar slowly going into the dusk of the approaching night toward the death camps.

Then, in their death camp uniforms, the talmidim (minus Yehudah as in Yn chp 21 OJBC) awaken in a boat near the shore in Lake Galilee to find themselves amazingly no longer in the Polish ghetto but now in modern Eretz Yisroel (previewed in the wedding vision earlier). The talmidim have a sense of the presence of the Moshiach. As they see Rebbe in his kaftan with his Star of David armband, standing on the seashore, they follow his instructions and throw out their net. The fish we saw at the beginning are seen again, symbolizing the world-wide fishing expedition (fishing for lost unredeemed men) of Moshiach's Kehillah. For the camera pulls up from the fish in the giant net in an aerial shot which becomes a satellite shot of Israel and then a space station shot of the whole world as the music swells.<sup>2837</sup>

The black legend (demonization) of Poles and the Polish Catholic clergy has also made its way into American mainstream television.

Aired on the NBC television network in November 2001, the war drama miniseries "Uprising"—directed and written by Jon Avnet (co-authored by Paul Brickman, with Michael Berenbaum as historical consultant)—is bursting with anti-Polish content. A particularly disturbing scene shows a mass, with blasphemous Catholic religious imagery in the background, at Warsaw's cathedral during the 1943 ghetto uprising. While the ghetto was burning, smoke came in through the church window during Easter services, and the only visible concern expressed was to close the window. (This even though stained windows did not open in historic churches.)

<sup>2837</sup> "Rebbe," Artists For Israel International (2002), Internet: <https://afii.org/rebbe.txt>.

The message is crystal clear: Christian beliefs were allegedly responsible for what was happening, and hostile Polish Christians—led by their clergy—were completely indifferent to what was happening around them.

The November 14, 2007 episode of the sitcom “Back to You” contained a crude “joke” of the kind that is quite acceptable in Hollywood,<sup>2838</sup> the virtue-signalling capital of the world, provided it targets a suitably vulnerable constituency “Bowling is in your Polish blood, like kielbasa, and collaborating with the Nazis.”

Remarkably, Dana Bash, CNN’s chief political correspondent, saw fit to use the unfolding tragedy in Ukraine and the Poles’ generosity in welcoming millions of Ukrainian refugees, as an occasion to suggest that that response “is somehow a way to make up for some of [Poland’s alleged] wrongs.” Among those wrongs, she listed “concentration camps during World War II,” supposedly part and parcel of Poland’s historical legacy of anti-Semitism.<sup>2839</sup>

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<sup>2838</sup> Hollywood has played a detrimental role in casting Poland—unlike other wartime Allies—uniformly in a negative light in numerous movies produced in the 1930s and 1940s. See M. [Mieczysław] B. B. Biskupski, *Hollywood’s War with Poland, 1939–1945* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010); Mieczysław B. Biskupski, “Poland and the Poles in the Cinematic Portrayal of the Holocaust,” in Cherry and Orla-Bukowska, *Rethinking Poles and Jews*, 27–42. This tradition of contempt reemerged in the 1970s when the Holocaust began to be featured in films such as *QB VII*, *Holocaust*, *Sophie’s Choice*, *Schindler’s List*, *Uprising*, and others. In *Sophie’s Choice*, Zbigniew Biegański, a fictitious Fascist professor at Kraków’s Jagiellonian University, is credited with writing a pamphlet advocating the extermination of the Jews that allegedly inspired the Final Solution.

<sup>2839</sup> Interview with President Andrzej Duda, CNN, April 6, 2022, Internet: <https://transcripts.cnn.com/show/cnnt/date/2022-04-06/segment/01>.





# INDICES



## Personal Index

- Abrachamowicz** Janina I 412  
**Abrachamowicz** Teresa I 412  
**Abrahamsen** Samuel II 1019  
**Abram** Alvin I 420; II 673  
**Abramczuk** Olga I 202  
**Abramovich** Solomon II 963  
**Abramowicz** Adam, Rev. II 767–68  
**Abramowicz** Ignacy II 780  
**Abramowicz-Wolska** Merila (Maryla) II 779  
**Abramsky** Chimen I 347  
**Abzug-Malewska** Adela II 861  
**Abzug-Malewski** Stanisław II 861  
**Ackerman** Diane I 309  
**Adamczyk** Józef, Rev. II 675  
**Adamczyk** Paulina, Sister II 923  
**Adamczyk** Ryszard I 76  
**Adamek** Irena (Sister Małgorzata) I 425; II 990  
**Adamiak** Jerzy II 957  
**Adamiak**, Family II 1049  
**Adamowicz** Irena I 146, 185, 357, 397, 425; II 780  
**Adamowicz**, Mr. II 596–97  
**Adamowski** Jozef (Józef) I 417  
**Adamska** Imelda (Bogumiła), Sister II 899  
**Adamski** Jerzy II 733  
**Adamski** Józef, Rev. II 797  
**Adamski** Stanisław I 310  
**Adamski** Stanisław, Bishop I 41, 47  
**Adamski** A., Benefactor I 299  
**Adamski**, Family II 1065  
**Adela** (Osoba Ksenia), Sister of Schwarzwald Laura II 852  
**Adela**, Mrs. II 598  
**Adelson** Howard L. II 1129  
**Adenauer** Konrad I 58  
**Aderet** Ofer I 92, 424; II 937, 946, 1124–25  
**Adin** Jerzy (Podbielski Marian) see Adin Jurek  
**Adin** Jurek II 592, 598  
**Adler** Edmund II 1075  
**Adler** Eliyana R. I 117  
**Adler** Hermann I 20; II 772–73  
**Adler** Joseph I 74  
**Adolfina**, Sister I 516  
**Aftergut** Adela I 507  
**Agatstein** Dora II 862–63  
**Agatstein** Karolina II 862–63  
**Ainsztein** Reuben II 637, 1078–79  
**Ajzenfisz** Chana (Chaya) II 1045  
**Ajzner** Halina (Węgiełek Halina) I 162, 386–87  
**Ajzner** Hania (Strosberg, Zakościelna Anna) I 160–62, 387; II 947  
**Akrejć** Mieczysław, Rev. I 136; II 784, 996, 1002  
**Akselrad** Batia (Eisenstein) II 940–41  
**Akselrod** Ester II 845  
**Akselrod** Inka II 1110  
**Akselrod** Milek II 845  
**Akselrod** Zofia (Garfinkel) II 845  
**Albert** Jehoszua I 349  
**Albin**, Rev. I 381  
**Albury** William Randall I 363  
**Alef-Bolkowiak** Gustaw II 689–90, 1060  
**Alejski**, Family II 805  
**Aleksandrowicz** Erwin II 705  
**Aleksandrowicz** Irena I 401; II 705

- Alexievitch Svetlana I 28  
 Alkevitch-Semyanovska Sofia II 848  
 Allemang John II 939  
 Allen-Shore Lena II 797  
 Allerhand Aleksander I 483  
 Allerhand Anna (Szosana, Malinowska Maria) I 484  
 Allerhand Rozalia (Róża, Kasia) I 482–84  
 Allweiss Sol II 1066  
 Allweiss Zygie II 1066  
 Alma, Sister I 157  
 Alojzy (Aloisius), Father from the Bernardine Monastery I 527–29  
 Aloszko Paulina II 1081  
 Aloszko Wincenty II 1081  
 Aloszko, Family II 1081  
 Alperovitch Nahum I 441  
 Alt Helen II 944  
 Altbeker Cyprys Ruth I 151–54, 360; II 1111  
 Alter Celina (Magidsohn Kristine, Maliniak Krystyna) I 462  
 Alter Liliana I 416; II 1084  
 Alter Trus II 759  
 Altman Emmanuel I 508  
 Altman Hersch II 1078  
 Altman Ilya II 963  
 Altman Jakub II 677  
 Altman Janka II 1118  
 Altman Salomon (Salek) I 559  
 Altman Szaja (Szaje) I 508–9  
 Altscher Halinka (Altschuler) I 422  
 Altscher Mendel (Altschuler) I 422  
 Altscher Regina (Altschuler) I 422  
 Altschuler Mordechaj I 162  
 Alufi Perets II 727  
 Ałapin Piotr (Pietraszkiewicz) I 197  
 Amankowicz Dominik, Rev. II 1002  
 Ambroziak Mieczysław I 110–11  
 Amihai Mordechai II 608, 637  
 Amstisławski Helena I 531  
 Amstisławski Jan I 531  
 Amstisławski Janusz I 531  
 Anapolsky Nyuma II 1070  
 Anat Arie I 443  
 Anderman Max II 620  
 Anders Władysław II 958  
 Andersz Elżbieta II 575  
 Andrzejewski Tadeusz II 1093  
 Angielczyk Henryk II 854  
 Angielczyk Maria II 854  
 Angielczyk, Family II 854  
 Anielewicz Mordechai I 350; II 752  
 Anlen Bronisław I 361  
 Anmuth Lea (Podgórska Helena) I 510  
 Anna, Daughter of Byszewska Helena I 211, 411  
 Anna, Sister II 594  
 Antall József II 954–55  
 Antoniewicz, Mrs. II 902  
 Antoniou Giorgos II 1019  
 Antonowicz Jadwiga II 801  
 Antonowicz Lucyna II 801  
 Antonowicz Wincenty II 801  
 Antonowicz, Dr. I 369  
 Antonowicz, Family II 801, 1081  
 Anużienė Elena (Vilnonis) II 807  
 Anużis, Family II 807  
 Apelbaum Dwora II 708  
 Apelbaum Mojżesz I 86; II 707–8  
 Apelbaum Sender (Appelboim) II 646, 798  
 Apenszlak Jacob I 112  
 Apfelbaum Emil I 363  
 Applefield Janet (Gittel, Singer Gustawa, Antoszkiewicz Krystyna) I 501–3  
 Appleman-Jurman Alicia II 1077  
 Arad Yitzhak (Rudnicki) II 1020, 1118  
 Arbesfeld Hanka II 923  
 Achilles, Rev. II 921  
 Archutowski Józef, Rev. I 221  
 Archutowski Roman, Rev. I 20, 342, 385; II 999  
 Arcichowska Amelia I 370  
 Arcichowski Rudolf I 370  
 Arczyński Marek II 1118  
 Arensztajn Marek (Marek Andrzej) I 366  
 Arkin, Family II 783  
 Arluk Nelly (Aniela) II 669  
 Armstrong Diane (Danusia, Bogusławska) I 213; II 691–94, 1069  
 Armstrong Jennifer II 606

Arnold Janice II 1053  
 Aronson Franciszka II 1037  
 Aronson Moshe I 292  
 Aronson Stanisław II 1110  
 Asch Aliza (Ash, Asz Elżbieta, Elzbieta, Elizabeth) II 866–67  
 Asch Nachum (Asz) II 866  
 Asher Margalit II 664  
 Askenazy Janina II 899  
 Askenazy Szymon II 899  
 Aspler Minna II 579–80  
 Assadowska Jadwiga, Sister II 1012  
 Asz Ruth (Justa) II 866–67  
 Asz Shimon II 866–67  
 Aszkenazy-Engelhard Halina I 200–2  
 Auder Jan, Rev. II 697  
 Auerbach Fajwel (Feiweł) II 1080  
 Auerbach Salomea I 536  
 Auerbach Walter I 536  
 August, Dr. II 926, 1091  
 Augustynowicz, Family II 962  
 Aulich Leopold, Rev. I 451; II 998  
 Ausenberg Helena (Aussenberg) I 59  
 Avinum Sara II 921  
 Avatihi Aryeh II 650  
 Avnet Jon II 1138  
 Avrom-Leyzer Rubin II 768  
 Avruch Esther I 499–500  
 Avtchinsky Ben-Zion I 444  
 Axer Otto II 1049  
 Axer Paul II 1049  
 Ayre, Dr. II 873

**B.** Józef, Jewish Surgeon I 503  
 Baar Frederic II 1087  
 Babiarz Helena I 421  
 Babicka Flora (Emilia, Płńska) I 179  
 Babilińska Gertruda II 774–76  
 Babski Aleksander, Rev. I 345  
 Babsky Aleksander, Rev. see Babski Aleksander, Rev.  
 Babulevič Pavel II 745  
 Baca Aleksander II 708  
 Bacall-Zwirn Alina II 1112  
 Bachner Leokadja I 553

Bachrach Shlomo I 206; II 796  
 Baczowska Maria I 264  
 Bagiński Henryk, Rev. II 759  
 Bagiński Krzysztof II 770  
 Bagłaj Ewa II 1084  
 Bagon Felicja II 859  
 Bagrowski Anna I 492  
 Bagrowski Kazimierz I 492  
 Bajak, Family II 1047  
 Bajer Franciszek, Rev. II 618–19  
 Bajer Hipolit I 307  
 Bajer Władysław, Rev. I 116; II 875  
 Bajewska Aniela I 439, 440  
 Bajewski Jan Antonin, Rev. I 440  
 Bajko Józef, Rev. II 998  
 Bajko Stanisław, Rev. I 227–28, 491  
 Bak Jonasz (Jonas) I 431  
 Bak Mitia (Mita, Mitzia, Markowska) I 431–32  
 Bak Samuel I 431–34  
 Bak Sofie Lene I 149; II 1018, 1025  
 Bak Zalman (Samuel) II 778  
 Bak, Mrs. II 778  
 Bak, Family I 432  
 Bakalarz Nomberg Hena II 576  
 Bakalczuk-Felin Meilech I 443  
 Bakas, Police Commander II 671  
 Baker Mark Raphael I 556  
 Bakowska Irena II 1065  
 Baksztańska Frida (Wojutyńska Józefa) II 575  
 Baksztańska Wiera (Sierpiński, Wojutyńska Zofia Weronika) II 575  
 Baksztańska, Family II 575  
 Balanda Taida, Sister II 923  
 Balaryn Antoni I 511  
 Balberiszki Mendel see Balberyszski Mendel  
 Balberyszski Mendel II 779  
 Balcerak Wiesław II 1118  
 Baldinger Bronia (Bogusławska) II 691  
 Baldinger Henek (Bogusławski) II 69–93  
 Baldinger Maria (Salomea), Sister II 922  
 Balicki, Mr. II 817  
 Balint Lea (Herla Halinka) I 248–49  
 Balul Antoni II 820  
 Balul Franciszek II 820  
 Balul Wiktoria II 820



- Balul Wincenty II 820  
 Balul, Family II 820–21  
 Bałaban Jadwiga (Kowalczyk Jadwiga) I 405;  
     II 1005  
 Bałagowa Maria II 1121  
 Bałys Jan, Rev. I 543–44  
 Banach Michał, Rev. I 530  
 Banach, Dr. II 620  
 Banashchik, Family I 550  
 Banasik Marianna II 1033  
 Banaszak Stanisław, Rev. see Banaś  
     Stanisław, Rev.  
 Banaś Stanisław, Rev. I 491  
 Bancer Witold, Rev. II 801  
 Band Adela II 839  
 Band Natan II 839  
 Bandalowska Czesława (Czesława) II 822  
 Bander Jerzy I 271–72  
 Bandler Leon (Leizor) II 626–27  
 Bandt Shakhna II 784  
 Baniewicz Kazimierz, Rev. I 128–29  
 Bank Chaim I 80  
 Bankier David I 129; II 1075  
 Bant Izrael II 738  
 Bańkowska Aleksandra I 478  
 Bar Joachim, Rev. I 115  
 Bara Gregory I 206  
 Barabasz Jan, Rev. I 41  
 Barad Gedalia II 642  
 Baradyn Józef, Rev. II 998  
 Barakin Kalman I 132  
 Baran Czesław (Rev. Cezar), Rev. I 265–66  
 Baran Eliasz I 206–7  
 Baran Guta I 206–7  
 Baran Janina II 876  
 Baran Zeev I 206–7  
 Baran, Family I 206–7  
 Baranek Henryk II 1014  
 Baranek Katarzyna II 1014–15  
 Baranek Lucja II 1014–15  
 Baranek Necha (Murofska Zosha (Murawska  
     Zosia)) I 323–24  
 Baranek Sala I 323  
 Baranek Tadeusz II 1014  
 Baranek Wincenty II 1014–15  
 Baranek Zion I 323  
 Baraniak Antonina I 300  
 Baranowska Elżbieta I 452  
 Baranowska Konstantyna (Aniela), Sister  
     II 899  
 Baranowski Józef, Rev. II 675  
 Baranowski, Mr. II 711  
 Baranowski, Rev. II 949  
 Barański Kamil I 230, 556; II 1003–4  
 Barącz Maria II 612  
 Barcikowska Helena II 821  
 Barcikowski Józef (Józef) II 821  
 Barcikowski Tadeusz II 821  
 Barczak Janina I 299  
 Barda Franciszek, Bishop I 117–18  
 Barga Barbara I 236  
 Barga Maria I 236  
 Bari Shmuel II 608, 637  
 Barilan Yechiel Michael II 1016  
 Barkai Berkowicz Jonatan II 800  
 Barkai Berkowicz Zipora Feiga (Reznik)  
     II 800  
 Barkan, Family II 785  
 Bar-Lewaw Isaac I 354  
 Barnaś Julia (Sister Frydolina) I 404  
 Baron Lawrence II 970  
 Bar-On M. Y. I 68  
 Bar-Or Chaim II 652  
 Bar-Razon Matityahu II 790–91  
 Barrere Miriam I 399  
 Barska, Mrs. II 908  
 Barski Ludwik, Rev. II 675  
 Bart Jerzy II 861–62  
 Bart Zofia II 861–62  
 Bart, Family II 861–62  
 Bartel Oskar I 216–17  
 Bartel Zofia (Idzikowska Jadwiga) I 216–17  
 Bartkowiak Wiktor, Rev. I 383  
 Bartkowiak Władysława (Sister Euzebia)  
     I 816–19; II 990  
 Bartkowski Juliusz, Apostolic protonotary  
     I 39  
 Barto Zofia II 1094  
 Bartosiewicz Maria II 611  
 Bartosik Wojciech, Rev. I 115; II 683–85, 988

- Bartoszewski Władysław I 21–23, 59, 78, 107, 114, 116, 141, 155, 170, 178, 183, 194, 207–8, 212, 220, 230, 235, 241, 245, 254–55, 264, 299, 305, 318, 324, 327, 346, 349, 351, 357, 361, 365, 373, 381, 387–88, 390–92, 404, 411, 435, 447, 464, 469, 505, 523, 531, 540–41, 546, 548, 560, 564; II 575, 583, 588, 598, 623, 631, 654–55, 657, 665, 674, 678, 686, 688–89, 701, 704, 714–15, 725, 732, 739, 748, 756, 758–59, 761, 768, 770, 861, 866, 875, 880, 902, 905, 923, 925–26, 955, 969–70, 997, 999, 1006, 1010, 1013–14, 1029, 1032–33, 1055–58, 1060–61, 1063, 1066–68, 1072–74, 1083–84, 1089, 1092–93, 1098
- Bartoszewski Władysław T. I 496
- Bartov Omer I 233; II 622, 884, 1040–41, 1078, 1130
- Barylak Aniela I 557
- Bash Dana II 1139
- Basist Chaim II 746
- Basiura Zofia (Sister Petronela) I 207
- Bas-Melcer Esther (Estera, Waiss, Małecka Barbara) I 254, 258–59
- Bass Lea II 714, 721
- Bass Sara (Frenkel) II 714, 721
- Bass, Block overseer II 999
- Bastacky Shulamit I 436–37
- Baszczij Jan II 623
- Batalion Judy II 577
- Batista Chana (Hanna, Rozen Sara) II 842–43, 912
- Bau Irene (Głowacz Irene, Głowacz Irena) see Landesdorfer Irena
- Bauer Katz Etunia II 884
- Bauer Rozalia (Krzyżanowska Teresa) II 621–23
- Bauer Yehuda I 24–25, 135, 170, 441; II 610–11, 652, 952, 1071, 1077, 1117
- Baum Zelman (Kozieniec Waław) I 525
- Bauman Hasslauer Rita I 156–57
- Bauman Janina II 680
- Bauman Sophie II 680
- Baum-Gruszowska Marzena II 1119
- Bayer David II 1108
- Bayer Leib I 69
- Baziak Eugeniusz, Bishop I 525–28
- Bażański, Dr. II 711
- Bąk Hermana, Sister II 909–10, 923
- Becher Roman I 464
- Beck Eldad II 956
- Beck Henryk II 888
- Becker Alex I 441–42
- Becker Jadwiga (Bekin) II 1059
- Becker Ruth (Bekier) I 441–42
- Becker Scheinboim Batya (Batja) see Scheinboim Batya
- Bednarczyk Błażeja, Sister I 330
- Bednarczyk Henryk II 675
- Bednarczyk, Family II 629
- Bednarek, Family I 462
- Bednarska Stanisława (Sister Stefania) I 425; II 990
- Bednarski Damian I 26, 113–14, 354; II 752
- Begin Menachem I 27; II 1124
- Bein William II 965
- Bejman Rózia II 1058
- Bejze Bohdan II 576, 744
- Beker Bronia (Rohatiner) II 1074
- Bella Białostocka II 770
- Belszan Maria II 655–57
- Ben Dahan Eli, Rabbi II 1130
- Ben Haiem Itta I 530
- Ben Nun (Kahana) Shifra I 543
- Bencjanowski Herzl II 748
- Bencjanowski Tina (Benson) II 748
- Bender Aleksander I 370
- Bender Ryszard I 548; II 752
- Bender Sara I 124, 151, 158–59, 160, 166, 171, 181–82, 186, 188, 196–98, 202–3, 206–7, 211, 219–20, 225, 228, 231, 237–38, 241–42, 256, 260, 266, 284–85, 288, 290–93, 299–302, 305–11, 316, 318, 320–21, 325–26, 328, 334, 337–38, 340–41, 371, 382, 387, 391–93, 400–1, 404, 406–7, 414, 417, 422, 424, 429–31, 434, 436, 441, 452, 464, 479, 484, 486–89, 500, 512, 519, 525,

- 530, 535, 540, 543–44, 549, 553, 556, 559, 560–61, 564; II 579–82, 590, 594, 599–600, 605, 609–10, 613–16, 620, 624, 628–30, 634, 636–38, 644, 649, 654, 660, 672, 675, 677, 686, 705, 708, 712, 717, 719–22, 724, 739, 743, 752, 758, 762–64, 768, 770, 777–80, 800–2, 804–5, 821–34, 836–43, 850, 854–61, 866–67, 869–70, 874–80, 886, 903, 908, 912, 921, 924, 933–35, 943, 945, 955, 969, 988–89, 996, 1039–40, 1043, 1045–47, 1051–52, 1054–55, 1058, 1063, 1066–67, 1069, 1074–75, 1079, 1081, 1089, 1095, 1104–7, 1110, 1112–13
- Benedyk, Family I 232–33
- Benedykta, Sister from Stanisławów I 538
- Benedyktowicz Witold, Protestant Clergymen II 993
- Benedyktowicz Zofia II 993
- Beniamin, Rev. Bernardine priest I 108
- Benisch Pearl I 144
- Benisz Helena I 401
- Benisz Jan I 401–2
- Ben-Meir Moshe Shlomo (Treshansky Idel) II 768, 795
- Ben-Moshe Z. I 551
- Benon Andrzej I 308
- Benon Bronisława (Bronisława) I 308
- Benon Jonas I 307–8
- Benon Stanisław (Stanisław) I 308
- Bensch Teodor, Rev. II 890–91
- Berczyńska Kazimiera I 464
- Berczyńska Zofia I 464
- Berczyński Wacław I 464
- Berenbaum Michael II 1138
- Berendt Grzegorz I 149, 488; II 1010, 1015, 1017, 1111
- Berenstein Tatiana I 114, 126, 358, 423, 440, 553; II 587, 703, 885, 949, 1044, 1069, 1073
- Berestyńska Franciszka II 670
- Bereś Witold I 349
- Berezin Moshe (“Michał”) II 658
- Berezowski Mikołaj (Mikołaj, Feiner Leon) I 355, 358
- Berg Włodzio (Włodzio, Włodzimierz, Donat William) I 163, 320
- Berger Barbara II 823
- Berger Danuta (Jaworska) II 823
- Berger Jacob Solomon II 1077
- Berger Mira II 1071
- Berger Murray II 1038
- Berger Raymond M. II 896–97
- Berger Ronald J. I 395; II 1074
- Berger Shlomo I 395; II 1074
- Berger Zyskind II 823
- Berger, Sisters II 590
- Bergerman Weinberg Anita Zofia (Maciejewska, Biernacka) I 305
- Bergman Braha I 559
- Bergman Eugene I 240
- Bergman Pesakh I 240
- Bergman Ronen II 1126
- Berkman Boris II 785
- Berkovitsh Yechiel (Berkowicz) II 1102
- Berkowa (Zelman), Jewish woman II 1051
- Berkowicz Celina II 859–60
- Berkowicz Guta II 860
- Berkowicz Jack II 860
- Berkowicz Sonia (Liberman, Palejow Zofia) I 423–24
- Berkowicz Sophie II 860
- Berkowicz Zygmund II 859–60
- Berkowicz, Mrs. I 469
- Berkowicz, Family I 423
- Berkowitz Michael II 1086
- Berkowitz Nathan II 1108
- Berliner Fela I 452
- Berliner Lea I 151
- Berliner Luba I 151
- Berliner Mirka see Berliner-Pear Mirka-Miki
- Berliner-Pear Mirka-Miki I 452
- Berman Adolf (“Borowski”) I 351, 356–57, 416
- Berman Basia I 357, 416
- Berman Helena II 932
- Berman Jakub I 351
- Berman Kopel II 1108

- Bernan Brocha II 800  
 Bernan Kazriel (Kasinskii Anatolii) II 800–1  
 Bernan Samuel II 800  
 Bernard Helena II 1034  
 Bernard Krystyna II 1034  
 Bernhaut Gustaw II 643  
 Bernhaut Joseph (Urbański Jarosław) see  
     Urbanski Joseph  
 Bernhaut Salomea II 643  
 Bernstein Celina I 170  
 Bernstein Irena (Biernacka) I 155  
 Best Werner II 1024  
 Betto Henryk, Rev. II 762–63  
 Bętkowska Czesława II 746  
 Białowitcz Joseph II 1047  
 Białowitcz Philip (“Fiszal”) II 1047  
 Białowitcz Symcha II 869  
 Białęcki Andrzej II 926, 1091  
 Białek Czesław, Seminarian I 491, 505  
 Białek Krystyna I 505  
 Białkowska Anna II 893  
 Białkowska Weronika II 705  
 Białous Tadeusz I 29; II 752  
 Białowas Michał, Rev. II 642–43  
 Białowas Zygmunt, Rev. II 611  
 Bibliowicz Helena II 798  
 Biderman Shlomo I 77  
 Bieberstein Aleksander I 114  
 Bieda Jan, Rev. I 115  
 Bielak Mojżesz I 136  
 Bielańska Balbina, Sister II 922  
 Bielawska Irena (Sister Maria Honorata)  
     I 285; II 990  
 Bielawski Aleksander, Rev. I 472  
 Bielawski Krzysztof II 766  
 Bielawski Stefan, Rev. II 717  
 Bielawski Wacław I 554; II 1002–3, 1017  
 Bielecki Jerzy II 1089–90  
 Bielecki Tadeusz I 372  
 Bielicka Estera II 1081  
 Bieniek Józef I 505  
 Bieniek Juliusz, Bishop I 47  
 Biernacki Aleksander, Rev. I 239  
 Biernacki Antoni, Rev. II 725  
 Biezuńska, Mrs. see Biezuńska, Mrs.  
 Biezuńska-Malowist Iza I 74, 155  
 Biezuńska, Mrs. II 582  
 Bigajer Abraham II 1048  
 Bigajer Regina II 1048  
 Bigos Anastazja II 611  
 Bigos Antoni II 611  
 Bijak Stanisław II 629  
 Bikels Rotenstreich Mina I 554  
 Bikont Anna I 394; II 1049  
 Bikowska Katarzyna, Sister II 923  
 Bik-Wander Marta I 108  
 Biliak Avraham II 786–87  
 Biliak Gutka (Sara-Gutka) II 786  
 Biliak Libka II 786  
 Biliak Masha II 786–87  
 Biliak Tevka II 786–87  
 Bilińska, Mrs. I 391  
 Biliński Stefan II 609  
 Bilko Leopold, Rev. see Biłko Leopold, Rev.  
 Bill-Bajorkowa Maria II 725  
 Biłska Irka (Bialer Irena) I 157–58  
 Bilsza Franciszek, Rev. II 785  
 Bilwin Jadwiga I 299  
 Biłko Leopold, Rev. I 41  
 Bimko Barbara II 706–7  
 Bimko Henry II 706–7  
 Bimko Sonya (Salamon Sarah) II 706–7  
 Bimko Zeleg II 707  
 Binder Diana I 218  
 Binder Pearl II 577  
 Binder, Mr. 891, 894  
 Binder, Mrs. II 891, 894  
 Binstock Leah II 931–32  
 Birenbaum Halina II 1033  
 Birkenfeld Jakub II 630  
 Birnbaum Barbara (Krajewska Liliana)  
     I 565–66  
 Birnbaum Ben I 73  
 Birnhak Alice II 796  
 Biskupski Mieczysław B. II 1139  
 Bitowt Anastazja II 805  
 Bizuń Stanisław I 117, 396, 539  
 Bjørnvad Anders II 1027  
 Blachura Bolesław II 1054  
 Blady Szwajger Adina I 223, 298; II 1009

- Blaiberg Sternbach Chaim (Bożeński, Bużyński Stefan) I 228  
 Blakemore Erin II 1092  
 Blankaman Yekhiel I 78  
 Blankfeld Halina I 453  
 Blas Chaja (Blass Hanka, Czarniecka Wanda) II 869–70  
 Blasenstein Samuel I 519  
 Blaskowitz Johannes I 87  
 Blass Margalit (Tamara, Lavee Tami) II 869  
 Blaszk Abram I 104  
 Blaszk Franciszek II 771  
 Blaszk Regina II 771  
 Blatman Daniel I 138  
 Blatt Thomas Toivi I 76, 560; II 1069  
 Blattberg-Cooper Sarah II 1096  
 Blau Mejer II 1050  
 Blayn Feliks I 264  
 Blazer Maria II 1051  
 Blazer Tadeusz II 1051  
 Blecher Esther (Kreingel) II 960  
 Blecher Musia II 960  
 Bleicher Ora (Bleucher) I 125  
 Bleier Salomon I 467  
 Bleishtif Janina II 631  
 Blicharczyk Aleksander II 669  
 Blim Abraham II 925  
 Block Gay II 776  
 Blond Shlomo I 554; II 1003, 1077–78  
 Blum Anna I 386  
 Blum Ignacy I 122  
 Blum Lawrence A. II 970  
 Blum Seva (Sheva) I 177  
 Blumberg Eva (Wugshul Hava) II 657–58  
 Blumenkrantz Lila (Lea, Rosenthal, Fried (Frid)) I 285  
 Blumenthal Itay II 1101  
 Blutman Hersch II 1110  
 Blyakher Eliahu II 745  
 Błaszczuk, Rev. II 797  
 Bławat Celina, Sister II 748  
 Błoniarczyk Anna I 400  
 Bobińska-Skotnicka Irena I 565  
 Bobotek, Mr. I 380  
 Bobrow Abraham I 127  
 Bobrow Julia I 127  
 Bobrowska, Mrs. I 439  
 Bobrzyk Marian I 439  
 Bobrzyński Michał I 347  
 Bochenek Bronisław (Bronisław) I 181  
 Bochenek Irena II 913  
 Bochenek Maria I 181  
 Bochner Leokadja II 1078  
 Bochner Maria I 545  
 Bociński Czesław, Rev. II 578  
 Boczek Wilhelm, Rev. II 940  
 Boćkowska Renia (Czaczkas) I 155  
 Boćkowski Daniel I 52; II 766–67, 1124  
 Boder David P. I 98  
 Bodkier Leah (Broniewska Krystyna) II 649  
 Bodnar Moshe I 557–58  
 Bodnar Wiktor I 557–58  
 Bodnar, Family I 557–58  
 Bodner Anna II 664  
 Bodner Gizela II 664  
 Bodner Leontyna II 664  
 Boduch Józef, Rev. I 504  
 Bogacz Scholastyka, Sister II 923  
 Bogacz Wiktoria, Sister II 900  
 Bogatek Julian, Rev. II 797  
 Bogdanowicz, Family II 962  
 Bogdanowicz, Polish rescuer II 1039–40  
 Bogdanowski, Family II 794  
 Bogdańska Janina I 564–65  
 Bogdański Ludwik I 564  
 Bogdański Tadeusz I 564  
 Bogner Nahum (Nachum) I 26, 158, 161, 250, 285–86, 292–93, 301, 304, 325, 520, 562; II 680, 843, 912, 943, 969, 1047, 1054  
 Bogucka Magdalena I 326  
 Bogucki Andrzej II 1034  
 Bogucki Jan II 1034  
 Bogucki Karol II 609  
 Bogucki Kazimierz II 906  
 Bogucki, Family II 907  
 Bogumiła, Sister II 894  
 Bogusława, Sister I 158  
 Bogusz Józef, Rev. I 509  
 Bogusz Józefa Anna (Korzennik) I 508–9

- Boguszewski Brunon, Rev. I 115, 561; II 988  
 Boharčík Pavel (Bucharczyk) II 954–55  
 Bohatkiewicz Mieczysław, Rev. II 789, 1006  
 Bohdziewicz Beata II 844  
 Bohdziewicz Grzegorz II 844  
 Bohdziewicz Witold II 844  
 Bohdziewicz Zofia II 844  
 Bohdziewicz, Family II 844  
 Bojańczyk (Bojeńczyk) II 1106  
 Bojarski Jerzy Jacek II 1087  
 Bokman Khena II 784  
 Bolak Felicja II 919  
 Bole Bogdan, Rev. I 35  
 Bolejko Konstancja, Sister I 330  
 Bolotny Kinrus Wanda (Litwak) II 575  
 Bolt Felix (Feliks), Rev. I 39  
 Bolt Zbigniew I 480–81  
 Bolt, Family I 481  
 Bołdok Irena (Agata) II 697–98  
 Bołotna Helena II 575  
 Bomba Abraham (Avraham) I 61; II 1102–3  
 Bombach Eliyahu II 797  
 Bombas Rozalia II 821  
 Bombas Zuzanna II 821  
 Bombas, Family II 821–22  
 Bombecki Józef (Józef) I 288  
 Bomze Fishel II 613  
 Bomze Ricka II 613  
 Bomze, Family II 613  
 Boraks Edek I 425–26, 429  
 Boraks Gustaw II 1105  
 Borchak Lukanich Mironko II 632  
 Borczyk, Mrs. I 463  
 Borenstein Masha (Janik Irena Maria, Adika Miriam) II 575  
 Borensztajn Estera (Mitrani, Wiśniewska Teresa) II 703  
 Borensztajn Celina I 163  
 Borensztajn Dora (Borenstein Tova) I 204  
 Borensztajn Estera II 1044  
 Borensztajn Stanisław I 163  
 Borkowski Jankiel II 1043  
 Borkowski Julian, Rev. II 703, 1057  
 Borkowski Mieczysław II 587  
 Borkowski, Miller II 913  
 Bornshtein Gershon I 69  
 Borodo Zvi (Borodowski Hirs) II 802  
 Borodowska Genia-Szeina (Lurie) II 802  
 Borodowski Arie II 802  
 Borodowski Avraham II 802  
 Boroniec Hanka (Borometz) II 899  
 Boroniec Ludka (Borometz) II 899  
 Borowicz Izabella II 972, 1004  
 Borowski, Rev. II 797  
 Bors Irene (Przedborska) II 585–86  
 Bors Stanley (Przedborski Stanisław) II 585–86  
 Borten Estera II 856  
 Borten Julia II 856  
 Borten Moshe II 856  
 Borten, Family II 856  
 Bortensztajn Mieczysław II 1107  
 Bortnowska Maria II 947  
 Boruciak Bartosz I 564  
 Borucka Antonina II 1107  
 Borwicz Michel I 333–34, 440, 483, 532, 539, 561; II 643, 760, 926  
 Borys Anna (Jaguścik Maria, Goland Maria) I 472–73  
 Borys Henryk I 472  
 Borza Peter I 117  
 Borzymińska Zofia I 74  
 Boyarin Jonathan II 740, 1007  
 Bradło Antoni, Rev. II 989  
 Bradło Eugeniusz II 1121  
 Bradło, Family II 1121  
 Brajnes Leopold (Branes Fred) I 454  
 Brajnes Regina see Mingel Rena  
 Bram Francesca (Grochowska) I 96; II 1006  
 Bram Mirka (Erlich Miriam) II 690  
 Brama Teresa I 265, 268  
 Brand Sandra (Roma) II 890–91  
 Brandsdorfer Eudel I 474  
 Brandsdorfer Fay I 474–75  
 Brandsdorfer Louis I 477  
 Brandsdorfer Mala (Goldrat) I 474–77  
 Brandstätter Stefania I 170  
 Brandwajn-Ziemian Janina I 258  
 Brandys Paweł, Rev. I 41  
 Brasse Alexius (Aleksy), Rev. I 34



- Brasse Wilhelm I 95  
 Bratos, Family II 1045  
 Bratter Józef I 393  
 Braudiené Basè (Brojde Basia) II 959–60  
 Braun Isaac II 1075  
 Braunstein (Burzanowski), Family I 413  
 Brawer Berta (Bella) see Brawer-  
     -Tepper Bella  
 Brawer-Tepper Bella I 489  
 Breczewski Leo (Leon), Rev. I 35  
 Bregman Barbara (Marlow, Anyszka  
     Marianna) II 881–82  
 Bregman Bronisława (Karczewska Paulina)  
     II 881  
 Bregman Fruma I 384; II 1111  
 Bregman Maria II 1111  
 Bregman Zosia I 384  
 Bregman, Family I 384  
 Brener Aleksander II 859  
 Brener Dawid I 75  
 Brener Henoch (Brenner Henry) II 1105  
 Brener Ida II 859  
 Brenmuller, Dr. I 224  
 Brenner Małgorzata (Asher Margalit) II 664  
 Brenner Nancy (Zimmer Emilia) I 174–75  
 Bretter, Guard II 961–62  
 Brettler Itzhak (Bratkowski Władysław)  
     II 954–55  
 Brettler Mina II 955  
 Brickman Paul II 1138  
 Briggs Henry I 484–85  
 Brill Danuta II 851  
 Brishevski Zigmund see Bryszewski Zygmunt  
 Broda Stefan I 321–22  
 Broda Stefania I 519  
 Brodacki Krystian II 1052  
 Brodsky David I 112  
 Brodziński, Family I 537  
 Brodzka Gustawa I 371  
 Brodzka Helena I 371  
 Brodzka Jakubowicz Eugenia I 371  
 Brodzka-Wald Alina I 369–72  
 Brodzki Nikodem I 371  
 Brodzki Salomon I 371  
 Brogowska Cecylia II 723, 1062–63  
 Brogowska Ksawera II 723  
 Brogowski Maciej II 723, 1063  
 Brogowski, Family II 723, 1062–63  
 Brojde Hillel II 742  
 Brokhe-Bronia, Wife of First Dov Berish I 247  
 Brokman Henryk I 363  
 Bromberg Gabriela (Rysia, Rywka) II 677–78  
 Bromberg Michał II 677  
 Bromberg Rachela II 677  
 Bron, Family II 659  
 Bronikowska Henryka, Sister II 884  
 Bronisława, Sister I 294–96  
 Bronowski Alexander I 132–33, 170–71,  
     546–47; II 799, 1066  
 Bronowski Samuel II 1088  
 Bronstein Bella (Bujalska Antonina)  
     II 694–97  
 Bronsztejn Szyja II 796  
 Brostoff Anita I 437  
 Broszat Martin I 51  
 Browning Christopher R. I 360  
 Brozek Anna I 205  
 Brück Ronia (Cwengel, Sokołowska  
     Bronisława) I 335  
 Bruder Franziska II 1113  
 Brudzisz Marian I 548  
 Brudzisz Marian II 777  
 Brulińsk Czesław, Rev. II 769  
 Brumberg Abraham I 32  
 Bruno-Niczowa Wanda I 304–5  
 Bryk Andrzej II 730, 732  
 Brykczyńska Maria II 1048  
 Brykczyński Marcin II 847, 1048  
 Brykczyński, Family II 847, 1048  
 Bryks Franciszek, Rev. see Bryx  
     Franciszek, Rev.  
 Brylant Feliksa (Danuta, Gziut Feliksa) I 230–  
     31, 386–87  
 Brylant Ludwik (Mroczek Zdzisław) I 228,  
     230–31, 300, 386  
 Bryłowski Milliner see Bryłowski Milliner  
 Bryłowski Milliner I 78  
 Bryn Sara II 1044  
 Brys Jurek I 301  
 Bryskier Henryk II 1120

- Bryszewski Zygmunt I 83  
 Bryx Franciszek, Rev. I 123, 125  
 Brzechwa Jan II 661  
 Brzechwa Jan, Writer II 1083  
 Brzechwa Maria II 661  
 Brzeska Maria I 194  
 Brzezińska, Mrs. II 672  
 Brzeziński Julian I 457  
 Brzęk Dorota I 400  
 Brzozecki Sławomir, Rev. I 66  
 Brzozowicz Antonina II 822  
 Brzozowicz Maria II 822  
 Brzozowicz Olga II 822  
 Brzozowska Margarita I 193–94, 219  
 Bubi, Jewish Kapo II 999  
 Buchkowski, Professor see Buczkowski, Professor  
 Buchman Roma I 175  
 Buchowski Władysław see Bukowski Władysław  
 Buczkowski, Professor II 632  
 Buczyński Franciszek II 1094  
 Budacz Aleksander, Rev. I 400  
 Budnicki, Family I 313  
 Budnikowski Teodor, Rev. II 576  
 Budnowska Anna (Sister Tekla) I 234, 236, 267–68; II 990  
 Budny Jan, Rev. I 42  
 Budziarek Marek II 576  
 Budziński Jan, Rev. I 30  
 Budzyńska, Mrs. I 537  
 Bugajer Adela I 464  
 Bujnowski Leon, Rev. I 454; II 1003  
 Bujnowski Wincenty, Rev. II 786  
 Bukalska Patrycja I 410  
 Bukartyk Artur II 618  
 Buki Bela I 548  
 Buki Fela I 548  
 Buki Mirla I 548  
 Buki Moszek I 548  
 Buki Sala I 548  
 Buki Szulim I 548  
 Bukiet Roza (Róża) II 854  
 Bukovinsky Władysław, Rev. see Bukowiński Władysław, Rev.  
 Bukowiński Leon I 183  
 Bukowiński Władysław, Rev. II 658–59  
 Bukowska Helena II 683–84  
 Bukowski Jan II 683  
 Bukowski Stach II 926, 1091  
 Bukowski Władysław II 683, 685  
 Bukowski Włodzimierz II 684  
 Bukowski, Engineer II 689  
 Bukowski, Family II 1045  
 Bukraba Kazimierz, Bishop I 197; II 799  
 Bulka Reuven P., Rabbi I 28; II 1132  
 Bunevitch Kazimierz, Rev. see Baniewicz Kazimierz, Rev.  
 Bunin Helena-Maria II 854  
 Burak Janek I 286  
 Burczyńska Maria II 579  
 Burds Jeffrey II 650  
 Burdyn Bernard, Rev. I 39  
 Burleigh Michael I 49  
 Burling Paweł I 436  
 Burling Viktoria I 436  
 Burling, Family I 436  
 Burstyn Isadore II 1043  
 Bursztyn Sura (Tyl Barbara) II 1100  
 Bury Alfred Eugeniusz, Rev. I 115  
 Burza-Karliński Stanisław (“Burza”) I 545  
 Burzlaff Jan II 1042  
 Burzyńska Ania II 648  
 Burzyńska Lonia II 648  
 Burzyńska Teofila II 649  
 Buschbaum Josek I 318  
 Bussold Stanisława I 299  
 Busz Tekla, Sister II 900  
 But Masza (Bidziek Marysia) II 690  
 Butkiewicz Maria II 822  
 Butkiewicz Stanisława (Stanisława) II 822–23  
 Butrymowicz Rajmund, Rev. I 440  
 Buzelytė Ona II 807  
 Bydelska Jadwiga I 124  
 Bykhovtsev Nikolai I 133  
 Bylicki Bronisław II 1059  
 Byszewska Aniela I 440  
 Byszewska Helena I 211  
 Byszewski Wacław I 488

- Cabaj Konstanty, Rev. I 505  
 Cabaj Stanisława (Stanisława) I 164  
 Cahérec Anne-Marie le, Sister II 958–59  
 Cahn-Tober Theresa I 255, 500–1  
 Callahan William James I 49  
 Cała Alina II 796, 1052  
 Całka Helena II 1106  
 Całka Szymon II 1106  
 Cantor Norman F. I 1129  
 Čapková Kateřina I 117  
 Car Czesław (Czesław) II 879  
 Car Maria II 879  
 Cargas Harry James II 728  
 Carter Alina I 561  
 Carter Anna I 561  
 Carter Zygmunt I 561  
 Cassidy Christian II 885  
 Cassidy Fryderyka II 611  
 Cebryński Tadeusz (Teodosy), Greek Catholic Clergymen II 993  
 Cederbaum Celina II 839–40  
 Cederbaum Miriam II 839–40  
 Cedrowski Hercek II 1043  
 Cegliński, Family I 492  
 Cekus Andrzej (Brother Baltazar) I 338  
 Celemenski Jacob I 257  
 Celemenski Jankel (Celek) I 356  
 Celka Ada II 851  
 Ceran Tomasz II 931  
 Cetkowski Henryk I 378  
 Ceytlin Edik I 406  
 Chabło Stefan, Rev. II 614–15  
 Chabowska Natalia (Sister Maria Pelagia) I 210  
 Chacinski Antoni see Chaciński Antoni  
 Chacińska Irena I 235  
 Chaciński Antoni I 235; II 596  
 Chadzynski Edward see Chądzyński Edward  
 Chaim Bina II 839  
 Chaimovitch, Comrade I 172  
 Chajko Grzegorz I 116, 396; II 615, 969  
 Chajutin Jurek I 468  
 Chajutin Władek I 468  
 Chalozin, Brothers II 960  
 Chałciński Longin, Brother I 90  
 Chamiel Yehuda I 75  
 Chamowitz Sheila I 437  
 Chana Comins II 650  
 Chandler Victoria I 543  
 Chandrinos Iason II 1019  
 Chanoff David I 83; II 741, 797  
 Charasz Danuta II 637  
 Charasz Henryk II 638  
 Charasz Witold II 637  
 Charin Fania II 758  
 Charin Józef (Julian) II 758–59  
 Charin Mina (Omer) II 759–60  
 Charlap Muller Sarah (Domanska Anna, Domańska Anna, Stolarczyk) I 563  
 Charlap Rafal I 447  
 Charmatz Konrad II 1094  
 Charszewski Ignacy, Rev. I 76–77  
 Chartan Boris II 637  
 Chartan David II 637  
 Chartan Golda II 637  
 Chartock Roselle K. I 341  
 Charytański Jan, Rev. I 491  
 Chaskielewicz Stefan I 495–96  
 Chaskielewicz Stefan II 1082  
 Chasson Miriam (Finkielsztajn, Lewandowska Irena) I 379–81  
 Chayat Pesia I 441  
 Chaykin Janina (Reichardt Jasia) I 253  
 Chazan Dora II 660  
 Chądzyński Edward II 581  
 Chciuk Andrzej I 374, 390, 491, 547; II 688, 744, 746, 1004, 1010, 1033–34  
 Checinski Michael II 1116  
 Chelmicka Rina I 537; II 1118  
 Cherry Robert I 70; II 1139  
 Cheszes Papers Anna II 767  
 Chilewicz Helena II 1062  
 Chlebicki Zygmunt II 1106  
 Chlebowski Henryk see Hlebowicz Henryk  
 Chłond Elizabeth II 600  
 Chłond Karol II 600  
 Chłond Krystyna (Krysia) II 600  
 Chłond, Family II 599–600  
 Chłopecki Romuald, Rev. II 640–41  
 Chmiel Aniela II 712

- Chmiel Janina II 712  
 Chmiel Yehuda I 74  
 Chmielenska Irena see Chmielińska Irena  
 Chmielenska Maria see Chmielińska Maria  
 Chmielenski Ludwik see Chmieliński Ludwik  
 Chmielińska Irena I 325–26  
 Chmielińska Maria I 326  
 Chmieliński Ludwik I 326  
 Chmielewska Apolonia II 823  
 Chmielewska Helena (Stanisława), Sister I 236, 272–73  
 Chmielewska Stanisława (Sister Helena) II 990  
 Chmielewski Antoni, Rev. I 136  
 Chmielowiec Piotr I 52, 507  
 Chmielowski Albert (Adam), Brother II 907  
 Chmura Emilia I 487  
 Chmura Lucylla II 827–28  
 Chmura Nulla I 202–3  
 Chodakiewicz Marek Jan I 29, 546; II 675, 712, 733, 1098–99  
 Chodor, Family I 514  
 Chodorska Jolanta, Sister I 213, 405; II 847, 1005, 1048, 1053, 1069, 1073, 1075, 1081  
 Chodyko Aleksander, Rev. II 632–33, 766  
 Chodźba Krzysztof Ryszard see Chodźba Krzysztof Ryszard  
 Chodźba Krzysztof Ryszard (Zvi Pilpel) II 821–22  
 Chojecki Czesław, Rev. II 701  
 Cholawsky Shalom I 123; II 797, 1003  
 Cholewa Józef II 1067  
 Cholewski, Family II 1061  
 Chomel Avraham II 644  
 Chomicki Antoni, Rev. II 653  
 Choms Władysława (Władysława, Chomsowa Władysława) II 604–5  
 Chomski Antoni II 771  
 Chomski Józef, Rev. II 771  
 Chomski Leopold, Rev. I 425, 440  
 Chorczewsky Ignacy, Rev. see Charszewski Ignacy, Rev.  
 Choromanska Janina see Choromańska Janina  
 Choromańska Janina II 853  
 Choromański Zygmunt, Rev. I 385  
 Choroszuca Perla (Regina) II 770  
 Chotiner Zygmunt II 604  
 Christ Aniela I 489  
 Chrobak Alojzy, Rev. I 161–62, 240, 387, 384, 491  
 Chrobak Bonawentura, Sister II 922  
 Chrościcki Julian, Rev. I 23; II 587–88, 930, 1010  
 Chrościcki Julian, Rev. see Chrościcki Julian, Rev.  
 Chrust Josef II 790–91  
 Chruścicki Julian, Rev. see Chrościcki Julian, Rev.  
 Chrusciel Hipolit, Rev. I 123; II 802, 804  
 Chrycuk Irena, Sister II 878  
 Chrzan Bronisław II 924–25  
 Chrzanowski Antoni I 394  
 Chubak Genowefa, Sister see Czubak Genowefa (Sister Dolorosa)  
 Chucherko Eugeniusz II 943  
 Chucherko Henryk II 943  
 Chucherko Leopold II 943  
 Chucherko Stefan II 943  
 Chucherko, Family II 942  
 Chudy Feliks, Rev. I 522  
 Chudzinski Jerzy, Rev. see Chudziński Jerzy, Rev.  
 Chudziński Jerzy, Rev. I 39  
 Chumatovsky, Family I 172–73  
 Churchill Winston I 91  
 Chus Rywka II 1061  
 Chwałba Andrzej I 114  
 Chwałko Józef, Rev. II 763–64  
 Chwedoruk Wiesława I 176, 182, 189, 193, 507  
 Chwiesińska Bronisława II 770  
 Chwiesiński Eugeniusz II 770  
 Chwiesiński Ludwik II 770  
 Chylinski Thaddeus I 52  
 Chyra-Rolicz Zofia II 705  
 Cichanowska Genia II 801  
 Cichocka, Mrs. II 670  
 Cichocki Stanisław, Rev. I 552  
 Ciechanowicz Aleksandr (Aleksander) I 451

- Ciechanowicz Anna I 451  
 Ciechanowicz Maria I 451  
 Ciechanowicz Stanisława (Weryk) I 451  
 Ciechanowicz Wincenty I 451  
 Ciechanowicz, Family I 451  
 Ciechanowska Julia II 581  
 Ciechanowski Damazy II 581  
 Ciecieląg Jadwiga II 578  
 Cielecka Maria II 779  
 Cielecki Józef II 779  
 Ciembroniewicz Julius II 949  
 Cieński Jan, Rev. I 559  
 Ciepiela Bolesław I 62; II 932  
 Ciesielska Irena II 689  
 Ciesielska Romualda II 854, 1089–90  
 Ciesielski Feliks II 854, 1090  
 Ciesielski Maksymilian II 856  
 Ciesielski, Family II 854  
 Cieslicki Józef, Rev. see Cieślicki Józef, Rev.  
 Cieśla Wojciech I 109  
 Cieślak Stanisław I 96, 109, 384, 492, 505;  
     II 928, 956, 995  
 Cieślicki Józef, Rev. I 20, 77–78  
 Cieślik Józef, Rev. II 798  
 Cieślik Teresa II 881  
 Cieśliński Stanisław, Rev. I 19, 103  
 Cisek Amalia, Sister II 644  
 Cisko Aleksander, Rev. II 640  
 Ciszewska Janina II 1040  
 Ciszewicz Aleksander, Rev. II 1008  
 Ciurko-Skrzeczyńska Julia II 611  
 Clarke Anna (Szydłowska Chawa, Chana)  
     I 117, 184–85  
 Cobel-Tokarska Marta II 1034  
 Codogni Karol II 613  
 Codogni Stanisław (Stanisław) II 613  
 Cohen Boaz II 631, 660, 1072  
 Cohen Julian II 1134  
 Cohen Julius II 759  
 Cohen Steve II 1127  
 Cohn Dora II 664  
 Comins Chana (Cominetsky, Bebczuk) II 650  
 Cooney Daniel II 657  
 Cooper Anderson II 1127  
 Cooper Leo II 799  
 Cowen Brenda I 422  
 Cowen Sidia I 422  
 Croes Marnix II 1018  
 Crowe David M. I 91  
 Crowley Katherine II 870  
 Cukerman Itzhak Zev II 726  
 Cukier Maria II 610  
 Cukierkorn Jacques I 482; II 811, 1029, 1032,  
     1066, 1105, 1116, 1121  
 Cukierman Frieda (Bartosiak Halina,  
     Chruścicka Halina) II 702  
 Cunge Emanuela II 806  
 Cunge Jan II 806  
 Cunge Stanisław II 806  
 Cunge, Family II 807  
 Curran Peggy II 1053  
 Curyłło Jan, Rev. I 511; II 797  
 Cwajgenhaft, Family I 304  
 Cwyl Janek II 584  
 Cybulska Aleksandra I 423  
 Cybulska Tzila II 1090  
 Cybulski Jan, Rev. I 220  
 Cybulski Kazimierz I 423  
 Cybulski, Family I 423–24  
 Cydzik (Cydzikowa), Mrs. II 698  
 Cyganek Kazimierz, Rev. II 770  
 Cygielman Avraham II 633  
 Cygielman Julian II 633  
 Cygielman, Family II 633–34  
 Cygler Hendel (Łaski Kazimierz) I 208–9  
 Cygler Irena (Lewandowska Teodozja) I 208  
 Cygler Władysława (Władysława) II 593  
 Cymbler Jeffrey I 549  
 Cymlich Israel II 1105  
 Cynka Walenty I 325  
 Cynka, Family I 325  
 Cyrankiewicz Józef II 1092  
 Cytron Pinchas II 1137  
 Cytryniarz Artur (Citrin) II 1045  
 Cytryniarz Hana (Citrin) II 1035  
 Cywinski Feliks see Cywiński Feliks  
 Cywiński Feliks I 309  
 Czaban, Family II 1061  
 Czabański Ignacy, Rev. I 483  
 Czach Józef, Rev. I 83

- Czacka Elżbieta (Róża), Sister I 410  
 Czaczkes Stefan I 155  
 Czajka Michał I 384, 533; II 654, 660, 1072–73, 1075  
 Czajkowska Antonina II 882  
 Czajkowska Mirosława I 254  
 Czajkowski Mieczysław I 254  
 Czajkowski Tadeusz II 882  
 Czajkowski, Family II 962  
 Czapek Frantisek (Franciszek) II 951  
 Czapla, Family II 678–79  
 Czaplińska Kleisinger Danuta II 1029  
 Czapłowski Paweł, Rev. II 806  
 Czapnik, Jewish women I 343  
 Czapran Józef, Rev. I 538; II 988  
 Czarkowska Teresa (Idzikowska, Wionczek) I 198  
 Czarkowski Bolesław, Rev. II 763–64  
 Czarkowski Kazimierz, Rev. II 750  
 Czarlińska Odylla (Anna), Sister I 410  
 Czarnecki Antoni, Rev. I 22, 361, 363–64, 367–68, 370  
 Czarnecki Józef, Rev. I 76  
 Czarnecki Mark II 1112  
 Czarny Josef II 1106  
 Czartoryska Helena II 823–24  
 Czartoryski Stanisław, Rev. I 115, 503  
 Czartoryski-Sziler Piotr II 823  
 Czech Celina II 582  
 Czechowicz Ludwika I 554  
 Czechowicz Maria, Sister I 261  
 Czerkies Jakub II 715  
 Czerkies Sabina Irena (Ossowska) I 226; II 715–16  
 Czermiński Edward, Seminarian I 491, 505  
 Czernek Jadwiga (Czernik, Szpigelman) I 386–87  
 Czerniaków Adam I 362–63, 386  
 Czerniaków Felicja I 386  
 Czernik, Family II 1090  
 Czerska Diana (Topiel) II 722–23  
 Czertok Czesława (Czereśnia) I 440  
 Czerwiakowski Jan I 264  
 Czerwień Fryderyk II 862  
 Czerwień Maria II 862  
 Czerwień Ryszard II 862  
 Czerwień Stanisława II 862  
 Czerwień, Family II 862  
 Czerwińska Maria II 585–86  
 Czerwińska Maria Teresa, Sister I 156  
 Czerwińska, Mrs. II 649  
 Czerwiński Marian II 926, 1091  
 Czesława Sabina I 242  
 Czesnykowski, Mr. I 558–59  
 Czeżowski Tadeusz II 779  
 Czeżowski, Family II 779  
 Czizowski Tadeusz see Czeżowski Tadeusz  
 Czelecki Josef see Cielecki Józef  
 Czoban Sara II 847  
 Czort Józefa I 99  
 Czuba Michał [Rev. ?] II 629–30, 988  
 Czubak Genowefa (Sister Dolorosa) I 331–35; II 990  
 Czubaszek Krzysztof II 1113  
 Czyzewicz Adam see Czyżewicz Adam  
 Czyżewicz Adam II 888  
 Czyżykowska Maria I 225–26  
 Czyżykowski Marcin I 225–26  
 Czyżykowski, Family I 226
- D**  
 Dab Josef see Dąb Józef  
 Dabrowska Danuta see Dąbrowska Danuta  
 Dabrowska Stefania see Dąbrowska Stefania  
 Dabulewicz Paweł, Rev. II 745  
 Dach Morris II 932  
 Dagnan, Family II 1087  
 Dalecki Michał, Rev. II 800, 1007  
 Daluge Kurt II 1019  
 Damesek Eliahu II 747  
 Danielak, Family II 1065  
 Danieli David II 679–80, 1054  
 Danilewicz Alina I 157  
 Dankowski Piotr, Rev. I 94  
 Danziger Kibort Hinda II 930  
 Dańko Jadwiga II 599  
 Dańko Krystyna II 600  
 Dańko Mieczysław (“Odważa”) II 599–600  
 Dańko, Family II 599–600  
 Dardashti Schelly Talalay II 822  
 Dargiel Aleksandra I 464



- Datko Andrzej II 789, 927, 930, 999, 1005–6, 1012
- Datner Szymon I 56, 66, 184; II 761, 766–67, 949, 997–99, 1010–11, 1061, 1117, 1134
- Dattner Joseph II 1053
- Datynier Zygmunt II 601
- Daum Menachem II 1116
- Davies Norman I 32, 55, 121
- Dawelec Maria II 869
- Dawidowicz Aleksander II 807
- Dawidowicz Antonina I 135
- Dawidowicz Bolesław I 135
- Dawidowicz Janina (David, Markowska Danuta Teresa) I 236, 265
- Dawidowicz Lucy C. II 1020, 1127
- Dawidowicz I. II 763
- Dąb Barbara II 836–37
- Dąb Irena (Brzezińska Teresa) II 836, 1084
- Dąb Józef II 836–37
- Dąbek Agnieszka I 18, 343; II 1106
- Dąbrowicka, Mrs. I 393
- Dąbrowicz, Family II 806
- Dąbrowska Anna II 710, 721–22, 824, 1063–64
- Dąbrowska Danuta (Blidsztejn Jakoba, Kubusia) I 69, 162
- Dąbrowska Eugenia I 325
- Dąbrowska Jadwiga II 1092
- Dąbrowska Julia Halina I 192
- Dąbrowska Stefania (Abzug) I 236; II 861
- Dąbrowska Tekla I 439
- Dąbrowski Antoni, Rev. II 654
- Dąbrowski Jadwiga II 844
- Dąbrowski Józef II 844–45
- Dąbrowski Józef, Rev. I 189, 383
- Dąbrowski Kazimierz I 325–26
- Dąbrowski Stanisław II 900
- Dąbrowski Stanisław, Rev. II 654
- Dąbrowski, Family II 844–45
- Dąbska-Brykczyńska Maria II 847
- Dąmbrowska Stefania II 805–6
- Dąmbaska Aleksandra (Rudecka) II 847
- Dąmbaska Izydora I 319
- De Shrage Joseph II 577
- De Simone Gianfranco II 936
- De Ville Feliks, Rev. I 214
- Deák István I 15, 354–55; II 1026–27
- Dean Martin I 65, 111, 123, 126, 133, 211; II 759, 765, 771, 785, 791, 802, 885, 963, 1067, 1074
- Debsztok Hana Hakman (Kraśnicka Apolonia) II 576
- Dec Stanisław I 226
- Dekelbaum Ida (Landsberg) II 840–41
- Dembowa Anna I 346; II 688
- Dembowa Janina I 523
- Dembowski Peter F. I 263, 360, 365, 370–72
- Dembowy Franciszek II 688
- Demianczuk Kazimiera see Demiańczuk Kazimiera
- Demiańczuk Kazimiera II 848
- Deneka Jadwiga see Deneko Jadwiga
- Deneko Jadwiga I 228
- Dershowitz Alan M. I 91
- Derus Stanisław I 519
- Derwiesz Zofia I 326
- Desiato Tonia I 526
- Deszcz Władysław, Rev. II 997
- Dettlaff Teresa, Sister II 900–1
- Detz, Mr. I 338
- Deutsch Eva I 272
- Deutsch Leon I 272
- Deutsch Mina (Kimmel) I 272
- Deutsch Yaacov II 737
- Dezent Shoshana (Szoszana) II 834–36, 1124
- Dębicki Eweryst, Rev. II 797
- Dębińska, Mrs. II 678
- Dębiński Józef I 77
- Dębowska Krystyna I 65
- Diamand Helena (Dobek) I 415
- Diatłowski Jerzy I 136; II 630, 1039, 1057
- Dieckmann Christoph II 1094
- Diehl Gustaw II 1104
- Diehl Weronika II 1104
- Diehl, Family II 1104
- Diem Rudolf II 1092
- Dietrich Czesława II 602–3
- Diller Helena II 862
- Diller Łazar II 862
- Dimand Bronia I 532

- Dimenshteyn Leyb II 790  
 Dimont Max I. II 1129  
 Dinces, Mrs. II 1097  
 Dipel, Family I 545  
 Distler Anita II 772–73  
 Ditman Józef II 1037  
 Ditman Zwi II 1037  
 Dizerej, Dr. II 926, 1091  
 Dlutowska Stefania see Dłutowska Stefania  
 Dłutowski, Family see Dłutowski, Family  
 Dłutowska Maria-Krystyna II 879  
 Dłutowska Stefania II 879  
 Dłutowski, Family II 879  
 Dmowski Rafał I 11  
 Dobiańska Helena, Sister I 234, 236, 253;  
     II 990  
 Dobija Michał, Rev. I 539  
 Dobkowski, Family II 798  
 Dobraczyński Jan (Janek) see  
     Dobraczyński Jan  
 Dobraczyński Jan I 142–43, 146, 227, 298–  
     99, 318, 386; II 1086  
 Dobrecka Róża II 1087  
 Dobrodziej Andrzej I 385  
 Dobrodziej Krystyna II 854  
 Dobrodziej Maria I 385  
 Dobrodziej Władysław (Władysław) II 854  
 Dobrodziej, Family II 854  
 Dobrolubow Barbara II 902  
 Dobrolubow, Family II 902  
 Dobroszkłanka Seweryn II 1069  
 Dobroszycki Lucjan I 301  
 Dobrotowska Serwacja, Sister II 923  
 Dobrowolska Halina II 826  
 Dobrowolska Ludwika (Sister Zenona) I 175,  
     189  
 Dobrowolski Tadeusz II 826  
 Dobrzańska, Mrs. I 246  
 Dobrzański, Mr. I 246  
 Dobrzyńska Leokadia see Dobrzyńska  
     Leokadia  
 Dobrzynski Anthony, Rev. see Dobrzyński  
     Antoni, Rev.  
 Dobrzyńska Leokadia II 706  
 Dobrzyńska Wacława II 801, 1081  
 Dobrzyński Antoni, Rev. I 35  
 Docha Antoni II 743  
 Docha Janina II 743  
 Docha, Family II 743  
 Dolenga-Wrzoszek Teresa see Dołęga-  
     -Wrzoszek Teresa  
 Dolinska Anna see Dolińska Anna  
 Dolińska Anna II 803–4  
 Dolnickis, Dr. II 961  
 Dołęga Czesław II 653  
 Dołęga-Wrzoszek Teresa I 424  
 Dołęgowski Aleksander, Rev. I 394  
 Dołżyk Paweł, Rev. I 998  
 Domanus Adela I 203  
 Domański Tomasz I 114; II 1075  
 Domaradzka Seweryna, Sister II 909, 923  
 Domb Zipora Cheslava (Czesława, Anbar)  
     II 947–48  
 Dombek Justyna Mirosława II 930, 1012  
 Domeracki Joseph (Józef), Rev. I 34  
 Dominik Konstanty, Bishop I 39  
 Dominik Wojciech II 687  
 Domysłowska Laurencja II 816–67  
 Donat Alexander I 163; II 1102, 1104, 1112  
 Donikowska Ewa I 551  
 Donikowski, Family I 551  
 Dorobiała Władysław (Dorabiała), Rev. I 224  
 Doroszkiewicz Kazimierz, Rev. II 790  
 Dortheimer Alicja I 290  
 Dortheimer Mieczysław I 290  
 Dov Kulka Otto II 661  
 Draber Irena (Sister Teresa of Jesus) I 220  
 Draber, Daughters I 220  
 Drabich Stanisław II 580–81  
 Drabicka Stanisława I 551–52  
 Dragon Meyer I 99  
 Drajhorm Tojwje II 1043  
 Dratwicki, Mr. II 1008  
 Draus Jan II 971  
 Drągowska Maria II 761  
 Drązek Daniel (Rufeisen Shmuel Oswald)  
     II 946  
 Drązek Rachel (Malczewska Maria Janina,  
     Sister Paula) II 946

- Dreifinger Artur (Stenawka Tadeusz, Dreifinger Arturo) I 469–70  
 Dreifuss Havi (Ben-Sasson) I 70, 349; II 728  
 Drescher Hanka II 1051  
 Dressen Willi I 87  
 Drexler Blanka I 535  
 Dreyfus Richard II 657  
 Drix Samuel I 558–59  
 Dronicz Romuald, Rev. II 789, 1005  
 Drori Dina I 478–80; II 798  
 Droumpouki Anna Maria II 1019  
 Drozd Anna II 666  
 Drozd, Family II 1087  
 Drozdowska Nina II 711  
 Drozdowska-Rogowicz Wanda I 266, 299  
 Drucker Herman II 842, 903  
 Drucker Malka II 776  
 Drucker Nina (Levine Noe, Witeszczak Janina) II 842, 903  
 Druker Izajasz I 147–48  
 Drutin Bencjon II 1119  
 Drutowski Feliks I 368  
 Drutz Paula I 130  
 Drweska-Ruszczyówna Irena see Ruszczyc Drwęska Irena  
 Drwęcki Aleksander I 206  
 Drzewiecka Aleksandra (Drzewiecka), Sister I 436; II 990  
 Dubas Antoni, Rev. II 1006  
 Dubiński Aleksander see Dubieński Aleksander  
 Dubieński Aleksander I 320  
 Dubinski Mieczysław Karol see Dubiński Mieczysław Karol  
 Dubiński Mieczysław Karol I 382  
 Duchowski Tadeusz I 395; II 1074  
 Duckwitz Georg Ferdinand II 1024  
 Duczy, Jewish man II 1046  
 Duda Jerzy II 621  
 Dudaszek Miriam (Kowska Marysia) see Skurnik Miriam  
 Dudek Maria II 667–69, 1048  
 Dudek Roberta, Sister I 211–12  
 Dudek Stanisław II 667–68, 1048  
 Dudek, Family II 668–69, 1048  
 Dudman, Rescuer II 838  
 Dudziak, Family II 1058  
 Dudziec Jadwiga I 327, 425, 429  
 Dudziec Jadzia (Janina) II 780  
 Dudzik Maciej II 1066  
 Dudzik Zofia II 1066  
 Dudzik, Family II 1066  
 Dudzińska Cecylia II 823  
 Dudziński Bolesław, Rev. II 583  
 Dudziński Jan I 111  
 Duell Irene I 416  
 Duhl Menachem II 608–9  
 Dul (Doll), Family II 608  
 Dul Anna (Konisz Maria, Kunysz) II 608–9  
 Dul Janina (Konisz) II 608–9  
 Dul Maksymilian (Meniachem) see Duhl Menachem  
 Dulkinienė Rima II 1070  
 Dulman Danuta II 677  
 Dulman Janina II 1057  
 Dulman Jerzy II 1057  
 Dulman Władysław II 1057  
 Dulman Zofia II 677  
 Dunajewski Antoni, Rev. I 514–15, 517; II 988  
 Dunikowski Stanisław, Rev. I 115  
 Dunin-Wąsowicz Krzysztof I 50; II 972  
 Duracz Jerzy I 183  
 Duracz Romana II 932  
 Dutkiewicz Helena I 306  
 Dutkiewicz Wacław (Wacław) I 306  
 Dutkiewicz, Family I 553  
 Dutman Paweł II 1046  
 Dvaranauskas Vincentas II 779  
 Dwork Debórah II 1027  
 Dwucet Józef, Rev. I 42  
 Dwucet Wincenty Alfons, Rev. II 621–22  
 Dybek, Family I 518  
 Dybiec Wojciech, Rev. I 509–10  
 Dygdoń Michał II 1067  
 Dykier Gerard, Rev. see Dysarz Gerard, Rev. Dymecka Hanna I 177  
 Dymek Valentine (Walenty), Rev. I 37  
 Dynin Aviva Marcela II 813  
 Dynin Franciszka II 813  
 Dynin Jerzy (George) II 813–14

- Dynin, Family II 814  
 Dynlacht Zdzisław (Dynlacht Sigmund) II 715  
 Dynner Glenn I 300; II 1053  
 Dynowska Franciszka II 824  
 Dynowski Leon II 824  
 Dynowski Ludwika II 824  
 Dynowski Władysław (Władysław) II 824  
 Dynowski, Family II 824  
 Dysarz Gerard, Rev. I 39  
 Dyszel, Family I 85  
 Dyżewski Franciszek, Rev. II 575  
 Działoszyńska Antonina II 623–24  
 Działoszyński, Family I 554; II 623–24  
 Dziarmaga Agnieszka I 343, 547  
 Dziękaniec Antoni, Rev. I 122  
 Dzidek Eulalia, Sister II 922  
 Dziędużycki Paweł, Rev. I 559  
 Dziędział Zygmunt, Rev. I 549  
 Dziędzic Józef I 551  
 Dziędzic, Family II 1058  
 Dzierżek Stefan, Rev. I 109, 491  
 Dzięwanowska Zofia, Sister II 1011  
 Dzięcioł Witold, Rev. I 547; II 1010  
 Dzięciołowska Karolina I 315, 451; II 724, 1063  
 Dziondziak Czesław, Rev. I 389  
 Dziuba Jan I 385  
 Dziuba Józefa I 385  
 Dziuban Jan, Rev. II 620  
 Dziubiński Paweł, Rev. II 714, 721  
 Dzwonkowski Roman, Rev. I 30, 52  
 Dźwigoński Franciszek, Rev. I 99  
 Dżambowa Maria II 932–33  
 Dżugała, Family II 637  
  
**Ebstein** (Eckstein, Ebenstein), Mr. II 901  
 Echaust Bronisław, Rev. I 39  
 Echkaus Bronia see Eckhaus-Waserman Bronia  
 Eck Leon II 903  
 Ecker Janina (Nina, Leiman) I 417–18; II 876–77  
 Ecker, Family II 876  
 Eckhaus-Waserman Bronia II 654  
 Eckstein Maria I 138  
 Eckstein Tadeusz I 138  
 Edelman Ira I 422  
 Edelman Marek I 173–74  
 Edith, Sister II 896–97  
 Efrati David I 559  
 Egierszдорff Irena (Olszakowska) II 719  
 Ehrenburg Ilya I 333–34  
 Ehrlich Elhanan II 1051  
 Ehrlich Felicja (Bielska Janina) II 826  
 Ehrlich Konstancja (Constance) Krystyna (Sister Emilia) II 725  
 Ehrlich Ludwik II 725  
 Ehrlich Seweryn II 826  
 Eichhorn, Jewish farmer II 1066  
 Eidintas Alfonsas II 1020  
 Eile Henryk I 491  
 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz Anna II 1038  
 Eimont, Family II 962  
 Einhorn Jerzy I 242  
 Einhorn Szejndl (Stefania, Kurz Jafa) I 557  
 Einsiedler Fryda (Stieglitz Frieda) I 226, 274  
 Eisen Max II 1091  
 Eisen Samuel II 1074  
 Eisenberg (Zaleski Krzyś) II 910  
 Eisenberg Eliyahu II 1101  
 Eisenberg Judyta (Maziarz Anna) I 487–88  
 Eisenberg Meir I 487–88  
 Eisenstadt Janina II 581  
 Eisenstadt Zofia II 592  
 Eisner Bronisława (Bronia) see Sz wajca Bronisława  
 Eitani Rina II 1036  
 Eizenberg Savitzki Mati Mazei II 948  
 Ekert Genia II 931–32  
 Ekstein Anita II 615–16  
 Elberger Jasia (Wojciechowska Aniela) II 640–42, 1009  
 Elbinger Pola II 687  
 Elbinger Rozalia II 687  
 Eliach Yaffa II 744, 938  
 Eliahu, Husband of Volotzki Nekhe I 129  
 Eliraz Shmuel (Wiesiu) II 1044  
 Elkana Anlen Bronisław (Bronisław) I 237  
 Elliot Jeffrey M. II 607, 1079  
 Elman Joseph I 333–35

- Elmer Artur Władysław I 395–96, 536  
 Elmer Janusz I 395  
 Elmer, Family I 396  
 Elsztajn Elias (Elstein, Elnstein) II 913  
 Elsztajn Halinka (Elstein, Elnstein, Kubicka) II 913  
 Elżanowska Gabriela I 192  
 Emaitis Luisa II 772  
 Engelberg Irena I 241  
 Engelberg Lazar I 241  
 Engelking Barbara I 29–30, 105, 115, 145, 263, 384, 404, 503, 548; II 592, 628, 724, 758, 761, 831, 1000, 1011, 1033, 1056, 1062–63, 1071, 1081, 1085, 1102, 1105–6, 1130, 1133  
 Engelson Ethel (Engelczyn) II 793–94  
 Engelson Irving II 793–95  
 Engelson Morris II 793–95, 799  
 Engelson Wolf II 794  
 Engelson, Family II 794  
 England Ida (Kisielevska Irena, Majchrzak Irena) I 291  
 Epstein Sarah (Epshteyn Sara) II 963  
 Epšteinaité Dalija I 438; II 773  
 Epsztein Tadeusz II 878  
 Erber Helena I 541  
 Erber Józefa I 541  
 Erdman (Szymański Benedyk) II 803  
 Erenbrod Leontyna (Mileszczuk Ludwika, Matias) II 846  
 Erenhalt (Flaks) Sara II 931–32  
 Erenreich Henryk see Briggs Henry  
 Erik, Brother of Lowy Edith I 108–9  
 Erlich Joske (Ehrlich Josek) II 993  
 Erlichman Sujka (Erlichman-Bank) I 204  
 Ernberg Erna I 452  
 Ernberg, Veterinarian I 452  
 Estreicher Karol I 75–76  
 Estrin Benjamin I 123  
 Ettinger, Lawyer I 369  
 Eva, Daughte of Altbeker Cyprys Ruth I 151  
 Evans Richard I 32, 354; II 1023, 1025  
 Eyzner Yankel (Eisner Jacob) II 1102  
 Ezkera Eth II 796  
 Fabiana, Sister I 207  
 Fabisiak Czesław (Chester), Rev. I 50, 95, 111, 491; II 928–29  
 Fagin Helen I 171  
 Fairbloom Esther I 421  
 Fajersztajn Rosa II 578  
 Fajersztajn Szprynca I 31  
 Fajęcki Aleksander, Rev. I 361  
 Fajkowski Józef II 998  
 Fajnsztajn Hana II 822  
 Fajnsztajn Jakov II 822  
 Fajnsztajn Masha II 822–23  
 Fajwiszys Izrael Sruł II 752, 756  
 Faktor Batya (Barbara, Basia, Batja, Batia, Piechotka, Pikhotke) I 163–66  
 Faktor Esther (Jadwiga, Jadzia, Rosman) I 163–66  
 Faktor Halina I 165  
 Faktor Janek I 165  
 Faktor Regina I 165  
 Falant Arye-Leybl II 790  
 Falconi Carlo I 348  
 Falencki Bronisław I 545  
 Faliszewski Stanisław II 945  
 Falkowski Piotr I 549  
 Falkowski Stanisław, Rev. II 751–56, 988, 1032  
 Falska Maria I 325  
 Faracik Genowefa, Sister I 507  
 Farber Sania I 553  
 Fartus Roza II 778  
 Faryniarz, Family II 1048  
 Fastmann (Fastman) Ludwik II 926, 1091  
 Faude Wilhelm I 392  
 Fayans A. L. II 768  
 Faygenbaum Hanna I 254  
 Fedecka Maria II 779–80  
 Fedecki, Family II 806  
 Feder Frymeta II 837  
 Feder Jerzy II 837  
 Federman Hyman II 1037, 1116  
 Federman Josek II 1037  
 Federman Pinkas II 1037  
 Federman, Brothers II 1116  
 Fedorcio Stanisława (Stanisława) I 488–89

- Fedorowicz Helena II 670  
 Fedorski Witold II 618  
 Fedorski, Family II 618–19  
 Fefer Chava II 951–52  
 Feffer Abraham D., Rabbi II 1133  
 Feffer Carolyn (Safier) II 659  
 Feier Mariam II 649  
 Feier Warda (Wojciechowska Krystyna, Shenbaum) II 649  
 Feierbach Ewa (Łaska) I 536  
 Feigelbaum Abe II 1112  
 Feigelbaum Henry II 1112  
 Feigelson Anna II 771  
 Feigelson Shoshana II 771  
 Feiler Bela (Lola) II 942–43  
 Feiler Berish (Berek, Bernard) II 942–43  
 Feiler Chaim (Henryk) II 942  
 Feiler Sala II 942  
 Feiler, Family II 942  
 Feinberg Blima Chaja I 312  
 Feinstock-Shimmel Lusja II 931  
 Feiwei Auerbach II 1080  
 Fejgin Irena II 830  
 Fejkiel Władysław II 1092  
 Feldenkreiz-Grinbal Eva I 71–72, 342, 346; II 796, 1052  
 Feldhorn Maria (Krawczyk) I 231–32  
 Feldman Fania I 439–40  
 Feldman Jozef (Józef) I 181; II 901  
 Feldman Manya Auster I 127–28  
 Feldman Mundeck II 833  
 Feldman Rebecca I 439–40  
 Feldman, Sisters I 440  
 Feliksiak Elżbieta II 807  
 Felińska M. I 299  
 Felix Karl II 706  
 Felix Kitty (Hart-Moxon, Dobrzyńska Leokadia) II 705–6  
 Felix Lola Rosa II 706  
 Feller Adam I 457  
 Felman Freda II 947  
 Felman Jack II 947  
 Fenereisen Krystyna I 412  
 Fenereisen Zofia I 412  
 Fenigstein Hersz (Wigrowski Henryk) I 566  
 Fenigsztajn Herszek (Herszko) I 564–65  
 Fenster Bleema see Katz Betty  
 Fenster Lily (Skórka Luba) II 702  
 Fenster Lusja (Gertner Lucy) II 884  
 Fenster Regina (Nurnberg, Gertner) II 884  
 Ferderber-Salz Bertha I 226; II 1049  
 Ferenc Mikołaj, Rev. II 626–27, 988  
 Ferens Tadeusz II 866–67  
 Ferens Wanda II 866  
 Fern Regina (Malec Józefa) II 830  
 Fernandez Maria I 500  
 Fernández Mercedes I 471  
 Ferster Wincenty I 299  
 Fesia (Teodoziia), Ukrainian nanny of Neger Bina I 271  
 Festentsztat Hania I 298  
 Fester Wincenty I 319  
 Fey Bronisława II 887  
 Feyge Furman Khayt (Chajt) Esther I 444  
 Fijałkowski, Family II 586  
 Fichtner Margaria II 743  
 Fidelisa, Sister II 909  
 Fiejka Bolesław (Bolesław) II 854–55  
 Fiejka Helena II 854–55  
 Fiejka, Family II 854–55  
 Figiel Andrzej I 400  
 Fijałkowski, Family see Fijałkowski, Family  
 Fijałkowski, Mr. see Fijałkowski, Mr.  
 Fijałkowski Franciszek, Rev. I 316–17; II 798  
 Fijałkowski Zenon I 48  
 Fijałkowska, Mrs. II 680  
 Fijałkowski, Mr. II 681–83  
 Fijałkowski, Family II 681–83  
 Fiksel Josephine (Zauberman Józia) II 611  
 Filak Małgorzata, Sister II 699  
 Filip Teodor, Rev. I 47  
 Filipek Magdalena I 176, 182, 189, 193, 507  
 Filipowicz Mariusz I 122  
 Filipowski A., Jewish boy I 220  
 Filoda Julian, Rev. I 401, 403–4  
 Filomena, Sister (Sisters of Charity) I 526, 528–29  
 Fil-Wroblewska Anna (Wróblewska) I 540  
 Finder Wand Rozalia (Zięba Maria) II 578  
 Fink Frania I 214–16



- Fink Jakub I 435  
 Fink Wilinke (Zienowicz Józef) I 434  
 Fink, Family II 1052  
 Finkelstein Bronisława (Bronisława) II 856  
 Finkelstein Henryk II 856  
 Finkelstein Reuben II 832  
 Finkelstein-Walters Ann I 394  
 Finkielgluz Edwarda (Estera, Edzia, Siekiera) II 659–60  
 Finkielgluz, Family II 659  
 Finkielman Marian (Domanski) II 1062  
 Finkielsztajn Gustaw I 379  
 Finkielsztajn Roza (Róża) I 379  
 Finkielsztejn Chaya (Finkelstein Chaia) I 394; II 1062  
 Finkielsztejn Yisrael (Finkelstein Israel) I 394; II 1062  
 Finkielsztajn-Adler, Family I 381  
 Finkiel-Zdrojewicz Małgotzata II 770  
 Fiodorczenko Zofia I 452  
 Firer Tuvia II 853–54  
 First Avraham Simkhe, Rabbi I 247  
 First Dov Berish I 246–48  
 Firuta, Family II 1076  
 Fischbein Bronisława (Bluma, Fiszbejn) II 664–65  
 Fischer Ludwig I 98; II 1013  
 Fischer Maria (Zahn, Sieczka Maria) see Fisher Zahn Maria  
 Fischer Zahn Maria I 209; II 611, 1074  
 Fishgrund Salo (Henryk) I 356  
 Fishkin Sarah II 1038  
 Fishman Dunka (Devora) I 566  
 Fishman Lala (Weintraub Klara, Krzyżanowska Urszula) I 255, 534–35  
 Fishman Miriam (Felińska Maria) I 177  
 Fiszbain Stan I 505  
 Fiszbain-Tokarz Jadwiga I 505–6  
 Fiszbaum Szyfra (Altman Stefi) II 707  
 Fiszer Adela I 532–33  
 Fiszer Halina II 840  
 Fiszer Herszel I 77  
 Fiszer Ludwika II 1054  
 Fiszhaut Elżbieta (Górska, Gorski Elisabeth, Matusik Stanisława) I 467–68  
 Fiszhaut Helena (Kalińska Józefa) I 467–68  
 Fiszhaut Helena I 159  
 Fiszler Edmund II 854  
 Fiszler Leonora II 854  
 Fiszman Maria (Saadia Miriam, Sawia Miriam) I 194, 292  
 Flachs Jan I 406  
 Flachs Lila (Trembska Zofia, Lewar Zofia) I 406  
 Flaiszman Esther (Rakowska Marysia) see Avruch Esther  
 Flajszer Herman (Fleiszer, Repa Henryk) I 540  
 Flajszer-Jablonska Salomea (Jabłońska Maria) I 540  
 Flechtman Chaviva II 820  
 Flechtman Moshe (Flekhtman Havivah) II 820  
 Fleck Ludwik II 1091  
 Fleischer Lajosné II 931  
 Fleisher Miriam II 884–85  
 Fleisher Regina II 884–85  
 Fleisher Samuel II 884  
 Fleissig Magal Alicia II 1134  
 Flohr Michal (Michał) II 879  
 Florek Bronisław I 340  
 Florek Maria I 340  
 Florek, Family I 340  
 Florentyna Stanek (Sławek) II 823  
 Fogelman Aviva (Avivah, Czoban, Lipińska Irena) I 274  
 Folk Lilli Lewin II 953  
 Forczyk Robert I 57  
 Forkasiewicz Anna (Studnia Niuta) II 688, 1033  
 Forkasiewicz Józef II 688  
 Fornalski Jan, Rev. II 840  
 Forycka, Mrs. II 693  
 Foryniak Mieczysława I 503; II 1055  
 Foster Claude R. I 90  
 Fox Elaine Saphier I 277  
 Foxman Abraham (Fuksman, Kurpi Henryk Stanisław) I 439; II 1127  
 Frackiewicz Helena see Frąckiewicz Helena  
 Frajberger Malwina I 461

- Francis, Pope I 92  
Franciszekiewicz Lucyna I 299  
Franczak Artur I 492, 505  
Franczak Jan I 78  
Franczek Jan see Franczak Jan  
Franek Karol, Rev. I 41  
Frank Hans I 41, 46, 113–14; II 1013  
Frank Moshe II 1047  
Frankel Henry I 183  
Frankl, Sisters II 887  
Frankowski Józef, Rev. I 30–31  
Frantzman Seth J. II 1126  
Frassati Luciana I 348  
Frayman Roman II 1121  
Frazer Jenni II 956  
Frącek Teresa Antonietta, Sister I 18, 187, 234–36, 239–40, 242, 248, 250–51, 253–54, 260–61, 263–64, 268, 271–73, 457; II 590, 690, 812, 897, 971, 1012  
Frąckiewicz Helena (Sister Diana) I 124–25, 430; II 990  
Frączek Jan II 1048  
Frączek Kunegunda II 1048  
Frąś Leon, Rev. II 777  
Freeman Joseph I 216  
Freiberg Bendori Bracha Bronia (Kleinman) II 577  
Freiberger Estera II 856–57  
Freiberger Henryk II 857  
Freiherter Lila II 665  
Frejman Bela I 412  
Frenkel Fryda (Frieda) II 631  
Frenkel Manfred II 721  
Frenkel Miriam (Mira) II 631  
Frenkel Rita see Frenkiel Rita (Frenkel)  
Frenkel, Family II 631  
Frenkiel Rita (Frenkel) II 631  
Freund Józef II 914  
Freund Kurt I 326  
Freund, Family I 326  
Frida Kohn (Zajackowska (Zajączkowska) Fela, Maria) II 842  
Fridman Batia (Friedman, Gortler, Barańska Basia) I 274  
Fried Viliam II 1100  
Friedland Minna (Frydland, Frydman Mina, Burczyńska Maria) see Aspler Minna  
Friedländer Saul I 32  
Friedman Barbara (Zofia) I 274  
Friedman Filip (Philip) I 19–21, 23, 25–26, 137, 341, 426, 455; II 742, 750, 772, 996, 999–1000, 1017, 1043, 1092  
Friedman Hala II 899  
Friedman Izaak II 628–29; II 766  
Friedman Jeanette I 106, 113  
Friedman Mendel II 628–29  
Friedman Michal II 798  
Friedman Shmuel I 550  
Friedman Zev, Rabbi II 1132  
Friedmann Sholom I 341  
Friedrich Majer, Rabbi I 113  
Friedrych Elsa (Elżunia) I 172–73; II 869  
Friedrych Zalman (Zygmunt) I 172–73; II 869  
Friedrych Zille I 172–73  
Fries, Family II 664, 1048  
Frisch Schieli (Kaczyńska Michalina, Lewkowicz-Kaczyńska) I 186  
Frischer Bronisława I 507  
Frischer Kazimierz I 507  
Frister Elżbieta I 149  
Frister Roman I 361  
Frister Roman II 1119  
Frister Vera (Michalska Janka) I 311  
Froehlich Katarzyna II 933  
Froehlich, Family II 933  
From K., Dr. II 661  
Fromer H. II 1078  
Frounfelter Michael D. I 185  
Frtizsch Karl I 92  
Frydel Tomasz I 404; II 1067  
Frydland Rachmiel II 737  
Frydland, Family II 579  
Frydman Cypora II 1062  
Frydman Ilona (Gawrońska Irena) I 464  
Frydman Mirska Irena II 860  
Frydman Mirska Krystyna (Mausner) I 236, 242  
Frydman Mirska Margareta (Małgorzata, Acher Marguerite) I 236, 242–43; II 860  
Frydman Mirski Roman II 860

- Frydman Roma I 464  
 Frydrich Mirla (Szternzys) II 1063  
 Frymet Dwojra II 1072  
 Fuchs Hannah Devorah (Greenberg Doris, Kalinowska Krystyna) I 500  
 Fuchs Sabina (Schweid) II 610  
 Fudakowski Kazimierz I 491  
 Fufman Keleh II 790  
 Fuja Antonina (Sister Maria Kalasancja) II 880  
 Fuks Sara II 1052  
 Fuks Werner Rina II 948–49  
 Fulbrook Mary II 1041  
 Fulman Marian Leon, Bishop I 45–46, 132; II 799  
 Fulman Zeev Hertz II 592  
 Fürgang Karol (Adamowicz Antoni) I 494  
 Furmanik Maria I 407  
 Fuswerk Jozef (Józef) I 307  
 Fuswerk Maria (Adler) I 307  
 Futersak Dina I 232–33  
 Futersak Sabina (Futtersack Sheindel) I 232–33  
 Futersak Sonia I 232–33
- G**  
 Gabaj Abel I 435–36  
 Gabaj Benjamin I 435–36  
 Gabaj Renana I 434, 435–36  
 Gabej, Dr. II 926, 1091  
 Gabel Józef (Gablewski Józef) I 543  
 Gabriel Severin II 576  
 Gabrionchik, Mr. I 550  
 Gabryl Franciszek J., Rev. I 115–16; II 1010  
 Gaca Emeryka, Sister II 922  
 Gaczek Wilhelm, Rev. I 108  
 Gadowski Stanisław I 340  
 Gadziński, Family II 902  
 Gafny Emunah Nachmany I 111, 147; II 941, 1100  
 Gaik Tadeusz, Rev. II 927–28  
 Gajewska Eugenia, Sister II 922  
 Gajewska Maryla I 177  
 Gajewski, Miller II 671  
 Gajło Michał see Gajło Michał
- Gajło Adam (Krzysztof Bolesław (Bolesław) Sawicki) II 821  
 Gajło Michał II 821  
 Gajowniczek Franciszek I 92  
 Galderczyk, Rev. see Kalbarczyk Julian, Rev.  
 Galek Czesław II 870  
 Galewski Edward II 889  
 Galiński Antoni II 576, 744  
 Gall Stanisław, Archbishop I 112–13, 262, 385  
 Gallo Max II 1064, 1103  
 Galloway Janine I 542–43  
 Galoński, Family II 1037  
 Galus Bronisława (Sister Róża) I 227–28; II 990  
 Gałuszka Józef, Rev. see Gałuszka Józef, Rev.  
 Gałązka Ewaryst, Rev. I 545  
 Gałęcka Anna II 1033  
 Gałęcki Kazimierz II 1033  
 Gałek Kazimierz, Brother I 47  
 Gałęza Jan, Rev. II 689–90  
 Gałucha Anatol, Rev. I 47  
 Gałuszka Józef, Rev. I 41–42  
 Games Sonia (Sieradzka Zofia Róża) I 471–72  
 Gammon Carolyn I 354; II 1087  
 Gamss Isaac II 737–38, 1049  
 Gamss Leah II 737, 1049  
 Ganczarski Jan II 608  
 Ganczarski, Family II 608  
 Gans Alfred I 393  
 Gans Anna (Gawlik Stefania) I 393  
 Gans Fryderyk (Górny Alfred) I 393  
 Gantz Halina (Hertz) I 246  
 Gantz Henryk Ryszard I 246  
 Gantz Stanisław I 246  
 Gantz Yaki II 934  
 Ganusovitch Itzhak II 747  
 Ganuz Yitzhak II 1071–72  
 Gapys Jerzy I 547  
 Garbala Józef, Rev. I 217–18  
 Garbicz Józef, Rev. I 555  
 Garczyńska Wanda, Sister I 142, 176–77, 179–80, 182–85, 187–91; II 990  
 Garliński Józef I 171

- Garncarek Franciszek, Rev. I 366, 373–74;  
II 1000
- Garztecka, Mrs. I 392
- Gasinski Jerzy see Gasiński Jerzy
- Gasiński Jerzy I 105
- Gasior Adam see Gąsior Adam
- Gasior Maria see Gąsior Maria
- Gastfriend Eddie I 93; II 1091
- Gaszak Salomea (Sara) II 578
- Gaszak, Mrs. II 578
- Gauer Moni I 544
- Gavish Shoshanna II 727
- Gawell Donna B. I 52
- Gawkowski Robert I 390; II 587–88
- Gawlikowski Stefan II 1035
- Gawlina Józef, Bishop I 354; II 957
- Gawroński Jan I 348
- Gawrych Aleksandra I 292
- Gawrych Jan I 292
- Gawryś Cezary I 229
- Gayda Józef, Rev. II 797
- Gąsior Adam II 857
- Gąsior Maria II 857
- Gąsior, Family II 857
- Gdowski Andreas (Andrzej), Rev. I 20
- Gdowski Franciszek (Andrzej od Jezusa,  
Andrew of Jesus), Rev. II 771–75
- Gebauer Jadwiga I 485
- Gebauer, Family I 485
- Geber Halina I 310
- Gebert Gizela I 320
- Gedovsky Andras, Rev. see Gdowski  
Franciszek, Rev.
- Gefen Aba II 963
- Geier Arnold I 218
- Geist Estera II 1104
- Gelb Hersch I 503
- Gelbard (Gadomski), Dr. I 368
- Gelbart Rose (Grosman) II 1032
- Gelber Józef II 916
- Gelber Maria II 916
- Gelbart Mendl II 795, 965, 1006
- Gelbstein Mieczysław I 254
- Geler Esther II 780
- Geler Mandel Basia II 625
- Geller Lusja II 886
- Geller, Mrs. II 886
- Gelman Anna II 841
- Gemrot Salomea I 518; II 798
- Gemrot Wilhelm I 518
- Gendzieński Zygmunt, Rev. II 617
- Geneja Janusz, Rev. I 522
- Genzel Juliusz II 803
- Gepsman, Person from Przemyśl II 918
- Ger Sonia I 453
- Gera Vanessa I 309
- Gerber Alan Jay I 341
- Gerlach Christian II 1023, 1026, 1028, 1035
- Germ Fritz II 1071
- Gersh Peter II 1123
- Gershen, Family II 1049
- Gerstenfeld-Maltiel Jacob I 137
- Gersztajn Berek II 1105
- Gertner Janina I 154
- Gertner Szaja II 1094
- Gertner, Family II 884
- Geselevich Hasyah II 807
- Gesing, Professor I 506
- Getler Mira II 576
- Getlinger Lola I 491
- Getter Matylda, Sister I 21, 142, 187, 192,  
234–37, 240–42, 245; II 648, 990
- Gevirtz Morris II 1112
- Gewis Frajda II 705
- Gęśla Marcelli Ryszard I 66
- Gibbs Chad II 750
- Gieda, Mrs. II 779
- Giedrojc Justyna II 807
- Gielarowski Jan, Rev. I 405; II 1005
- Gierasimowicz Henryk II 748
- Gierasimowicz Wanda II 748
- Giesing see Gesing, Professor
- Giesselmann Bernhard I 117
- Gigliotti Simone I 300; II 947
- Gilbert Martin I 16, 98–99, 165, 268, 433–34,  
560; II 604, 617, 659, 887, 953, 969,  
1082
- Gilbert-Lurie Leslie II 737–38, 1050
- Gildenman Moshe II 650
- Giliat Gita II 1081–82

- Gilinsky Shmuel I 445–46  
 Gill Anton I 170; II 933, 1095  
 Gindelman Chana II 577  
 Ginsberg Fajga (Fani, Fanny, Kobyłko Maria) I 530  
 Ginsburg Rivka I 530  
 Ginsburg Sara I 530  
 Ginsburg Shlomo I 530  
 Ginsburg Suzanne II 1069  
 Girbudas Petras II 959–60  
 Girschowicz Meyer I 438  
 Gitelman David (Gittelman) I 436  
 Gitelman Lea (Gittelman) I 436  
 Gitelman Getele I 436  
 Gitelman, Family I 436  
 Glass Malka II 874  
 Glass Sara (Pasht) II 874  
 Glazer Richard II 1112  
 Glazer Yankel II 786  
 Glazer Zofia (Olszakowska) II 719–20  
 Gleit Aron II 1103  
 Glick Isaac II 1128  
 Glick Sol II 798  
 Glicksman Wolf II 1092  
 Glickson Jerry David I 448  
 Glik Berl I 126; II 885  
 Glikson Meir II 853–54  
 Glikson Cypora I 450  
 Glikson Helena I 450  
 Glikson Jakub I 450  
 Glikson Jerzy (Glickson Jerry) I 446–47  
 Glikson Józef I 450  
 Gliniski Leonard see Gliński Leonard  
 Gliński Leonard II 824–25  
 Gloeh Feliks, Protestant Clergymen II 993  
 Glowacki Władysław, Rev. see Głowacki Władysław, Rev.  
 Glowiczower Henryk I 181  
 Glowiczower Susanna I 181  
 Glowinska Gucia II 827  
 Glowinski Michał see Głowiński Michał  
 Gładkowski, Family II 1081  
 Gładysz Antoni I 116; II 928, 1010  
 Głembocka Józefa I 533  
 Głowacka Andrea II 816–17  
 Głowacki Władysław, Rev. I 366, 370–71; II 988  
 Głowińska Felicja I 192  
 Głowiński Henryk I 192  
 Głowiński Michał (Pruszkowski Adam) I 192, 228, 231, 300, 302; II 1120  
 Głownia Feiga II 1105  
 Głownia Gitel II 1105  
 Głuchowski Czesław II 1112  
 Głuchowski Piotr II 1119  
 Gnатовski Michał I 52  
 Gociek Józef, Rev. I 108  
 Goczewski, Family II 1065  
 Goda Norman J. W. I 149; II 1024  
 Godlewska Fryderyka (Karmi Szulemit) II 1084  
 Godlewska Janina II 1034  
 Godlewski Edward, Rev. II 787  
 Godlewski Helena II 575  
 Godlewski Leon II 575  
 Godlewski Marceli, Rev. I 22, 233, 241, 244, 263, 300, 359, 361–63, 365, 367–69, 456; II 988  
 Godlewski, Family II 962  
 Godot Chuma I 429  
 Godziek Augustyn II 933  
 Godziek Zofia II 933  
 Godziszewski Antoni, Rev. I 263–64; II 988  
 Goebbels Joseph I 56  
 Goetel Ferdynand II 683  
 Goetel Jadwiga II 683–84  
 Gogola Zdzisław I 90, 491  
 Gogoliński Wiktor, Rev. II 813  
 Golan Batya (Klig) II 832  
 Golan Motke II 832  
 Golańska Ottona, Sister II 643–44  
 Gold Nathan II 1053  
 Gold Pepa (Sternberg) II 1077  
 Goldberg Edward (Edek) I 274  
 Goldberg Efraim (Fromka) II 839  
 Goldberg Hersh II 839  
 Goldberg Józef (Golan) II 1035  
 Goldberg Leibl I 72  
 Goldberg Shiye (Chehever Shie) I 77; II 1051  
 Goldberg Szymon II 1064, 1106

- Goldberg Tola II 839  
 Goldberg Zofia II 944, 1096–98  
 Goldberger Franciszka I 340  
 Goldberger Leo II 1127  
 Goldberger Wincenty I 340  
 Goldberger Witold (Florkowski) I 340  
 Goldberg-Warobel Liba (Wrobel Luba) see  
   Wrobel Goldberg Luba  
 Goldberg, Shoemaker from Sandomierz I 72  
 Goldenberg Myrna I 97, 202, 310, 409–10;  
   II 798  
 Goldfarb Jack II 839  
 Goldfein Olga (Goldfajn) I 331–35  
 Goldfeld Józef II 666  
 Goldfluss Pinkas II 875  
 Goldfus Roza II 839  
 Goldhagen Daniel II 1042  
 Goldhirsh Maria II 1073  
 Goldhirsh Ruzia (Slutzky Rose) II 1073  
 Goldiner Ryfka II 710, 1063  
 Goldman Blums II 879  
 Goldman Halina (Sister Bonifacja) I 410  
 Goldman Larisa (Meilen) I 199  
 Goldman Nora II 580  
 Goldman Pauline (Stanislas) I 199  
 Goldman Rywka I 197, 199  
 Goldman, Lawyer II 858  
 Goldring Shmuel II 1109  
 Goldschlag Emma I 406  
 Goldschlag Matylda I 405  
 Goldschmidt Lila (Engel, Sawicka Danuta)  
   I 240  
 Goldschmidt Mary (Eckerling, Krawczyk  
   Maria) I 240  
 Goldschmidt, Family I 118  
 Goldstein Bernard I 172–74  
 Goldstein Ignacy II 671  
 Goldstein Kurt Julius II 1095  
 Goldstein, Brothers I 222  
 Goldszmid Aniela II 840  
 Goldwasser Monika II 904  
 Goldzin, Family II 769  
 Golembiowska, Sister see Gołębiowska, Sister  
 Goliński Zdzisław II 997  
 Goljan Maria I 203  
 Golomb Jacob I 300; II 947  
 Golonka Jan, Rev. I 545  
 Golos Yisrael II 1046  
 Goltweld Zofia II 665  
 Gołachowska-Szczygłowska Bogusława  
   II 667  
 Goławska Marcjanna II 703  
 Goławski Józef II 703  
 Goławski, Family II 1044  
 Gołąb Alicja I 501–2  
 Gołąb Idalia (Dalia, Taragin) I 386  
 Gołąb Jan I 501–2  
 Gołąb Julian (Golob Julius), Rev. I 501–3  
 Gołąb Ludwik I 502  
 Gołda, Jewish child I 412–13  
 Gołembowska Beata II 617  
 Gołębiowska, Sister I 190  
 Gołębiowski Marian II 1050  
 Gołębiowski Sławomir II 704  
 Gołędowski Władysław, Rev. I 45  
 Gołombiewski Bronisław (Golumbiauskas  
   Bronius) II 963  
 Gołombiewski Piotr (Golumbiauskas Petras)  
   II 963  
 Gołoś Edward II 1104  
 Gołubiak Henryk I 166–67  
 Gomułka Joanna (Majerczyk) I 387  
 Gomułka Liwa II 1116  
 Gomułka Władysław II 1116  
 Gomułkiewicz Agata I 229  
 Gonczar Jan I 406  
 Gonczar Maria I 406  
 Gongola Leon II 1045  
 Gonsky Fanya (Nowoszycka) I 453  
 Gorajek Józef, Rev. II 717–18, 988  
 Goral Władysław, Bishop I 45–46, 48  
 Gorczyca Edward, Rev. I 364–65  
 Gorczyca, Family I 525  
 Gorecka Agnieszka see Górecka Agnieszka  
 Gorecki, Family II 869  
 Gorin George I 125; II 1007  
 Gorodecka Chana I 385–86  
 Gorska Maria Stefania, Sister see Górska  
   Maria Stefania (Sister Andrzeja)  
 Gorska Roza see Górska Róża



- Gorson Sigmund (Gruszkowski Zygmunt)  
I 92–93; II 1090–91
- Goryński Ludwik I 326
- Gorzowska Apolonia II 587
- Gorzynski Wladyslaw see Gorzyński  
Władysław
- Gorzyńska Genowefa see Górzyńska  
Genowefa
- Gorzyński Aleksander see Górzyński  
Aleksander
- Gorzyński Władysław II 854
- Gos Stefania (Goś) II 833
- Gosek Jan, Rev. II 722
- Gosik, Family II 1045
- Gostkiewicz Jadwiga I 211
- Goszczyńska Agnieszka II 587
- Goszczyński Adam, Rev. I 97
- Goś Edward II 833
- Gościmska Alicja I 411
- Gothajner Fanny II 1084
- Gotlieb, Pharmacist II 926, 1091
- Gottesfeld Heller Fanya II 632
- Gotthelf Niusia (Janowski) I 134–35
- Gottowt John (Gesang Isidor) I 80
- Götzel David (Goetzel, Gilbert) I 185
- Götzel Miriam (Micki, Kurkowska Maria)  
I 185
- Gougeon Helen I 197
- Gover Meir G. II 1109
- Gozdalski Karol, Rev. II 577
- Gozdek Jadwiga, Sister I 167
- Gozdek Jan [Rev. ?] II 988
- Góral Aleksandra II 1105
- Góral Jan II 1105
- Góralczuk Sergiusz, Rev. II 750
- Góralski Franciszek, Rev. II 672
- Górecka Agnieszka II 868–69
- Górecka Ewa II 1056
- Górecka Jadwiga II 869
- Górecki Piotr II 869
- Górecki, Dr. I 369
- Górny Grzegorz I 328
- Górny Jan, Rev. I 325
- Górska [?] Aleksandra II 843
- Górska Felicja I 236
- Górska Halina II 880
- Górska Maria II 714
- Górska Maria Stefania (Sister Andrzej)  
I 190–91, 195–97, 199; II 990
- Górska Oppenheim A. I 372
- Górska Róża I 312
- Górska Ryszarda I 236
- Górski Jerzy I 504
- Górski Jurek (Norek) II 914
- Górski Stanisław I 343
- Górski, Family II 1065
- Górzyńska Genowefa II 704
- Górzyński Aleksander II 704
- Górzyński Zdzisław (Grunberg, Michalczyk  
Jan) II 588
- Górzyński, Family II 703, 1057
- Góźdź Kaliksta, Sister II 923
- Grabczyński Jan II 1092
- Grabina Chana (Mackowicz Anna) II 868–69
- Grabiński, Family I 286
- Grabiszewski Franciszek, Rev. I 115
- Grabowicz Józef II 1043
- Grabowicz, Family I 542
- Grabowiecka, Dr. I 440
- Grabowska Irena I 178, 180
- Grabowska Janina I 299; II 761
- Grabowska Stefania II 761
- Grabowska Urszula II 704–5
- Grabowska, Dr. I 386
- Grabowska, Mrs. II 892–93
- Grabowski Aleksander, Rev. II 581
- Grabowski Edward I 229
- Grabowski Henryk I 357–58; II 653, 1083
- Grabowski Jan I 29, 145, 170, 184, 404, 503;  
II 724, 734, 758, 797, 831, 1011, 1040–  
41, 1063, 1067, 1099, 1130
- Grabowski Michał, Rev. see Twarowski  
Michał, Rev.
- Grabowski Mieczysław, Rev. II 588
- Grabowski Stanisław I 50
- Grabowski Wacław, Rev. 794
- Grabowski Zbigniew Ryszard (Abrahamer  
Ryszard) I 170
- Grabowski, Rev. II 626
- Grabowski, Family II 761

- Grachovski Yozek see Grachowski Józef  
 Grachowski Józef I 129–30  
 Graczyk Maria (Sister Leonia) I 457–60  
 Gradel Chaim (Grabel) II 1106  
 Graf Esther see Liber Esther  
 Graf Herman II 862  
 Graf Róża II 862  
 Grajewski Mieczysław (Gray Martin) II 1064, 1103  
 Grajolski Stashik see Grocholski Staszek  
 Gramz Bolesław, Rev. II 1001  
 Gran Wiera II 1083  
 Grant Henry (Hanoch) II 808–9  
 Graczynska Wanda, Sister see Garczyńska Wanda, Sister  
 Grauden, Family II 1037  
 Gausam, Dr. I 369  
 Gravosi Yozek see Grachowski Józef  
 Grądzka Martyna I 115, 338, 447; II 759, 826, 899, 905, 971, 996, 999, 1010, 1012, 1014, 1017, 1029–30, 1106, 1111, 1116  
 Grądzka-Rejak Martyna see Grądzka Martyna  
 Green Jessica I 94  
 Green Sabina II 577  
 Greenberg Doris I 500  
 Greenberg Gershon II 728  
 Greenspan Lucia Rotman II 724  
 Gregorowicz Leon I 392  
 Gregorowicz Leonia I 392–93  
 Gregorowicz Maria I 392  
 Gregorowicz, Family I 392–93  
 Greifinger Giza (Zoszak Jadwiga, Sternberg) II 578  
 Greiser Arthur II 1088  
 Grek-Gozdek Jan see Gozdek Jan  
 Grela Feliks, Rev. II 733  
 Grenda Anna (Sister Ligorja) I 274, 277–79, 281–82; II 990  
 Grębicki Jacek (Grinberg Grisza) II 657, 1072  
 Gribou Henry (Grzybowier Haim) II 734–35  
 Grickevičius Artūras II 959  
 Griffel Andrew II 1088  
 Griffel Henryk II 1088  
 Griffel Paulina II 1088  
 Grim Emanuel, Rev. I 42  
 Grimm Emanuel, Rev. see Grim Emanuel, Rev.  
 Grin Hasya (Grün, Geselewitz Chasia) II 807  
 Grinberg Daniel I 112  
 Grinberg Esther (Morgenstern) I 413  
 Grinberg Jehoszua (Milewski Jan) II 578  
 Grinberg, Jewish Child I 457  
 Grinberg-Brown Chava II 1036  
 Grinblat Henryk (Chaim, Greenblatt Henry) II 945  
 Grinboim Erez I 480; II 798  
 Griner Faibish II 843  
 Griner Jakub Hersz (Pawłowski Grzegorz) II 1047  
 Griner Miriam (Goldin Miriam) II 843–44  
 Griner Rachel II 1037  
 Griner, Family II 843  
 Grinkraut Joel I 473–74  
 Grinkraut Priwa (Jabłońska Zofia, Konieczpolski) I 473–74  
 Grinszpan Lucia (Rotman) II 724  
 Grobelna Helena I 299  
 Grobelny Julian (“Trojan”) I 316–17  
 Grobelny Władysław, Rev. I 453; II 997, 1008  
 Groblicki Julian, Rev. I 116  
 Grocholska Maria II 737, 1049  
 Grocholski Stanisław II 737–38, 1049  
 Grochowski Kazimierz, Rev. I 138–39; II 1002  
 Grodis Jan, Rev. II 797, 1003  
 Grodzieńska Żurowska Krystyna I 236  
 Grodzka-Gużkowska Magdalena (Rusinek) I 320  
 Grodzki Hugolin, Brother I 47  
 Grogul Ignatiy, Eastern Orthodox Clergymen II 994  
 Gromelski, Teacher II 689  
 Grosfeld Eva (Chruszcz Józefa, Grosfeld Krawczyk Ewa) I 158–59  
 Grosfeld Olga I 159  
 Groslik Barbara II 854  
 Groslik Elzbieta (Elżbieta) II 854  
 Groslik Krzysztof I 266  
 Grosman Haika I 429  
 Grosman Pinsker Blanca (Górska Maria) I 441–42  
 Grosman Yitzhak-Shaya (Icchak) II 942

- Gross Hania II 1054–55  
 Gross Jan Tomasz I 27, 29, 146; 1020–21  
 Gross Jerzy (Yoram) II 1034  
 Gross Józefa II 900  
 Gross Klara II 1034  
 Gross Lena (Kaniawska) II 875–76  
 Gross Nathan II 1033–34, 1086  
 Gross Rachela I 515–17  
 Gross Sara II 1034  
 Gross Tzipora II 799  
 Gross, Family II 1065  
 Grosshaus Mojsie II 916  
 Grossman Chaika II 768  
 Grossman Jerzy (Jedlicki Jerzy) I 391–92  
 Grossman Vasily I 333  
 Grossman Wanda I 392  
 Grossman Wilhelm I 392  
 Grossman Witold I 392  
 Gruber Samuel I 560; 712, 1129  
 Grubowska Halina I 255; II 767, 828, 1113  
 Grudzieński Bolesław, Rev. I 529  
 Gruenberg Ziuta I 337–38  
 Gruenberg, Family I 337  
 Grunberg Halina (Hana) see Grynberg  
     Halina (Hana)  
 Grunberg Leon see Grynberg Leon  
 Grünberg Franciszka I 414  
 Grünberg Stefan I 414  
 Grünfeld Adela II 1054  
 Grünfeld Leon II 1054  
 Grünwald Maria II 1034  
 Grunwald Miroslav (Fred) II 929  
 Grunwald Simon II 710  
 Grupińska Anka II 1119  
 Grus Ewa (Lusia) II 626–27  
 Grüss Noe I 211; II 690, 924, 1046, 1049,  
     1067, 1074, 1088  
 Gruszka Teofil II 587  
 Grynbaum Mendel II 850  
 Grynberg Ewa II 828  
 Grynberg Hanka (Hana, Chana, Halina)  
     II 828–29, 859, 1045  
 Grynberg Henryk I 76, 157  
 Grynberg Laib Hersz (Leon) II 828  
 Grynberg Leon II 859, 1112  
 Grynberg Michał I 126, 132, 139, 151, 181,  
     203, 237, 298, 307–8, 319, 338, 371,  
     423, 519, 531, 540; II 579, 581–83,  
     613–14, 628, 634, 675, 677, 722, 751,  
     769, 821, 828, 834, 838, 844, 858–61,  
     866, 885, 908, 943, 971, 1043, 1064–65,  
     1084, 1099, 1112–13  
 Grynberg Mikołaj I 560  
 Grynberg Sara II 850  
 Grynberg, Family I 368  
 Grynblat Jankiel I 151; II 1057  
 Grynszpan Halina (Zylberbart) I 304  
 Grynszpan Inka (Kwiecińska Joanna) I 304  
 Grynszpan Szymon II 1105  
 Grynszpan Tadeusz I 304  
 Grynszpan, Family II 854–55  
 Grysman Charles, Rabbi II 1132  
 Grywińska-Adwentowicz Irena I 197  
 Grzebieluch Franciszek I 545  
 Grzebień Ludwik I 77, 548  
 Grzebowski, Mr. II 933  
 Grzegorzczak Stanisław, Rev. I 478  
 Grzegorek Józefa II 1059  
 Grzegorek, Family II 1059  
 Grzeliński Bolesław see Grzewiński Bolesław  
 Grzenkowicz Ferdynanda, Sister II 922  
 Grzesiak Tadeusz, Rev. I 423, 454; II 1007  
 Grzewiński Bolesław I 461–62  
 Grzmielewska Wiktoria II 779  
 Grzmiliewska Wiktoria see Grzmielewska  
     Wiktoria  
 Grzybowski Andrzej I 363  
 Grzybowski Antoni, Rev. I 491; II 995  
 Grzymała Ewa II 878  
 Grzywacz Szlomo II 941  
 Grzywacz, Mr. II 600  
 Guesnet François I 300; II 1053  
 Gugła Władysław II 1046  
 Gugulski Marcin I 288  
 Gulbin Maria, Sister II 721  
 Gulbinowicz, Family II 962  
 Gumol Kazimierz, Rev. I 116  
 Gurewicz Hanka II 785  
 Gurewicz Rachel II 785  
 Gurewicz Riwetka II 785

- Gurfein Jakub II 853–54  
 Guriono, Mrs. II 780  
 Gurska Aleksandra see Górska Aleksandra  
 Gurwicz Mina II 808, 811  
 Gurwicz So Moishe II 808  
 Gustaitis Pranas, Rev. I 26  
 Gustaw Leśniodorski I 108  
 Gut Opdyke Irene II 605–7, 1079  
 Gutenbaum Jakub I 205, 255, 300, 312, 550;  
     II 604, 679, 698, 969, 971  
 Guterman Ewa II 705  
 Guterman Simcha II 705  
 Guterman Yaakov (Guterman Jakub) II 705  
 Gutholtz Miriam II 1100  
 Gutkiewicz Piotr, Rev. I 406  
 Gutkiewicz Szajndla I 104  
 Gutman Israel (Yisrael) I 30–31, 58, 124,  
     151, 158–60, 166, 171, 181–82, 186,  
     188, 192, 196–99, 202–3, 206–7, 209,  
     211, 219–20, 225, 228, 231, 237–38,  
     241–42, 254, 260, 266, 274, 284–85,  
     288, 290–93, 299–302, 305–12, 316,  
     318, 320–21, 325–26, 328, 334, 337–  
     38, 340–41, 350, 360, 371, 382, 387,  
     391–93, 400–1, 404, 406–7, 414, 417,  
     422, 424, 429–31, 434, 436, 441, 444,  
     447–48, 451–52, 464, 479, 481, 484,  
     486–500, 508, 512, 519, 525, 530, 535,  
     540, 543–44, 549, 553–56, 559–61, 564;  
     II 579–82, 590, 592–94, 599–600, 605,  
     609–10, 613–16, 620, 624, 628–30, 634,  
     636–38, 644, 646, 649, 651, 654, 656,  
     660, 672, 675, 677, 686, 690, 704–5,  
     708, 710, 712, 717, 719, 721–24, 739,  
     743, 751–52, 758, 762–64, 768, 770,  
     777–80, 785, 800–2, 804–5, 812, 816,  
     821–34, 836–46, 850, 885–62, 866–67,  
     869–70, 874–76, 879–80, 886, 903, 908,  
     912, 917, 921, 924, 933, 935, 943, 945,  
     955, 962, 969–70, 988–89, 996, 999,  
     1003, 1019, 1029, 1035–37, 1039–40,  
     1042–43, 1045–48, 1050–52, 1054–58,  
     1063, 1066–67, 1069, 1071–72, 1074–  
     75, 1079, 1081, 1089, 1093, 1095,  
     1104–7, 1110, 1112–13, 1127, 1135–36  
 Gutman Józef II 1107  
 Gutman Miriam II 674  
 Gutman Renia II 878  
 Gutmanas Michailas II 961  
 Guttman Irving II 1080  
 Guttman Leon II 644–45  
 Guttman, Family II 644–45  
 Guz Alicja I 303  
 Guz Barbara I 301  
 Guz Leon I 301, 303  
 Guzik Janina II 667  
 Guzik Stanisław II 667  
 Guzik, Family II 667  
 Gwiazda Abram II 831  
 Gwiazda Felicia II 831  
 Gwozdowicz Irena II 825  
 Gwozdowicz Matylda II 825  
 Haas Franciszek I 507  
 Haas Roze Zofia (Panekiewicz) I 416  
 Haas Wiktoria I 507  
 Habela, Family I 401  
 Haber Frieda (Fryda) I 485–86  
 Haber Oscar (Oskar) I 485–86  
 Hac Wanda I 237  
 Haczela Peregryn (Jan), Rev. I 556; II 1004  
 Hadassah (Halinka), Daughter of First Dov  
     Berish I 246–47  
 Hader Rock Regina II 637  
 Hadryszewska Natalia, Sister I 225  
 Haezrahi-Bürger Yosef II 1099  
 Hager Rachel II 776  
 Hagin Malkah II 646  
 Hagin Pinhas II 646  
 Hahn Issy I 79  
 Hajt Lusja-Halinka (Zipi, Zipora Kamon)  
     I 238–39  
 Hajt Pola (Wall) I 238  
 Hakman Malka II 752  
 Halamaj, Family II 644  
 Halamajowa Franciszka see Hałamaj  
     Franciszka  
 Halberstam Ben Zion, Rabbi I 487; II 958  
 Halevy Benjamin I 71  
 Halicz Hanka II 653

- Haller Maria II 899  
 Halperin Józef I 454; II 1008  
 Halpern Fania (Galpern, Lubitch) II 743  
 Halpern Sam II 796  
 Halstock Yechezkel (Halshtok Yehiel Halevi),  
     Rabbi I 342  
 Halter Marek I 244, 315; II 936, 1083  
 Halweg Halina I 310  
 Hałamaj Franciszka II 644  
 Hałamaj Wilhelm II 644  
 Hałuniewicz Zygmunt, Rev. I 395  
 Hamera Marian II 1100  
 Hamerman Blima I 489  
 Hampel Symcha II 733–34  
 Hanak, Family II 933  
 Haniszewski Julian, Seminarian I 491  
 Hankiewicz, Rev. II 797  
 Hannson Per Albin II 1024  
 Hanusewicz Aleksander, Rev. II 812  
 Hanusiak Michael I 411  
 Hanusowski Sykstus, Rev. II 744, 1004  
 Hanzowa Andzia II 845  
 Hanzowa Maria II 845  
 Hański Mieczysław II 917  
 Hański Tadzio (Galewicz) II 917  
 Hapońska Franciszka (Sister Gertruda) I 404  
 Harasimiuk, Family II 762  
 Harf Marta II 596  
 Harmelin Raoul II 1123  
 Harnik Kalman II 632  
 Hart Aleks II 628–29  
 Hart Klara II 628–29  
 Hartenstein Leon I 554  
 Hartenstein Wilhelm (Szelożyński Roman)  
     I 554  
 Hartman John J. I 279  
 Hass Izabela (Zula) I 490–91  
 Hatzair Hashomer II 752  
 Haukal Ibn I 73  
 Hausner Tony II 1076  
 Hauswirt Zofia II 1092  
 Hayes Peter II 1025, 1028  
 Hądyńska Regina (Renia) I 392  
 Heberer Patricia I 538  
 Hefer Michal (Żurakowska) I 168  
 Heider Icek II 672  
 Heiler Alicja II 669–70  
 Heininger, Friend of Zofia Pilichowska II 689  
 Heinzl, Mr. I 550  
 Hel Guerchon I 105  
 Hela, Young Jewish woman I 406  
 Helena, Sister I 157  
 Helfgott Anita (Jaworska Anna) see  
     Ekstein Anita  
 Helfgott Etzel (Edzia) II 615  
 Helfgott Fiszal II 615–16  
 Helfgott, Family II 615–16  
 Helfing Isadore II 1105  
 Helicher Mendel (Martin) I 83–84  
 Heller Ari Leo I 363  
 Heller Nusia I 186  
 Heller Stern Anna (Kucharuk Anna) II 640  
 Hellreich Bernard Ryszard (Ingram) II 1050  
 Helman Anna (Załuska, Górka Anna) I 463  
 Helman Bronia II 1063  
 Helman Piotr (Surmacki Piotr) I 463  
 Helman Ruta (Haberman Ruth, Ossowska  
     Basia) I 226; II 715–16  
 Helman Salomea II 723, 1063  
 Helman Shlomo (Szłoma) II 1106  
 Helman Zula II 613  
 Helmreich William B. II 1095, 1120  
 Hendzel Weronika, Sister I 305; II 990  
 Hendzel, Family II 1048  
 Henrych Adam I 324  
 Henrych Wanda I 324  
 Hera Janina I 111, 138, 235, 250, 288, 392,  
     489, 529, 539; II 661, 700, 777–79, 847,  
     1044, 1048, 1059, 1075, 1091, 1102  
 Herbert Ulrich II 1094  
 Herc Meir I 151; II 1068  
 Hercberg Jungerman Helena I 566  
 Hercberg Zybert Chaja Helena I 566  
 Herkowitz Libicz II 1100  
 Herman Ewa (Grzybowska, Grybowska,  
     Czermak Ewa) I 395; II 588, 865  
 Herman Maria (Sister Urszula) I 289  
 Herman, Family I 395; II 588  
 Hermelin Rudolf I 364–65, 368–69  
 Herstein Celina II 670

- Hert Kazimierz II 589  
 Hertz Zofia I 246  
 Hertzberg Arthur, Rabbi II 939  
 Herzig Jakob Jehoszua I 487  
 Herzog Anna II 614  
 Herzog, Rabbi I 531  
 Hescheles Altman Janina II 1055  
 Heszeles Janina I 560  
 Heszeles Mariusz Jerzy I 560  
 Heuman Fred II 729  
 Heuman Henryk (Tarnawski Andrzej) II 882  
 Heuman Karolina (Regusz Marta) II 882–83  
 Hewelt Kamil I 492  
 Heydrich Reinhard II 1019, 1136  
 Hilberg Raul I 328; II 1020, 1024, 1065, 1135  
 Hilchen Henryk, Rev. I 381; II 988  
 Hillel Marc II 1118  
 Hiller Shachne (Berger Stanley) II 938  
 Hilman, Mr. II 899  
 Himiltsbach Jan II 705  
 Hindes Izio I 422  
 Hipsz Pola II 938  
 Hirsch Aisic (Porszskinsky Bronisław) II 590–91  
 Hirsch Eugenia I 393  
 Hirsch Ignacy I 392  
 Hirsch Sara Beila I 519  
 Hirsch Zofia I 393  
 Hirsch, Family I 393; II 591  
 Hirschler Gertrude I 560; II 1129  
 Hirszfeld Ludwik I 352, 362–64, 368–70; II 1033  
 Hitler Adolf I 91, 121, 191, 247, 322; II 585, 733–34, 755, 1019, 1125, 1133, 1136–37  
 Hlebowicz Henryk, Rev. II 805–6  
 Hlond August, Cardinal I 33, 353–54; II 735  
 Hoch Icchak (Icek) I 558  
 Hoch Mendel II 862  
 Hochberg Eugenia (Ginia, Lanceter Gina) see Hochberg Lanceter Gina  
 Hochberg Lanceter Gina II 635  
 Hochberg Rose (Róża) I 542, 453  
 Hochberg Zelig I 542  
 Hochberg-Mariańska Maria I 211; II 690, 924, 1046, 1049, 1067, 1074, 1088  
 Hochlerer Luba II 1064  
 Hodge Freda II 962, 1104  
 Hoeft Józef, Rev. I 47  
 Hoff Eva II 930  
 Hoffman Eva II 764, 996, 1122  
 Hoffman Jerzy II 925  
 Hoffman Jola II 741  
 Hoffman Teodozja, Sister II 898  
 Hoffman Valter II 1094  
 Hoffman Zenon (Zeno) I 554  
 Hoffmann Bedřich I 50  
 Hofman Louis II 702, 798  
 Hofmekler Dalia (Hofmekler-Ginzburg, Jadwiga, Jadvyga) II 961  
 Hofmekler Michael II 961  
 Hofmekler Perla (Pera'le) II 961  
 Hofmekler, Family II 961  
 Holcman, Family II 807  
 Holdengraeber Lola II 826  
 Holdengraeber Rita II 826–27  
 Holewa Mateusz, Rev. I 487  
 Holler Edward I 507  
 Hołub Bolesław, Rev. I 405  
 Homme Maria, Sister I 541  
 Homnyuk, Benefactor II 632  
 Honig Jack (Yankel) I 511  
 Honig Jack II 797  
 Honig Józef II 711  
 Honig Samuel II 797  
 Hönigman Rachela I 163  
 Honigwachs Sabina (Bruk, Wójcik Maria) I 68, 401–4  
 Honigwachs, Family I 401  
 Hopfeld Gitel II 710  
 Hopfenstand Eleonora I 307  
 Hoppen Jerzy I 109  
 Horba Albin, Rev. I 132–33  
 Horbaczewska Zofia I 135  
 Horbaczewski Paweł I 363  
 Horn Estera (Ochlewska Maria) II 857  
 Horn Felix (Wójcik Feliks) II 575, 798, 1119  
 Horn Maria Halina II 768  
 Horn Perla II 857  
 Horn Zofia I 274  
 Horodko Stanisława II 767



- Horodyński Witold II 750  
 Horodyński, Family I 401  
 Horowicz Zofia II 854  
 Horowicz, Family II 854  
 Horowitz Avraham II 1120  
 Horowitz Sara Reva II 943  
 Horski Judge II 739  
 Horwat, Mrs. II 899  
 Hosticzko Józef II 660  
 Hosticzko, Family II 659–60  
 Hoszowska-Mikre Waca I 188  
 However Adam S. II 631  
 Hromiak Maria II 634–35  
 Hryc, Benefactor II 1123  
 Hrycaj Wacława, Sister II 643  
 Hrynaskiewicz Leonard, Rev. I 221  
 Hryniowicz Bronisława (Sister Beata) I 163–66; II 990  
 Hubel Czesława I 227  
 Hubel Zofia I 227  
 Huberband Shimon, Rabbi I 76, 103–4, 111, 139; II 766  
 Huberman Godel II 711  
 Huberman Ruzhka (Huberman-Ayvan Ruzshke) II 702–3  
 Huener Jonathan I 50–52  
 Humeński Julian I 72  
 Huneke Douglas K. II 1071  
 Huppert Jerzy I 551  
 Hurman Abram II 1033  
 Hurman Sonia II 1033  
 Huzarski Alfreda II 633  
 Huzarski Fryderyk II 633–34  
 Huzarski Marian II 633–34  
 Huzarski Zbigniew II 633–34  
 Huzarski, Family II 633–34  
  
 Iarmusik Edmund S. I 133; II 789  
 Idasiak B. II 1052  
 Idasiak, Family II 1052  
 Idźkowski Jan, Rev. II 760  
 Iglicki Wacław (Steinhendler Szul) II 1108–9  
 Ignaczewski Henryk, Rev. I 222  
 Iliński Paweł, Rev. I 382–83  
  
 Ilonka Fajnberg (Feinberg Ilona, Górska Róża Maria, Kołakowska Marysia) I 311–12  
 Imiołek, Family I 321  
 Imshennik Vladimir, Eastern Orthodox Clergymen II 994  
 Inwentarz Bella I 387  
 Inwentarz Fejgele I 387  
 Inwentarz Jasek (Carmeli Josef, Karmeli Yosef) I 387–88  
 Iranek-Osmecki Kazimierz I 560; II 604, 683, 1010  
 Irving Engelson II 794  
 Isakiewicz Elżbieta I 256–57, 276, 278, 484, 559; II 834–35, 861, 1077  
 Isakowicz Leon, Rev. I 536  
 Ismach Szmuel (Shmuel) II 770  
 Itkin Feiga II 780  
 Iwańców Adolf, Rev. II 607  
 Iwański Henryk (“Bystry”) I 373  
 Iwicki Witold, Rev. I 373; II 998  
 Izdebski Józef II 1033  
 Izraelsky Katsev Khyene (Israelski Kacaw Chana) II 1081  
 Izydora, Sister II 913  
 Iżowski Jerzy, Rev. I 399  
 Iżycka-Fedorska Romana (Roma) II 618  
 Iżycka, Family II 619  
  
 Jablonkowska Leonia see Jabłonkowska Leonia  
 Jablonska Judy see Jabłońska Izia  
 Jablonska Maria see Jabłońska Maria  
 Jablonska Teresa see Jabłońska Teresa  
 Jabłonka Leonia (Jabłonkówna Maria Leonia) I 288  
 Jabłonka Leonia (Jabłonkówna Maria Leonia) II 1032  
 Jabłonkowska Leonia II 861  
 Jabłonowska Helena, Countess I 517–18  
 Jabłonowski, Family I 486  
 Jabłońska Antonina II 761  
 Jabłońska Fela (Felicja, Fajga) I 186  
 Jabłońska Izia (Jabłońska Iska, Jabłońska Józefa (Józia), Kolt Judy) I 177, 186–87  
 Jabłońska Maria I 392

- Jabłońska Regina II 677–78  
 Jabłońska Teofila (Tosia, Tauba) I 177, 186–87  
 Jabłońska Teresa, Jewish girl I 288  
 Jabłońska Teresa, Benefactress II 761  
 Jabłoński Abraham (Bloch Bogdan) I 466–67  
 Jabłoński Jan II 761–62  
 Jabłoński Józef (Gedali Wanger, Żółty) II 761  
 Jabłoński Michał, Rev. I 76; II 678  
 Jabłoński Stefan I 186–87  
 Jabłoński, Mr. II 925  
 Jabrzemski Roman I 235  
 Jacewicz Wiktor I 97, 116, 125, 405; II 971, 995, 1001–2, 1005, 1007, 1010–11  
 Jachimczyk Maciej I 347  
 Jachimek Franciszek (Frank) II 656  
 Jachimek Maria II 657  
 Jachimowicz Joachim I 374  
 Jachna, Mr. I 400  
 Jachna, Mrs. I 400  
 Jachna, Family I 400  
 Jachowicz Bronisław II 938  
 Jachowicz Józefa II 938  
 Jachowicz, Family II 938  
 Jackl Klara I 299, 543  
 Jackowski Stanisław (Stanisław) II 1039  
 Jacob, Engineer II 778  
 Jacobson Jadwiga I 544  
 Jacobson Władysław I 544  
 Jadrzyk John, Rev. see Jadrzyk Jan, Rev.  
 Jafe Ester II 778  
 Jaffe Anna (Monika) I 432–33  
 Jaffe Yakov I 432  
 Jaffe Zofia (Sara) I 432  
 Jagiełłowicz Michał I 63  
 Jagła Brunon, Rev. I 115  
 Jagła (from Łódź), Rev. II 798  
 Jagodziński Antoni, Rev. I 435  
 Jagodziński Stefan I 341  
 Jaguścik Alojzy I 473  
 Jaguścik Anna I 472  
 Jaguścik Władysław I 472–73  
 Jahns Maria I 180  
 Jahr Rubin Irena (Terlecka Janina) II 578  
 Jaje Anna II 1067  
 Jaje Stanisław II 1067  
 Jaje, Family II 1068  
 Jakiri Efraim II 829  
 Jakobson Ignacy I 468; II 1056  
 Jakobson Roman I 74  
 Jakowski Ryszard II 962  
 Jakuba, Sister I 277, 282  
 Jakubowicz Jakow II 821  
 Jakubowicz Jakub I 519  
 Jakubowicz Józef I 519  
 Jakubowicz Szlama II 940  
 Jakubowicz Tadeusz II 686–87, 1066  
 Jakubowska Zofia (Sister Innocenta) I 207  
 Jakubowski Bronisław, Rev. I 537  
 Jakubowski Dawid II 928  
 Jakubowski John (Jan), Rev. I 34  
 Jakubson Dawid, Rev. I 122  
 Jakus Zygmunt, Rev. I 511  
 Jałbrzykowski Romuald, Archbishop I 21, 424–25, 431; II 780  
 Jamicka Irenka I 177  
 Jan, Half-brother of Brodzka-Wald Alina I 371  
 Janas Krysia I 157  
 Janasz Sara (Silver Leslie, Janaszewska Lucyna) I 325  
 Janasz, Family I 325  
 Janczak-Żak Hanna II 1032  
 Janczarek Władysław (Władysław) II 721  
 Janczewski Leon, Rev. II 724  
 Janecka Katarzyna I 301  
 Janecki Walerian I 301  
 Janiak Maria II 841  
 Janicka Irena (Życka) I 363; II 720  
 Janicki Franciszek, Rev. I 116  
 Janiecki, Rev. II 751, 753  
 Janik Bronisław II 653  
 Janik Eleonora, Sister II 922  
 Janik Stanisław, Rev. I 220; II 1009  
 Janina, Sister of Sokołowska Hanka I 457  
 Janina, Sunger in the Warsaw opera chorus II 897  
 Janke Wenceslaus (Wacław), Rev. I 34  
 Jankiewicz Eleonora, Sister I 229  
 Jankowska Genowefa II 802  
 Jankowska Halina (Brulińska) II 846

- Jankowska Janina I 158  
 Jankowska Kornelia, Sister I 290–91; II 990  
 Jankowska Stanisława I 228  
 Jankowska Stenia I 197  
 Jankowski Bolesław II 846  
 Jankowski Julian, Rev. II 778  
 Jankowski Stanisław I 217; II 1123  
 Jankowski Stanisław M. I 348; II 998  
 Jankowski, Prewar school teachers 160  
 Jankowski, Family II 761, 846  
 Janowicka (Janowska) II 872  
 Janowicz Jan II 779  
 Janowska Maria see Yanovska Marishka  
 Janowska-Boisse Ewa I 549–50  
 Janowska-Ciońcka Anna I 549–50  
 Janowski Henryk I 105  
 Janowski Marcin I 118  
 Januszkiewicz Aleksander I 440; II 778  
 Januszkiewicz Zofia II 778  
 Jare Eugenia (Diamant Gina) I 405  
 Jarkowska-Natkaniec Alicja I 87  
 Jarmulski Saturnin I 227–29  
 Jarocka, Mrs. II 916  
 Jaromińska Bronisława II 770  
 Jaromiński Stanisław see Jeromiński Stanisław  
 Jaroń Idelfonsa, Sister I 418–20  
 Jarońska Maria I 213  
 Jaroński Bronisław I 213  
 Jaroński Leszek I 213  
 Jaroński, Children I 213  
 Jarsz Franciszek II 1033  
 Jarsz Józef II 1033  
 Jarsz Maria II 1033  
 Jarsz Stanisław II 1033  
 Jarsz, Family I 400–1; II 711  
 Jarszewicz Albin, Rev. I 20; II 742, 996  
 Jarszewicz Jan, Bishop I 263  
 Jarszynski Józef see Jaroszyński Józef  
 Jaroszyńska Bronisława (Sister Klara) I 406–10; II 990  
 Jaroszyńska Halina I 407  
 Jaroszyńska Natalia I 264  
 Jaroszyński Antoni I 410  
 Jaroszyński Józef I 407  
 Jarzmik Jan I 400  
 Jarża Józef, Rev. I 546  
 Jasienica Paweł II 755  
 Jasiewicz Krzysztof I 31, 388; II 1008  
 Jasik, Family I 361  
 Jasinska Anna see Jasińska Anna  
 Jasinski Włodzimierz, Bishop see Jasiński Włodzimierz, Bishop  
 Jasińska Anna I 309–10  
 Jasiński Jan II 672  
 Jasiński Włodzimierz, Bishop I 42, 342  
 Jaskowski Boleslaus (Bolesław), Rev. I 34  
 Jaskólska Janina I 519  
 Jaskulska Hermina Helena, Sister II 698  
 Jastrzab Antoni (Jastrzab) I 473–74  
 Jastrzab Leokadia (Jastrzab) I 473–74  
 Jastrzab Łukasz I 51, 99  
 Jastrzębska Nonna I 299  
 Jastrzębski Franciszek, Rev. II 615  
 Jastrzębski Stefan, Rev. II 655  
 Jasza (Yasha), Husband of Jetta (Yetta) I 431  
 Jaszczołt Tomasz II 1011  
 Jaszczuk Bronisława II 589–90  
 Jaszczuk Józef II 589–90  
 Jaszunski Grigori (Grisha) I 432; II 778  
 Jaszunski Irena I 432  
 Jaśkiewicz, Family II 629  
 Jawor Tadeusz II 1093  
 Jaworski Adam II 678  
 Jaworski Franciszek, Rev. I 96–97; II 657, 1006  
 Jazdończyk Jan, Rev. I 99  
 Jaziewicz Wacław, Rev. I 491  
 Jaźwicz Katarzyna, Sister I 162  
 Jaźwińska Maria I 204  
 Jaźwiński Aleksander I 204  
 Jądrzyk Jan, Rev. I 38  
 Jedlicka Wanda (Grossman, Grosman) II 1083  
 Jedynak Witold I 405; II 1005  
 Jegergarn Chaim I 71  
 Jegergarn Chava I 71  
 Jeleń Hanka II 1044  
 Jeleń Stanisław II 1044–45  
 Jelska Helena I 454; II 1009  
 Jemielity Witold, Rev. II 733, 1007

- Jenicz Andrzej II 957  
 Jentel Kita (Kitaj) II 751  
 Jeromiński Stanisław II 770  
 Jeschiwe Augustyna I 412  
 Jesionowski Feliks I 565  
 Jetta (Yetta), Sister of Bak Mitia I 431  
 Jezierska Helena, Sister II 1011  
 Jezierska Maria II 725  
 Jezierska Wacława II 1033  
 Jezierski Anzelm, Rev. I 539  
 Jeżowski Lesław I 554; II 1003  
 Jędrzejewski Sylwester I 221  
 Jędrzejko, Rescuer of Jews I 559  
 Jędrzkiewicz Franciszek, Rev. I 531  
 Jiruska Maria Antonina II 880  
 Jiruska Stefania Weronika II 880  
 Jiruska Wanda II 880  
 John Paul II, Pope (Wojtyła Karol) I 91–92, 198; II 725, 936–39  
 Johnson Paul II 936  
 Jonas, Rev. Lithuanian priest from Vidkulė I 26  
 Jonatan Barkai II 799  
 Joseph Judyta (Kachel Judith, Koniak Franciszka) II 869  
 Joseph, Rev. II 605–6  
 Jospa Olga II 829  
 Jospa, Family II 829–30  
 Jozwikowska Stanisława, Sister see Józwikowska Stanisława, Sister  
 Józej, Jewish man I 412  
 Józwik Marek I 384, 553; II 1064, 1075  
 Józwikowska Stanisława, Sister I 163–66; II 990  
 Juanski Zbigniew see Juański Henryk  
 Juański Henryk I 328  
 Judziński, Family II 1035  
 Junak, Engineer I 505  
 Jung Mosze II 956  
 Jurandot Jerzy II 1111  
 Jurasz Szczepan, Rev. II 883–87  
 Jurczak Helena Anna I 310  
 Jurczuk Jerzy II 756  
 Jurczuk Marianna (Jurczak) II 756  
 “Jurek”, Family I 401  
 Jurytko Bronisława II 933  
 Jurytko Brunon II 933  
 Jus Andrzej I 525–26, 529  
 Jus Karolina (Frist) I 525–27  
 Juškevičius Michailas II 959  
 Juszcak Maria I 236  
 Juszcak Stanisława Rakower I 236  
 Juszczyk Krzysztof II 653  
 Juszkiewicz Ryszard II 583, 1065  
 Juśkiewicz Leokadia (Sister Longina) I 274, 277; II 990  
 Juzwa Józef II 643  
 Kac (Edelist), Dr. of Łódź I 134  
 Kac Daniel II 1072  
 Kac Estera II 1072  
 Kac Felicia II 837  
 Kac Helena II 807  
 Kachel Helena I 328  
 Kaczanowski Afanazy II 1061  
 Kaczerewicz Zelda II 761  
 Kaczerginski Szmerke II 779–80  
 Kaczmarczyk Magdalena, Sister II 923  
 Kaczmarczyk Tadeusz, Rev. II 997  
 Kaczmarczyk, Family I 226  
 Kaczmarek Czesław, Bishop I 547  
 Kaczmarek Franciszek II 825  
 Kaczmarek Teresa II 825–26  
 Kaczmarek Władysława (Władysława) II 825  
 Kaczmarek, Family II 949, 1044  
 Kaczorowska Anna I 327  
 Kaczorowska Antonina I 219–20  
 Kaczorowski Andrzej W. I 191, 197, 199; II 1069  
 Kaczorowski Józef, Rev. II 630  
 Kaczykowska Jadwiga, Sister II 748  
 Kaczyńska Maria I 290  
 Kaczyńska Sabina, Sister I 107  
 Kaczyński Apolinary, Rev. II 1006  
 Kaczyński Marek II 941  
 Kaczyński Zygmunt, Rev. I 45, 367, 457; II 965  
 Kadłubkiewicz Kamila, Sister II 699  
 Kadzielski Mieczysław I 383  
 Kagan Berl II 655

- Kagan Henryk I 446, 448, 450  
 Kagan, Family I 451  
 Kahan I. (Cohen Yisrael) II 964  
 Kahana Bertha see Scharf-Kahane Berta  
 Kahane David, Rabbi I 143  
 Kahane Leon II 638–39  
 Kahane Shifra see Ben Nun (Kahana) Shifra  
 Kahane Shimon (Szymon) I 543–44  
 Kahane, Family II 639  
 Kahn Leon II 1082  
 Kahn Leora II 776  
 Kaiser Izrael I 71  
 Kajdas, Mr. II 686  
 Kajetanowicz Dionizy, Rev. I 536  
 Kajler Felicia (Sandzer) II 879  
 Kajler Mirla II 879  
 Kajles Irena (Krzysztoporska, Abramowicz)  
     I 197  
 Kakowski Aleksander, Cardinal II 799  
 Kalabinska Marta II 866  
 Kalabiś Rozalia II 933  
 Kalas Maria II 649  
 Kalata-Olejniki Krystyna I 291, 300  
 Kalb Chaja (Helena) I 411  
 Kalb Emanuela, Sister I 412  
 Kalb Józefa I 412  
 Kalbarczyk Julian, Rev. I 414  
 Kalbarczyk Sabina I 302  
 Kalbarczyk Stanisław I 302  
 Kalchheim Moshe I 131  
 Kaleko Shaul (Barkeli) II 727  
 Kalenkovitch Isaac Yaakov, Rabbi I 136  
 Kaleta Maria (Baruszyńska Alfreda) II 665–66  
 Kaletska Anna II 1094  
 Kalfuss Rachel (Skrzydłowska Maria)  
     II 823–24  
 Kalib Sylvan I 478  
 Kalicka Aniela II 1033  
 Kalicka Maria II 848  
 Kalicki, Family II 700  
 Kalinowicz Julian I 545  
 Kalinowicz Juliusz I 545  
 Kalinowicz Richard I 544–45  
 Kalinowicz Tadeusz I 545  
 Kalińska, Jewish woman II 918  
 Kalisher Shmuel I 560; II 757, 760, 1060–61  
 Kalisiewicz Józef (Józef) II 762  
 Kalisiewicz Mieczysław (Mieczysław) II 762  
 Kalisiewicz Paweł (Paweł) II 762  
 Kalisiewicz Wacław (Wacław) II 762  
 Kalisiewicz Władysława (Władysława) II 762  
 Kalisiewicz, Family II 762  
 Kaliska Rachela (Anna) I 177, 179, 193  
 Kaliska [first name unknown] I 177  
 Kaliski Emil (Domagalski Józef) I 177, 193  
 Kaliski, Family I 417  
 Kalisz Michał I 68, 402, 404, 406, 487–89;  
     II 1049  
 Kalita Janina II 576  
 Kalmanovich Zelig II 728  
 Kalmus Halina (Gorcowicz) I 374–79  
 Kalmus Sabina I 30  
 Kalski Sofia II 1037  
 Kalski Tadeusz II 1043  
 Kaltman Ewa II 603  
 Kaltman Joanna II 603  
 Kałużny Stanisław, Rev. I 116  
 Kałowska Sabina Rachel I 477–78  
 Kałuszyńska Adela I 566  
 Kałuszyńska Krysia I 566  
 Kamerman Erna I 256  
 Kamieniecka Szejna (Zofia) II 756–57  
 Kamieniecki Arie (Jan) II 757  
 Kaminska Hanna see Kamińska Hanna  
 Kaminski Borys, Rev. (Orthodox priest)  
     II 746, 1004  
 Kaminski Józef, Rev. see Kamiński Józef, Rev.  
 Kaminsky Felix I 80  
 Kamińska Anna II 904  
 Kamińska Hanna II 593, 602  
 Kamińska Maria (Linder Ruta) II 611–12  
 Kamiński Józef, Rev. I 219–20  
 Kamiński Łukasz I 330, 503  
 Kamiński Maksymilian II 904  
 Kamiński Ryszard I 411  
 Kamiński Stefan I 260  
 Kamiński Tadeusz, Rev. I 205  
 Kanc Shimon I 76, 123, 350, 443–44, 446;  
     II 763, 792, 796, 919, 952–53, 1108,  
     1117

- Kanczanin Waclaw (Wacław) I 124, 430  
 Kanczanin Wanda I 124, 430  
 Kanczewska Zofia I 264  
 Kania Antoni, Rev. II 626–27; II 988  
 Kaniewska Janina II 859  
 Kaniewska Stanisława, Sister I 261  
 Kann Maria I 392  
 Kantarovich Esther I 432, 440  
 Kantorowicz Shimon II 1082  
 Kantorowicz Moishe II 1093  
 Kapalski Franciszek, Rev. I 77  
 Kapczuk Wawrzyniec, Rev. I 220  
 Kaperczak Zofia II 748  
 Kapias Janina II 1034  
 Kapica Antoni (Anton) II 679  
 Kapica Marta (Martha) II 679  
 Kapica, Family II 679  
 Kapilman Abraham I 286  
 Kapilman Bronia (Choter Bela) I 286  
 Kapinska Aniela see Kępińska Aniela  
 Kapitańczyk Adam II 1111  
 Kaplan Aron Arkadiy II 952  
 Kaplan Chaim Aron, Rabbi I 59, 360  
 Kaplan Ida Lewkowicz II 804  
 Kaplan Rachel I 541  
 Kaplan Rita (Gronowska Krystyna) see Lowenstein Rita  
 Kaplan Shabtai (Szabtaj) II 771  
 Kaplan Shepsl II 771  
 Kaplinski Baruch I 69  
 Kaplon Józef (Jozef) II 595–96  
 Kapłański Maria II 686  
 Kapłański Stefan II 686  
 Kapłański, Family II 1066  
 Kapral Janeczka II 868  
 Kapturkiewicz Leon, Rev. II 655  
 Kapusta Jan, Rev. I 221  
 Kardasz Henryk, Rev. II 765–66  
 Kardel Czesław, Rev. II 790  
 Kardisch Leiser II 833  
 Kardisch Rena (Renia) II 833–34  
 Kardisch Romek II 833  
 Kardisz Ester (Kardisch) II 833–34  
 Kardyś Sykstusa, Sister II 923  
 Kargol Antoni, Rev. II 710  
 Kariv Yosef II 1072  
 Karliner Oskar I 507  
 Karmeli Yosef I 387  
 Karmiol Ela II 822  
 Karol Alfred (Blitzylberg Leopold) II 596  
 Karol K. S. see Kewes Karol  
 Karp Benedykt, Brother I 467  
 Karpalska, Benefactress I 565  
 Karpala, Family II 688  
 Karpiński (Karpinski), Dr. of Warsaw I 105  
 Karpman-Rozenberg Chana II 1068  
 Karski Jan I 121, 347; II 998  
 Karsov-Szymaniewska Stanisława I 194  
 Kartshmer Kalmen II 745  
 Kartyganer Regina (Damaszek Maria, Szkolnicka Maria) I 253, 272–73  
 Kartyganer Rozalia I 273  
 Karuga Stanisław, Rev. I 491, 505  
 Karwowska Jadwiga (Zalewska) I 412  
 Kasia, Housekeeper of Biernacki Antoni, Rev. II 725  
 Kasimow Brown Rita II 787  
 Kasimow Harold II 787  
 Kasimow Miriam II 787  
 Kasimow Nachum (Norman) II 787  
 Kasiński Antoni II 800  
 Kasiński Michał II 800  
 Kasman Maria (Brauner) I 324  
 Kasprowicz Aniela, Sister II 891  
 Kasprzyk Helena I 508  
 Kasprzykowski Ignacy, Protestant Clergymen II 993  
 Kass Teresa I 236  
 Kassler Ewa (Kessler) II 901  
 Kassow Samuel D. I 123, 138; II 1113  
 Kastek Bolesław, Rev. I 478, 480  
 Kaszubowski Alojzy, Rev. I 40  
 Kaszubska Władysława II 1057  
 Katana Leon, Rev. I 399  
 Katarzyna, Daughter of Rybakowska Maria (Wieniewicz) I 214  
 Katsh Abraham I. I 59, 360  
 Katz Benjamin (Remigiusz) II 771  
 Katz Betty II 620–21  
 Katz Blima II 1050



- Katz Esesman II 668  
 Katz Etunia Bauer II 1077  
 Katz Icek II 1050  
 Katz Jacob II 731  
 Katz Janina II 686, 1066  
 Katz Mojżesz II 1050  
 Katz Rubin II 1101  
 Katz Steven T. II 652, 1071  
 Katz Yisrael I 28; II 1124  
 Katz Zofia I 548  
 Katzenellenbogen Oskar (Ortwin Ostap) I 539  
 Kaufman Jonathan I 159  
 Kaufman Mojsze (Bobrowski Michał) I 439  
 Kawiecki Franciszek, Rev. I 324–25  
 Kawula Karol, Rev. I 518  
 Kazimierowicz Aniela II 640  
 Kazuczyk Maria II 991, 1061  
 Kazuczyk Marianna II 768–69, 1061  
 Kazuczyk Zygmunt II 768  
 Kazuczyk, Family II 769, 1061  
 Kaźmierczak, Mrs. II 678  
 Kaźmierczyk-Gruszka Helena II 1033  
 Kącki Franciszek I 342; II 971, 1009  
 Kądziaława Stefania (Sister Czesława) I 401–2  
 Kądziołka Stanisław, Rev. II 1012  
 Kądziołka, Family II 1050  
 Keffermuller Bolesława II 621  
 Kegl Dolek (Bernat) I 510  
 Kegl Moniek I 510  
 Kegl Roman (Ciepiela) I 510  
 Keidar Amira II 719  
 Keiferowicz Elżbieta I 389  
 Keiferowicz Jadwiga I 389  
 Keiferowicz Teresa I 389  
 Keiferowicz, Family I 389  
 Keins Gary A. I 360  
 Keller Ita (Itta, Kobyłko Irena) see Ben Haiem Itta  
 Keller Jan, Rev. I 405  
 Keller Salka (Ginsburg) I 530  
 Keller Shimon I 530  
 Keller, Family I 530  
 Kemblińska Meta II 1033  
 Kempinski Michal see Kępiński Michał  
 Kempieńska Regina (Riegelhaupt) I 400; II 1033  
 Kempler Bernard II 908  
 Kempler Hanna (Lobel Anita) II 908  
 Kempler, Family I 337  
 Kener Celia (Rapp) I 138  
 Kenig-Bruder Helena I 255  
 Kenigswein Mosze (Miecio, Tirosh Moshe) I 309  
 Kenigswein Regina I 309  
 Kenigswein Sara (Stefcia) I 309  
 Kenigswein Shmuel I 308–9  
 Kenigswein Szmulik (Szulik, Stanisław) I 300, 309  
 Kenigswein, Family I 309  
 Kermish Joseph I 349  
 Kerner Antonina I 381  
 Kerocka Zosia II 909  
 Kerszman Gustaw II 767  
 Kertzer David I. II 1129  
 Kessler Kierszman Ada I 289  
 Kestenbaum Anna (Hana, Hanale) I 226  
 Kestenbaum Esther II 1035  
 Kestenbaum Moshe II 1035  
 Kestenbaum Moshe (from Grodzisko Dolne) II 1049  
 Kestenbaum Yaakov II 1035  
 Kestenberg Jurek II 1109  
 Kestenberg Maurycy (Moshe) I 416–17  
 Kevyurski Ranya (Wewiórska Renia) I 332  
 Kewes Karol (Karol K. S.) I 82  
 Kewlaker Haim II 758  
 Keys Kerry II 1070  
 Kębliński Józef, Rev. I 123  
 Kędra Władysław II 670  
 Kędra-Chodorski Lesław, Rev. II 669–70  
 Kędzierska Celina (Aniela), Sister I 234, 236, 270–71; II 991  
 Kępińska Aniela II 859  
 Kępiński Michał II 767  
 Kępiński Szlama II 859  
 Kępka Zbigniew II 687  
 Kfir Basia (Rehes Batia, Batya) II 863–64  
 Khan Azmat I 219  
 Kholozhin Shmuel II 960

- Kiałka Stanisław I 109  
 Kiałka Stanisław, Seminarian I 491  
 Kiedrowski Witold, Rev. II 587, 930  
 Kielak Marta I 365  
 Kielan Franciszek II 855  
 Kielan Krystyna II 855  
 Kielan Maria II 855  
 Kielan Zofia II 855  
 Kielan, Family II 855  
 Kiełbasiński Stanisław I 363  
 Kiepora Jan II 875  
 Kiepora Maria (Neuman) II 875  
 Kiepora-Kuc Helena II 875  
 Kierocinska Teresa-Janina, Sister see  
     Kierocińska Janina (Sister Teresa)  
 Kierocińska Janina (Sister Teresa) I 288;  
     II 991  
 Kierszman Renata I 289  
 Kijkowski, Family II 1111  
 Kijowska Maria I 452  
 Kijowski Władysław (Władysław) I 452  
 Kimchi Esther I 497–99  
 Kimmelman Leon I 107  
 Kimmelman Mira Ryczke I 107  
 Kindler Dawid II 643–44  
 Kindler Eli (Eliasz, Oleś) II 644  
 Kindler Laura II 643  
 Kindler Simche (Simcha) II 643  
 Kindler, Family II 644  
 Kinrus Wanda (Bołotna) see Bolotny Kinrus  
     Wanda (Litwak)  
 Kirjanow Helena I 385  
 Kirschenbaum Aaron II 1016  
 Kirszenbaum Mindzia (Kirschenbaum  
     Mindze) II 1045  
 Kirsztajn Alicja (Prusicki Alice) I 381  
 Kisiel Władysław, Rev. I 435  
 Kisiełewicz Czesława (Strąg) I 272–73  
 Kisiełewicz Rozalia I 272–73  
 Kisiełewska Jadwiga I 209, 297, 305–6, 312;  
     II 1011  
 Kist, Benefactor II 632  
 Kita, School teacher II 868  
 Kitaj-Drobner Helena I 559  
 Kittel Rudolf II 756  
 Kitz Emanuella (Sherman Illa) I 197  
 Kiżło Michał II 785  
 Klaczynski Roman, Rev. see Klaczyński Jan  
     Romuald, Rev.  
 Klaczyński Jan Romuald, Rev. I 47  
 Klang Abraham II 862  
 Klang Róża II 862  
 Klara, Sister (“Sisters of Service”) I 512  
 Klara, Sister (Jasna Góra monastery) I 263  
 Klarzuk Krystyna I 158  
 Klass Sholom, Rabbi II 1131  
 Klebanski Bronia II 1065, 1135  
 Klec Jacek II 1048  
 Kledzik Jan II 926, 1091  
 Kledzik Maciej I 358  
 Klee Ernst I 87  
 Kleiman Lidia see Kleinman Lidia  
 Kleiman Moshe (Klajman Mosze) II 1106  
 Klein Heniek II 1105  
 Klein Janina (Dyląg (Dyląg)) II 826  
 Kleinberg Alicja (Janowska) I 549–50  
 Kleinberg Ewa see Janowska-Boisse Ewa  
 Kleinberg Hanka (Anna) see Janowska-  
     -Ciońcka Anna  
 Kleiner Adolf II 616  
 Kleiner Al II 616  
 Kleiner Alek Elias II 935–36  
 Kleiner Józef II 616  
 Kleiner Juliusz (Zalutyński Jan) I 491; II 1060  
 Kleiner Maria I 491  
 Kleiner Yocheved (Joanna) II 616  
 Kleiner, Family II 616  
 Kleinfeld Edwarda (Rorat) II 710–11, 1063–64  
 Kleinman Bracha Bronia see Freiberg  
     Bendori Bracha Bronia (Kleinman)  
 Kleinman Lidia (Siciarz, Borowska Maria,  
     Wołoszyńska Maria) I 267–69  
 Kleinman Mendel I 267  
 Kleinman Nuske I 72  
 Kleinmann, Family I 114  
 Klementyna, Sister (Felician) II 876, 878  
 Kleniec, Family II 582  
 Klepacka Maria II 876  
 Klepfisz Michał (Michał) I 355–56, 358  
 Klęk Wincenta Wiktorja, Sister II 698

- Klich Aleksandra I 461; II 725, 799  
 Klig Basia (Golan Batya) II 831  
 Klig Chava-Chana (Klig Hava-Hanna) II 831  
 Klig, Family II 832  
 Klima, Mrs. I 495  
 Klimaszewska Wiktoria II 1092  
 Klimaszewski Józef II 1003  
 Klimczak Michał (Dionizy), Rev. I 20; II 742, 996  
 Klimczak Władysław, Rev. I 454; II 1003  
 Klimecki Stanislas (Stanisław), Rev. I 48  
 Klimek Łukasz I 114; II 876, 899, 905, 971  
 Klimkiewicz Jan, Rev. I 69  
 Klimowicz Henryk II 766  
 Klimpel Hugona, Sister II 911, 923  
 Klin David II 1133–34  
 Klinov Rina II 784–85, 1006  
 Klistała Jerzy I 441  
 Kliszko Michał, Rev. I 362, 384  
 Kloczowski Jerzy I 49  
 Kloze Józefina I 225  
 Kluger Erna (Hilfstein) I 170  
 Kluger Jerzy II 936  
 Klukowski Zygmunt I 78  
 Kluz Stanisława, Sister II 923  
 Kłobukowska Janina (Sister Róża) I 202  
 Kłobukowski, Family II 649  
 Kłoczowski Jerzy II 970  
 Kłodecka Kazimiera, Sister I 163  
 Kłodziński Stanisław II 1092  
 Kłos Lilla Małgorzata II 590  
 Kłosiński, Family II 1065  
 Kłosowski Roman I 483  
 Kłosowski, Family I 483  
 Kmieciak Kazimierz (Ireneusz), Rev. II 723  
 Kmieciński Józef see Kmieciński Józef  
 Kmieciński Maria see Kmieciński Maria  
 Kmieciński Sabina see Kmieciński Sabina  
 Kmieciński Józef I 124, 430  
 Kmieciński Maria I 124, 430  
 Kmieciński Sabina I 124, 430  
 Kmieciński Viktor I 430  
 Kmieć, Family II 615  
 Kmita Mieczysław, Rev. II 1011  
 Knabel-Margulies Malwina II 615  
 Knade Tadeusz II 1034  
 Knap Paweł I 555; II 821, 842, 1055  
 Knie Deborah (Adela) I 251  
 Knie, Family II 1067  
 Knobel Ester II 677  
 Knobloch Żanetta I 554  
 Knoch, Dr. II 926, 1091  
 Knyszyńska Lilka I 239  
 Knyszyńska Ruth (Róża, Flakowicz) I 239, 257  
 Kobierzyński Emil, Rev. II 632–33  
 Kobierzyński Emil, Rev. see Kobierzyński Emil, Rev.  
 Kobosko, Family II 762  
 Kobrzyński Józef II 1027  
 Kobus Justyna II 1084  
 Kobus, Mr. II 594  
 Kobylanski Mieczysław see Kobylański Mieczysław  
 Kobylańska Jadwiga II 826  
 Kobylański Mieczysław II 826–27  
 Kobyłko Tadeusz see Kobyłko Tadeusz  
 Kobyłko Adam I 530–31  
 Kobyłko Tadeusz I 530  
 Kochalski David A. II 674  
 Kochanowska Giga II 856  
 Koczorowska Jadwiga II 902  
 Koczorowski Zygmunt II 902–3  
 Koczorowski, Family II 902–3  
 Kodlik (Kudlik), Treblinka escapee II 1104  
 Koenig Isadore (Koenigstein) II 1105  
 Koenig Jerry (Koenigstein) II 1105  
 Koenig Mary (Koenigstein) II 1105  
 Koenig Michael (Koenigstein) II 1105  
 Koenig (Koenigstein), Family II 1105  
 Koenigstein Alina I 261  
 Kofman Yechezkal (Kaufman, Cooperman) II 1102  
 Kogut Janina II 724  
 Kogut Józia I 404  
 Kogutowicz Suplicja, Sister II 923  
 Kohen Albert II 1105  
 Kohen Stasiek II 1105  
 Kohn Felicja I 541; II 899, 905  
 Kohn Frida (Fela) II 903

- Kohn Severin (Gawroński Władysław) see Gabriel Severin
- Kokin Leon II 838
- Kokoszko Helena II 592
- Kokoszko Lusja II 600
- Kokoszko Maryna (Maria) II 600
- Kokoszko Michał II 600
- Kokoszko, Family II 600
- Kol Stan (Staś) I 300
- Kolasieński Bogdan II 926, 1091
- Kolbe Maximilian (Maksymilian), Rev. I 88–94, 348; II 1004–5, 1009, 1090
- Kolbina Wiktorina see Kolbińska Wiktorina
- Kolbińska Wiktorina I 211
- Kolin Stella I 205
- Kolko Moshe II 1093
- Koller Helena II 616
- Koller Mieczysław II 616
- Kolpanitzky Kopel II 1080
- Kolski Abraham (Abram) II 798, 1105
- Kolski, Rev. II 581
- Kołacińska-Gałązka Anna I 272, 300, 387–88; II 587, 634, 649, 822, 887, 904, 971
- Kołącz Wacław II 1035
- Kołąta Jolanta I 219, 226–27, 230
- Kołkowska Stanisława II 1110
- Kołkowski Ludwik II 1110
- Kołątaj-Szednicki Jan II 954–55
- Kołodziej Fortunata, Sister II 922
- Kołodziej Władysław, Protestant Clergymen II 993
- Komaiszko Jadwiga (Sister Mary Joseph of Jesus) I 357–58
- Komaj Don II 1081
- Komaj Maria II 1081
- Komański Henryk I 556; II 625–26, 630, 637–38; 884, 888, 1004, 1075, 1079
- Komar Edward, Bishop I 515
- Komar Konstantin, Eastern Orthodox Clergymen II 994
- Komarnicka Leokadia (Loda, Kemblińska Meta) II 880
- Komarnicka Maria II 624
- Komiążyk Aleksander II 1110
- Komiążyk Helena II 1110
- Komiążyk, Family II 1110
- Komidzierski, Family II 625
- Komorowski Bronisław, Rev. I 47
- Komorowski Edmund II 687
- Komorowski Henryk, Rev. I 366–67, 371–72
- Kompanijec Henryk II 750
- Komperd Zofia (Dygdała) II 824
- Kon Atkins Janina (Kaniewska Jasia) I 177, 186–91, 197; II 859
- Kon, Dr. I 104
- Konarski, Family II 1056
- Kondeja Urbana, Sister II 908–9, 923
- Kondras Katarzyna I 400
- Konefał Jan II 1004
- Konieczna Alojza, Sister II 866
- Konieczna Longina, Sister II 923
- Konieczny Antoni, Rev. (from Słomczy) II 687
- Konieczny, Rev. (from Lwów) II 798
- Konigsberg, Camp foreman II 886
- Konopska Walentyna II 1094
- Kopacz Róża I 549
- Kopciowski Adam I 173; II 707, 869
- Kopeć Anna (Kopec) II 1048
- Kopeć Stanisław II 1048
- Kopeć, Family II 1048
- Koper Antoni-Stefan II 856
- Koper Ewa II 1075
- Kopera, Family II 686
- Koperman Chana II 749
- Koperska Halina II 748–49
- Kopiec Benedykt, Eastern Orthodox Clergymen II 994
- Koplewicz Mordechai (Mietek, Capelle Michel) II 869
- Koplewicz Romana (Margitte) I 251
- Kopliński Wojciech (Anicet), Rev. I 373; II 999, 1009
- Kopówka Edward I 316; II 699, 704–5, 750, 763, 765, 996–7, 1057, 1099, 1104–6
- Koppa [?] Paul (Paweł), Rev. I 48
- Kopperman Gutsheh (Gita) II 749
- Kopperman Mendl II 749
- Koprowski Marek A. II 646–47
- Kopyciński Adam II 1092
- Kopyto Josek I 77; II 1052

- Kopytowski, Family II 762  
 Korczak Janusz (Goldszmit Henryk) I 84, 318, 361, 366–67; II 906  
 Korczak Jędrzek II 750  
 Korczak Rozka I 429  
 Korczak, Camp manager II 886  
 Kordabheh Ibn I 73  
 Koren Gabriel (Staś, Korn) I 274, 279, 281–82  
 Korman Roza (Cieciela Jadwiga) see Fajersztajn Rosa  
 Kormiol Piotr I 390–91  
 Korn Miriam see Gutman Miriam  
 Kornacki Stanisław (Stanley, Kupferblum Tanchum) I 184, 217–19, 343  
 Kornacki, Dr. II 702  
 Kornberg Izio I 422  
 Kornberg Nachum I 422  
 Kornblum Hannah (Borkowska Anna) I 464–66; II 913  
 Kornblum Izaak Wacek II 760  
 Kornblum Paula (Borkowska Apolonia) see Popowski Kornblum Paula  
 Kornelli, Family II 687  
 Korngut Adolf II 621–22  
 Kornilak Aleksander, Rev. II 702  
 Korniłowicz Władysław, Rev. I 22, 406  
 Kornitzer Smelkes, Rabbi I 113  
 Kornreich Gelissen Rena II 1093  
 Korobiec Emilia II 1082  
 Korobiec, Family II 1082  
 Koropiowski Zbigniew I 544  
 Korpalska (Karpalska), Mrs. I 566  
 Korpalski Stefan I 566  
 Korsak Tadeusz II 813  
 Korsak, Family II 813  
 Koryzna Maria (Marynia) II 624–26  
 Koryzna Stanisław II 624  
 Koryzna Wiktoria II 624  
 Koryzna Kamińska Teofila II 625  
 Koryzna, Family II 624  
 Korzeniewska Helena (Krukowiecka-Kruk, Korazim) II 581  
 Korzennik Helen I 508  
 Korzennik Józef I 508  
 Korzennik, Family I 509  
 Korzystko Maria I 274  
 Kos Eleonora II 653  
 Koscialkowska Anna see Kościółkowska Anna  
 Kosibowicz Józef, Rev. II 922  
 Kosibowicz Tadeusz I 64  
 Kosinski Jerzy I 522–24; II 1047  
 Kosinski Kiki I 523  
 Kosinski, Family see Kosiński, Family  
 Kosińska Elżbieta (Kosinska Elzbieta) I 522–24  
 Kosińska Józefa II 849  
 Kosińska, Mrs. II 891, 894  
 Kosiński Franciszek II 849  
 Kosiński Mieczysław (Kosinski Mieczyslaw) I 522–24  
 Kosiński, Family I 346, I 523–24; II 689, 849, 1047  
 Kosiorek Szczepan (Franciszek), Brother I 556; II 1004  
 Kosiorwski, Family II 1029  
 Kosmala Beate II 1018  
 Kosman, Family I 287  
 Kosmowska, Mrs. II 835  
 Kosmowski Stefan, Rev. II 703, 1044  
 Kossak-Szczucka Zofia I 113, 142, 347–49, 351, 469; II 732  
 Kossecka Joanna (Sister Krystyna) I 189  
 Kossower Michael I 105  
 Kostecki Franciszek II 587  
 Kostka Wilhelm II 933  
 Kostka Wincenty II 933  
 Kostołowski Stanisław, Rev. II 611–12  
 Kostrzewa Andrzej II 827  
 Kostrzewa Anna II 827  
 Koszanowski Zbigniew see Kozanowski Zbigniew  
 Koszutska Jadwiga I 299  
 Koszutki Kazimierz I 417  
 Koszyc Ludwik II 800  
 Koszyc Monika II 800  
 Kościakiewicz Maksymilian, Rev. I 105  
 Kościółkowska Anna I 431  
 Kościółkowska Maria I 431  
 Kościółkowski Witold I 431  
 Kościelniak Mieczysław II 1092

- Kościuszek Nepomucena, Sister II 817  
 Kośmider Wojciech, Rev. II 640–41  
 Kot Jan I 532  
 Kotarba Maria II 1089–90  
 Kotas Maria, Sister II 923  
 Kotkowsky Charles I 107  
 Kotlar Basia II 708  
 Kotlar Chana (Helen) II 708–9  
 Kotlar Golda II 708–9  
 Kotlar Hersh II 708  
 Kotlarzes, Family II 708–9  
 Kotler-Nakdimon Genia II 742  
 Kotlińska Bronisława I 300  
 Kotowicz Jasia II 600  
 Kotowicz Józefa I 535  
 Kotowicz Olena (Zybert) II 600  
 Kotowicz Stanisław, Rev. I 39  
 Kotowska Aniela (Sister Maria Klara) I 285; II 991  
 Kotowska Maria I 126, 132, 139; II 885, 1043  
 Kotowska Maria Jadwiga (Sister Alicja) I 84–85  
 Kott Jan I 22, 324  
 Kott Lidia I 255  
 Kott, Lawyer from Warsaw II 927  
 Kotula Kazimierz, Rev. I 491  
 Kotulova Helena (Kotulowa, Kotula) I 514–15  
 Kovch Omelian, Rev. I 26  
 Kovitzka Anna (Kaletska) II 742–43, 1094  
 Kovitzki Jack II 743  
 Kovitzki Meyer II 743  
 Kovner Abba I 425–30  
 Kovner Michas (Michaś, Michael) I 427–28  
 Kovner Rosa I 427–28  
 Kowalczuk Józef, Rev. II 789  
 Kowalczyk Bronisław (Bronislaw) I 484  
 Kowalczyk Czesław (Czeslaw) I 484  
 Kowalczyk Jadwiga II 1005  
 Kowalczyk Jan II 1033  
 Kowalczyk Jerzy I 484  
 Kowalczyk Józef I 390, 394, II 758–59, 761, 1061–62  
 Kowalczyk Józefa II 1033  
 Kowalczyk Salomea I 484  
 Kowalczyk Stanisław (Stanislaw) I 484  
 Kowalczyk Zofia (from Radomsko) II 912  
 Kowalczyk Zofia, Sister II 1011  
 Kowalczyk, Family I 482; II 662  
 Kowalewska Maria Anna II 689  
 Kowalewski Bernard II 789  
 Kowalik Edward, Rev. I 167  
 Kowalik, Polish Officer II 623  
 Kowalska Bronisława I 236  
 Kowalska Faustyna, Sister II 803  
 Kowalska Kazimiera II 849–50  
 Kowalska Maria (Gross Miriam) I 507–8  
 Kowalska Maria (from Ignacow) I 296  
 Kowalska Stanisława I 507–8  
 Kowalska Stefania I 548–49  
 Kowalska Teresa I 265, 548–49  
 Kowalska Zofia I 73–74  
 Kowalska-Kutera Helena II 675  
 Kowalska-Leder Justyna II 1059  
 Kowalska-Ulanowska Henryka II 739  
 Kowalska, Mrs. II 672, 891, 894  
 Kowalski Isaac II 736, 777–78, 780, 1069  
 Kowalski Józef I 508  
 Kowalski Józef, Rev. I 94  
 Kowalski Leszek I 508  
 Kowalski Marcin II 1119  
 Kowalski Roch I 463  
 Kowalski Wojciech II 828  
 Kowalski Zygmunt, Rev. I 366; II 575  
 Kowalski, Attorney I 306  
 Kowalski, Jewish boy I 265  
 Kowalski, Rev. II 785  
 Kowalski, Family I 346; II 828, 849  
 Kowicki Emil I 490  
 Kowicki Sophie I 490  
 Kozak Aleksander II 708–9  
 Kozak Bronisława (Bracha, Kruszevska Stanisława) I 413  
 Kozak Cesia (Cecylia) I 413  
 Kozak Dobra Jenta (Debora, Kruszevska Maria, Miliband Marion) I 413–14  
 Kozak Hadassa (Kruszevska Jadwiga, Wisia) I 413–14  
 Kozak Jan, Rev. II 808–11  
 Kozak Janina II 708–9  
 Kozak Maria I 423



- Kozak, Family II 708–9  
 Kozakiewicz Maria II 1094  
 Kozal Cester I 50  
 Kozal Michał, Bishop I 44, 48  
 Kozanowski Zbigniew I 328  
 Kozarska Eugenia II 843  
 Kozin Haim II 844  
 Kosińska-Romaniewicz Weronika II 1071  
 Kozioł Genowefa see Kozioł Genowefa  
 Kozioł Genowefa I 519  
 Koziołkiewicz Czesław, Rev. I 75  
 Kozura Florian, Rev. I 89  
 Kozłowicz Anthony, Rev. see Kozłowicz Antoni, Rev.  
 Kozłowska Zofia see Kozłowska Zofia  
 Kozłowicz Antoni, Rev. I 38  
 Kozłowska Halina I 299  
 Kozłowska Teofila, Sister I 386; II 991  
 Kozłowska Zofia II 779  
 Kozłowski Tadeusz II 1056  
 Kozniak Zofia see Koźniak Zofia  
 Kozubal Marek I 394; II 641  
 Kozubowska, Mrs. II 891, 894  
 Kozubski Zygmunt, Rev. II 892–93  
 Kozuliewicz Janina II 643  
 Koźmian Jan II 712  
 Koźniak Zofia I 520  
 Kraciuk Barbara, Sister II 665  
 Kracovski Yozeq see Grachowski Józef  
 Krahel Tadeusz, Rev. I 18, 122–23, 125, 133, 139, 424–25, 428, 435, 440, 442, 445, 447; II 763, 768, 742, 778, 780, 784–85, 789–90, 792, 800, 802–3, 806–7, 812, 816, 971, 996–97, 1000–2, 1005–6, 1008  
 Krajewska Barbara I 565  
 Krajewska Elżbieta II 689  
 Krajewska Janina II 1100  
 Krajewska Kazimiera, Sister I 292  
 Krajewska Leokadia II 627  
 Krajewski Edmund II 627  
 Krajewski Jakub II 1100  
 Krajewski Mirosław II 689  
 Krajewski, Family II 1100  
 Krajterkraft Hanna (Dziedzio Regina) II 906–7  
 Krakauer Renate II 624–25  
 Krakowski Shmuel I 30–31, 448, 489, 554; II 646, 690, 999, 1003, 1075  
 Krakówka Franciszka (Adela Bińczak) II 757  
 Krakówka, Dr. II 920  
 Krall Hanna I 256, 357–58; II 923, 1032  
 Krall Jadwiga I 256  
 Kransnosielsk Norbert II 797  
 Kranzler David II 760  
 Krasicki Józef I 417  
 Kraska Immakulata I 412  
 Krasnodębska Maria I 299  
 Krasnodębska Marianna (Jarosz) II 711, 1051  
 Krasowska Janina I 264  
 Krassowski Aleksander, Rev. II 706  
 Krasucki Piotr I 223–24  
 Kraśny, Family II 1055  
 Kraus Sara (Kolkowicz) II 721–22, 831  
 Krause Edmund, Rev. I 347, 385  
 Kraushar Aleksander I 250  
 Krawczyk Józef II 1056  
 Krawczyk Wiktoria (village of Tarłów) II 1056  
 Krawczyk Wiktoria, Janitor (Kraków) II 683  
 Krawczyk Władysław, Rev. II 725–26  
 Krawecki Adam II 735  
 Krayzel Miryam I 478  
 Krebs Dennis L. II 970  
 Kreczmar Felicja I 324  
 Kreczmar Jerzy I 324  
 Kreise Aleksander I 439  
 Krempa Andrzej I 509; II 1068  
 Kreplak Chana II 1110  
 Kreplak Hersch II 1110  
 Krepski, Family II 1082  
 Krepy Ludwik see Krępa Ludwik  
 Krepy Wanda see Krępa Wanda  
 Krepy, Family see Krępa, Family  
 Kret Apolonia (Sister Benedykta) I 164–65  
 Kret, Family II 621–22  
 Kretowicz (Chinson Jadwiga) II 759  
 Kretowicz Jan, Rev. II 804–6  
 Kretowicz Onufry II 805  
 Kretz Anna (Daniszewski Henriette, Kopłowicz) I 270–71  
 Krępa Ludwik II 856

- Krępa Wanda II 856  
 Krępa, Family II 856–57  
 Krępeć Irena II 1053  
 Krępeć Jerzy II 1053  
 Krępeć, Family II 1053  
 Krętosz Józef, Rev. I 405, 489, 554, 556;  
     II 641, 650, 653, 1001, 1003–5  
 Krizel Miriam (Krakowska Marysia) see  
     Krayzel Miryam  
 Kroch Janina I 256  
 Krochmal Genia (Baker) I 556  
 Krochmal Jacek I 279  
 Krochmal Leo I 556  
 Krochmal Rosa (Raisl) I 556  
 Krokowski, Rescuer of Jews I 393  
 Kronenberg Abraham I 75  
 Kronisch Leib (Leon, Kronish) II 610  
 Kronstein Bella II 640  
 Kronstein Henryk II 640  
 Kronstein John (Jacob) II 640  
 Kronstein Mira II 640  
 Kronstein Schatzker Helene II 640  
 Krowicka Joanna (Joasia) II 624  
 Król Grzegorz I 251  
 Król Janek II 711  
 Kruczek Konstanty, Rev. II 643  
 Kruczkiewicz Władysław II 609  
 Kruczkowska Jadwiga I 486; II 921  
 Kruczkowski Ludwika II 610  
 Kruczkowski Łukasz II 610  
 Krueger Henryk II 579  
 Krüger (Krueger), Family II 1048  
 Krugman Gurdus Luba II 671  
 Kruk Herman II 746, 779–81  
 Krukierok, Family II 940–41  
 Krum Adela (Kowalik) II 623–24  
 Krum Mira (Marysia, Ledowski Mira)  
     II 623–24  
 Krupa Anzelma, Sister II 922  
 Krupa, Family II 686  
 Krupavičius Mykolas, Rev. II 779  
 Krupnik Henry II 837  
 Krupowicius Mykolas, Rev. see Krupavičius  
     Mykolas, Rev.  
 Kruszelnicka Helena II 903–4  
 Kruszelnicka Malwina II 903–4  
 Kruszewska Janina, Sister I 235, 262  
 Kruszewska Maria I 260  
 Kruszewski Adolf, Rev. II 761–62, 988  
 Kruszyński Józef, Rev. II 722  
 Kruth, Mr. I 559  
 Krutnik Iuzefa II 621  
 Kruze Bolesław I 416–17  
 Krygier Salomea (Gemrot) see Gemrot  
     Salomea  
 Kryński Jan, Rev. I 122  
 Kryński, Family II 697  
 Krystal Ester I 422  
 Krystal Maria I 422  
 Krystal Zosia I 422  
 Krystosik Stanisław, Rev. II 1006  
 Krystyna Bykowska II 593  
 Krywicz Stanisław (Krivičius) II 963  
 Krzemińska Bronisława (Sister Witolda)  
     I 386; II 991  
 Krzemiński Mieczysław, Rev. I 471–72  
 Krzepicki Jakub (Abraham) II 1102  
 Krzeszkiewicz Stanisław, Rev. I 34  
 Krzosek Stefania I 250  
 Krzus Jan II 639  
 Krzyczkowski, Family II 1046  
 Krzypow Halina (Greenberg) II 947  
 Krzypow Hancher Abraham II 947  
 Krzysztof Kunert Andrzej I 354  
 Krzysztoporski Stanisław I 254  
 Krzyściak, Mrs. I 393  
 Krzywicka Marta II 899  
 Krzywonos Maria (Krzywonosowa) I 520  
 Krzywonos Maria Walentyna, Sister I 230  
 Krzywonos, Sister of Boduch Józef, Rev. I 504  
 Krzyzanowski Bronisław see Krzyżanowski  
     Bronisław  
 Krzyzanowski Helena see Krzyżanowska  
     Helena  
 Krzyzos Antos (Krzyżoś Antoś) I 476  
 Krzyżanowska Helena I 206  
 Krzyżanowska Maria (Sister Maria Irena)  
     I 211  
 Krzyżanowska Zenobia I 417  
 Krzyżanowska Zofia II 1051

- Krzyżanowski Bronisław I 206–7  
 Krzyżanowski Józef, Rev. I 463  
 Krzyżowska-Kukulska Anna I 299; II 1034  
 Ksieni, Sister I 420  
 Ksieżopolski Antoni Julian see Ksieżopolski  
     Antoni Julian  
 Ksieżopolski Antoni Julian I 562  
 Ksieżyk, Rev. I 463  
 Kuba, Family I 214  
 Kubacki Michał, Rev. I 199–202; II 988  
 Kubar Zofia I 223; II 719–20  
 Kuberska Rywka I 393  
 Kuberska Sara Fajga (Helena) I 393–94  
 Kuberski Icchak (Icek) I 393–94  
 Kubik Mieczysław, Rev. I 454; II 1007–8  
 Kubina Teodor, Bishop I 461; II 799  
 Kubowicz Marian, Rev. I 463  
 Kuc-Froehlich Dorota II 933  
 Kucharczyk Czesław, Rev. I 205  
 Kucharski Kazimierz, Rev. I 109, 491  
 Kucharski, Mr. II 783  
 Kuchinskiy Stefan, Eastern Orthodox  
     Clergymen II 994  
 Kuchler-Silberman Lena I 253, 299; II 732,  
     937  
 Kucy Jan, Rev. II 619–20  
 Kuczer Hena (Budnicka Krystyna) I 313–14  
 Kuczera Anna I 504  
 Kuczkowska-Trzaskalska Izabella I 266, 299,  
     387  
 Kuczynska Marysia see Kuczyńska Maria  
 Kuczyńska Maria I 296  
 Kuczyński Edward, Cleric I 109  
 Kuczyński Józef, Rev. II 646–47, 800, 1000,  
     1003, 1008  
 Kuderewski Stanisław, Rev. II 785  
 Kudlik Arie II 1104  
 Kugelmass Jack II 740, 1007  
 Kuhar Robert (Kuchar), Rev. I 341  
 Kukielko Renya I 56; II 576–77  
 Kukielka Renia (Widuchowska Wanda) see  
     Kukielko Renya  
 Kukla Stanisław, Rev. I 41–42  
 Kuklik, Family II 1061  
 Kukolewska Zofia I 435  
 Kukolewski Jan I 435  
 Kukulska Maria I 299; II 1034  
 Kulas Zygmunt Zdzisław I 457  
 Kulbinger Jan (Bandrowski) II 915  
 Kulczycka Eugenia (Steinberg, Zalejska  
     Komar, Kirst Stanisława) I 381  
 Kulczycka Julia II 683  
 Kulczycki Bolesław II 635  
 Kulczycki Karol II 683  
 Kulczycki Władysław, Rev. I 115, 392, 561  
 Kulesza Joanna II 857  
 Kulesza Karol II 857  
 Kulesza, Family II 857  
 Kuliberda Romualda Józefa, Sister II 698  
 Kuligowska Helena II 858  
 Kulka Otto Dov II 970  
 Kulowski Leon II 1093  
 Kulpa Władysław Józef II 1034  
 Kulpa, Rescuer of Jews I 559  
 Kułak Kazimierz, Rev. I 125  
 Kumoch Jakub II 957  
 Kunat Leon, Rev. I 224  
 Kunda Helena I 135  
 Kunda Paweł I 135  
 Kunefal Ludwik (Ludwig) I 514  
 Kunegunda Genowefa I 483  
 Kunegunda, Sister I 82  
 Kunert Andrzej Krzysztof I 351, 353  
 Kuniak Yitzhak II 1053  
 Kunicki Jan, Rev. II 743, 798  
 Kuno Kruse II 666  
 Kupczyk Rafaela, Sister II 923  
 Kuper Harry I 65  
 Kuper Irena (Romano Irit, Kowalczyk Irena)  
     I 292–93, 295; II 590  
 Kuper, Family I 452  
 Kuperman Chana (Siloni) II 748  
 Kuperman Gita II 748  
 Kuperman Menachem II 1067  
 Kuperman Mendel II 748  
 Kupfer, Mr. II 850  
 Kupferberg Edna (Alma) I 532  
 Kupferberg Rachel I 532  
 Kupferblum Abram (Antek) I 409  
 Kupferblum Ewa (Kuper Eva) I 408–10

- Kupferblum Felicia I 124  
 Kupferblum Josef I 124  
 Kupferblum Leon I 409  
 Kupferblum Ludwik (Miedzinski, Miedziński) I 124, 430–31  
 Kupferblum Tanchum (Stanisław, Stach) I 409  
 Kupferblum Viktor I 124  
 Kupilas Franciszek, Rev. I 41–42  
 Kuras Wincenty, Rev. I 454; II 1008–9  
 Kurc Miriam II 805–6  
 Kurek Ewa I 17, 26–27, 51, 110, 143, 145, 147–48, 162, 168, 176–77, 193–94, 211–12, 220, 231, 249, 257, 263, 270–71, 284, 287, 292, 297, 412, 417–18, 447, 516–17, 539–40; II 595, 598, 644–45, 655, 699, 748, 843, 866, 868–70, 878, 907, 970–71, 979, 1037  
 Kurek-Lesik Ewa see Kurek Ewa  
 Kureniuk Maria (Michalina) I 559  
 Kuritzki-Shulzinger M. I 123  
 Kurkowska-Bronik Juliana Marianna I 307  
 Kuroczycka-Rusiecka Dana II 744  
 Kuropieska Józef, Rev. II 688  
 Kuropieski Jozef, Rev. see Kuropieska Józef, Rev.  
 Kurowska-Szczebic Anasztazja (Szczerbic) II 840  
 Kurowski Aleksander I 79  
 Kurpi Bronisława I 439  
 Kurpierz Tomasz II 954  
 Kurtz, Sisters from Poznań I 199  
 Kuryłowicz Adam II 1092  
 Kuryłowicz Zofia I 311  
 Kurzyna, Family I 404  
 Kushel Charna II 844  
 Kushel Elchik II 844  
 Kushel Judith II 844–45  
 Kuszell, Family I 216  
 Kuszyńska, Mrs. I 381  
 Kuśmierz Antoni, Rev. I 506  
 Kuśnirska Maria I 254  
 Kutrzeba Joseph F. II 1032, 1109  
 Kutrzeba Joseph S. (Fajwiszys Arie) II 751–53, 755–56  
 Kutrzeba Rela II 752  
 Kutser Sonia II 844–45  
 Kutz Michael I 418–21  
 Kuzin Maria II 758–59  
 Kuzniew Sofia I 520–22  
 Kuźniar Jan, Rev. I 520  
 Kwasowicer-Glikfeld Mira (Becker) II 768–69, 1061  
 Kwaśniewski Andrzej I 547  
 Kwiatek Franciszek I 483  
 Kwiatek Maria I 483  
 Kwiatkowska Maria I 307  
 Kwiatkowska Zofia I 207  
 Kwiatkowska-Biernacka Wanda I 301, 307–8  
 Kwiatkowska, Benefactress I 462  
 Kwiatkowski Jerzy II 999  
 Kwiatkowski Paweł, Rev. I 44  
 Kwiatkowski Stanisław, Rev. II 630  
 Kwiatkowski, Family II 1061  
 Kwiczała Józef, Rev. see Kwiczała Józef, Rev.  
 Kwiczała Józef, Rev. I 41  
 Kwiecińska, Mrs. II 672  
 Kwieciński Stanisław (Stanisław) I 480–82  
 Kwieciński, Mr. II 672  
 Kwinta Chava (Gerszonowicz) I 477  
 Kwolek Jan, Rev. I 117  
 Łabedz Helena see Łabędź Helena  
 Labensohn Judy II 833  
 Lach, Family II 683  
 Lachman Erich (Shaya) II 1105  
 Lachor Mieczysław, Rev. II 666  
 Lachowicz Ksawery see Lewkowicz Ksawery  
 Lachs Halina I 381  
 Lahun Agnieszka II 788  
 Lahun, Family II 788  
 Lajewska Gabriela see Łajewska Gabriela (“Bronka”)  
 Lak Jadwiga (Holas) I 253  
 Laks Hilary II 855  
 Laks Janina (Tola) II 855  
 Laks Romana II 855  
 Laks Szymon II 1093  
 Lamet Halina I 211  
 Lamet Meyer II 1074

- Lamming Robert I 18  
 Lampert Halina (Baczewska) I 177, 188–89  
 Lampert Lilian (Baczewska Ludwika, Lili) I 177, 188–89  
 Lancberg Daniel (Wojciech) II 596  
 Landau Bolesław I 193  
 Landau Elaine II 626  
 Landau Hana II 822  
 Landau Helman II 738  
 Landau Ludwik II 705  
 Landau Stefania I 193  
 Landau Zvi I 64  
 Landau-Czajka Anna II 795  
 Lande, Dr. I 408  
 Landesdorfer Irena I 480–82  
 Landesdorfer Regina (Głowacz Zofia, Głowacz) I 480  
 Landesdorfer Samuel I 481  
 Lando Aba II 747  
 Lando Jerzy I 385  
 Landowska Zofia II 868  
 Landowski Józef (Józef) II 868  
 Landowski, Family II 868  
 Landsberg Dan II 591–92, 601  
 Landsberg Daniel (Płochocki Wojciech) see Landsberg Dan  
 Landsbergowa P. I 372  
 Land-Weber Ellen II 874–75, 1050  
 Landy Zofia (Sister Teresa) I 410–11  
 Lang Jakub I 551  
 Langdorf Józef II 1037  
 Langer Magdalena I 193  
 Langer Ruth, Rabbi I 72  
 Lanner Anita I 541  
 Lapid Yair I 28; II 1125–26  
 Lapid, Family II 1125  
 Lapomarda Vincent A., Rev. I 448, 492; II 1065  
 Lask Israel M. I 559, 796  
 Laska Józef (from Bełchów near Nieborów) I 380  
 Laska Józef, Police commander in Bobowa (near Gorlice) I 487  
 Laska Ludwika I 155  
 Laska Marianna I 380  
 Laska Stanisław I 380  
 Laska, Family I 379–81  
 Laskey Heather I 197  
 Laskowiecki Konstanty II 601  
 Lassoga Klara II 846  
 Latał, Tailor II 684  
 Latała Agnieszka I 205, 255, 300, 312, 550; II 604, 679, 698, 969, 971  
 Latarus Berek II 1093  
 Latawiec Józefa (Józefa) II 876–77  
 Latawiec Tadeusz II 876  
 Latawiec, Family II 876–77  
 Latka Józefina, Sister II 923  
 Latosiński Michał see Lotoński Michał  
 Latoszyński, Family II 1035, 1045  
 Lau Yisrael Meir, Rabbi II 1131  
 Laubner Wilhelm I 461  
 Lauer Betty I 323; II 667  
 Laufer Tema II 931  
 Laukaitytė Regina I 26  
 Launer Pat I 542  
 Lautenberg Anita I 407  
 Lautenberg Jakub (Lotenberg Jakob) I 407  
 Lautenberg Karola I 407  
 Lawrence N. Powell II 732  
 Lazanowski Zaveduk Adele I 277  
 Lazar Litai Chaim I 359, 360  
 Lazar Zamenhof Ludwik I 368  
 Lazar, Greek Catholic Clergymen II 993  
 Lebenstein Eugene II 659  
 Lechka Helena II 621  
 Lechka Józefa II 621  
 Lechka Karolina see Lehka Karola  
 Lechka Kazimiera II 621  
 Lechka, Family II 621  
 Lechowicz Stanisław, Rev. II 664  
 Lechowicz Wacław, Rev. I 214  
 Lecker Marcus (Markus) II 1074–75  
 Lederer Shoshana (Szechner Rojza, Róża) II 624–25  
 Ledóchowska Urszula, Sister I 386  
 Ledóchowski Włodzimierz, Rev. II 955  
 Leginowicz Jan I 484  
 Leginowicz, Family I 484–85  
 Lehka Karola II 621

- Lehmann Rosa II 797, 799  
 Lehrer Shoshana (Ronis) I 251  
 Leib Karp Shmuel II 637  
 Leibel Benjamin I 382  
 Leibel Jehuda (Malinowski Roman) I 382  
 Leibner William II 670  
 Leibowicz Szymon I 511; II 797  
 Leichter Józef II 1049  
 Leiman-Skowroński Janek (Schtemberg Izrael) I 287  
 Leiner Esther (Elżbieta) I 271  
 Leiner Ludwika I 536  
 Leinkram Jerzy II 879  
 Leinkram Julian II 879  
 Leinkram Ruth II 879  
 Leipciger Nate II 933–34  
 Leipciger Nathan II 1125  
 Leivers Dorothy II 963  
 Leizer Franciszka II 665  
 Leja Andrzej II 1071  
 Lejawka Urbana, Sister I 395  
 Lekago Galina II 789  
 Lekago Mikhail II 789  
 Lemańska Bernarda, Sister I 234, 236, 254; II 991  
 Lemkin Raphaël II 1019  
 Lenart Bonawentura II 881  
 Lencka Marta II 879  
 Lendzion, Family II 1065  
 Lenz Claudia II 1018, 1025  
 Lenz Johann M., Rev. I 50  
 Leńko Józef, Rev. II 1000  
 Leociak Jacek I 263, 414, 432; II 592, 940, 971, 1000, 1011, 1046  
 Leoni Eliezer see Leoni-Zopperfin Eliezer  
 Leonia, Sister see Graczyk Maria  
 Leoni-Zopperfin Eliezer II 652, 734, 1071  
 Leonowicz Aleksandra I 406  
 Lepalczyk Irena I 199  
 Lepold Leon II 1120  
 Lerer Moshe I 442–43  
 Leščinskienė Marija see Leszczyńska Maria  
 Leshem Rachel (Kacev) II 960  
 Leshem Riva II 960  
 Lesiów Janina (Krakowicka Julianna) I 386–87  
 Lesniewska Helena (Sister Pia) see Leśniewska Helena (Sister Pia)  
 Lessing Marek II 1039  
 Leszczynska Zofia see Leszczyńska Zofia  
 Leszczyński Józef (Józef) II 828  
 Leszczyński Klemens II 828  
 Leszczyńska Maria I 489; II 723, 962  
 Leszczyńska Sabina II 828, 1069  
 Leszczyńska Stanisława II 1092  
 Leszczyńska Zofia II 828  
 Leszczyńska, Mrs. II 749  
 Leszczyński Anatol II 766  
 Leszczyński Franciszek, Rev. II 989  
 Leszczyński Mariusz, Bishop II 998  
 Leszczyński, Rev. II 797  
 Leszczyński, Family see Leszczyński, Family  
 Leszczyński, Family II 828–29, 859  
 Leśniak Apolonia, Sister II 922  
 Leśniak Stanisław, Seminarian I 491  
 Leśniewska Helena (Sister Pia) I 189, 191, 195, 389, 410  
 Letman Lea II 801  
 Leuchter Marcus David I 560; II 797, 1083  
 Lev Moyshe I 128  
 Levin Alex (Joshua) II 650–51  
 Levin Irene II 1018, 1025  
 Levin Samuel (Levinson) II 650–51  
 Levine Menachem, Rabbi II 1132  
 Levine Musia II 787  
 Levine Samuel II 1112  
 Levinienė Antonina II 931  
 Levite Abraham I 80  
 Lew Beata I 211  
 Lew Krystyna I 211  
 Lew Lola I 308  
 Lew Marek I 211  
 Lewandowska Anna I 45  
 Lewandowska Ilona II 807  
 Lewandowska Janina I 543; II 989  
 Lewandowska Maria, Sister I 107  
 Lewandowska Stanisława I 109  
 Lewandowski Henryk II 1083  
 Lewandowski Tadeusz I 543; II 989



- Lewar Zofia I 406  
 Lewartowska Ida II 1061  
 Lewek Michał, Rev. I 41–42  
 Lewi Ewa I 255  
 Lewiarz Jan, Rev. I 406  
 Lewicka Maria I 219, 226–27, 230  
 Lewicka Władysława, Sister II 901–2  
 Lewicki Anthony (Antoni), Rev. I 34  
 Lewicki Czesław II 1034  
 Lewicki Tadeusz I 74  
 Lewicki Zygmunt II 667  
 Lewin Artur I 563  
 Lewin Dawid II 862  
 Lewin Dioniza (Lewińska) I 224  
 Lewin Elżbieta (Woroszyło Barbara, Merel) I 563–64  
 Lewin Eugenia see Szajn Lewin Eugenia  
 Lewin Helen II 862, 917  
 Lewin Izrael II 798  
 Lewin Miriam II 801  
 Lewin Moshe (Levin Morris) II 801  
 Lewin Mosze II 862  
 Lewin Rhoda G. I 80  
 Lewin Ryszard I 563–64  
 Lewin Zofia I 107, 114, 116, 141, 155, 170, 178, 183, 194, 207–8, 212, 220, 230, 235, 245, 254–55, 264, 299, 305, 318, 324, 327, 346, 373, 404, 365, 381, 387–88, 390–92, 411, 435, 447, 464, 469, 505, 523, 531, 540–41, 546, 548, 560; II 575–76, 583, 588, 598, 623, 631, 654–55, 657, 665, 674, 678, 686, 688–89, 701, 704, 714–15, 725, 739, 748, 756, 758–59, 761, 768, 770, 861, 866, 875, 880, 902, 905, 923, 925–26, 969–970, 997, 1006, 1010, 1013–14, 1032–33, 1055–58, 1060–61, 1063, 1066–68, 1072–74, 1083–84, 1092–93, 1098, 1123  
 Lewin, Family I 563  
 Lewinkopf Elżbieta see Kosińska Elżbieta  
 Lewinkopf Henryk (Kosiński) I 522  
 Lewinkopf Jerzy see Kosinski Jerzy  
 Lewinkopf Moishe (Moses) see Kosiński Mieczysław  
 Lewinówna Zofia see Lewin Zofia  
 Lewinsky Yom-Tov II 749  
 Lewinson Adolf II 746  
 Lewinson Lea (Bętkowska Lucyna, Bętkowska-Krata Lucyna) II 746  
 Lewiński Jan, Rev. II 653  
 Lewiński Maciej, Rev. I 416  
 Lewis Helen II 933, 1095  
 Lewkowicz Halina (Brudner) II 808  
 Lewkowicz Halina II 598–99  
 Lewkowicz Ksawery I 454–55  
 Lewkowicz Leon I 529  
 Lewkowicz Maryla II 699  
 Lewkowicz Richard II 599  
 Lewkowicz, Family I 529  
 Lewosz Antoni (Leosz), Rev. I 435  
 Lewy Seva (Sheva) I 177  
 Leya Natasha (Gold-Lumer Natalie) I 320–21  
 Liber Esther I 525  
 Libera Krystyna I 490  
 Libfeld Ted II 933  
 Libicki Marcin I 51, 57  
 Libionka Dariusz I 184, 384; II 592, 1011, 1060, 1075  
 Libish, Uncle of Gilbert-Lurie Leslie II 737–38  
 Libo Alexander (Samuel) I 432–33; II 778–79  
 Libo Luba (Gilon) I 432  
 Libo Vera I 432  
 Librowska Zofia I 324  
 Lichnowska Lidka II 765  
 Licht Dziunia II 858  
 Licht Estera see Lighton Elizabeth  
 Licht Irena Stefania I 536  
 Licht Olek II 858  
 Licht Shimon II 858  
 Licht Szymon (Lighton Stephen) I 500–1, 536  
 Licht Teresa (Licht Irena, Urban Teresa Krystyna) II 858  
 Licht Terry see Cahn-Tober Theresa  
 Licht, Family II 858  
 Lichtenstein Philippe II 1095  
 Lichtensztejn Jakub II 766  
 Lichtig Bertha I 508  
 Lichtig Ruth I 508–9  
 Lichtman, Mr. II 747

- Lidegaard Bo II 1026  
 Lieberman David II 1101  
 Liebes Roman I 536  
 Liebeskind Ludwika II 838–39  
 Liebthal Franciszka, Sister I 234  
 Lieutenant Doliński II 751  
 Lifszitz, Mr. II 1096  
 Lifszyc Bogusława II 1055  
 Ligęza Zdzisław II 707  
 Lighton Elizabeth I 500–1  
 Ligonowski Mieczysław II 733  
 Likierman Irena see Bołdok Irena (Agata)  
 Likiernik Stanisław I 394  
 Likiernik Wanda I 394  
 Lilien Olga II 872–75, 1050  
 Lilientahl Józio II 581  
 Lilientahl Justyna II 581  
 Limbo Hieronim, Rev. I 126  
 Limon Zenon II 748  
 Lindeman Yehudi I 566; II 797, 1009  
 Lindenberg Gavriel II 643  
 Linder Ruta see Kamińska Maria  
 Linder Sara II 612  
 Linder Sender II 612  
 Lindzinowa Helena I 454  
 Liniewska-Halamajowa Helena II 644  
 Linkiewicz Antoni II 643  
 Linkiewicz Genowefa II 643  
 Linkiewicz, Family II 643  
 Linowska Klara, Sister II 882–85, 887  
 Linsker Beile Gittel II 644  
 Linsker Gitl II 644  
 Lior Israel II 1095  
 Lior-Lichtenstein Lauren II 1095  
 Lipa Zygmunt, Rev. I 416  
 Lipenholc Eta II 779  
 Liphshiz Cnaan I 473  
 Lipińska Malwina II 611–12  
 Lipka Helena (Sister Flawia) II 661  
 Lipka Wojciech, Brother I 108  
 Lipkunski Pinkhas II 745–46  
 Lipnicki Dawid (Andrzej) II 800  
 Lipniunas Alfonsas see Lipniūnas Alfonsas  
 Lipniūnas Alfonsas, Rev. I 26; II 779, 1000  
 Lipska Danuta I 308  
 Lipska Stefania I 308  
 Lipski Władysław (Władysław) I 308  
 Lipson Alfred I 91; II 1108  
 Lipszyc Aldona I 159, 363, 467–68  
 Lipszyc Małgorzata I 566  
 Lipszyc Różia I 566  
 Lipszyc, Mr. I 566  
 Lis Efrema, Sister II 922  
 Lis Irena II 589  
 Lis Ludwika (Lisówna), Sister I 234, 236, 991  
 Lis Tomasz I 343  
 Lisak Esther II 575  
 Lisiewska Teresa (Sara) I 300–1  
 Liskowska Ada II 768  
 Lisogurski Broder Chana II 697  
 Lisowski Franciszek, Bishop I 515  
 Lisowski, Family I 387  
 Liss Ahuva I 274  
 Liss Rachel I 476  
 Liszka Adela II 1048  
 Liszka Zofia (Sister Serapiona) I 401–2;  
 II 991  
 Litewska Anna II 592–93  
 Litewski Czesław, Rev. see Wilemski  
 Czesław, Rev.  
 Litner Tola II 917  
 Litowicz Rachel II 871, 874  
 Litowicz Rebecca (Marysia) II 871–74  
 Litvinoff Barnet I 74  
 Litwak, Family I 537  
 Litwiejko Kazimierz II 1011  
 Litwin Kazimierz, Rev. I 68, 401  
 Litwińczyk, Family II 1037  
 Litwiński Dominik, Rev. I 518–19  
 Litwiński Stanley II 706  
 Lizervitch Michal II 1101  
 Lobel Anita (Aneta, Hanna, Kemppler)  
 I 335–38  
 Lobel Bernard (Bernhard, Kemppler) I 335,  
 337–38  
 Loew Andrew I 456  
 Loew Clemens (Neustein Klemak, Nowicki  
 Klemak) I 456, 458, 461  
 Löffelholz Szymon II 616  
 Lojszczyk Rozalia see Łojszczyk Rozalia

- Lolek, Grandson of Maria Kasman I 324  
 Longhi Silvano II 1018  
 Lopata, Betar leader see Łopata, Betar leader  
 Lorenc Jan Kanty, Bishop I 71–72, 342–45  
 Lorenc Apolonia, Sister I 235  
 Lorenz Leah (Sawa Mary) I 252  
 Losinski Bernard, Rev. see Łosiński  
     Bernard, Rev.  
 Lossow Halina (Sister Joanna) I 70, 155, 204,  
     310, 410–11, 413  
 Loszek, Family I 171  
 Lotoński Michał II 587  
 Lowenstein Rita I 541  
 Lowy Edith I 108–9  
 Lozansky Bogomolnaya Rivka II 962  
 Lubaczewski, Family I 384  
 Lubasz Marcelli I 255  
 Lubelczyk Willenberg Ada II 1119  
 Lubelski Mieczysław I 547  
 Lubianiec Karol, Rev. II 1001  
 Lubicz Anna I 555  
 Lubliner Tamara (Tamar) I 325  
 Lubliner Władysław I 325  
 Lubling Yoram II 1130  
 Lubow George II 748  
 Lubowicki Kazimierz II 653  
 Lubowiecki Edward, Rev. I 541; II 905  
 Ludwik, Rev. (Augustinian priest) I 108  
 Ludwika Rozen (Bałda Józefa) II 825  
 Ludwika, Wife of Gans Fryderyk (Górny  
     Alfred) I 393  
 Lukas Richard C. I 55, 255, 383; II 1017,  
     1040, 1066  
 Łukaszewicz Pelagia see Łukaszewicz Pelagia  
 Łukowska Salomea see Łukowska Salomea  
 Lurie Rita II 738, 1050  
 Lusthaus Benedykt (Halicz Benedykt) II 653  
 Luśniak Jadwiga I 407–8  
 Lutjens Richard J. Jr. II 1019, 1024  
 Lutkiewicz Halina see Lyutkevich Lutkiewicz  
     Halina  
 Lutkiewicz, Family II 962  
 Lutnik Janina Ludmiła II 642  
 Lutnik Szczepan (Stefan) II 642–43  
 Lutnik Zofia II 642  
 Lutyński Czesław I 286  
 Lyutkevich Lutkiewicz Halina II 576  
 Łaba Karolina I 532  
 Łabęcka Janina Teofila (Sister Maria-Janina)  
     I 152–53  
 Łabęda Jan, Rev. I 550  
 Łabędź Helena I 370–71  
 Łach Stanisław, Rev. I 401–2  
 Łachowska Izabella (Łachowska) I 158  
 Łacina Jędrzej II 625  
 Łagocki Michał, Rev. I 345  
 Łaguń Genowefa, Sister I 225  
 Łaja Chana (Korn) I 212  
 Łajewska Gabriela (“Bronka”) I 359  
 Łaniewska Katarzyna II 1092  
 Łaniewski Julian Grzegorz, Rev. I 115  
 Łanucha Ernest, Rev. I 115  
 Łańcucki Adam, Rev. II 613–14  
 Łapiński Franciszek, Rev. I 123  
 Łapiński Tadeusz I 194  
 Ławkowicz Włodzimierz II 1091  
 Łazicki Jan, Rev. II 723  
 Łączniak Marcjanna (Sister Ambrozja)  
     I 401–2; II 991  
 Łeszeżanka Maria (Leszeża) I 189  
 Łoboda Helena, Sister I 343  
 Łojarczyk Rozalia II 829  
 Łopata, Betar leader I 359  
 Łosiewski Julian, Rev. II 769–70  
 Łosiński Bernard, Rev. I 40  
 Łoś Jan II 1051  
 Łoziewicz Zofia II 891, 893–95  
 Łozińska Maria II 944  
 Łozińska Pelagia I 30  
 Łozińska Zuzanna II 945  
 Łoziński Emil II 944  
 Łoziński Kazimierz, Rev. II 631  
 Łoziński, Family II 944–45  
 Łozowski Bolesław, Rev. I 130  
 Łozowski Cyprian, Rev. I 123, 125  
 Łubieńska Maria Cecylia, Sister I 541; II 901,  
     905  
 Łucja (Joasia), Sister I 432  
 Łuczak Czesław I 49

- Łuczniak, Mr. I 432  
 Ługowska Halina II 1033  
 Ługowski Zygmunt II 1033  
 Łukasiewicz Franciszka II 629  
 Łukasiewicz, Family II 629  
 Łukaszewicz Aleksander, Rev. II 781–82  
 Łukaszewicz Pelagia II 676–77  
 Łukaszewicz Stanisław, Rev. II 765  
 Łukaszewicz Władimirowa Zofia I 209  
 Łukomski Stanisław, Bishop I 29; II 752–54, 1007  
 Łukowska Jadwiga (Jadzia, Jadzhe) II 941–42  
 Łukowska Salomea II 578  
 Łuniewski Aleksander, Rev. II 1003  
 Łupiński Kazimierz, Rev. II 1003, 1007  
 Łuszczkiewicz Zofia (Sister Izabela, Izabella) I 507  
 Łuszczuk Tadeusz (Rosentreter Tadeusz) I 457  
 Łysik Józef II 1035–36
- Macadam Heather Dune** II 1093  
 Machaczek Janina I 415  
 Machaczek Józef I 415  
 Machaczek Józefa I 415  
 Machaczek Wincenty I 415  
 Macharowska Danuta I 210  
 Macharowski Ignacy I 210  
 Macharowski Ryszard I 210, 551; II 915  
 Machay Ferdynand, Rev. I 22, 114, 260; 683–85, 988  
 Machcewicz Paweł I 123, 125, 394; II 1062  
 Machnes Ariel II 784–85, 1006  
 Machniak Jan I 412  
 Maciejewska, Mrs. I 160  
 Maciejowska Felicja II 960  
 Maciejowska Germana II 960  
 Maciejowska Katerina II 960–61  
 Maciejowski Jonas Juozas II 960–61  
 Maciejowski Polikarp (Macijauskas Polikarpas, Maciejovskis), Rev. II 959–61, 988  
 Maciejowski, Family II 960–61  
 Macijauskaitė Germana see Maciejowska Germana
- Macijauskas Jonas Juozas see Maciejowski Jonas Juozas  
 Macijauskas, Family see Maciejowski, Family  
 Macijauskienė Felicja see Maciejowska Felicja  
 Mackiewicz Antoni, Rev. II 814, 816–17, 997  
 Mackiewicz Józef II 777  
 Mackiewicz Olgierd I 303  
 Mackiewicz-Niemczyk Aleksandra I 388  
 Macugowska Stefania II 850  
 Macugowski Józef II 850  
 Macugowski, Family II 850  
 Maćkowiak Władysław, Rev. II 788, 1006  
 Madaj Karol I 362  
 Madej Anna I 327  
 Madej Piotr I 327  
 Madura Tomasz I 510  
 Magenheim Maria I 320  
 Magenheim Stefan I 320  
 Magenheim, Family I 320  
 Magid Simcha II 960  
 Magidsohn Jon I 463  
 Mahorowska Teresa I 384, 553; II 1064, 1075  
 Maik Michael I 395; II 1113  
 Maimon Shlomo I 78  
 Majacki Janusz I 391  
 Majacki, Family I 390–91  
 Majcher-Ociesa Edyta II 1075  
 Majdański Kazimierz I 50  
 Majer Mania see Smith Mania  
 Majerans Anna II 665  
 Majerczak, Mr. II 922  
 Majerczyk Joanna (Joasia, Gomułka) I 318, 386  
 Majerczyk Maria I 318, 386–87  
 Majerhoff Berta II 670  
 Majerowicz Basia II 667  
 Majewska Alicja II 891  
 Majewska Maria II 892–93  
 Majewski Franciszek II 698–99  
 Majewski Henryk II 577  
 Majewski Jerzy S. II 906  
 Majewski Zygmunt I 324  
 Majka Bronisław, Rev. II 887–88  
 Majuk Dominika II 1119  
 Majuk Emil I 453; II 798

- Majus Krzysztof Dawid II 797  
Majzel Całko I 132–33  
Majzel Edmund I 223  
Majzel Jan (Mostowski Jan, Philipp Jan)  
I 223–24  
Majzel Karol (Laskowski) I 223–24  
Majzles, Dr. II 918  
Makarczuk Stepan II 1078  
Makarczuk Władysław, Rev. I 116  
Makarewicz Tadeusz, Rev. II 779, 804  
Makosiowa, Mrs. II 711  
Makow David I 258  
Makower Henryk I 363  
Makowiecka-Serafin Rozalia I 544  
Makowska Zofia (Sister Bogumiła) II 870, 991  
Makowska, Mrs. II 891, 894  
Makowski Janusz II 1091  
Makowski, Family II 582  
Makuch Maria Łukasz, Sister II 878  
Makut Krystyna II 666  
Makut Wanda II 666  
Malak Henryk Maria I 50  
Malberg Joanna (Malinowska Bronisława)  
II 801, 1081  
Maldis Jadwiga I 565  
Maletka Jan II 1099  
Maletka Stanisław II 1099  
Malicka Maria II 588–89, 999  
Malicki Marian II 588–89  
Malinowicz Bronisława I 254  
Malinowska Anna II 1004  
Malinowska Izabela II 829  
Malinowska Maria (Markus Rachel) I 382  
Malinowska Maria (Widera) I 239  
Malinowska, Mrs. I 394  
Malinowski Bronisław II 676  
Maliszewska Maria II 583  
Małkiewicz Aniela see Małkiewicz Aniela  
Małkiewicz Ludwika, Sister see Małkiewicz  
Ludwika, Sister  
Maltz Judy II 644, 1115  
Maltz Moshe II 644  
Maluga Jan II 707  
Malz Mina (Maltz, Schwinger, Sokołowska  
Czesława) I 483  
Małecki Andrzej R. II 1001  
Małkiewicz Aniela II 829–30  
Małkiewicz Ludwika (Halina), Sister II 591,  
593–98, 991  
Małkowska Józefa (Sister Emilia) I 274, 276–  
79, 281–83  
Małolepszy Kazimiera (Małolepsza, Sister  
Madeleine) II 958–59, 991  
Małowist Marian I 74, 349; II 1060  
Małuszyńska Helena I 299  
Małynicz-Malicki Mieczysław, Rev. I 131  
Małyśiak Albin, Bishop I 327–28; II 988, 1059  
Mamzer Tomasz, Rev. I 41  
Manaster Ramer Helena I 338–40  
Manaszczuk Antonina (Sister Irena) I 227–  
28; II 991  
Mandel, Family II 1051  
Mandelbaum Chana II 940  
Mandelbaum Franciszka II 713  
Mandelbaum Henryk II 932  
Mandelbaum Nechamia II 837  
Mandelberger Hanah (Avrutski Hanna,  
Avrutzky Hanna, Litwińska Hanka)  
I 197  
Mandelkern Benjamin II 1112  
Mandelman Abraham II 836  
Mandelman Andzia II 836  
Mandelman Josef II 836  
Mandelman Ruth II 836  
Mandelman Tamara II 836  
Mandelman, Family II 836  
Mankowska Józka see Mańkowska Józka  
Mankowski, Family see Mańkowski, Family  
Manor Alexander II 747  
Manowarda Stanisława, Sister I 389  
Mansdorf Josek II 1067  
Mansfeld-Booth Romualda (Goldynsztajn  
Ester, Goldenstein Ester) II 649  
Manski Samuil II 796  
Mantel Karolina II 704–5  
Mantel Maria (Kłosińska) II 705  
Manteuffel Leon I 310  
Manugiewicz Samuel, Rev. I 536  
Mańkowska Józka I 295  
Mańkowski Zbigniew II 830

- Mańkowski, Family II 830  
 Marber Estera II 856  
 Marceli Drobiński I 487  
 Marcelina, Sister (Felician) II 876, 878  
 Marchewka Antoni, Rev. I 469–70  
 Marchewka Stanisław, Rev. I 478  
 Marchione Margherita I 118–19, 190, 192  
 Marchlewicz Bronisław II 591–93, 601–2  
 Marciniak Gertruda (Stanisława), Sister II 591, 593, 596–97  
 Marciniak Jan (Antoni) II 637  
 Marciniak Maria II 637  
 Marciniak Stanisława (Sister Gertruda) II 991  
 Marciniak, Family II 585  
 Marciniowska Krystyna (Sister Eugenia) I 161–62; II 991  
 Marciszczuk Piotr II 628–29  
 Marciszczuk, Family II 628–29  
 Marczewski Jarosław R. I 45  
 Marczewski Mansuetus, Brother I 89  
 Marczyńska Magdalena I 210  
 Marczyński Aleksander II 1012  
 Marć Józef II 664, 1048  
 Marć Józefa II 664, 1048  
 Marek, Brother of Grosman Pinsker Blanca I 442  
 Margolis Alina (Margolis-Edelman) I 256–57  
 Margolis Anna I 468  
 Margolis Samuil (Alicia) II 847  
 Margolis Shelli II 847  
 Margules Józef I 195  
 Margules Lucille II 610  
 Margules Zygmunt II 610  
 Margulies Fanny II 856  
 Margulies Henryk (Jackowski Marian) II 827–28  
 Margulies Ida II 827–28  
 Margulies Malwina see Knabel-Margulies Malwina  
 Margulies Renata (Pick Margulies Johanna) I 229–30  
 Margulies Róża I 411  
 Maria Alina, Daughter of Haas Roze Zofia I 416  
 Maria Ancilla od Najświętszego Sakramentu (of the Blessed Sacrament), Sister I 411  
 Maria Zenona, Sister I 175  
 Marianowicz Antoni II 1068  
 Marinow J. II 792  
 Markevičius, Family II 746  
 Markiewicz, Farmer of Jagodne I 151  
 Markow Basia I 266  
 Markowska Marta II 1036  
 Markowski Florian, Rev. II 800  
 Markowski, Family II 1068  
 Marks Jane I 457  
 Marks Ruth (Glowinska Roma Serafinska Vislava, Serafińska Wisława) II 827  
 Markucki Władysław, Rev. I 492, 505  
 Markus Felicia (Minz Izabelle) I 382  
 Markus Marek I 423  
 Markus Moshe I 382  
 Marlow Jennifer I 439  
 Marossanyi Wanda II 1094  
 Marrin Albert II 730–31  
 Marsänger Józef, Rev. I 492  
 Marszak, Mr. II 861  
 Marszalec Janusz I 176, 182, 189, 193, 507  
 Marszałek Gabriel, Rev. I 405; II 636, 988  
 Marta, Sister (Benedictine Missionary Sisters) II 660  
 Marynowska Władysława I 298, 302  
 Marysia, Benefactress II 714–15  
 Marzerski Jan, Rev. see Mazerski Jan, Rev.  
 Marzynski Marian see Marzyński Marian (Kuszner)  
 Marzyński Marian (Kuszner) I 194, 219  
 Masewicz, Family II 962  
 Masłowicz Henryk I 324  
 Masłowicz Mortry I 324  
 Maśłowski Kazimierz, Rev. I 551  
 Masny Jan, Rev. I 115  
 Masojada Felicja II 650–52, 1070–71  
 Mastalski Lech I 462  
 Mastbojm Rywka (Wiśniewska Maria) I 421  
 Maślanka Józef II 830  
 Maślanka Wojtek II 703, 1044  
 Maślankiewicz Krystyna (Heldwein) I 154  
 Maślanko Mieczysław II 1092



- Matea Karol, Rev. see Mathea Karol, Rev.  
 Matejko Jan I 363  
 Matejko Leontyna I 443  
 Materski Wojciech I 53  
 Mathea Karol, Rev. I 41–42  
 Matityahu Bar-Razon II 790  
 Matlak, Family II 1054–55  
 Matros Maksymilam I 440–41  
 Matulaniec, Family II 1081  
 Matulski Ada (Gringlas, Kotlecka Zosia)  
     II 583  
 Matusiewicz Czesław, Rev. II 789  
 Matusiewicz Emilia II 615–16  
 Matusiewicz Józef II 615–16  
 Matusiewicz Paulina II 615–16  
 Matusiewicz, Family II 615–16  
 Matusik Barbara I 236  
 Matuszczyk, Family II 1037, 1116  
 Matuszewski Jozef (Józef) II 825  
 Matyas, Family II 1081  
 Matysiak, Family I 383  
 Matysik Marian II 733  
 Max, Uncle of Gilbert-Lurie Leslie II 733  
 Maxwell Elisabeth II 1031  
 Mayer Jan, Rev. I 115, 412  
 Mayer Margaret (Rita, Abzug) II 861  
 Mazak Stanisław (Stanisław), Rev. I 25;  
     II 628–29, 988  
 Mazerski Jan, Rev. I 220–21  
 Mazgaj Marian S. I 344  
 Mazur Bronisława II 611  
 Mazur Edmund I 264, 381; II 657, 1072  
 Mazur Grzegorz I 55  
 Mazur Krystyna II 857  
 Mazur Stanisław (Stanisław) II 611, 857  
 Mazur Zygmunt I 122, 539  
 Mazur, Mrs. I 393  
 Mazur, Family II 707, 857  
 Mazurek Andrzej II 739  
 Mazurek Felicja II 739  
 Mazurek Janina I 505  
 Mazurek Józef (Joseph) I 505  
 Mazurek Tadeusz II 739  
 Mazurkiewicz Agnieszka I 423; II 1073  
 Mazurkiewicz Jan I 493  
 Mazzeo Tilar J. I 315, 317  
 Mączka Piotr, Rev. I 97  
 Mączkowska Anna (Anita) I 183  
 Mączyński Władysław, Rev. I 115  
 McKale Donald M. I 57–58  
 Mech, Mrs. II 891, 894  
 Mechel Helman II 738  
 Medlinski Batia II 781  
 Medlinski Raizel (Nachimowicz) II 781  
 Medyński Kazimierz I 189, 193  
 Meed Vlada (Peltel Feigele, Miedzyrzecki,  
     Wonchalska Stanisława, Wąchalska  
     Stanisława) I 255, 258, 355–56, 358,  
     563; II 939, 1128  
 Meerson Michael II 737  
 Mehr Frieda I 533  
 Mehr Wanda (Spiegler Ida, Grabowieńska  
     Wanda) I 533  
 Meier, Mr. II 625  
 Meir Gideon II 1126  
 Meir ha-Kohen Yehuda ben I 73  
 Meiri Shmuel II 726  
 Meisel Fela (Felka, Renia, Mikołajczyk Felicja)  
     I 210; II 871, 873  
 Meisel Henryk II 871, 873  
 Meisel Nina II 873  
 Meisel Paula II 871  
 Meister Bertold II 824  
 Meister Lucja (Łucja) II 824  
 Meizner, Family I 394–95  
 Melcer Celina II 1081  
 Melcer Helena II 1081  
 Melcer Izaak II 1081  
 Melcer Raya II 1081  
 Melchior Małgorzata I 255–56, 258; II 905,  
     1033  
 Meller Andrzej I 539  
 Meller Bonaventura, Rev. see Metler  
     Bonawentura, Rev.  
 Meller Henryk II 925–26, 1088  
 Melnyk Józef II 905  
 Meloch Katarzyna (Meloch-Jackl, Dąbrowska  
     Irena) I 170, 228–29, 231, 300–2, 389;  
     II 663, 971–72  
 Meltzak Rose (Raisel) II 1076

- Meltzer Aviv II 632  
 Meltzer Shimshon II 1078  
 Melz Augustyn (Meltz), Rev. I 41  
 Mendelsohn Daniel II 640  
 Mendelson Michał I 387  
 Mendes-Flohr Paul R. II 661, 970  
 Mengele, Dr. II 1095  
 Menkes-Fast Cyla I 537–38  
 Menkes-Post Zyla see Menkes-Fast Cyla  
 Meozzi Laura, Sister I 437–38  
 Merc Adam (Künstlich Majer) I 29  
 Merenholc Helena I 347  
 Mermelstein Max (Weidenfeld) II 1076  
 Mermer, Family II 1056  
 Mesz Hanna II 1057  
 Meszorer Lucian I 392  
 Meszorer Ludwika I 392  
 Metler Bonawentura, Rev. I 47  
 Metzendorf Barbara II 875  
 Metzger, Family I 548  
 Mezvinsky Norton II 730  
 Męcikowski Alfons, Rev. I 198  
 Mędrzycki Anshel II 1102  
 Męski Zygmunt, Rev. I 117  
 Mianowska Aleksandra I 260; II 685  
 Miałkiewicz Stefania, Sister I 187, 235; II 689–90  
 Michael Robert II 732  
 Michael Turek II 769–70  
 Michaida Kornel (Michejda) II 778  
 Michajlik Larysa II 744  
 Michalak Helena I 308  
 Michalak, Family I 506; II 1043  
 Michalik Gabriel I 86  
 Michalina, Sister I 213  
 Michalovitz Zvi I 550  
 Michalowski Hirs (Michaeli Tzvi) II 1037  
 Michalowski Jozef see Michałowski Józef  
 Michalska Anna (Monat) I 386–87  
 Michalska Irena (Monat) I 386–87  
 Michalska Maria I 311  
 Michalska, Mrs. II 739  
 Michalski Antoni I 311  
 Michalski Henryk I 311  
 Michalski Kazimierz I 311  
 Michałowicz Jan, Rev. I 548  
 Michałowska Maria II 813  
 Michałowski Jan II 813  
 Michałowski Józef, Rev. II 739–40  
 Michałowski Mosze II 1038  
 Michejda Kornel II 780  
 Michlic Joanna Beata I 300, 439; II 947, 1041, 1053, 1069, 1115  
 Michniak Michał, Rev. I 447  
 Michrowska Julia (Sister Bernadetta) I 425  
 Miedziejewska Magdalena I 365  
 Mielnicki Michel (Mendel) II 926–27  
 Mierzecka Aleksandra (Ola, Garlicka) I 197  
 Mieszkowska Anna I 315  
 Migdalek Andrzej (Migdałek) I 524  
 Migdalek, Family see Migdałek, Family  
 Migdałek, Family I 524  
 Mika, Family II 1037  
 Mikhailik Larysa see Michajlik Larysa  
 Miklashevski Yatsneti see Miklaszewski Jacenty  
 Miklaszewski Jacenty II 632  
 Miklaszewski, Family II 632  
 Mikloshevski, Family see Miklaszewski, Family  
 Mikłasz Barbara II 1050  
 Mikołajczyk Felicja II 871  
 Mikołajczyk Anna II 699  
 Mikołajków Aleksander I 404  
 Mikołajków Leokadia I 404  
 Mikołajków, Family I 404; II 1123  
 Mikoś Julia (Sister Chrystiana) I 401–3  
 Mikre Maria I 188  
 Mikre Ryszard I 188  
 Mikre, Family I 188  
 Mikrut Jan I 45, 49, 113–14, 123, 125, 133, 139, 354, 435, 440, 445, 492; II 752, 789–90, 792, 802, 807, 973, 979, 1008, 1020  
 Mikšta Anna (Mikszta) II 846–47  
 Mikšta Piotr II 846–47  
 Miksz Adam I 404  
 Mikszta, Family II 846  
 Mikuczyn Józef I 446–48  
 Mikuczyn, Family I 450

- Mikulińska Teodora II 610  
 Mikuliński, Family II 610  
 Mikulska Maria (Sister Benedykta) I 20, 431–34; II 778, 991  
 Mila, Jewish Friend of Weintraub Klara I 534  
 Milanowski, Miller II 616  
 Milch Baruch II 885–87  
 Milchman Adele I 531  
 Milczyn Beti I 274  
 Milejkowski Jurek II 837  
 Milewski Kazimierz II 648  
 Milgram Avraham I 192, 199, 209, 228, 274, 312, 326, 444, 447, 481, 508, 553; II 592–93, 651, 656, 704, 710, 721, 802, 812, 816, 844–45, 846, 862, 917, 970, 1035–37, 1045, 1047–48, 1050–51, 1056–57, 1071–72, 1075, 1089  
 Milgrom Hirsch II 637  
 Miliband David I 414  
 Miliband Edward I 414  
 Milicz Jadwiga I 431  
 Milicz Julia, Sister I 431  
 Milikowska Mina II 837–38  
 Miller Avigdor, Rabbi II 729  
 Miller Edward I 74  
 Miller Julia II 660  
 Millo Belle II 1073  
 Milner, Family I 85  
 Miławicki Marek I 122  
 Miłkowski Stanisław, Rev. I 425; II 816  
 Miłkowski Zygmunt, Rev. II 1008  
 Miłobędzki, Family II 1065  
 Miłosz Czesław I 193  
 Mina Charin (Omer Maria Jadwiga) II 758  
 Mincberg Dina (Krzeczowska Eugenia) see Drori Dina  
 Mincberg Hanka (Krzeczowska Matylda) I 478–80  
 Mincberg Menachem II 1056  
 Minczykowska Katarzyna I 176, 182, 189, 193, 507  
 Mineyko Zofia (Sister Amata) I 492  
 Mingel Rena I 454  
 Miniewicz Maria I 236  
 Miniewski, Family II 629  
 Minko Emanuela, Sister II 922  
 Mińkowska Helena II 805  
 Mińkowski Artur II 805  
 Mińkowski, Family II 806  
 Mioduszewski Henryk I 177, 193  
 Miosga Ambroży, Seminarian I 492  
 Mirecka Leandra II 661  
 Mirecki Tadeusz II 661  
 Mirek Agata, Sister I 107, 162, 198, 200, 287, 310, 330, 389, 396, 406; II 644–45, 699, 748, 803–4, 814, 897, 899, 905, 979  
 Mirek Stanisław, Rev. I 492, 531  
 Mirewicz Jerzy, Rev. I 492–94; II 1065  
 Miron Danuta (Woźniak, Klimczuk-Miron, Sowa) I 305–6  
 Miron Jerzy I 306  
 Miron Maria (Klimczuk) I 306  
 Mirola Wacława, Sister II 661  
 Mirowski Stefan II 671  
 Mirska Klara II 1051  
 Mirska Lasota Halina I 305; II 648–49  
 Mirska Lasota Teresa I 236  
 Mirski Chana (Shachar Hana) II 792–93, 1081  
 Mirski Nathan II 792, 1081  
 Mirski Zvi II 793  
 Misiewicz Jan II 638–39  
 Misiurewicz Klemensa, Sister II 897, 900, 1012  
 Misiuro Wacław II 800  
 Miskiewicz Barbara see Miśkiewicz Barbara  
 Miskiewicz Bronisław see Miśkiewicz Bronisław  
 Miskiewicz Katarzyna see Miśkiewicz Katarzyna  
 Mistecka Maria Lucyna I 85, 160  
 Mistera Janina (Sister Joanna) I 292–93, 295, 991  
 Misztal Józefa (Józefa) II 830–31  
 Misztal Rozalia II 906–7  
 Misztal Stanisław (Stanisław) II 830  
 Misztal Wincenty II 830  
 Misztal, Family II 830–31  
 Miś Jadwiga II 932  
 Miś Władysław, Rev. I 115–16; II 910, 1010

- Miśkiewicz Barbara II 855  
 Miśkiewicz Bronisław II 855  
 Miśkiewicz Katarzyna II 855  
 Miśkiewicz Przemysław II 687, 1066  
 Mitka Kazimierz, Rev. II 792  
 Mizgalski Jerzy I 467; II 798  
 Mizia Stanisław, Rev. I 115  
 Mleczo Julian I 400  
 Mleczo Władysław I 400  
 Młynarczyk Janek see Młynarczyk Jan  
 Młocińska Zofia I 236  
 Młodkowska Maria I 533; II 660, 1072–73  
 Młodożeniec Juwentyn (Juwentyn), Brother I 89  
 Młynarczyk Jan I 478–80  
 Młynarski Kazimierz II 674  
 Młynczak Jan, Rev. I 383  
 Mndelman Rafael II 949  
 Modrzewska Krystyna (Mandelbaum) II 713–14  
 Modzelewski Jerzy, Bishop I 384  
 Modzelewski Roch, Rev. II 751, 753–54, 756  
 Mogilnicki, Family I 543  
 Mogilnik Asna I 444  
 Mogilnik Boris I 444  
 Mogilnik Dawid I 443–44  
 Mogilnik Gira I 444  
 Mogilnik Jakob I 444  
 Mogilnik Sara I 444  
 Mojżesz (Wiktor), Brother of Lisiewska Teresa I 301  
 Mokrzycki Antoni I 361  
 Molc Augustyn, Rev. see Melz Augustyn (Meltz), Rev.  
 Molendzianka Janina (Molenda), Sister I 325  
 Monar Mieczysław (Mieczysław) I 318  
 Monar Pola I 318  
 Mondry Wojciech, Rev. I 461  
 Monis Juliusz I 489  
 Monis Marcin (Leszczyński Marcin) I 489  
 Monkiewicz Waldemar I 390, 394; II 758–59, 761, 1061–62  
 Monko Aniela see Mońko Aniela  
 Monko Katarzyna see Mońko Katarzyna  
 Monko Mieczysław (Mieczysław) see Mońko Mieczysław (Mieczysław)  
 Monko, Family see Mońko, Family  
 Mońko Aniela II 831  
 Mońko Katarzyna II 831  
 Mońko Mieczysław (Mieczysław) II 831  
 Mońko, Family II 831  
 Moore Bob I 54, 149; II 1018, 1024, 1026, 1028  
 Moorhouse Roger I 57  
 Moorstein Yerachmiel II 1112  
 Moraczewska Olga (Sister Michaela) I 202, 204  
 Morajek, Family II 686  
 Morawiecki Mateusz II 1126  
 Morawska Joanna II 618  
 Morawski Marian Józef Wojciech, Rev. I 95–96, 492  
 Morgens Frank (Morgenstern Mieczysław) II 739–40, 1056  
 Morgenstern Abraham II 1078  
 Morina Christina II 1041  
 Moroz Walerian Marian II 789, 927, 930, 999, 1005–6, 1012  
 Morris Marjorie II 1082  
 Morrison Patt II 639  
 Mortkowicz Janina (Horwitz Żaneta) I 177  
 Mortkowicz Olczak Hanna I 177  
 Moryl Florian, Rev. I 486  
 Mosdorf Jan II 1092  
 Moses A. Dirk II 1019  
 Moshe Lewin (Levin Morris) II 802  
 Moshe'ly Miller, Rabbi I 67  
 Moskalewicz Władysław II 687  
 Moskop Joseph M. I 137  
 Moskowicz Ethel see Wahler Ethel  
 Moskowski Jaś II 913  
 Mossoczy Helena I 506  
 Mossoczy Mieczysław I 229  
 Mostyzer Hershel II 1052  
 Moszczeńska Stefania I 387  
 Moszkowicz Aron II 854–55  
 Moszkowicz Maks II 1089  
 Mościcka, Mrs. II 777  
 Motyczyńska Wawrzyna, Sister I 160

- Motyl Cecylia (Górna) II 739  
 Motyl Michał (Michał) II 825–26  
 Motyl Regina (Irena Kwiatkowska, Grynberg) II 825–26  
 Motz Anna Apolonia, Sister II 1011  
 Mozol Agap I 452  
 Mozol Stiepan I 452  
 Mól Władysław, Rev. I 115  
 Mrozek Bernard, Rev. I 492; II 956  
 Mrozek Kinga II 1106  
 Mrozowska Emmanuela (Oktawia), Sister II 897  
 Mrozowska Halina II 599  
 Mrozowski Jan II 599  
 Mrówka Jerzy II 687  
 Mróz Franciszek I 395  
 Mróz Janina II 1033  
 Mróz Stanisław II 1033  
 Mrzygłód Cypriana, Sister II 922  
 Muchowski Bolesław (Bolesław) II 581–82  
 Muchowski Zygmunt II 581–82  
 Müller Beate II 631, 660, 1072  
 Müller Zofia Irena II 670  
 Munro John II 927  
 Musiał Adam, Rev. see Musiał Adam, Rev.  
 Musiał Adam Kazimierz I 35; II 1067, 1121  
 Musiał Bogdan II 1013  
 Musiał Bronisława I 486  
 Musiał Filip I 503  
 Musiał Franciszek (Musiał) I 486  
 Musiał Jan II 971  
 Musiał Stanisław, Rev. I 545  
 Muskietorz Anastazja II 933  
 Muskietorz Marta II 933  
 Muskietorz Paweł II 933  
 Muszyński Wojciech Jerzy I 183; II 1098–99  
 Mützenmacher Józef see Kot Jan  
 Mutzenmacher Shiyer II 1067  
 Myczko-Grzybowska Zofia II 919  
 Myers Sondra I 341; II 605, 1079  
 Mylkavitz Peasant (Milkiewicz) II 785  
 Myszka P. II 905  
 Myszka Stanisław I 523  
 Myślicki, Family II 1081  
 Nabielski, Family II 940  
 Nachimowicz Gerszuni Szoszana Roza (Medlinski) II 784  
 Nacht Juliusz I 500  
 Nachtgaist Klara (Nahorayska Julia) II 842, 903  
 Nadel Tully (Naphtali) I 549  
 Nadel, Family I 549  
 Nadolska Maria (Marianna), Sister II 1011  
 Nagel Israel I 429  
 Nahorayska Julia II 903  
 Najbar Franciszek II 620  
 Najbar Maria II 620  
 Najer, Family I 326  
 Nalewajko-Kulikov Joanna I 88  
 Namysło Aleksandra I 224, 447, 488; II 759, 826, 931, 933, 996, 999, 1010, 1012, 1014–15, 1017, 1111  
 Napiórkowski Stanisław Celestyn, Rev. I 122, 251; II 972  
 Narloch Franciszka I 107  
 Naszyńska Aneta II 1124  
 Natalia Świerzeńska (Świerzawska Nata) II 805  
 Natanblut Anna I 372  
 Natkaniec Rozalia I 337–38  
 Navolskyi Antin (Izvol'ski), Rev. II 885, 993  
 Nawłoka, Family II 1118  
 Nawrocka Maria II 686  
 Nawrocka Wiktoria I 304–5  
 Nawrocki Marian II 686  
 Nawrot, Dr. II 739  
 Nazaruk Iosif, Protestant Clergymen II 993  
 Nazmi Ahmed I 74  
 Nazmiewski Victoria (Grzmielewska Wiktoria) II 780  
 Nedilenko, Mrs. II 641  
 Neger Bina (Marysia, Einav) I 271  
 Neile Caren S. II 1050  
 Neiman Mendelman Esther (Kozłowski) II 949  
 Neimark Helena (Neumark, Hala, Fagin Helen) I 171  
 Neimark Teresa (Neumark, Tobcia, Dolgov Terry) I 171

- Neimark Wanda (Neumark, Lomazow) I 171  
 Nelken Benedykt II 906  
 Nelken Feliks (Gwozdz Felix, Gwóźdź) II 928  
 Nelken Halina II 1090  
 Nelken-Załuska Wanda see Zaluska Wanda  
 Nelson Zev K., Rabbi I 91; II 1131  
 Nerenberg Sam I 347  
 Nestorowski Zygmunt, Rev. I 115  
 Netzman Johewet II 711  
 Neuberg Halina (Zylberman) I 497  
 Neuding Anna I 325  
 Neuding Janina I 325–26  
 Neuding Joanna (Podgórska) I 325–26  
 Neugebauer Maria (Sister Imelda) I 425; II 991  
 Neugelauer Łukasz, Brother I 47  
 Neuman Adam II 854  
 Neuman Isaac I 103  
 Neuman, Mrs. I 387  
 Neumark Zenon I 54  
 Neumark, Family I 226  
 Nevins Michael A. I 76  
 Nevo Denise II 1071  
 Ney Artur (Grodzieński Piotr) I 220–22  
 Nichtberger Dolek I 340  
 Nichtberger Frania I 340  
 Niedźwiecka, Mrs. II 712–13  
 Niedźwiedzka, Mrs. see Niedźwiecka, Mrs.  
 Niedźwiedz Józef I 56  
 Niekrasz Krystyna (Putter Ewa) II 663  
 Niemczyński Józef, Rev. I 115; II 796  
 Niemiec Maria II 858  
 Niemira Karol, Bishop I 366, 373–79  
 Niemycki Piotr, Rev. II 812  
 Nienałtowska Ewelina, Sister I 286  
 Niepokój Jadwiga II 669–70  
 Nieścierowicz, Family II 1081  
 Nietysza Bronisław (Bronislaw) II 582  
 Nieweglewski Stanisław, Rev. see Niewęłowski Stanisław, Rev.  
 Niewęłowski Stanisław, Rev. I 94–95  
 Niewiadomska Henia (Orzechowska Krystyna) see Wasiak Krystyna  
 Niewiadomski, Dr. II 683  
 Niewiarowicz Helena II 660  
 Niewieściuk Marian, Rev. II 630  
 Niewyk Donald L. I 148; II 742, 1076, 1093–94, 1109  
 Niezabitowska Małgorzata II 1134, 1057, 1118  
 Niezgoda, Family II 1058  
 Nika Kohn Fleissig II 1134  
 Nir Yehuda I 255  
 Nirnberg Manya II 886  
 Nisencwajg Eva (Bergstein, Szumielewicz Iwonka) I 289–90  
 Nisencwajg Hena I 289  
 Nisencwajg Henryk I 290  
 Nisencwajg Janek I 289  
 Nisencwajg Lucy I 289  
 Nisencwajg Moshe I 289  
 Nissenbaum Bernard II 1086  
 Niziołkiewicz Zeno, Rev. see Niziołkiewicz Zenon, Rev.  
 Niziołkiewicz Zenon, Rev. I 34  
 Noakes Jeremy I 87  
 Noekh Meyer (Marek) I 247  
 Nogala Władysław I 550  
 Noiman Shraga I 551  
 Noiszewska Bogumiła (Sister Maria Ewa) I 446–49; II 998, 1011  
 Noj Renata II 592  
 Nojmark Henryk (Papierski) II 852  
 Nordon Haskell II 796  
 Norich Hary (Tzvi) II 1054  
 Nosek Stanisław, Rev. II 699  
 Nosko, Family II 762  
 Noskowski Wiktor II 1081  
 Novak David II 1016  
 Novick Bogdan I 520  
 Novinski Richard I 301  
 Novitch Miriam II 869  
 Nowak Edmund, Rev. I 116, 562  
 Nowak Felicja I 134  
 Nowak Jan II 609, 1092  
 Nowak Stefan II 1106  
 Nowakowska Maria I 350  
 Nowakowski Ildefons, Rev. I 492  
 Nowakowski Jerzy II 649  
 Nowakowski Marcelli, Rev. I 45



- Nowicka Józefa I 177  
 Nowicka Maria (Marysia) II 805  
 Nowicki Casimir (Kazimierz), Rev. I 34  
 Nowicki Donat, Rev. I 347  
 Nowicki Jan, Rev. I 251–52, 533  
 Nowicki Ladislaus (Władysław), Rev. I 34  
 Nowicki Stanisław, Rev. I 43  
 Nowiński Ryszard I 301  
 Nowiński Wacław I 170  
 Nowodworska Irena II 881  
 Nowodworski Dawid II 1105  
 Nowodworski Leon II 881  
 Nowogródzki Henryk I 368  
 Noworyta, Family II 943  
 Nowosad Błażej, Rev. II 998  
 Nowosielska Adela I 211  
 Nowoszycka Paula I 453  
 Nowotko Tadeusz, Rev. I 22, 361, 367  
 Nowowiejski Antoni, Archbishop I 43, 48  
 Noy Max (Maks) II 593–96  
 Noy Raizel (Roza, Róża) II 593–94, 597  
 Noy Ruth (Rutka, Wysocka Teresa) II 592–97, 601  
 Noy, Family II 593–94  
 Nudel Marian (Niedzwiedzki) I 254  
 Nudel Miriam (Caspari) I 238  
 Nurzyńska, Mrs. II 702–3  
 Nurzyński Michał II 702  
 Nusbaum Klemens I 122  
 Nusbaum-Hilarowicz Tadeusz I 242  
 Nyc Ryszard I 64  
 Nydziński, Family II 1065  
 Nykanor (Deyneha Mykola), Greek Catholic Clergymen II 993
- O**  
 Obacz Józef, Rev. I 229, 492  
 Obalski Jan (Oberfeld) II 604  
 Obara, Family II 1048  
 Obenzinger Hilton II 944  
 Oberc Franciszek II 733  
 Oberländer Theodor I 111  
 Oberleder Irena I 384  
 Oberleder Ludwika (Aran) I 384  
 Obremska Stella (Kolin) I 205  
 Obremski Józef, Rev. II 812
- O'Brien Darcy II 797, 936  
 O'Connor John Joseph, Archbishop II 727  
 Ogniewska Bronisława II 1039  
 Ogonowska Maria I 177  
 Ogórek Michał II 638–39  
 Ogrodowicz Józefa, Sister II 1011  
 Ogrodziński Sławomir (Sławek, Sławek) II 872–73  
 Ogurek Michael see Ogórek Michał  
 Ojak Józef II 886  
 Ojak-Sobkowiak Helena II 886  
 Ojrzanowska Janina II 1032  
 Ojrzanowska Maria II 1032  
 Oko Jan (Aka) II 779  
 Okon Eugeniusz, Rev. see Okoń Eugeniusz, Rev.  
 Okoń Eugeniusz (Okon), Rev. I 522–24  
 Okoński Franciszek, Rev. I 509–11  
 Olbrychska Klementyna II 1084  
 Olbrychski Franciszek II 1084  
 Olczak Maria (Maliszewska) I 179  
 Olczak Ronikier Joanna I 177–81  
 Olczak, Family II 1065  
 Oldak, Attorney I 306  
 Olejniczak Aleksandra I 177  
 Olejnik Tadeusz I 55  
 Olenyk Barbara II 659  
 Oleska Junap II 637  
 Oleszkiewicz Maria I 552  
 Olędzki Stanisław II 751–52  
 Oliner Pearl M. I 24; II 970  
 Oliner Samuel P. I 24; II 727, 970  
 Olizar Jadwiga I 241  
 Olizar Władysław (Władysław) I 241  
 Olney Ross R. II 1100  
 Olshin Joshua II 760  
 Olšvangaitė-Montvilienė Sara II 961  
 Olšvangas Saiva II 961  
 Olszak Henry (Henryk), Rev. I 41  
 Olszanowska Janina (Sister Ksawera) I 203  
 Olszewska Zofia, Sister I 236, 265, 267–68; II 991  
 Olszewski Hieronim, Rev. II 781–82  
 Olszewski Krzysztof, Rev. I 108  
 Olszewski Stanisław, Rev. I 321–22

- Ołdak Aleksander II 675  
 Ołdak Apolonia II 675  
 Ołomucka Zofia I 492–93  
 Omeljančuk Tamara II 744  
 Omieljanczuk Ada II 1093  
 Onochobaski Lutzian see Onuchowski Lucjan  
 Onuchowska Felicja (Fela) II 647  
 Onuchowski Bronisław II 647  
 Onuchowski Cyprian II 647  
 Onuchowski Lucjan II 647–48  
 Onuchowski, Family II 647  
 Oost Karel (Karol) van, Rev. I 340  
 Opałko Mariusz (Lederman) I 473  
 Opdyke Irene (Gut Irena) see Gut Opdyke Irene  
 Opiatowski Henryk, Rev. II 763–64, 996  
 Opoczyńska Berta (Sokołowska Zuzanna) I 554  
 Opoka Jakub, Rev. I 29  
 Oppenheim Antoni I 373  
 Oppenheim Franciszka Anna I 373  
 Oppenheim Ludwik I 373  
 Oprzała Zofia I 236  
 Oracz Maria I 512–13  
 Oraczewski Czesław, Rev. I 386  
 Ordynowski Jan I 242  
 Oren Marek (Orenstein) II 1119  
 Oren Ram II 776  
 Ores Ryszard (Richard) II 928  
 Orła-Bukowska Annamaria I 70; II 1139  
 Orlikowska, Dr. I 496  
 Orlińska Czesława (Orlinski Czeslava) I 446, 449  
 Orliński Abraham I 447  
 Orłowski Maria I 512–13  
 Orłowsky, Farmer see Orłowski, Farmer  
 Orłowska Zosia (Rostworowska Zofia) I 179  
 Orłowski Edward, Rev. I 123  
 Orłowski, Farmer I 504, 521  
 Orman L. II 792  
 Orme William A. Jr. II 939  
 Ornstein Emil II 613–14  
 Ornstein Jacek II 613–14  
 Orszewski, Family II 1081  
 Orth Karin II 1094  
 Ortner Natan I 544  
 Orzechowska Krystyna II 590  
 Orzechowski, Family II 690  
 Orzeł Olga II 1047, 1072  
 Orzeł Zygmunt I 400  
 Orzeszko Tadeusz II 1091  
 Orzhef Shimen, Rabbi I 247  
 Osiecka Stanisława I 486  
 Osiecki Aleksander, Rev. I 485; II 988  
 Osiecki Michał I 486  
 Osiejewska Józefa I 235  
 Osiejewski Roman I 235  
 Osiewicz Jan II 677  
 Osikowicz Andrzej (Osikiewicz), Rev. I 488–89; II 988, 996  
 Osiński Franciszek, Rev. II 590  
 Osiński Władysław, Rev. II 590  
 Osiński, Family I 214  
 Osowiecka Maria (Marysia, Brzoza Halina, Donat Michaelle, Donnet Michèle) II 591–93, 601–2  
 Ossowski Artur I 55  
 Ostalczyk Leon, Rev. II 760  
 Ostreyko Maria (Sister Jordana) I 425; II 991  
 Ostrowska Maria I 256  
 Ostrowska Regina II 770  
 Ostrowska-Ruszczyńska Maria II 1032  
 Ostrowska-Zuckerwar Helen II 1111  
 Ostrowski Czesław II 770  
 Ostrowski Joel (Julian) I 274  
 Ostrowski Julian I 220, 284  
 Otreba Wiktor, Rev. see Otręba Wiktor, Rev.  
 Otrebski Antoni, Rev. II 852  
 Otręba Wiktor, Rev. I 41  
 Oziembłowska, Mrs. I 376  
 Pabis Małgorzata I 395  
 Pac Maria I 213  
 Pac Stanisław I 213  
 Pac, Family I 213–14  
 Pacek Jerzy II 831  
 Pacek Leszek II 831  
 Pacek Stanisława (Stanisława) II 831–2  
 Pacek, Family II 832  
 Paciak Władysław, Rev. II 672–73

- Paciorek Stanisława (Sister Maria Ena) I 176–77
- Pacula Wojciech II 913
- Paganuzzi Quirino, Monsignor I 118–19
- Paiken Steve II 1124
- Pajak, Family I 400
- Pajewska Maria II 1046
- Pajewski Stanisław II 1046
- Pajewski, Family II 1046
- Pajor Maria I 400
- Pajor, Family I 400
- Pakalnis Józef, Rev. II 791–92
- Pakula Zbigniew II 1044
- Palarczyk, Family I 506
- Palatynska Barbara see Palatyńska Barbara
- Palatyńska Barbara I 308
- Palatyńska Elzbieta (Elżbieta) I 301, 308
- Paldiel Mordecai I 25, 149, 171, 188–89, 274, 276, 424, 426, 428, 433, 436, 438; II 628, 634, 751, 776, 960, 1018–19, 1024, 1106
- Palencia-Roth Michael I 103
- Palester Henryk I 394
- Palewski Antoni, Rev. see Chmielewski Antoni, Rev.
- Palhendler Hayyim I 85
- Paljard, Family I 85
- Palmowska Janina II 1092
- Paluch Sylwester, Rev. I 539
- Palus Alojzy, Rev. I 526
- Paluszkiewicz Felicjan I 432, 447, 492, 494; II 956
- Pałasz-Rutkowska Ewa I 109
- Pamrów Barbara I 297
- Pamuła Jan, Rev. I 108
- Panasiuk Ewencja, Sister II 922
- Pancer Stanisław, Rev. I 416
- Panczanka Krysia I 171
- Panic Alfred II 933
- Pankowski Józef, Rev. see Frankowski Józef, Rev.
- Pannek, Benefactor I 474–75
- Pannelay Marie-Louise, Sister II 958–59
- Panski Anthony see Pański Antoni
- Pański Antoni II 779
- Paper Chaskiel I 292
- Paper Stephen Edward I 127
- Papers Aryan II 814
- Paprocka Anna (Mendelson) I 386
- Paprocki Henryk I 78
- Papuzinski Stanislaw see Papuziński Stanisław
- Papuzińska Zofia I 266
- Papuziński Stanisław I 266, 299, 317
- Papuziński, Family I 266
- Pardyka Władysław, Rev. II 707
- Parecka Lidia I 506; II 1055
- Parecka-Jaśkiewicz Lidia Bożena I 506
- Parille, Family I 560; II 608
- Parkes Debbie I 419
- Parysek Krystyna I 236
- Pasek Jan, Rev. II 797
- Paskowitz-Tailblum Tova II 953
- Paśławska Rozalia II 833
- Paśławski Bolesław II 833
- Passe Natan II 1045
- Pasternak Aleksandra II 711
- Pasternak Jan II 711
- Pastor Jan II 822
- Pastor Stanisława (Stanisława) II 822
- Paszek Henryk II 933
- Paszek Ludwik II 933
- Paszek Maria II 933
- Paszkiewicz Marian, Rev. I 467
- Paszkowska Anna (Paškovski, Paškauskas) II 963
- Paszkowska Eleonora II 801
- Paszkowska Genowefa II 801
- Paszkowska Irena II 801
- Paszkowski Wacław (Paškovski, Paškauskas) II 963
- Paszkowski, Family II 802
- Paśnik Kazimierz, Brother I 467
- Patecka Zofia I 299
- Patora, Rev. I 545
- Patrzyk Barbara I 488
- Patrzyk Jan, Rev. I 487–88; II 988
- Patrzyk Władysław I 487
- Patrzyk, Family I 487–88
- Patti, German commandant II 886

- Paul Mark I 122, 171; II 1041, 1098  
 Pauliński Franciszek, Rev. I 383  
 Paulsson Gunnar I 195, 257, 560; II 722, 1030–31, 1086–87  
 Pavoncello Angelo II 956  
 Pavoncello Mosè II 956  
 Pavoncello Pacifico II 956  
 Pawelec Maria II 869–70  
 Pawlicki Jan, Rev. II 608–11, 988  
 Pawlikowski Tomasz I 114  
 Pawlina Leon, Rev. II 881  
 Pawlitzki Jan, Rev. see Pawlicki Jan, Rev.  
 Pawłowski Roman, Rev. see Pałowski Roman, Rev.  
 Pałowicz Remigiusz II 1099  
 Pałowiczowa Maria I 405, 489, 554, 556; II 641, 650, 653, 1001, 1003–5  
 Pałowska Józefa (Sister Vita) I 463–66; II 913, 923, 991  
 Pałowski Józef, Rev. II 1005  
 Pałowski Roman, Rev. I 44  
 Pazynska Mira see Pażyńska Mira  
 Pażyńska Mira I 320  
 Peciak Ludwik, Rev. II 640–42, 1009  
 Pecold Tadeusz, Rev. see Pecolt Tadeusz (Perzyński), Rev.  
 Pecolt Tadeusz (Perzyński), Rev. I 157  
 Peczek Marian (Pečko Marián), Rev. I 503  
 Peiper Róża I 270  
 Peiper Rysiek I 271  
 Peiper Urszula (Kaner Shulamit) I 267, 270  
 Pelagia Sister II 714–15  
 Pelc Bereś II 644  
 Pelc Chana II 960  
 Pelc Kamilla II 832  
 Pelc Karol II 832  
 Pelcaitė Chana (Zakienė) II 961  
 Pelczarski Kazimierz I 548  
 Peleg Mordecai I 487; 921, 1087  
 Peleg-Mariańska Miriam I 487; II 921, 1087  
 Pellier-Zagórski, Dr. I 306  
 Pelt Robert Jan van II 1027  
 Penski-Chayut Aliza I 249–50  
 Peńsko Ludwika (Sister Ludovica) I 243–44, 236; II 649, 991  
 Perec (Peretz) Etons Bernard Sheila I 560  
 Perec Antonina (Dworakowska) I 198–99  
 Perelman Danuta (Wocial) II 865  
 Perelmutter Reichental Dyna I 97  
 Pereświat-Sołtan Lucjan, Rev. II 807  
 Perewoska Celina II 813  
 Perewoska Dora II 813  
 Perewoski Eli (Leszek) II 813  
 Perewoski Shmuel II 813  
 Perewoski, Family II 813  
 Peri J. II 1071  
 Perkowski Józef, Rev. II 751, 753, 756–59  
 Perlmutter Arnold I 237  
 Perlmutter Bianka (Marzec, Lerner Bianca) I 237, 240  
 Perlmutter Mała I 525  
 Perlmutter Stefania I 237  
 Perlow Yitzchok II 736  
 Persak Krzysztof I 123, 125, 394; II 1062  
 Person Katarzyna I 360  
 Perzanowska Stefania II 1092  
 Perzhentsavsky Yitzhak, Rabbi I 206; II 796  
 Peschel Rolf II 890  
 Peter Silverman II 788  
 Petrani Aleksy II 799  
 Petranker Salsitz Amalie I 514  
 Petrowa-Wasilewicz Alina I 234  
 Petruszewicz Kazimierz II 779  
 Petruszewicz Kazimierz see Petruszewicz Kazimierz  
 Pępiak Julia II 723–24, 1042, 1063  
 Pępiak Zygmunt (Sebastian), Rev. II 724  
 Pęza Aleksander, Rev. I 19, 125; II 771, 1007  
 Pfau Bronisława I 368–69  
 Pfau Zygmunt I 368  
 Pfeffer Feiga II 630, 1075  
 Phifer Henryka I 225  
 Pianko Piotr, Rev. II 1002–3  
 Piasecki Waldemar II 703, 1044  
 Piaszczyński Michał, Rev. II 927  
 Piątek Stanisława II 1033  
 Piątek, Family I 542  
 Piątkiewicz Wincenty, Rev. I 115  
 Piątkowska Antonina II 1094  
 Piątkowska Teodozja II 1092

- Piątkowski Sebastian I 22, 242, 489, 510;  
II 582, 675, 700, 717, 1084, 1116
- Piec Aleksander, Rev. II 669
- Piechowicz Lucyna II 1033
- Piechowicz Marian II 1033
- Piechowska Leokadia II 779
- Pieczara Balbina (Sister Seweryna) I 404
- Piekarska Anna (Andzia) II 839
- Piekarski, Family I 500
- Piekut Józef, Rev. I 205–6; II 796
- Pieniak Bolesław II 703
- Pieniak Genowefa II 703
- Pieniak Paweł II 1104
- Pieniak, Family II 1044
- Pieróg Eugeniusz II 1067
- Pieszczczyk, Mrs. II 689
- Pieściuk Franciszek, Rev. II 766
- Pietak Zygmunt see Piętaś Zygmunt
- Pieterkowski, Jewish man II 933
- Pietkiewicz Maria, Sister I 312; II 991
- Pietkun Jan II 778
- Pietkun Witold, Rev. II 778
- Pietrash Josif (Petrash), Greek Catholic  
Clergymen II 993
- Pietraszek Alfreda II 1052
- Pietraszek Bolesław II 1052
- Pietraszek, Family II 1052
- Pietroń Zofia II 643
- Pietrzak Tomasz I 413
- Pietrzyk Aniela, Sister II 899
- Pietrzyk Jan, Rev. II 680
- Pietrzykowski Jan I 202, 220, 222, 225, 461–  
62, 551; II 996
- Pietrzykowski Tadeusz (“Teddy”) I 94
- Piękosz Julia I 399
- Piętaś Zygmunt I 308
- Pięłowska Zofia Blanka, Sister I 236, 267–68;  
II 991
- Pik-Szafrańska Stefania I 392
- Pikulska, Mrs. II 894
- Pikulski Jan I 197
- Pilarska Maria II 1017
- Pilch Jan II 921
- Pilch Julia II 921
- Pilch, Family II 921
- Pilecki Giedymin, Rev. II 800
- Pilichowska Hanka Apolonia II 576
- Pilichowska Janina II 689
- Pilichowska Wanda II 689
- Pilichowska Zofia (Weiser) II 689
- Pilichowska, Mrs. (Kowalewska Maria Anna)  
II 689
- Pilichowski Czesław I 57
- Pilichowski Henryk (Będzikowski Aleksander  
Franciszek) II 689
- Pilpel Moshe II 821
- Piłat, Family II 1037
- Piłsudski Józef I 246; II 893, 1096
- Pinczewski Jakub II 879
- Pink, Family II 1055
- Pinkert Zygmunt II 603
- Pinkert-Langer Hanna II 602–3
- Pinkert, Family II 602–3
- Pinkus, Jewish woman I 288
- Pinner Y., Rabbi I 342
- Piotrowska Alojza, Sister I 204–5
- Piotrowska Feliksa I 235
- Piotrowska Hana (Hanka) I 266, 317
- Piotrowska Jadwiga I 144–45, 146, 228, 266,  
299, 317–18, 320, 387
- Piotrowska Wanda I 317
- Piotrowska Władysława II 1033
- Piotrowska, Mrs. II 700
- Piotrowski Kazimierz, Rev. II 964
- Piotrowski Stanisław, Rev. I 224, 235
- Piotrowski Tadeusz I 351; II 1017, 1072
- Piotrowski, Mr. II 1107
- Piórkowska Małgorzata II 750
- Piórkowski, Family II 1045
- Piwożyński Marian, Rev. I 548
- Pisulski Józef see Piłsudski Józef
- Pisz Halina II 1055
- Pitlok Alojzy II 931–32
- Pitluk Szulamit (Shulamit, Silver Sharon,  
Ostrowska Anna) II 770
- Pius XII, Pope I 118, 507
- Piwiński Jan, Rev. I 551
- Pizio, Family II 637
- Plater-Zyberk Halina II 813
- Plater-Zyberk Jan II 813

- Plater, Family II 814  
 Plauszewska Stefania II 833  
 Plauszewski Feliks II 833  
 Plazinski, Family see Płaziński, Family  
 Plechoć, Family II 805  
 Pleszewska Ela II 838  
 Plewa Alojzy I 469  
 Plewa Anna I 469  
 Plewa Antoni I 469  
 Plewa Józef, Rev. II 771  
 Plewa, Family I 469  
 Plinka Mendel II 711  
 Plonski David I 382  
 Pluszkiewicz Helena II 761  
 Pluta Ignacja, Sister II 923  
 Plywaski Walter (Pływacki Władysław) II 1095  
 Płatek Maria I 327  
 Płatkiewicz Marian (Maniek) II 1101  
 Pławiński Jerzy I 439  
 Płazińska Maria I 555  
 Płazińska Zuzanna I 555  
 Płaziński Józef (Jozef) I 555  
 Płaziński, Family I 555–56  
 Płoński Jerzy I 383  
 Pniewski Tadeusz I 494  
 Pochoda Józef, Rev. II 630  
 Pocimak Helena I 211  
 Poczbyt Zofia I 450  
 Poczobutt-Odlanicki Fabian, Rev. II 997, 1008  
 Podbielski Józef, Rev. I 385  
 Podczerwiński Jan (Podczerwieński), Rev. I 544  
 Poddebniak Jan, Rev. see Poddębniak Jan, Rev.  
 Poddębniak Jan, Rev. I 31; II 721, 988  
 Podgórska Janina I 326  
 Podhorcer Rosa II 613  
 Podhorcer, Family II 613–14  
 Podhorzer Klara (Nash Christine, Sanecka Krystyna, Zosia) I 160  
 Podolak Florentyna, Sister I 226  
 Podróżnik Nachman I 395  
 Podrzycka Helena I 286  
 Podrzycki Stanisław I 286  
 Podsiadły Jan, Rev. see Podsiadły Jan, Rev.  
 Podsiadły Jan, Rev. II 688  
 Podsiedlik Stefan, Rev. I 546  
 Pogonowski Iwo Cyprian I 74, 519  
 Pogorzelski Julian II 1105  
 Pogorzelski, Family II 1105  
 Pohoryles Mizio II 616  
 Pokiziak Władysław, Rev. I 30, 318–19  
 Pokorska Katarzyna II 584  
 Pokropek Waleria I 325  
 Polak Joseph, Rabbi I 91; II 1132  
 Polak Kazimierz I 364  
 Polak, Family II 585  
 Polanowski Zbigniew, Rev. II 576  
 Polechajllo Aniela (Sister Stanisława) see Polechajło Aniela (Sister Stanisława)  
 Polechajło Aniela (Sister Stanisława) I 227; II 991  
 Poler (Fuller), Mr. I 285  
 Poler (Fuller), Mrs. I 285  
 Poler Helena I 285  
 Poler Maria I 285  
 Poliakewicz Simche (Polakiewicz Simkhe) II 1107  
 Poliszowa, Mrs. II 624  
 Polkiewicz, Lawyer I 368  
 Polkowski, Family II 717  
 Polonsky Antony I 121, 347; II 1136  
 Połanecka Rozalia (Polanecka) I 511  
 Poławska Zofia I 203  
 Połoska Mieczysław, Rev. I 547  
 Połowicz Marian II 874  
 Pomierny Aurelia, Sister II 1011  
 Pomorska Zofia II 724  
 Pomprowicz, Family II 1048  
 Ponikiewska Celina I 318  
 Ponikiewski Marian I 318  
 Ponulak Jan II 878  
 Ponulak Michał II 878  
 Pop Esther (Tesler, Skalska Janina) II 654  
 Popczyk Teodor, Rev. I 461; II 996  
 Popek Leon II 646  
 Popel Vasili, Greek Catholic Clergymen II 993  
 Popiel Antonina Franciszka, Sister I 389  
 Popiski Zeev I 443  
 Poplawski, Family see Popławski, Family



- Popławska Janina, Sister I 292; II 991  
 Popławski Seweryn, Rev. I 366–68, 371;  
     II 689  
 Popławski, Family II 763–64  
 Popowska Maria I 363  
 Popowski Kornblum Paula I 464–66; II 913  
 Popowski Stanisław (Stanisław) I 237, 363  
 Popowski, Family I 237  
 Popper Geoge see Popper Jerzy  
 Popper Jerzy II 578  
 Popper Leopold II 578  
 Popracki Henryk see Paprocki Henryk  
 Porat Dina I 428–29; II 729  
 Poray Anna I 184; II 1017  
 Poręba Helena I 508  
 Poręba Katarzyna I 508  
 Poręba Marcin I 508  
 Poręba Piotr, Rev. I 507–8  
 Porębski Władysław II 1054  
 Porębski, Family II 1054  
 Porowska Klementyna II 1032  
 Portnoy Zeev II 663  
 Posascher Jakub II 738  
 Posławska Rozalia see Paśławska Rozalia  
 Posławski Bolesław see Paśławski Bolesław  
 Posłuszna Władysława, Sister I 227  
 Posmantier Chaim II 839  
 Posner Helena I 155  
 Pospelovsky Dimitry I 49  
 Post Abisz II 862  
 Post Efraim II 862  
 Postan M. M. I 74  
 Postek Henryk II 1110  
 Postek Julianna II 1110  
 Postek Stanisław II 1110  
 Postek Wacław II 1110  
 Postek, Family II 1110  
 Postrąg, Family see Postrąg, Family  
 Postrąg Regina II 824  
 Postrąg Roza (Róża) II 824  
 Postrąg, Family II 824  
 Poswolska Janina II 860–61  
 Poswolski Andrzej II 861  
 Poswolski Henryk II 861, 1107  
 Potashnik Mikhoel (Michael) I 128–29;  
     II 1081  
 Potasnik Itzhak I 129  
 Potocka Teresa I 391  
 Potocka Zofia II 899  
 Potocki, Count II 698  
 Potok Alina I 531  
 Potok Alina see Potttock Alina  
 Potttock Alina II 824–25  
 Powązek Mania I 300  
 Powell Lawrence II 1038  
 Pozimski Jerzy II 1089–90  
 Poznanska Gina (Henia) I 452  
 Poznanski Marian I 452  
 Poznański Antoni, Rev. II 699  
 Poznański Ludwik II 1044  
 Pozner Luba (Liuba) I 130  
 Pozner Mordechai I 130  
 Pradzyński Józef, Rev. see Prądzyński  
     Józef, Rev.  
 Praga Rafał II 1084  
 Prager Dennis I 24  
 Prager Zofia (Michalak) I 301, 308  
 Pragier Ruta I 361  
 Prajs Henryk (Fiszel Froim, Żoładek Feliks,  
     Żoładek Feliks) II 583–85, 799, 1045,  
     1119  
 Präminger Renata (Szczurek Irena, Hromiak  
     Irena) II 634–35  
 Prawer Jhabwala Ruth II 955  
 Prażmowski Aleksander I 385  
 Prądzyński Józef, Rev. I 37  
 Preil Joseph J. I 126; II 885  
 Preker Mieczysław (Mieczysław) II 866  
 Preker Teresa (Dobrska) I 113, 266, 347,  
     350; II 588, 723, 732, 865–66, 1029,  
     1063–64, 1098, 1106  
 Prekerowa Teresa see Preker Teresa  
 Preshel Haim I 84; II 639  
 Pridham Geoffrey I 87  
 Prinz Irma (Rozsadowski) II 908  
 Prinz Janina (Kozma, Barska, Rozsadowski)  
     II 908  
 Pristal David (Princental) II 658–59  
 Proch Franciszek J. I 50

- Prochownik Leonard, Rev. II 797  
 Procyk Karol, Pastor of Baworów II 915  
 Procyk Wiktoria II 620  
 Prokop Aurelia, Sister II 699  
 Prokopowicz-Wierzbowska Maria I 298, 301–2, 319  
 Prokopowicz, Family I 302, 304  
 Proskurowska Bolesława I 467  
 Proskurowski, Jewish man I 467  
 Proszak Stanisław, Rev. I 115, 397–98  
 Proszowski Bolesław I 160  
 Proszowski Stanisław I 160  
 Prot Janina II 855  
 Prot Tomasz I 22, 407; II 1085  
 Prot Zofia (Deiches) I 407  
 Próchniewicz Stanisław, Rev. II 1011  
 Pruński Piotr (Prunskis Petras), Rev. I 445; II 796  
 Prus Edward II 1072, 1078  
 Prusicka Irena I 372  
 Prusin Alexander I 32  
 Prutkowska Krystyna (Flamenbaum) I 198  
 Prymowicz Janina I 300  
 Przebindowska Helena I 484  
 Przebindowska Urszula I 484  
 Przebindowska Mirosława (Mirosława) I 484  
 Przedpełski Jan II 1065  
 Przeglęta Marcin II 1116  
 Przemsza-Zieliński Jan I 62  
 Przeddziecka Maria-Ludwika II 955  
 Przeździecki Henryk, Bishop II 799  
 Przeździecki Pius, Rev. I 467  
 Przybojewska Apolonia I 304  
 Przybylska Lia, Sister II 898  
 Przybylski Bernard (“Father Wacław”), Rev. I 182  
 Przybylski Mieczysław (“Michał”) I 403  
 Przybyłowicz Kazimiera II 1033  
 Przybył-Sadowska Elżbieta I 411  
 Przybysz Grzegorz I 325  
 Przybysz Irena, Sister II 748  
 Przybysz Janina (Ninka) I 204–5  
 Przygoda Irena (Mizne) I 290  
 Przygoda Jan, Rev. I 492  
 Przygoda Joanna (Joasia, Kirsten Joan) I 290–91  
 Przygoda Zdzisław I 290–91; II 1085–86  
 Przygrodzki Michał I 556; II 1004  
 Przyłuski Dominik, Rev. II 1004  
 Przysiecka Maria II 671–72  
 Przysiecki Józef II 671–72  
 Przysuskiej Irka I 202  
 Pshenitse Yehudis (Pszenica Judith, Pavlovna Kristina, Pawłowska Krystyna) II 740, 1007  
 Ptaszek Antoni, Rev. II 670  
 Ptaszek Helena II 638  
 Ptaszek Karol II 637–38  
 Ptaszek Kazimierz, Rev. II 670  
 Ptaszowski Antoni I 505  
 Ptaszyńska Wanda I 326  
 Puch Antoni II 722  
 Puch Danuta II 722  
 Puch Maria II 722  
 Puch, Family II 722  
 Puchajda, Family I 401  
 Puchala Józef II 924  
 Puchala, Family see Puchała, Family  
 Puchalik Józef, Rev. I 519  
 Puchała, Family I 221; II 924  
 Puchałka Jolanta, Sister II 699  
 Puchnik, Mr. I 400  
 Puciata Leon, Rev. II 806–7  
 Puder Tadeusz, Rev. I 184, 236, 261–63, 359  
 Pukaité Gené II 961–62  
 Puleikis Kazimieras, Rev. I 26  
 Pustelnik Gertruda II 933  
 Putermilch Jakub II 1035  
 Putermilch Towa II 1035  
 Pycior Stanisław, Rev. II 913  
 Pyjek Maria II 598  
 Pyłowsky Seva (Sheva) I 177  
 Pyrtek Stanisław, Rev. II 788, 1006  
 Pytko Renata, Sister I 402  
 Pytowska Franciszka I 188  
 Pytowska Roza (Róża) I 177, 188  
 Pytowski Josef (Józef) I 177, 188  
 Pyz, Family II 585  
 Pyżewska Anna II 752

Quarawi Ibrahim al I 73

Quirini-Popławska Danuta I 74

Rabach Jezek (Bandrowski Józef) II 915

Rabin Antonia (Toni) II 842

Rabin Chaim II 724, 1070

Rabin Dov II 1112

Rabska Zuzanna I 250

Rabski Władysław I 250–51

Rachel Sophie I 206

Racińska (Gienia) II 912

Rackowski Jan, Rev. II 591, 601–3, 988

Raczynski Stefan see Raczyński Stefan

Raczyńska Maria II 834–35

Raczyński Adolf II 834

Raczyński Stefan II 834–36, 1124

Raczyński, Family II 834–35

Raczyński, Rev. II 603

Radca Gitla II 850

Radca Golda II 850

Radca Lejb II 850

Radca Miriam II 850

Radca Sara II 850

Radomski Tadeusz II 926, 1091

Radonski Karol Mieczysław, Bishop see

Radoński Karol Mieczysław, Bishop

Radoński Karol Mieczysław, Bishop I 44,  
352–53

Radosz Wacław, Rev. II 685

Radwanek Jerzy II 1089–90

Radzewicz Cherubina, Sister II 655

Radzicki Bernard II 583

Radzikowska Anna II 1033

Radzikowski Wacław II 700, 1033

Radziszewski Kazimierz, Rev. I 123

Radzivilover Matus II 1133

Radziwanowska Stefania II 1061

Radziwanowski Alfons II 1061

Radziwiłł, Family see Radziwiłł, Family

Radziwiłł, Family I 241–42

Rafalska Felicja (Sara) I 265

Raichbard Vovtche I 550

Raj Hania (Reich) II 921

Rajbach Lodka (Leokadia) II 917

Rajbenbach Maria II 588

Rajcfeld Mania (Marusia) II 878

Rajcfeld Rajzel II 878

Rajcfeld Zew (Władek) II 878

Rajch, Family II 1043

Rajchilbert, Person from Przemyśl II 918

Rajchman Chil II 1103

Rajchman Helena (Radlińska) I 199

Rajec Ewa I 503; II 1055

Rajman Halina I 203

Rajner Kryspina, Sister II 644

Rajzman Samuel (Reisman Shmuel) II 1104

Rakoczy Edward II 688

Rakoczy Łucjan II 688

Rakovskis Pijus I 129

Rakovsky Pijus see Rakovskis Pijus

Rakower Juszcak Stanisława I 250

Rakowski David II 1127

Ramer Artur (Arthur) I 338–39

Ramer Norbert I 338–39

Raniszewska, Sisters I 197

Rapacki, Family I 539

Rapaczyński, Family I 318

Rapaport Moshe (Rappaport) II 1102

Rapp Sonia I 138

Rappaport Szabse (Schabse), Rabbi I 68, 113

Rappoport Szabse, Rabbi see Rappaport  
Szabse (Schabse), Rabbi

Rappoport Yoel I 68

Raszeja Franciszek I 364

Raszkiewicz Hubert, Rev. see Raszkowski  
Hubert, Rev.

Raszkowski Hubert, Rev. I 40

Ratajczak Helena, Sister II 644

Ratkiewicz Kazimierz, Rev. 340

Ratnowski, Family I 452

Rauba, Family II 962

Rauch Teofilia see Burzyńska Teofila

Rauch, Family II 648–49

Ravid David (Shmukler) II 1077

Razdro Michalina II 842

Razminas Klemensas II 779

Rączek, Family I 309

Rączy Elżbieta I 68, 117–18, 226, 230, 274,  
276, 285, 402, 404–6, 487–89, 520, 525,

- 548; II 664, 666, 670, 686, 699, 738, 878, 970, 972, 1005, 1048–51, 1066, 1069
- Rapała Walerian, Rev. II 797
- Rechnic Anna (Baran Janina) I 195
- Rechtszafen Bronisława (Łuniewska Anna) I 413–14
- Rechtszafen Edward Karol (Haven Edward, Łuniewski Edward) I 413–15
- Rechtszafen Ludwik I 415
- Redler (Riedler), Family II 699
- Redlich Chana II 613
- Redlich Shimon II 613–14, 1122
- Reed Eva II 577
- Rees Laurence I 95; II 1025–27
- Reformat Teresa, Sister I 236, 253; II 991
- Regina Hądzynska (Rena X, Renia) II 701
- Regula, Family II 1122
- Reibschaid Edward II 684
- Reibschaid Marian II 684
- Reibschaid-Feliks Róża (Rosa) II 683–85
- Reibschaid, Family II 684
- Reich Bertha I 549
- Reich Efraim, Rabbi II 1123
- Reich Hania (Anna) I 487
- Reich Helena I 487
- Reich, Dr. I 522
- Reich, Family I 404
- Reichel Yitzchak II 784
- Reicher Aniela I 390
- Reicher Edward I 56, 390; II 1083
- Reicher Eleonora I 390
- Reicher Elżbieta I 390
- Reicher Janina I 237
- Reicher Michał II 780
- Reicher, Family I 390
- Reichman Dorota (Oleszkiewicz Maria) I 551–52
- Reichman Leon I 551–52
- Reichman Zofia (Oleszkiewicz Zofia) see Richman Orfanos Sophia
- Reichstein Abraham I 78
- Reider Chaya I 136
- Reig Leon II 933
- Reiman, Rescuer II 838
- Reinberg Tadeusz I 237
- Reinharz Maria (Klein Miriam) I 274–78, 281–82
- Reischstein Blanka see Drexler Blanka
- Reischstein Martha I 535
- Reisman Iser II 640, 642, 1009
- Reisman Toni II 640, 642, 1009
- Reisman, Family II 1009
- Reisner Lea (Bialowitz) II 869
- Reiss Volker I 87
- Reiter Joanna (Johanna, Sister Zygmunta) II 879, 991
- Reizman Chana II 1035
- Reizmann Shmuel II 1104
- Rejak Sebastian I 149
- Rejmentowski Stanisław, Rev. II 1007
- Rek Tadeusz I 523
- Religa Jan II 998
- Rembowska Hanna I 408
- Rems Ada (Remz, Stortz, Rosińska Adela) I 381
- Rems Eugeniusz (Remz) I 381
- Rems Fanny (Fania) I 381
- Renart Josef I 555
- Rennert Zila I 539
- Resnick-Tetelbaum Sonia II 1120
- Reszko Marianna (Sister Marcjanna) I 292–94; II 992
- Retman Edward I 62
- Reuter Timothy I 74
- Reznik Faiga (Barkai Berkovicz Zipora) II 799–800
- Ricciardi Antonio I 90
- Richman-Orfanos Sophia I 551–52
- Richmond Theo I 97; II 1006
- Richmond Yale I 72–73
- Richter Pola (Tamara, Michasia) I 212–13
- Riesel David I 181
- Riesel Felicja (Furness Irene, Kosowska Irena) I 181
- Riesel Lea I 181
- Rigamonti Magdalena II 867
- Rinde Flora (Blitzer, Kowalska Janina) I 284
- Rinde Roma (Buchman, Kowalska Ewelina) I 284

- Rinde Toni I 118  
 Ringel Abraham Mordechai I 544  
 Ringelblum Emanuel I 19, 23–24, 88, 113, 143–44, 349, 424; II 993, 1043, 1098  
 Riter Faiga I 431  
 Riter Josef I 431  
 Ritt Joanna I 154  
 Rittner Carol I 341; II 605, 1079, 1127  
 Ritz Mary Kaye II 1043  
 Rivkind Avraham Itzhak see Rywkind Avraham Itzhak  
 Rivlin Reuven I 28; II 1016, 1125  
 Riwash Joseph II 789, 1005  
 Robinson Halina (Trachtenberg Lina, Czernuszyn-Robinson) II 880–81, 1033  
 Robota Władysław, Rev. I 41  
 Robotnik, Mr. II 780  
 Rochman Bela I 387  
 Rochman Layb II 1053  
 Rodak Józef I 491  
 Röder-Blicksilber Manfred Karl (Adolf Karol) II 592  
 Rodzińska Stanisława (Sister Maria Julia) I 425, 431; II 930, 1012  
 Rogacka Wanda I 259  
 Rogaczewski Franciszek, Rev. I 47  
 Rogalewska Ewa I 224–25; II 766–67, 769, 828, 1061, 1124  
 Rogatska Wanda see Rogacka Wanda  
 Rogol Zelig II 745  
 Rogowski Benjamin II 1082  
 Rogozińska Teresa (Rachel) I 186, 265  
 Rogoziński Józef II 1107  
 Rogoziński, Family II 1107  
 Roguszewski, Family II 1105  
 Roiphe Anne I 91; II 732  
 Rojzman Berek II 1104, 1122  
 Rolicka Maria (Mary) I 328–29; II 1059  
 Rolnik Danuta (Vishnitzer) I 386–87  
 Rolnik Miriam (Mira) I 432  
 Rolski Michael (Michał), Rev. I 34  
 Roman Emanuela, Sister I 155  
 Romaniewicz Aniela II 1071  
 Romaniuk Ezechiel II 1033  
 Romaniuk Irena II 1033  
 Romaniuk Stefania II 1044  
 Romaniuk Zbigniew II 752, 756, 758, 761–62  
 Romankiewicz Kazimiera I 276, 281, 284  
 Romanowska Jadwiga II 799–800  
 Romanowski Gustaw I 220; II 1009  
 Romanowski, Family II 1065  
 Romansewicz Józefa (Sister Hermana) I 227–28, 231; II 992  
 Romańczyk, Rev. see Kalbarczyk Julian, Rev.  
 Romashkian Kazimierz, Rev. see Romaszkan Kazimierz, Rev.  
 Romasłowska Bronisława II 847  
 Romaszewski Tadeusz II 588–89, 999  
 Romaszkan Kazimierz, Rev. I 536–37  
 Romaszkan Krystyna I 537  
 Ronczoszkowa, Mrs. II 678  
 Ronen Shoshana (Rozalia, Wassner) II 1118  
 Ronen Zuzanna (Mokrzycka Maria) I 311  
 Ropelewska Maria (Sztajnman Mania, Staiman Weinzweig Marion) I 289  
 Rorat Jan II 710–11, 1064  
 Rorat Stefania II 710–11, 1064  
 Rorat, Family II 711, 1064  
 Rosak, Rev. II 702  
 Rose-Boratynska Ewa II 685  
 Rosen Armin I 27  
 Rosen Hedy (Jadwiga, Tugendhaft) I 274–75, 278–79  
 Rosen Jack II 1127  
 Rosen Leo II 1050  
 Rosen Richard Dean II 853  
 Rosen Zofia II 1084  
 Rosenberg Bernhard H. II 729  
 Rosenberg Blanca I 256–57, 496; II 1085  
 Rosenberg Emil (Wartanowicz) I 536  
 Rosenberg Gita II 860  
 Rosenberg Helena II 860  
 Rosenberg Michael (Majer, Różański Marjan) II 672–73  
 Rosenberg Sulamit (Żukowska Zofia, Wróblewska Zofia) I 312–13  
 Rosenblat Roma II 583  
 Rosenblatt Ela I 159  
 Rosenblatt Hanka I 158, 160  
 Rosenblatt Jan I 159

- Rosenblatt Mirka I 158, 160  
 Rosenblum Lili I 382  
 Rosenblum Max II 1108  
 Rosenbluth Faiga II 1050  
 Rosenfeld Ita I 520  
 Rosenman Gedalia, Rabbi II 632, 634  
 Rosental Shmuel (Rosenthal Samuel) II 964  
 Rosenthal Peppy (Naczycz) II 661–63, 730  
 Rosentreter Teresa I 457  
 Rosenzweig Gitta (Czekańska Marysia) I 166–68  
 Roserman Elżbieta II 1050  
 Roset Alter II 707  
 Rosiński Józef, Rev. I 236  
 Roskies David G. II 728–29  
 Rosłan Alexander II 1015  
 Rosłan Amelia II 1015  
 Rosman Moshe II 731  
 Rosolinska Adela (Sister Serafia) see Rosolińska Adela (Sister Serafia)  
 Rosolińska Adela (Sister Serafia) I 290; II 992  
 Rossino Alexander B. I 55, 57  
 Rossman Andrzej II 687  
 Rostan Susan M. II 580  
 Rostworowski Franciszek Maria Wawrzyniec, Rev. II 704  
 Rostworowski Jan Kanty, Rev. I 492, 494–95  
 Rostworowski Tomasz, Rev. I 491–94  
 Roszak Jadwiga II 578  
 Roszak Maria Janina (Sister Cecylia) I 425; II 992  
 Roszko Kazimierz, Rev. I 536  
 Roszko Maria II 902  
 Roszkowski Janusz I 256, 385, 407, 415, 423; II 630, 919, 1039, 1057, 1073, 1075, 1091, 1094, 1106  
 Roś Stanisława II 1059  
 Rotbart Nelli I 560  
 Rotem Simha I 562  
 Rotenberg Rosa (Rozensztroch, Darlewska Wanda) I 301  
 Rotensztein Halina I 162  
 Rotensztein Krystyna I 162  
 Rotfing Ester (Livny) II 846, 1045  
 Roth Denise II 958  
 Roth Irena II 905  
 Roth John K. II 1031  
 Roth Liliane II 958  
 Roth Margurete II 958  
 Roth Oscar II 958  
 Roth Renée II 958–59  
 Roth Rose (Moskowitz) II 904–5  
 Roth, Family II 958  
 Rothbard Kowalska Fredzia I 228  
 Rothchild Sylvia II 585, 1068  
 Rothenburg-Rosciszewska Anna see Rothenburg-Rościszewska Anna  
 Rothenburg-Rościszewski Witold see Rothenburg-Rościszewski Witold  
 Rothenburg-Rościszewska Anna II 858  
 Rothenburg-Rościszewski Witold II 858  
 Rothenburg-Rościszewski, Family II 858  
 Rothkirchen Livia I 26, 74; II 1019–20, 1023, 1028  
 Rothman Basia II 878–79  
 Rothstein Malcia (Stock) II 1076  
 Rotkiewicz Alfons, Rev. II 746  
 Rotman Bruno (Nowakowski) I 182  
 Rotman Nina (Nowakowska) I 181  
 Rotman-Weinstock Tema (Wajnsztok Tema, Santa Teresa) II 712; II 1058  
 Rotstein Bella II 576  
 Rotsztajn Fela II 687  
 Rottenberg Maria Krystyna I 411  
 Rotter Aleksander I 452  
 Rotter Ewa I 452  
 Rotter Hersh (Reed Henry) I 452  
 Rotter Zdzisław I 536  
 Rotter, Family II 869  
 Rotwein Maria (Rotnicka Maria) I 519  
 Rowecki Stefan I 32  
 Rozalski Adam, Rev. see Różalski Adam, Rev.  
 Rozanska Marianna see Różańska Marianna  
 Rozdeba Suzanne II 1046  
 Roze Regina I 416  
 Rozen Fruma II 859  
 Rozen Jakub II 859  
 Rozen Laiche II 846  
 Rozen Leonora (Policzkowska Barbara) I 563  
 Rozen, Family I 566



- Rozenbaum Shamir Varda (Wanda) I 236  
 Rozenberg Nora (Eleonora, Baranowicz, Hilkowicz, Stern) I 236  
 Rozenberg, Family II 944–45  
 Rozenblat Janina (Rosenblatt, Laufer Jane) I 263–64  
 Rozenblum Aleksander (Żuławski-Rozenblum) I 415  
 Rozenblum Elżbieta II 580  
 Rozenblum Mosze (Rozenblum Marian, Rosenbloom Marian, Rudzki Marian) II 580–81  
 Rozenblum Regina I 415  
 Rozenblum Serge-Allain I 346; II 1112  
 Rozenblum Zofia see Szymańska Zofia  
 Rozenchwajg Emilka (Kossower Rosenzweig Shoshana, Kosover Roentzweig Shoshana Emilka) II 577, 1119  
 Rozenfarb, Family II 580  
 Rozenowicz Eliaszy I 192  
 Rozenowicz Karolina (Kajla) I 192  
 Rozenal Frida (Kiel Irena, Byk Halina, Cukier) II 839  
 Rozhanska Złata (Różańska Złata, Zolota, Wiszniewska Helena) II 812  
 Rozkosz Hanna II 608  
 Rozlepiło Michał, Rev. II 617  
 Rozman Adam I 399  
 Rozman Edward I 399  
 Rozman Leopold I 399  
 Rozman Stanisława I 399  
 Rozman Stefania I 399  
 Rozman, Family I 399  
 Rozmaryn, Family I 260  
 Rozner Dani I 488–89  
 Rozovsky Shimon II 726  
 Roztworowski Tomasz, Rev. I 492  
 Rozumkiewicz Katarzyna II 611  
 Rozwadowska Helena (Sister Anuncjata) I 160  
 Rozwadowski Michał, Rev. I 221  
 Rózia, Housekeeper, Benefactress I 400  
 Róża od Serca Chrystusa, Sister (Rose of the Heart of Christ) I 411  
 Róża Weber II 913  
 Różalski Adam, Rev. I 47  
 Różańska Marianna I 151  
 Różański Eugeniusz I 556; II 1004  
 Różański Józef (Goldberg) I 344, 507  
 Różański Marcin A. I 454; II 1009  
 Różycka Anna II 603  
 Różycka Maryla II 768  
 Różycki Aleksander (Olek) II 603  
 Rubanek Henry II 949  
 Rubenstein Joshua II 963  
 Rubiłowicz-Łąpin Stanisława I 197  
 Rubin Anna (Hanka) I 274  
 Rubin Arnon I 395; II 588, 1104  
 Rubin M. (from Korczyn) II 665  
 Rubin Miriam (Rothschild, Dobosz Jolanta Maria) I 462  
 Rubin Sulia II 800  
 Rubin Zenon II 578  
 Rubinov, Mrs. II 778  
 Rubinovas Stanislovas (Rubinov Aron, Rubinow) II 777–78  
 Rubinshtein Eugenija II 931  
 Rubinstein Maria II 666  
 Rubinstein Mosze I 350  
 Rubinstein Sylvain (Turski) II 666  
 Rucinski Franciszek, Rev. see Ruciński Franciszek, Rev.  
 Ruciński Franciszek, Rev. I 37  
 Rück Cyla I 404–5  
 Rück Gusta I 404–5  
 Rück Regina I 405  
 Ruda Seweryn I 206  
 Rudawski Michał II 797, 799  
 Rudkowska Irena II 880  
 Rudnianski Zygmunt see Rudniański Zygmunt  
 Rudniański Zygmunt II 854  
 Rudnicka Małgorzata II 733  
 Rudnicka Masza (Svzizinger) I 123–24  
 Rudnicki Apolinary I 386  
 Rudnicki Klemens II 957  
 Rudnik Rachela I 123–24  
 Rudzianskienė Maria see Rudziańska Maria  
 Rudziańska Maria (Mania) II 961–62  
 Rudzītis Pēteris, Rev. II 785

- Rudzki Staszek II 710  
 Rudzki, Family I 486  
 Rufeisen Oswald II 816–20  
 Rufeisen-Schüpper Hella I 185  
 Rukalski Zygmunt I 307  
 Rukasz Józef, Rev. II 717  
 Rumak Zofia I 512  
 Ruminski Zigmund see Rumiński Zygmunt  
 Rumińska Maria I 246–48  
 Rumiński Zygmunt I 246–48  
 Rusiecki Aron II 744  
 Rusinek Teresa (Sister Stanisława) II 618  
 Ruskin Regina I 346; II 849  
 Russak Lea II 854–55  
 Rustungsbetrieb Haus II 844  
 Rustungsbetrieb Wohnung II 844  
 Ruszczyc Drwęska Irena I 209  
 Rutherford Phillip T. I 57  
 Rutka, Jewish woman II 711–12  
 Rutkowska Barbara I 565  
 Rutkowska Małgorzata I 143  
 Rutkowski Adam I 114, 126, 358, 423, 440, 553; II 587, 703, 885, 949, 1044, 1069, 1073  
 Ruzgys Jonas I 439  
 Ruzgys Stanislava I 439  
 Rużańska Cilia II 812  
 Rużańska Złata (Wiszniewska Helena) II 812  
 Rybak Bronisława I 229  
 Rybak Franciszka II 1052  
 Rybak Salome (Salomea) II 592, 597–98  
 Rybakowska Maria (Wieniewicz) I 214  
 Rybałtowski Kazimierz, Rev. I 451; II 998  
 Rybczyńska Stefania I 228  
 Rybicka Ewa I 326  
 Rybicki Jan I 404  
 Rychlak Ronald J. I 118  
 Rychlewicz Wojciech II 956–57  
 Rychlicka Lucyna I 163  
 Rychlińska Zofia II 682–83  
 Rychłowski Franciszek I 432  
 Ryclinska Zofia see Rychlińska Zofia  
 Ryczke Aaron I 455  
 Ryczke Janka I 455  
 Ryczke Kimmelman Mira I 455  
 Ryczke Mike (Mieczysław) I 455  
 Rydzewska Maria I 163  
 Rygier Leah I 300  
 Ryłski Mieczysław I 464–65  
 Rymowicz, Family II 962  
 Rynkiewicz, Family II 962  
 Rypstajn Emanuela, Sister II 865  
 Rys Paweł, Rev. see Ryś Paweł, Rev.  
 Rysińska Józefa I 487; II 921  
 Ryś Paweł, Rev. II 934  
 Rytel Zygmunt I 181–82  
 Rytel-Andrianik Artur I 18  
 Rytel-Andrianik Paweł I 316, 385, 413; II 698–99, 704, 750, 763, 765, 996–97, 1057, 1099, 1104–6  
 Rywkind Avraham Itzhak II 632–33  
 Rywkind Chaya II 632–33  
 Rywkind Menachem-Mendel II 632–34  
 Rywkind Raaya II 632–33  
 Ryziewicz, Family I 553  
 Ryżko Stanisław, Rev. II 814  
 Ryży Zofia II 957  
 Rządki Anthony (Antoni), Rev. I 38  
 Rządzińska Fryderyka (Shabry) I 287  
 Rządzińska Gitla (Eugenia) I 287  
 Rządziński Aleksander (Olek) I 287  
 Rzążewski Zygmunt II 1092  
 Rzeczinski Sonia (Yudenberg) I 544  
 Rzeczycka Sylwia I 305  
 Rzepecki Bronisław (Bronisław) II 836  
 Rzepecki, Painter I 539  
 Rzepka Abram II 1105  
 Rzepka Mendel II 1105  
 Rzeszewski, Rev. I 463  
 Rzewuska Lucyna II 719  
 Rzeźniczak Leszek Augustyn II 805  
 Rzottky Florian I 543  
 Rzottky Floriana, Sister I 543  
 Rzottky Franciszek, Rev. I 542–43; II 989  
 Rzottky Kazimierz I 542  
 Sack John II 736  
 Sada Miriam I 292–93  
 Sadowska Joanna II 766–67, 1124  
 Sadowski Janusz I 229

- Sadowski Maciej II 777  
 Sadurska Maria II 1046  
 Sadurski Józef II 1046  
 Safszyccka Eva II 1058  
 Sagan Stanisław Jerzy II 927  
 Saginur Gitya II 1040  
 Saginur Max II 1040  
 Saikowski (Sajkowski), Acquaintance of Mikšta Piotr's II 847  
 Sakaitė Viktorija I 26, 125, 438, 440; II 745, 779, 805, 807, 812, 816, 1001–2  
 Saks Józef (Josef) I 86  
 Sala Janina II 859  
 Sala Władysław (Władysław) II 859  
 Sala, Family II 859  
 Salamon Sarah II 707  
 Saleschutz Leibush I 514–15  
 Saleschutz Naftali (Jadach Tadeusz) see Salsitz Norman  
 Salicki, Family II 1053  
 Salit, Rabbi II 777  
 Salkaházi Sára, Sister I 26  
 Salomon, Son of Maria Kasman I 324  
 Saloni Jadwiga (Brzezińska) I 363; II 836–37, 1084  
 Saloni Juliusz I 363; II 836–37, 1084  
 Salsitz Norman I 514–15  
 Salton George Lucius II 797  
 Sałek Radeusz I 299  
 Sałek, Family I 300  
 Sałek-Deneko Jadwiga I 299–300  
 Sałek-Deneko Tadeusz I 300  
 Samerek Szczepan, Rev. I 115  
 Samson Naomi II 797  
 Samsonowska Krystyna I 394; II 876, 1055  
 Sandauer Feliks (Sawicki) II 847, 1048  
 Sandauer Franciszka II 847  
 Sandauer Józef Henryk II 847  
 Sandauer, Family II 847  
 Sandberg Lola (Kabanowska-Thiel Maria) II 640–42, 1009  
 Sandberg Mila (Amalia) see Sandberg-Mesner Mila  
 Sandberg-Mesner Mila (Schmiedel Stanisława) II 640–41, 797, 1009  
 Sandler David Solly I 128, 130; II 960, 963, 1081  
 Sann Marianne II 1092  
 Sapieha Adam, Archbishop I 22, 113–14, 116, 118–19, 344, 353, 507; II 906  
 Sapieha Maria (Sister Assumpta) I 189  
 Sarashka Hinda (Seroszko) II 697  
 Sarid Yishai II 1128  
 Sarid Yitzhak II 637  
 Sarna, Professor II 683  
 Sarosiek Witold (Garosek Vitold), Pastor of Kundzin II 1001  
 Sasin, Family II 1111  
 Sasower Dawid II 1070  
 Sass Fryderyk II 644  
 Satzker Joseph II 640  
 Sawicka Apolonia, Sister I 234, 456  
 Sawicka Franciszka Wanda (Berggruen) II 803  
 Sawicka Józefa II 785  
 Sawicka Maria, Sister I 271  
 Sawicki Ella II 577  
 Sawicki Franciszek, Rev. I 39  
 Sawicki Leon II 577  
 Sawicki Leopold II 590  
 Sawicki Polikarp, Rev. I 467  
 Sawicki, Family II 804  
 Schach Elazar Menachem, Rabbi II 729  
 Schafer Nicola II 880, 1033  
 Schäfer Peter I 92; II 737  
 Schaji (Szmaji), Family I 511  
 Scharf Bernard II 1076, 1080  
 Scharf Mark II 1076  
 Scharf Rina (Kwolek Janina, Chełmicka) see Chełmicka Rina  
 Scharf-Kahane Berta (Kahane (Szarf) Berta) I 537  
 Scharf-Kahane Rina I 537  
 Schargel Łucja (Borodziej, Keller) I 253  
 Schatzberg Ella II 577  
 Schatzberg Leon II 577  
 Schatzker Joseph II 640  
 Schauder Emilia I 252  
 Schauder Ewa I 252–53  
 Schauder Julius (Juliusz) I 252–53

- Schein Kozma Géza II 1095  
 Scheinboim Batya II 647–48  
 Scheinboim Brendala II 648  
 Schenk Rudolf I 541  
 Schieber Jona (Alschuler, Altshuler Yonah (Yona), Rawicz Joanna (Joasia)) I 161–62  
 Schiller Leon I 193  
 Schimmel Marilyn II 938  
 Schlafl Daniel L. Jr. I 90  
 Schmalholz Helena II 830–31  
 Schmalholz Shimon II 830  
 Schmalholz Yehoshua II 830  
 Schmid Anton II 772–73  
 Schmid Barbara (Guz-Schmid) I 300, 302–3  
 Schmidt Adam, Rev. I 38  
 Schmidt Kazimierz I 301  
 Schmidt Leokadia I 301, 311  
 Schmidt Maniek (Józef, Przybysz Aleksander) I 311  
 Schmidt Ron, Rev. II 1016  
 Schmidt Stefan I 310  
 Schneek Anita (Toczyska Anna) see Lanner Anita  
 Schneider Alexander II 844  
 Schneider Dora I 489  
 Schneider Grzegorz II 844  
 Schneider Lusja I 489  
 Schneider, Family II 844  
 Schneidermann, Treblinka escapee II 1104  
 Schnepf-Kołacz Zuzanna I 406; II 724, 831, 1049, 1063  
 Schnitzer Irena (Sznycer) II 1063  
 Schoenfeld Joachim I 81, 536; II 616, 638, 640  
 Schoenmann Bronia I 492  
 Schönker Henryk I 80; II 1059  
 Schönker Leon I 79–80  
 Schorr Mary II 618  
 Schorr Otto II 618–19  
 Schorr Sophie (Schorr-Reiner, Bajer) II 618  
 Schrank Moritz, Rev. II 935  
 Schreiber Zygmunt II 926, 1091  
 Schreidman (Fiałkowski) II 586  
 Schreyber Żabinska Shulamit II 1080  
 Schuessel Alfred see Schüssel Alfred  
 Schulman Faye II 796  
 Schultz Hans-Jürgen I 433  
 Schultz Irena I 298–99, 302, 318–19  
 Schulz Lucjan II 864  
 Schumacher Halina (Szumacher, Matusiak Helena) I 387  
 Schüssel Alfred II 609  
 Schuster Bernard II 799  
 Schutz Eva (Sarnecka Ewa) I 158–59  
 Schutz Jan (Sarnecki Jan) I 158–59  
 Schutzman Mark I 324  
 Schwartz Michael I 91  
 Schwartz Yosef II 608  
 Schwartzbach, Dentist II 631  
 Schwartzbaum Rachel (Klarman) I 137  
 Schwarz Olga (Szwarc), Sister I 234, 236, 238–39; II 992  
 Schwarz Ruth (Pardess) I 469  
 Schwarzfitter Jacob I 98  
 Schwarzwald Laura (Tymejko Bronisława) II 852–53  
 Schwarzwald Selma (Tymejko Zofia, Turner-Zaretsky Sophie) II 852–53  
 Schweid Klara II 611  
 Schweid Sabina II 610–11  
 Schweitzer Janina I 536  
 Sciolino Anthony J. II 734  
 Sebastianski Tadeusz, Rev. see Sebastyański Tadeusz, Rev.  
 Sebastyański Tadeusz, Rev. I 522, 524  
 Sebyła Alina I 209  
 Secomski Kazimierz, Rev. I 545  
 Seeberg Marie Louise II 1018, 1025  
 Segal Daniel II 839  
 Segal Gustawa II 626  
 Segal Leon II 626  
 Segal Rachmil II 839  
 Segal Roman II 839  
 Segal Yosef II 652  
 Segalson Haya II 961  
 Segalson Katya II 961  
 Segalson Lusik II 961  
 Segalson Moshe II 961  
 Segalson, Family II 961  
 Seidenberg Aaron I 300

- Seidenbeutel Maksymilian I 370  
 Seidenbeutel Tadeusz I 370  
 Seidner Marian (Józef) II 686  
 Seifer Bernard II 621–22  
 Seifert Felicja (Manor Ela, Smoleń Elżbieta) I 260; II 685  
 Seifmann Ewa I 211  
 Sekuła Adam, Rev. II 996  
 Selčinskaja Danutė II 773  
 Selinger Millie (Emilia) II 577  
 Sellin Jarosław I 114–15, 418, 519  
 Seltzer Stefanie (Maria) I 566  
 Semenowicz Mieczysław I 505  
 Semenowicz, Mrs. I 505  
 Semik Jan Jakub I 58  
 Semków Piotr I 57  
 Semrad Wanda II 1029  
 Semyanovski Alexander II 848–49  
 Semyanovski Felix II 848–49  
 Semyanovski Mikhail II 848  
 Sender Jakub I 62  
 Sender Symcha I 77  
 Sendler Irena (Krzyżanowska, Sendlerowa, “Jolanta”) I 143–44, 228, 235, 237, 243, 299, 301–2, 314–19, 351; II 858, 1136  
 Sendler Julek II 601  
 Sendlerowa Irena see Sendler Irena  
 Sendłak Stefan II 1038  
 Senkowska Eleonora I 236  
 Serafin Antoni II 602–3  
 Serafin Stanisława II 1029  
 Serafin, Family I 400  
 Serafinowicz Julian II 1106  
 Serafinowicz Stanisława II 1106  
 Serafinowicz, Family I 221  
 Seredziński Jan II 659  
 Sereny Gitta II 1103–4, 1122  
 Serwetnik, Family II 646–47  
 Seweryn Józef (Kraus) I 115  
 Seweryn Tadeusz II 925  
 Sękowska Elżbieta II 909  
 Sętkowska Franciszka I 365  
 Shachnovich Bluma II 960  
 Shachori Chana (Shchori Hana, Rosenblatt Ania, Rosenblatt Hanka) I 158  
 Shahak Israel II 730  
 Shaiak Gedaliah II 1057  
 Shamir Yitzhak I 28; II 1124–25  
 Shamri Arie I 248; II 1053, 1112  
 Shankowski Marian see Szankowski Marian  
 Shapira Kalonymos Kalmish II 727  
 Shapiro Dovid, Rabbi I 341–42  
 Shapiro Haim II 1037  
 Shapiro Irene II 1113  
 Shapiro Lejb (Szapiro Leon) II 763  
 Shapiro, Family II 764  
 Shatyn Bruno II 796  
 Shedletzki Tzvi II 919, 1117  
 Shefa Sheri I 66  
 Shein Baruch I 151; II 1068  
 Sheinboim Bronia II 648  
 Sheptytski Clement (Szeptycki Kazimierz), Greek Catholic Clergymen II 993  
 Sher Ben-Zion II 734  
 Shershnevsky Grigory (Kostka Stanisław Marian) I 436  
 Shierachek (Sieraczek), Family 173–74  
 Shifman Misha I 195  
 Shimoni K. II 952  
 Shleyen Yehoshua (Schleyen) I 561  
 Shli Meir (Shely) II 771  
 Shlomo Yisroel I 69  
 Shmuel Krakowski II 723, 751  
 Shmuelevich Y. I 84  
 Shmulowitz Gila (Gizela) I 257; II 1076  
 Shner-Nishmit Sarah I 447  
 Shnirer (Vaks) Rita (Shenirer Ritah) I 544  
 Shonfeld Moshe I 341–42; II 1131  
 Shortridge Tim I 185  
 Shperling H. (Sperling) II 1104  
 Shtaimetz Reiss Daniela (Rajska Danuta) I 236, 264  
 Shtibel Adam (Szybel Abram) II 1047  
 Shtibel Rachel II 1047  
 Shtokfish David I 560; II 697, 745–46, 796, 800  
 Shuval Dov I 78; II 964  
 Shveber Shmuel, Rabbi I 73  
 Sidelko Rozalia Domicella (Sister Bernarda) I 274, 277–82; II 992

- Sidrański Jankiel II 766  
 Siedlecka Joanna I 523  
 Siedlecki Hersz II 1116  
 Siedlecki Zygmunt, Rev. II 689  
 Siegelman Itzhak II 618  
 Siek Magdalena I 77, 88, 96, 138; II 1006  
 Siekierka Brindla (Bronka) II 1059  
 Siekierka Mojżesz II 1059  
 Siekierka Szczepan I 556; II 625–26, 630, 637–38, 884, 888, 1004, 1075, 1079  
 Siekierski Franciszek, Rev. I 116  
 Siekierski Maciej I 138; II 958  
 Siekierski Stanisław II 1071  
 Sieler Fella II 1073  
 Sielewicz Jan, Rev. II 802–4, 988  
 Sielski Jerzy I 467; II 798  
 Siemaszko Ewa II 1072, 1080  
 Siemaszko Władysław II 1072, 1080  
 Siemiątkowski Andrzej see Siemiątkowski Andrzej  
 Siemiatycka Masza (Śmiaticki) II 805  
 Siemiatycka Ruth (Siemiatycka Irena) II 805  
 Siemiątkowski Andrzej I 288  
 Siemiątkowski, Family II 1065  
 Siemińska Krystyna I 177  
 Sienkiewicz Adam II 794  
 Sienkiewicz Bronisław II 794  
 Sienkiewicz Łukasz II 742  
 Sienkiewicz Zuzanna I 182  
 Sienkiewicz, Family II 794  
 Sierpacka Dorota II 576  
 Sierpinski, Family II 575  
 Sierpińska Anna I 300  
 Sierzputowska-Grodzicka Stanisława II 1089–90  
 Siostrzewitowska Janina (Sister Bertranda, Borkowska Anna) I 410, 425–30; II 990  
 Sigalin Hanna I 305  
 Sigalin Krystyna I 305  
 Sigelman Yitshak II 609  
 Sikoń Zofia II 944  
 Sikora Kazimiera (Bąkowska) I 199  
 Sikorski Marian I 549  
 Silber Ludwika II 670  
 Silber Stizel Sonya I 441  
 Silbering Tushia II 948  
 Silberklang David I 26, 87  
 Silberman Julian II 616  
 Silberman Michał II 616  
 Silverman Genya II 788  
 Silverman Jack II 788  
 Silverman Peter II 788, 1006  
 Simonsohn Ludwik (Szymański) II 586  
 Singer Esther (Freilach) II 882  
 Singer Felicia II 636  
 Singer Friedrich II 882  
 Singer Gabriel II 1051  
 Singer Henryk II 636  
 Singer Isaac Bashevis II 731  
 Singer Rose I 549  
 Singer Samuel D. II 1103  
 Singer, Family I 549  
 Sirkiewicz Ludwik, Rev. see Syrewicz Ludwik, Rev.  
 Sitarek Adam I 224–25; II 799, 1029–30, 1106, 1116  
 Sitek, Mr. II 678  
 Sitkiewicz Damian II 589, 999  
 Sitko Maria II 837, 933  
 Sitko Wanda II 837, 933  
 Sitkowska Helena I 414  
 Sitkowski Andrzej I 414  
 Sitkowski, Family I 414  
 Sitnicki Andrzej I 166–67  
 Sitnik Aleksander Krzysztof I 66  
 Šiušienė Vincenta II 960  
 Siuta Natalia (Sister Makryna) II 705  
 Siwczyńska Barbra II 852  
 Siwczyńska Stefania II 852  
 Siwek Katarzyna II 686  
 Siwek Maria I 326; II 992  
 Skalbania Adam, Rev. see Skałbania Adam, Rev.  
 Skalska Jadwiga II 828, 859  
 Skalski Franciszek, Rev. I 189  
 Skalski Michał II 828, 859  
 Skalski, Family II 859, 1112  
 Skałbania Adam, Rev. I 220, 223–24; II 988  
 Skarbek Czesław, Rev. I 115  
 Skarbek-Tłuchowski Jan I 218



- Skardyński Jan Michał, Rev. II 785  
 Skarga Piotr I 363  
 Skarżyńska Jadwiga I 506; II 1055  
 Skarżyńska Zabłocka Krystyna I 506  
 Skarżyński Stanisław I 506; II 1055  
 Skaza Zofia I 487  
 Skibinski Irene Mauber II 791–92  
 Skibinski, Mr. see Skibiński, Mr.  
 Skibińska Alina I 105; II 1102, 1105  
 Skibiński, Mr. I 550  
 Składkowska Aliza II 879  
 Składkowska Fraidla II 879  
 Składkowski, Family II 879  
 Skobel Wacław (Wacław) I 523  
 Skoczewski Marian (“Ksawery”), Rev. I 545  
 Skoczylas Jerzy I 349  
 Skokowski Justyn, Rev. II 742, 996  
 Skolnick Irene R. II 798  
 Skolnik Richard I 515  
 Skop Andrzej II 1054  
 Skop Maria II 1054  
 Skop, Family II 1054  
 Skorupa, Family II 1087  
 Skotnicka Anna, Sister I 234, 456  
 Skotnicka Hanna I 565  
 Skotnicki Aleksander B. II 928  
 Skotnicki Aleksander I 565  
 Skowrońska Innocenta Janina, Sister II 699  
 Skowrońska Wanda II 675  
 Skowroński Stanisław II 675  
 Skrężyna Bronisława I 400  
 Skrężyna Julia I 400  
 Skrodzki Stanisław, Rev. I 393  
 Skrzyszewska Helena (Hela) I 559–60  
 Skrzydłowska Alina I 242  
 Skrzydłowska Jadwiga I 242  
 Skrzypczak Marian, Rev. I 34  
 Skrzypek Agnieszka I 519  
 Skubiś Ireneusz I 470  
 Skudrzyk Stanisław, Rev. I 492; II 956  
 Skurczyńska Janina II 746  
 Skurczyński Zygmunt II 746  
 Skurnik Miriam I 461  
 Skurskis Norbertas II 779  
 Skuza, Family II 1037  
 Skwara Marian I 415; II 575  
 Skwarlinski Bolesław, Rev. see Skwarliński Bolesław, Rev.  
 Skwarliński Bolesław, Rev. II 688  
 Sledzinski Wacław I 361  
 Śliogerienė Jadvyga II 959  
 Sliwa Joanna II 925  
 Sliwa Joseph II 943  
 Sliwczyński Jerzy see Śliwczyński Jerzy  
 Sliwczyński Tadeusz see Śliwczyński Tadeusz  
 Sliwczyński, Family see Śliwczyński, Family  
 Sloan James Park I 524; II 1048  
 Slodki Mordechai I 79  
 Slodzinski Bronisława (Bronisława) see Słodzińska Bronisława  
 Slodzinski Julian (Słodziński) see Słodziński Julian  
 Slodzinski Regina see Słodzińska Regina  
 Slowczyk David II 1110  
 Slowczyk Josef II 1110  
 Slowczyk Laib II 1110  
 Sławik Henryk II 953–55  
 Sławińska Stanisława II 837  
 Sławiński Jakub (Hirszy) II 767  
 Sławka, Wife of Nojmark Henryk (Papierski) II 852  
 Słodzińska Bronisława II 837–38  
 Słodzińska Regina II 837–38  
 Słodziński Julian II 837–38  
 Słodziński, Family II 837–38  
 Słomczyńska Helena I 319  
 Słonina Antonina I 254  
 Słońska Irena I 326  
 Słowacki Juliusz II 783  
 Słowakiewicz, Family II 1084  
 Słowikowski, Home Army member I 404  
 Słowiński Józef II 1061  
 Słowiński Zachariasz II 1061  
 Słupiński Marcei, Rev. I 442  
 Słupski Kazimierz, Rev. II 621–24, 988  
 Smart Maxwell II 1077  
 Smichkowitz Chaia II 947  
 Smiga Nuchem II 949  
 Smilg Adolf II 779  
 Smilg Lena II 779

- Smilovitskii Leonid (Smilovitsky) I 423, 453;  
II 800, 812, 996, 998, 1007–8  
Smilovitskii Leonid see Smilovitsky Leonid  
Smith Lyn I 65  
Smith Mania I 554–55  
Smith Mark S. II 1104, 1129  
Smoczeński Paweł, Rev. II 797  
Smolar Moshe I 135  
Smolarz Mosze II 1113  
Smolenska Zuzanna M. II 970  
Smolik Krystyna II 887  
Smoliński, Lawyer II 675  
Smolko Władysława see Smółko Władysława  
Smolnik Boris II 1082  
Smolnik Gitel II 1082  
Smolski Władysław see Smólski Władysław  
Smoluk Henryk, Rev. I 555  
Smorczewski Franciszek, Rev. I 452; II 988  
Smoroński Kazimierz, Rev. I 519  
Smoter Grzeszkiewicz Regina I 78  
Smólski Władysław I 237, 240, 262, 405;  
II 1005  
Smółko Jan II 769  
Smółko Władysława II 769  
Smuschkowitz David II 788, 1006  
Smuszkowicz Peter (Pejsach) II 788, 1006  
Snarska Helena (Wajnryb Lusja) II 806  
Sniadecka Zofia see Śniadecka Zofia  
Snyder Timothy I 53, 56, 354  
Sobalkowski Szczepan, Rev. I 546  
Sobelman Elżbieta I 158  
Sobierajska Władysława, Sister II 882–85  
Sobieszek Józef, Rev. II 690  
Sobkowicz, Family I 490  
Sobolewska Anastazja I 304  
Sobolewska-Pyz Joanna I 300  
Sobolewski Michał II 816  
Sobolewski Walerian I 304  
Sobolewski, Family I 302, 304  
Sobol-Masłowska Rysia I 213  
Socha Karol II 1099  
Sochański, Family II 670  
Soczek Eugenia (Sister Charitas) I 194  
Sojka Stanisław I 504; II 1010  
Sokalska Helena I 423; II 1073  
Sokol Al II 1053  
Sokolski Hanna I 18  
Sokol-Sokołowska Anna (Brożek, Brozek)  
I 205  
Sokołowska Anna II 1033  
Sokołowska Hanka I 457  
Sokołowska-Gwizdka Joanna II 617  
Sokołowski Adolf, Rev. I 125  
Sokołowski Henryk, Rev. I 492  
Sokołowski Jan, Rev. I 532  
Solarz Pankracja, Sister II 923  
Solcman Jakub (Jakow) II 653  
Solecka Maryla I 177  
Solecki, Jewish man I 393  
Soloduch Henryk II 845  
Soloduch Hona II 845  
Solowiejczyk Lejba II 798  
Solska Irene (Irena) I 190  
Soltysinski Romoald, Rev. see Sołtysiński  
Romuald, Rev.  
Soluch Felicja II 905  
Sołowiejczyk, Dr. I 306  
Sołtysiński Romuald, Rev. I 34  
Sommer Adela I 126; II 885  
Sommer Ulla II 885  
Sonensztajn Luisa I 422  
Sonensztajn Rosa I 422  
Songaila Alfonsas II 960  
Sonnenberg Sven II 947, 1053  
Sopoćko Michał, Rev. II 803–4  
Sorenzon Shalom II 746  
Soroka David II 941–42  
Soroka Esther II 941–42  
Soroka Sh. II 1053, 1112  
Sorys Tadeusz, Rev. I 555  
Sosnowska Julia, Sister I 291; II 992  
Sosnowski Henryk II 838  
Soszynski Roman, Rev. see Soszyński  
Roman, Rev.  
Soszyński Roman, Rev. II 691–93, 1069  
Sowiar-Chodnikiewicz Marianna II 1089–90  
Sowińska Zofia, Sister see Sowińska  
Zofia, Sister  
Sowińska Leokadia, Sister II 923  
Sowińska Zofia, Sister I 438

- Sowisło Maria II 878  
 Spalińska Aniela I 543–44  
 Spaliński Józef I 543–44  
 Spatz Zofia (Heimrath) I 116–17  
 Spector Klara II 643  
 Spector Sandor II 1112  
 Spector Shalom II 1112  
 Spector Shmuel I 136; II 645, 747, 1072  
 Spencer Jack I 341  
 Sperber Zalman (Zielinski Jozio, Zieliński Józio) II 887  
 Sperling Hershl II 1103  
 Sperski Bolesław, Rev. I 425; II 777–78  
 Spiegel, Family I 327  
 Spiegelman Art II 1094  
 Spiegler Ela (Pawlik Krystyna) I 533  
 Spigel Lotek (Spiege, Shafrir Eliezer) I 327  
 Spinek Izabela, Sister II 898  
 Spoz Józef Kazimierz I 78  
 Springer David II 720  
 Springer Leah (Fein, Wiśniewska Helen) II 720  
 Spritzer Jenny II 1095  
 Spus Helena II 1088  
 Spus Piotr II 1088  
 Srebolov Lea (Srebrołow) II 759  
 Srebolov Rivka (Srebrołow) II 759  
 Srebro Katarzyna II 621  
 Sromek Małgorzata I 62; II 932  
 Srul Warszawer Zygmunt II 1057  
 Stabholz Ludwik I 363  
 Stachowicz Izabela II 601  
 Stachowicz Janka I 518  
 Stachowicz, Family I 518  
 Stadler Tosia (Ajzenberg) II 614  
 Stakauskas Juozas, Rev. I 20, 432–34, 778  
 Stalin Joseph (Józef) I 121, 344, 351; II 755  
 Stalmach Adam, Rev. I 486; II 989  
 Stalmach Anna I 486  
 Stalmach Jan I 486  
 Stalska Antonina I 263–64  
 Stammer-Cichocki Stanisław II 878  
 Stanberg Edmund II 1111  
 Stanek Jan, Rev. I 200  
 Stanisław Cieślak I 531  
 Stanisławczyk Barbara II 1083  
 Stanisławska Bożena (Sister M. Piotra) I 155  
 Stanke Maria, Sister II 648  
 Stankiewicz Kazimierz, Rev. II 1006  
 Stankiewicz Remigiusz II 889  
 Stankiewicz Weronika (“Wercia”) II 1080  
 Stankiewicz, Judge II 609  
 Stankiewicz, Mrs. II 779  
 Stankiewicz, Family II 962  
 Stankowski, Family 401  
 Stano Łucjana, Sister II 923  
 Stapp Ewa II 798, 950, 1119  
 Starczewska Genowefa (Korczak) II 859–60  
 Starczewska Wanda II 859  
 Stark Jared II 1112  
 Starker Josef II 674  
 Starkopf Adam II 888, 890  
 Starkopf Jasia II 888–90  
 Starkopf Pela II 888–889  
 Starkopf, Family II 890  
 Staros Urszula I 386–87  
 Starowiejska Lea II 703–4, 1057  
 Stasiak-Kostka Erna II 933  
 Stasiowski, Family II 1048  
 Stasiuk Izabela II 841  
 Stasiuk, Family II 841  
 Staszak Bronisław II 1093  
 Staszewska Helena (Sister Maria Klemensa) II 1012  
 Staszewska Stefania I 307  
 Staub Fryderyk (“Proch”) II 1075  
 Stauber Roni II 1018  
 Staufer Ludwik, Rev. II 621  
 Stawarz Jan, Brother I 47  
 Stawiarski, Family II 1065  
 Stawinoga Roman, Rev. I 115  
 Stawowiak Aniela, Sister I 234, 236, 242, 261; II 992  
 Stączek Jan, Rev. II 954  
 Stec Bolesław I 78  
 Steckman Rubin Rudolf II 1068  
 Stefanicki, Family I 553  
 Stefanik, Family II 1048  
 Stefanowski Jan, Rev. I 383  
 Stefanowski Marian, Rev. I 104

- Stefańska Janina I 494  
 Stefański Bolesław, Rev. II 603–4  
 Stefański Stanisław I 235  
 Stefański Witold I 494  
 Stefko Zofia I 478–79  
 Stein Adek (Bulkowstein) II 1113  
 Stein André I 439  
 Stein Aron I 316; II 798  
 Stein Chaja Estera (Tucholska, Tucholska-Körner Teresa) I 316–17; II 798  
 Stein Faiga I 316–17  
 Stein Jadzia (Jochewet) I 316  
 Stein Pola II 1118  
 Steinberg Gould Caroline I 300; II 947  
 Steinberg Sheina (Kowalewska Janina, Epstein) II 804  
 Steinberg Zofia (Sister Katarzyna) I 410–11  
 Steiner Yehiel I 327  
 Steinfeld Ludwika II 608  
 Stek Marko, Greek Catholic Clergymen II 993  
 Stelmach, Family I 486–87; II 989  
 Stelmachowska Aleksandra I 159  
 Stelmachowska Irena I 159  
 Stelmachowska Wanda I 159  
 Stelmachowski, Family I 159  
 Sten Ephraim (Sternschuss) II 1089, 1123  
 Stepak Józef see Stępak Józef  
 Stepczyński Casimir, Rev. see Stępczyński Kazimierz, Rev.  
 Stepien Jan, Rev. see Stępień Jan, Rev.  
 Stepniewski Tadeusz II 1032  
 Stern Emilia II 842  
 Sternberg Lotka II 631–32  
 Sterngast Natalie II 1119  
 Sternlicht Tur Pola I 417  
 Sterns, Family II 842  
 Steuer Czesława I 412  
 Steuer Janina I 412  
 Steuer Jerzy I 412  
 Stevens Stewart II 1124  
 Stępak Józef I 523  
 Stępak Romualda, Sister I 234, 236, 261; II 992  
 Stępczyński Kazimierz, Rev. I 35  
 Stępień Jan, Rev. I 71–72, 343–44  
 Stępień Monika II 686, 904  
 Stępińska Maria II 683  
 Stępiński Michał II 683  
 Stępówna Teresa (Stępa, Sister Teresa) I 235–36; II 992  
 Stiefel Helena II 669–70  
 Stiefel Sala see Heiler Alicja  
 Stiefel Samuel II 669  
 Stiefel Stefan (Szymański) II 669–70  
 Stieszka, Mrs. II 783  
 Stiffel Frank II 1092  
 Stock Nechamia II 1076  
 Stocker Debora (Rygier, Szymeczko Wanda Katarzyna) I 300  
 Stockfish David II 608, 637  
 Stockhammer Shimshon, Rabbi I 341–42  
 Stodulski Piotr, Rev. II 712  
 Stojakowski Jan II 1093  
 Stojakowski, Rev. I 545  
 Stokauskas Joseph, Rev. see Stakauskas Juozas, Rev.  
 Stolarczyk Witold, Rev. II 989  
 Stolarczyk, Family II 989  
 Stolarzewicz Stefan II 1092  
 Stoler Meir II 1082  
 Stoll Katrin II 1042  
 Stolze Jackie Hartling II 787  
 Stołowicka Lydia II 773–74, 776  
 Stołowicki Michael (Stolowitzky) II 773–77  
 Stone Helen I 65  
 Stopinski, Family see Stopiński, Family  
 Stopiński, Family II 688  
 Stopniak Franciszek I 251; II 971–72, 1004  
 Stoszek Marek II 1066  
 Strak Gabriela, Sister I 234, 260  
 Strasser Max I 490  
 Strasser Serafina (Hacker Elmowitz Charlotte, Kozłowska Janina) I 490  
 Straszewska Janina II 838  
 Straszewska Teresa II 838–39  
 Strauchmann Krzysztof II 624–25  
 Straussová Valerie II 935  
 Strawczyński Oscar II 1105  
 Straż Ita II 1081  
 Streeter Kurt I 321

- Stremecka Marta II 617  
 Stroop Jürgen (Jurgen) I 565  
 Strowieska Lea see Starowiejska Lea  
 Strójwąg, Family II 657  
 Struś, Family II 857  
 Strużanowska Janina II 807  
 Strzałęcka Jadwiga I 391; II 1055  
 Strzałęcki Janusz II 1055  
 Strzałkowski Zygmunt, Rev. I 239  
 Strzałkowski, Family II 743  
 Strzelczyk Anna (Brinstein Anna Pola)  
     II 767–68  
 Strzelczyk Helena (Woźniak) II 767  
 Strzelczyk Maria (Józefowicz) II 767  
 Strzelczyk Tadeusz II 767  
 Strzelecki Andrzej II 932  
 Strzelecki Ryszard II 689  
 Strzelecki Wacław II 689  
 Stuchły Helena Regina (Miszal, Mischel,  
     Stuchłowa) I 506–7  
 Stuchły Janusz I 506  
 Stuchły Stanisław (Stuchły) I 506  
 Studzińska Teodora II 580  
 Studziński Ireneusz II 580  
 Stupnicka Anna I 415  
 Stupnicka Janina I 415–16  
 Stupnicki, Family I 416; II 1084  
 Styczeń Katarzyna see Styczeń Katarzyna  
 Styczeń Katarzyna I 328  
 Styczyńska Maria II 884  
 Stypułowska Eugenia I 326  
 Stypułowski Zbigniew I 251  
 Styrna Paweł II 1098–99  
 Styrna, Family II 1121  
 Styś Irena I 236  
 Styś Krystyna I 236  
 Suchecka Maria II 1003  
 Suchecka Stanisława II 687  
 Suchta Hiacenta (Hiacynta, Suchla), Sister  
     II 900–1  
 Sudoł Tomasz I 70, 104, 107, 162, 188, 198,  
     204, 235, 297, 310, 330, 347, 389, 396,  
     406, 411, 413, 467, 503, 506, 540, 565;  
     II 644–45, 699, 803–4, 814, 852, 882,  
     897, 899, 905, 956, 966, 972, 979, 1045,  
     1049, 1055, 1057, 1113  
 Sugihara Chiune I 109  
 Sujata Michał, Rev. II 615–16  
 Sukman Zalman II 760  
 Šukys Julija II 804  
 Sulej Henryk, Rev. I 392; II 701  
 Sułek Antoni II 708  
 Supel Piotr [Sopel?] II 1102  
 Superman Menachem II 1049  
 Suplat, Family see Suplat, Family  
 Suplat Antoni II 863  
 Suplat Bronisława II 863  
 Suplat, Family II 863–64  
 Surdacki Zygmunt, Rev. I 46, 373; II 997  
 Surdecki Zygmunt, Rev. see Surdacki  
     Zygmunt, Rev.  
 Surowiak Kanty Jan, Rev. II 798  
 Surowiec Franciszka I 525  
 Sussman Joni I 80  
 Sutkowska Roberta, Sister I 515–17  
 Sutzkever Abraham (Suckewer) I 425–27,  
     429–30  
 Suwała Stanisław, Rev. II 956  
 Swer Ita II 960  
 Swiech Filipa see Święch Filipa  
 Swinkowski Bronisław, Rev. see Świejkowski  
     Bronisław, Rev.  
 Switzky (Kubicki) II 808  
 Switzky, Family II 808–9  
 Sybyłówna Alina see Sebyła Alina  
 Sydry Zofia II 602–3  
 Sygall Adela see Milchman Adele  
 Sykulski Józef, Rev. I 393  
 Symon Stanisław, Rev. II 655–57  
 Synalewicz Balbina (Orlańska Elżbieta) I 105,  
     396–97  
 Syndutka, Family II 678  
 Synior Jan, Rev. I 551  
 Syrewicz Ludwik, Rev. II 645, 648–50  
 Syrkis Blum Ester (Esther) I 177, 184  
 Syrkis Idunia I 184  
 Syrkis Lewy Ida (Yehudit) I 177  
 Syrkis Mala I 184  
 Syrkis Pylowsky Ala (Malka) I 177

- Syrota Maria I 225  
 Szablak Halina I 299  
 Szachter Goldie I 478  
 Szachter Kalib Goldie I 478  
 Szac-Wajnkranc Noemi I 264  
 Szadkowska Lucyna (Sister Zofia) I 194  
 Szafir Boruch I 211–12  
 Szafir Froim I 212  
 Szafran Chana (Pozner) I 130  
 Szafran Jadwiga, Sister II 714  
 Szafraniec Anna II 664  
 Szaindl Wajnberg II 850  
 Szajdek, Family II 608  
 Szajn Leopold I 264  
 Szajn Lewin Eugenia I 563  
 Szajn Teodor I 264  
 Szajnberg Wolf (Szejnberg) II 1105  
 Szalacha Wiktoria I 518  
 Szalla Jan I 218  
 Szancer Alfred (Królikowski) I 397–98  
 Szancer Zofia I 398  
 Szancer Zygmunt I 397–98  
 Szandorowska Elżbieta (Elżbieta) I 255  
 Szaniawski Henryk (Środa Chaim) II 1033  
 Szankowski Marian I 554  
 Szapáry Erzsébet II 955  
 Szapira J. II 665  
 Szapiro Aniela II 904  
 Szapiro Anita II 592  
 Szapiro Faja (Unruch, Shapira Faye)  
 II 610–11  
 Szapiro Fajwel (Faivel Filip) II 763–64  
 Szapiro Inka I 202, 305  
 Szapiro J., Rescuer of Jews II 792  
 Szapiro Janina (Kuśmierk, Szczygielska)  
 II 904  
 Szapiro Klara I 203  
 Szapiro Lejb (Leibko Leon) II 763–64  
 Szapiro Leon II 904  
 Szapiro Nina (Shekht) I 203, 253  
 Szapiro Sylwia I 393  
 Szapiro, Miss I 209  
 Szarawaro Kazimiera see Szarowaro  
 Kazimiera (Halina)  
 Szarek Cecylia II 890  
 Szarek Jan, Rev. II 647  
 Szarek Peter (Piotr), Rev. I 34  
 Szarer Bronisława (Feuer) II 611  
 Szarota Tomasz I 31–32, 53, 112, 184  
 Szarowaro Kazimiera (Halina) I 207–9  
 Szawłowska Maria II 618–19  
 Szcrecranska Stella see Szczerańska Stella  
 Szczawiński Paweł II 901  
 Szczawiński Zygmunt I 320  
 Szczecińska Maria see Szczecińska Maria  
 Szczecińska Maria II 839  
 Szczeciński Jerzy I 457  
 Szczemirski Stanisław, Rev. I 443  
 Szczepaniak Mateusz I 362, 365, 564  
 Szczepanik Wincenty, Rev. II 708  
 Szczepańczyk Wiktoria Renata I 288  
 Szczepańska Irena (Sister Augustine of the  
 Cross) I 389  
 Szczepański Janusz I 205  
 Szczepański Stanisław, Rev. I 151  
 Szczepek Konstancja, Sister I 227  
 Szczerańska Stella II 758–59  
 Szczerba Patryk I 424  
 Szczerbik Zbigniew I 471  
 Szczerbowska Adolfa, Sister II 922  
 Szczerbowska Irena II 932  
 Szczerbowska Katarzyna II 932  
 Szczerbowski Jan II 932  
 Szczęsny Stanisław I 506  
 Szczurek, Family II 634–35  
 Szczygielska Zofia, Sister II 882, 992  
 Szczygieł Paweł, Rev. II 1005  
 Szczygłowski Jan I 78  
 Szejna Zofia II 757  
 Szejnbaum Jadwiga II 636  
 Szejngut Tuwie I 21, 357  
 Szejniuk Bergman Jadwiga (Edzia) II 800  
 Szela Władysław II 631  
 Szela, Family II 631  
 Szela Jan II 1047  
 Szela, Family II 1047  
 Szelański Kazimierz I 159  
 Szelażek Adolf, Bishop II 659, 799  
 Szelong Józef II 615  
 Szenfeld Marianna II 879



- Szenfeld Zenon II 879  
 Szenfeld, Family II 879  
 Szenker Meir II 724  
 Szenwic Eugenia I 194  
 Szenwic Iwona (Stenia, Grabowski Yvonne) I 194  
 Szenwic Wilhelm (Sowiński) I 194  
 Szeptycka Joanna I 228  
 Szeptycki Andrzej (Andreas), Archbishop I 25, 536; II 1117  
 Szeremeta Bronisław II 1078  
 Szereszewska Anna Maria (Marysia) II 892–93, 896  
 Szereszewska Helena II 891–92, 895–96  
 Szereszewski Robert (Macius) II 892–93, 895–96  
 Szesewski, Rev. II 719  
 Szeszko Helena I 298–99  
 Sześciuk Walerian, Rev. II 769  
 Szetelnicki Wacław, Rev. II 608  
 Szewach Helena (Bibliowicz) II 743–44  
 Szewach Merka II 1095  
 Szewc Antonina II 839  
 Szewc Józef (Józef) II 839  
 Szewc Marcin II 839  
 Szewc Zofia II 839  
 Sziling Jan I 49  
 Szkilnik Janina I 423; II 1073  
 Szkodziński Stanisław, Rev. II 885–88  
 Szkolnikow Lidia (Stamler Lidiah) II 881  
 Szkopwiec Ryszard I 251  
 Szladkowski Henryk I 374  
 Szlagowski Antoni, Bishop I 385  
 Szlak Józef I 544  
 Szlakman Salomon I 139  
 Szlam Ewa I 254, 264  
 Szlenik, Rev. II 785  
 Szlosberg, Family I 499  
 Szmajuk Marek (Szmajukand Marek Markus) I 423; II 1073  
 Szmajukand, Family I 423  
 Szmajzner Stanisław II 1122  
 Szmekura Joseph II 1057  
 Szmidt Maria II 879  
 Szmulek, Jewish child I 412–13  
 Szmulowicz Jakub II 1107  
 Szmurło Janina II 840  
 Szmurło Kazimierz II 840  
 Szmurło Helena II 1113  
 Sznajder Cyla (Huss) I 233  
 Sznajder Genia II 902–3  
 Sznajderman Regina (Rivka, Tauber) II 725  
 Sznarbachowski Feliks, Rev. II 798  
 Szner Zvi I 117  
 Sznuler Rachela II 1071  
 Sznurkowski Sławomir I 411  
 Sznycer Irena (Schnitzer Irena, Feinmesser Rina) II 723, 1042, 1062–63  
 Szor E., Dr. II 926, 1091  
 Szostak Ludwika II 862–63  
 Szostak Zygmunt II 862–63  
 Szostak, Family II 862–63  
 Szostkiewicz Halina I 170, 231, 301, 389; II 663, 971–72  
 Szołdzińska Agnieszka (Aniela), Sister I 166–68  
 Szpak Irena, Sister I 292  
 Szpakowska Aleksandra II 592–93, 600–2  
 Szpakowski, Engineer II 595  
 Szpakowski, Family I 424  
 Szpanowska Anna I 300  
 Szparberg Cypa II 1071  
 Szparberg Rywa II 1071  
 Szper Cohen Hanna II 1134  
 Szpigel Rina (Glahman) II 882  
 Szpigner Fryda (Frida, Franciszka, Frania, Aronson, Aharonson, Malinowska Frania) I 292–97  
 Szpilfogel Elżbieta (Chruściak) I 192  
 Szpilfogel Maria (Rozenowicz) I 192  
 Szpilman Władysław II 1033  
 Szpringer Fryda see Szpigner Fryda  
 Szramek Emil, Rev. I 41  
 Szrant Karol, Rev. I 547  
 Szreybrowski Kazimierz, Rev. I 37  
 Sztajn Ester I 266  
 Sztajenberg Aleksander (Sawicki) II 803  
 Sztakauskas Jazas, Rev. see Stakauskas Juozas, Rev.

- Sztark Adam, Rev. I 446–50, 492; II 988, 998, 1012  
 Sztark, Mr. II 893  
 Sztarkier Fryda II 674  
 Sztarkier Józef (Starger Josef) see Starker Josef  
 Sztarkier Maurycy (Pawlak Franciszek) II 674  
 Sztarsztein Daniel II 938  
 Sztetec Jadwiga II 848–49  
 Sztetier, Jewish girl I 393  
 Sztajnman Halperin Ruth II 1070  
 Szttern Emilia (Stern Minka) II 841  
 Szttern Shlomo II 841  
 Sztorchan Larissa (Cain, Kozłowska Marysia) I 361  
 Sztuka Jan, Rev. I 54; II 581  
 Sztumberk-Rychter Tadeusz II 725  
 Szubert Józef, Rev. II 678–79  
 Szubert, Mrs. I 469  
 Szuchta Robert I 74  
 Suksza Halina II 963  
 Suksza Wacław II 963  
 Suksza, Family II 963  
 Szul Braunia (Bella) I 255  
 Szulc Eugenia (Rosen, Jankowska Dzidzia, Giga) II 864  
 Szulc Felicja see Schulz Felicja  
 Szulc Lucjan see Schulz Lucjan  
 Szulinska Maria see Szulińska Maria  
 Szulińska Maria I 211  
 Szumacher Halina (Steinberg) II 865  
 Szumielewicz Stanisław (Stanisław) I 289  
 Szumielewicz Wiktoria I 289–90  
 Szumska Irena II 1050  
 Szumski, Notary II 645  
 Szurek Jean-Charles I 145  
 Szusterowa, Mrs. II 690  
 Szwagrzyk Krzysztof I 344–45  
 Szwaja Stanisław, Rev. II 1010  
 Szwajca Bronisława II 678–79  
 Szwajger Adina see Blady Szwajger Adina  
 Szwajkajzer Ewa I 441  
 Szwajkajzer Stefan I 441  
 Szwajkajzer Teofila I 441  
 Szwajkajzer Wanda I 441  
 Szwajkajzer Zbigniew I 441  
 Szwajkajzer, Family I 440–41  
 Szwajnoch Stefan, Rev. I 41  
 Szwalbenest Sender II 631  
 Szwandron Laurencja, Sister II 699  
 Swarc Aleksander I 489  
 Swarc Gizela II 838–39  
 Swarcbach, Dentist see Schwartzbach, Dentist  
 Swarcman Dorota II 1075  
 Swebel, Person from Przemyśl II 918  
 Swerkowska Anna II 880  
 Swertfeger Monika II 931  
 Swestkowa, Mrs. II 678  
 Szydzik Józef, Rev. I 40  
 Szyfka Rachela (Kurek Teresa, Dreeban Rochelle) I 177  
 Szykret Daniela I 308  
 Szymanska Regina see Wirszubska Szymańska Regina  
 Szymanski Adam, Rev. see Szymański Adam, Rev.  
 Szymańska Barbara (Szymańska Makuch) II 871, 873–74  
 Szymańska Halina (Szymańska Ogrodzińska) II 871–74  
 Szymańska Janina II 871, 874, 879  
 Szymańska Sylwia I 163; II 602  
 Szymańska Zofia (Rozenblum, Rosenblum Roza) I 180, 189–91, 196–97, 384; II 859, 1059  
 Szymańska-Kuta Daria I 411  
 Szymański Adam, Rev. I 71–72, 345–46; II 796  
 Szymborski Walerian II 758  
 Szymczak Jadwiga I 382  
 Szymczak Józef (Józef) I 382  
 Szymczak Zdzisław (Zdzisław) I 382–83  
 Szymczewska Dominika (Maria), Sister I 193  
 Szymczukiewicz Witold, Rev. II 799–800, 989  
 Szymczyk Maria I 384  
 Szymeczko Jan Kanty, Rev. I 108, 115  
 Szymerski Andrzej I 116; II 928, 1010  
 Szymkiewicz, Dr. of Warsaw I 105

- Szymborska Alter II 1056  
Szynal, Family I 549  
Zyndler Artur II 797  
Zypko Kazimierz, Rev. II 742, 996  
Zypko Jakób, Rev. II 796  
Zysko-Bardach Zofia (Kestelman Lucyna) I 411  
Zysko-Bohusz Zygmunt II 957  
Zyskowska Irena II 860  
Zyskowski Wacław (Wacław) I 243; II 860  
Zyskowski, Family II 860
- Ścibiorek Stefan, Rev. II 583–84  
Śledzianowski Jan I 547  
Ślepowski Mieczysław II 945  
Śliwa Tadeusz II 733  
Śliwczynski Jerzy II 582  
Śliwczynski Tadeusz II 582  
Śliwczynski, Family II 582  
Śliwka Zofia (Sister Atanazja) I 401  
Śliwowska Wiktoria I 205, 229, 231–32, 246, 291, 313, 373, 417, 435, 439, 462, 506; II 603, 612, 687, 828, 857, 875, 883, 970, 972, 1057, 1074, 1112  
Śliwowski Jerzy II 760  
Śmieciuch, Mr. II 700  
Śmietana Eugeniusz, Rev. I 116  
Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki Ryszard II 688  
Śmietanowska Aleksandra (Leliwa-Kopystyńska) I 213–14; II 923  
Śmietanowska Irena (Waksenbaum) I 213–14  
Śmietanowski Józef I 213  
Śmietanowski Stefan I 213  
Śmietanowski, Family I 213  
Śmigiel Alojzy, Rev. I 47  
Śmigiel Kazimierz I 50  
Śniadecka Zofia II 613–14  
Śnieg Dora II 587  
Śpiewak Jan Leon, Rev. II 645–46  
Śródka Andrzej II 901  
Świacki Władysław I 125  
Świąder Adam I 365  
Świąder Jan II 887  
Świąder Maria I 365  
Świątek Ernest, Rev. II 667  
Świątek Franciszek, Rev. II 777  
Świątek, Family I 164  
Świątkiewicz Franciszek II 1034  
Świda, Family II 1120  
Świder Franciszek II 954–55  
Świder Władysław, Rev. I 504; II 1010  
Świebicki Henryk II 932, 1095  
Świejkowski Bronisław, Rev. I 67–68  
Świerzawski Stefan II 805–6  
Świerzewska Nata II 806  
Świerzewski Stefan see Świerzawski Stefan  
Świetlik, Rev. II 722  
Świetlikowska Katarzyna II 792–93  
Świetlikowska Maria II 793  
Świetlikowski Jan II 793  
Świetlikowski Piotr II 793  
Świetlikowski Stanisław II 792–93, 1081  
Świetlikowski, Family II 792–93, 1081  
Świeżawska, Sister I 432  
Święch Filipa (Irena), Sister II 876, 878  
Święcicka Halina I 236  
Święcki Edward, Rev. I 311  
Święs Lidwina, Sister II 923  
Świrad Tadeusz, Rev. I 405  
Świrkowski Romuald, Rev. I 425, 435; II 1002  
Świrski Rufina (Tekla), Sister I 63–65  
Świrski Ignacy I 21; II 1010  
Świstak Zdzisław II 733  
Świstek Eugeniusz Grzegorz, Rev. I 115  
Świtacz, Family II 711  
Świtał, Mrs. II 678  
Świtała Adusia (Horowitz) II 911  
Świtała Janina (Horowitz) II 911  
Świtała Ludwik (Horowitz) II 911
- Tabaczkowski Edward, Rev. I 554; II 989, 1003  
Tabak-Burstein Tzipora II 757, 1060–61  
Taborska Hanna I 363  
Tadeusz Strzelczyk II 767  
Taffet Gerszon II 1073–74  
Taglicht Bruria (Bronia, Anusia) I 300  
Taglicht Maria I 300  
Taglicht Michalina I 300  
Taiblum, Family II 953

- Taitz Emily I 163, 218, 258, 491  
Tajc Sonia (Stasia) II 805–6  
Tajtlbaum Wacław (Wacław) II 858  
Talarczyk Celestyna (Mieczysława, Tatarczyk)  
II 900–2  
Talikowski Roman I 290  
Talikowski Wacław I 544  
Talmud Hirsh Melekh, Rabbi II 728  
Talmus Edgar (Zieliński Włodzimierz)  
I 222–23  
Talmus, Family I 222  
Tamme Emil II 738  
Tammeus Bill I 482; II 811, 1029, 1032, 1066,  
1105, 1116, 1121  
Tannenzapf Charlotte II 624  
Tannenzapf Renata see Krakauer Renate  
Tannenzapf Wilhelm see Tannenzapf William  
Tannenzapf William II 624  
Tarabula Leonka II 840  
Tarasek Andrzej I 539  
Tarasewicz Apolonia (Tarasevich Polina)  
II 800–1  
Tarasewicz Jan I 442  
Tarasiuk Renata II 705  
Taren, Dr. I 475  
Tarjan Peter I 218, 240; II 868  
Tarkieltaub Yisrael II 836  
Tarmon Asher I 125; II 1072  
Tarnas Kazimierz II 587  
Tarnawski Stanisław II 638  
Tarnowska Maria I 326  
Taube Herman II 798  
Taubenfeld Lidka (Feldblum Ilana) II 875–76  
Tauber Regina II 725  
Tazbir Stanisław (Stanisław) II 860  
Tazbir Wanda II 860  
Tchapowicz Efraim II 1111–12  
Tchapowicz Leibel II 1111–12  
Tchor Abraham II 647  
Tchor Batya II 648  
Tchor Henia II 648  
Tchor Michael II 647  
Tchor Sonia II 648  
Tchor, Family II 647–48  
Tec Nechama I 24, 257, 537; II 820, 851, 941,  
997, 1036, 1058, 1118  
Teichthal Bronisława (Schoenmann Bronia)  
I 492  
Teichthal Irena I 492  
Teichthal Mina I 492  
Teitelbaum Yoel Moshe, Rabbi II 729  
Teleżyńska Ewa I 394  
Teleżyński Tadeusz I 491  
Teller Adam I 73  
Temkin-Bermanowa Basia I 386, 416  
Tendera Franciszka II 933  
Tendera Teodor II 933  
Tendler Anna (Eck) II 903  
Tendler Edward II 903  
Tendler Felicity (Gniesław, Torosiewicz  
Krystyna, Kruszelnicka Krystyna)  
II 903–4  
Tenenbaum Chemia II 675  
Tenenbaum Helena (Ben-Israel Ilana)  
II 945–46  
Tenenbaum Joseph I 354  
Tenenbaum Sara II 675  
Tenenbaum Zeldia (Barbara) II 675  
Tenenbaum-Tamaroff Mordechai I 349  
Tenenwurzel Betty I 340  
Tenenwurzel Bronisław (Bunim) I 340  
Tenenwurzel Emanuel (Wójcik Jan, Tanay)  
I 340–41  
Tenenwurzel Ruth I 340  
Tenenwurzel, Family I 340  
Tennenbaum David (Wieczorkowska Teresa)  
I 553  
Tennenbaum Fanny (Fradel Feige,  
Wieczorkowska Franciszka) I 553  
Tennenbaum Mordechai II 1070  
Tennenbaum Samuel Lipa I 559–60  
Tennis Barbara II 717  
Teodorowicz Józef, Archbishop I 536  
Tepa Lupack Barbara I 523  
Teresa, Sister (from Piastów) II 855  
Teresa, Sister (Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent  
de Paul) I 311  
Terlecka, Mrs. I 340  
Terlikiewicz Salezja (Irena), Sister I 417

- Tesler-Gyraph Sonya II 1072  
 Tessler Haya II 1070  
 Tetmajer Alina II 1092  
 Thau Maria (Wecer) II 599–601  
 Theresa, Sister (Carmelite) II 658  
 Thiel Albin (Tyll) II 640–42  
 Thiel Jan II 924  
 Thiel Olga II 924  
 Thiel, Family II 924  
 Thijs Krijn II 1041  
 Thon Elsa I 256, 397  
 Tider Mendel II 1037  
 Timchishin, Deputy Governor II 632  
 Tischler Lermi I 160  
 Tiszka Wojciech Stanisław, Rev. see Tyszka  
     Wojciech Stanisław, Rev.  
 Titarenko Maria II 649  
 Tkaczyk Blandyna, Sister II 922  
 Tłoczyński Stanislaus, Rev. see Tłoczyński  
     Stanisław, Rev.  
 Tłoczyński Stanisław, Rev. I 35  
 Tober Piotr I 300–1  
 Toczyński Tadeusz I 542  
 Tojanowski Jan II 1049  
 Tokarska-Bakir Joanna I 29–30; II 1117  
 Tokarski, Family I 401; II 577  
 Tomasiak Adelajda, Sister II 922  
 Tomaszewski Franciszek (Brother  
     Tarsycjusz) I 548  
 Tomaszewski Irene I 260, 291, 351, 362, 464,  
     545; II 1053–54, 1080  
 Tomaszewski Jan, Rev. I 204  
 Tomaszewski Piotr, Rev. I 263, 299  
 Tomaszewski Szymon, Rev. II 707–8  
 Tomczak Kazimierz, Bishop I 42–43, 86, 342  
 Tomczak Władysława II 757  
 Tomczyk Genowefa I 309–10  
 Tomczyk Józef (Józef) I 309–10  
 Topas Jerzy (George) I 456  
 Topiński Jan I 564  
 Topiński Zofia I 564  
 Topiński, Family I 564; II 688  
 Topolewski Bolesław II 1045  
 Trachtenberg Halina see Robinson Halina  
 Trachtenberg Jadwiga II 880  
 Tracy Abraham II 1063  
 Trapsza Anna I 443  
 Trasawucki Abraham II 1063  
 Traskalska Kazimiera I 387  
 Traub Bernard II 1034  
 Trauber Henryka I 469  
 Trauenstein Ewa (Turzyńska) see Grus Ewa  
 Trauenstein Leon II 626  
 Trauenstein Moshe II 626–27  
 Trauman Franka II 944  
 Trauman Hanka II 944  
 Trauman Hela II 944  
 Trauman Lutek II 944  
 Trauman Telca II 944  
 Trawiński Bernard II 1034  
 Treece Patricia I 89–90, 93–95, 111; II 1005,  
     1091  
 Trepman Pinkhas (Paul, Krzus Jan) II 639  
 Trębacz Michał I 224–25; II 799  
 Trojanowski, Mr. I 400  
 Trosman Moshe II 652  
 Trosman Yissakhar II 652  
 Trószyński Zygmunt (Marian), Rev. I 22,  
     564–66; II 989  
 Trubak Wojciech, Rev. I 115  
 Truchanowicz Maria II 880, 1033  
 Truchanowicz Zygmunt II 880, 1033  
 Truchaszewicz, Dr. of Warsaw I 105  
 Trudzińska Wanda Janina (Sister Longina)  
     I 229  
 Trunk Isaiah I 199, 256; II 683, 1072, 1112  
 Trunkwalter Adolf I 230  
 Trupianski, Jewish child II 779  
 Trus Alter II 763  
 Truskowski (Witkowska), Family II 962  
 Trywiański Jan II 657  
 Trzaskalski Stanisław I 387  
 Trzcińska Maria I 177  
 Trzeciak Stanisław, Rev. I 31, 182–84  
 Trzecieśka Stella (Maria), Sister II 897  
 Trześniower Sabina Janina I 507  
 Trzonek Lucyna (Lange) I 301  
 Tsitsura Grigory, Protestant Clergymen II 993  
 Tsvia, Aunt of Gilbert-Lurie Leslie II 737–38  
 Tucznia Maria I 400

- Tucznia Wincenty I 400  
 Tur, Family II 759, 1061  
 Turchyn Andrew I 53  
 Turek Franciszek II 1034  
 Turek Jadwiga I 390  
 Turek Maria (Grunewald) I 394  
 Turjinskah Evah II 626  
 Turkeltaub Barbara (Basia, Gurwicz)  
   II 807–11  
 Turkeltaub Leah (Lusia, Kalish) II 807–11  
 Turner Icchak I 63–64  
 Turovsky, Treblinka escapee II 1104  
 Turski Marian I 216–17, 235, 291; II 667,  
   1085  
 Turzyńska Ewa II 626  
 Tusk-Scheinwechsler Franciszka II 1032  
 Tuszyńska Agata II 796, 1083  
 Twardowski Bolesław, Archbishop I 395, 536  
 Twardzik, Family II 678  
 Twarowska Irena (Sister Maria Kazimiera)  
   I 210  
 Twarowski Michał, Rev. I 131–32  
 Tych Feliks I 138; II 958, 1018, 1085  
 Tygier Helena II 829  
 Tykocki Josl II 757  
 Tykocki Teresa II 757  
 Tyłżanowski Jacek, Rev. I 108  
 Tymchina Daniil (Tymchyna), Greek Catholic  
   Clergymen II 993  
 Tymeckzo Krystyna I 160  
 Tymieńska Marianna (Zonszajn Rachela)  
   II 718–20  
 Tymieński Jan, Rev. II 927  
 Tymoczko Józef, Rev. I 544  
 Tyrangel, Family II 589  
 Tyrangel Benezra Guta II 589  
 Tyrangel Esther II 589  
 Tyrangel Guta (Tyrangel-Benezra  
   Genevieve, Filipiak Genowefa)  
   II 589–90  
 Tyrzcz, Family II 610  
 TyryHo, Family I 439  
 Tyszka Edward, Rev. II 575  
 Tyszka Wojciech Stanisław, Rev. I 442  
 Tyz, Family see Tyż, Family  
 Tyż Grzegorz (Hryc) I 559–60  
 Tyż, Family I 559  
 Tzi-Hirsch Rubin Joseph I 544  
 Tzur Nissan II 935  
 Tzurnamal Zev I 551  
 Tzvingel Ronyah I 335  
 Überall Alfred (Wodzinowski) I 501  
 Uchman Helena II 916  
 Uchman Henryk, Rev. II 738  
 Uciurkiewicz Franciszek II 1039  
 Udalski Antoni, Rev. II 1008  
 Ufryjewicz Szczepan, Rev. II 616–17  
 Ugniewski Stefan, Rev. I 386  
 Ujejska Maria I 230  
 Ulanowska Henryka II 739  
 Ulanowski Józef, Rev. II 738–39  
 Ulanowski, Family I 553; II 739  
 Ulatowski Stefan, Rev. I 385  
 Ułasiuk Jan II 1033  
 Ułasiuk Józefa II 1033  
 Umerski (Umirski), Family II 864  
 Umińska Apolonia see Umińska-Keff  
   Apolonia  
 Umińska Stanisława (Sister Benigna) I 193  
 Umińska-Keff Apolonia I 384, 533, 553;  
   II 660, 1064, 1072–73, 1075  
 Ungar Rózia (Rozia) I 345  
 Ungar William (Wolf) I 82–83; II 741, 797  
 Ungar-Sargon Batya II 1126  
 Unger Aviva I 168–70  
 Unger Israel I 354; II 1087  
 Urbach Jan (Urban) II 617  
 Urbach Jerzy (Urban) II 617–18  
 Urbach Maria (Urban) II 617  
 Urbach (Urban), Family II 617  
 Urban Marek II 797  
 Urban Wincenty II 725  
 Urbanczyk Marian see Urbańczyk Marian  
 Urbanczyk Wiktoria see Urbańczyk Wiktoria  
 Urbanek Mariusz II 1083  
 Urbaniak-Nowicka Janina I 540  
 Urbanowicz Jan, Rev. I 20; II 996, 1003, 1008  
 Urbanski Joseph II 643



Urbańczyk Andrew (Andrzej) II 868  
 Urbańczyk Jadwiga, Sister [?] I 326; II 992  
 Urbańczyk Marian II 866–68  
 Urbańczyk Wiktoria II 866–68  
 Urbańczyk, Family II 866–67  
 Urbańska Dunia (Urysson) II 933  
 Urbański Andrzej, Rev. II 640, 643  
 Urbański Krzysztof I 66  
 Urbański Marian I 545  
 Urbonek (Urbanek [?]), Benefactor I 475–76  
 Urynowicz Marcin I 349; II 1029–30, 1116  
 Ussas Bronisław, Rev. I 177

**V**aičiūnas Juozas II 779  
 Vaišutis Nikodemus (Wojszutis Nikodem),  
 Rev. I 445  
 Vaitkus Mykolas, Rev. II 779  
 Valcini Alceo I 360  
 Valiukėnas Stasys II 779  
 Valotzky Elye I 128  
 Vanger Richard I 424  
 Vasiliauskaitė Aušra II 959  
 Verlind Paul II 578  
 Vermut Yehoshua II 1078  
 Verstandig Mark II 1066  
 Verstandig, Family II 1068  
 Vidal-Naquet Pierre II 1117  
 Vilensky Eugenia II 848  
 Vilensky Mausza II 848  
 Vilensky Sara II 848  
 Vogel Carole Garbuny II 1074  
 Vogel Tadeusz (Jaworski) II 617  
 Vogel (Jaworski), Family II 617  
 Volotzki Nekhe I 130

**W**achnik Ignacy I 192–93  
 Wachowicz Marian II 882  
 Wachs (Wax [?] István) II 928  
 Wachs Henryk I 544  
 Wachs Malwina (Strzelecka Maria) I 544  
 Wachs Rita (Strzelecka Krystyna, Shenirer  
 Ritah) see Shnirer (Vaks) Rita  
 Wachsberger Ken I 478  
 Wachtel Eleanor II 955

Wachulak Zygmunt, Rev. II 701  
 Wachułka Maria I 271  
 Wachułka, Family 272  
 Waczyński Bogusław, Rev. I 229–30, 492  
 Wadek Józef I 217  
 Wagner Gita (Konopka Stanisława  
 (Stanisława)) II 722  
 Wagner, Family II 722  
 Wagszul Eve (Rich) see Blumberg Eva  
 (Wugshul Hava)  
 Wahler Ethel I 561  
 Wainberg Szaindl II 850  
 Wajc Jankiel II 1052  
 Wajc Mendel II 828, 1052  
 Wajc Rivka (Ryfka) II 828, 1052  
 Wajc Zygmunt II 1052  
 Wajland-Meyer Józefa II 677–78  
 Wajngold Bronisława (Sister Miriam,  
 Gołębiowska Maria) I 410  
 Wajnryb Lusja (Snarska Helena) II 805  
 Wajnstraub Fajga (Sobczak-RustECKa Janina)  
 I 201  
 Wajntraub Leon II 837  
 Wajsbard Dawid see Majewski Henryk  
 Wajzman Helen II 629  
 Wajzman Ziona II 629  
 Wajzman, Family II 629–30, 988  
 Wajzman Abraham (Weitman) I 285  
 Wajzman Bilha (Weitman) I 285  
 Wajzman Ela (Weitman) I 285  
 Wajzman Jakub (Weitman) I 285  
 Waks Motel II 1072  
 Waks Szarlota (Nacht) I 500  
 Wakszlak Bracha (Bergman) II 861–62  
 Wakszlak Ester (Shelvi) II 861  
 Wakszlak Henryk II 862  
 Wakszlak Teofila (Tośka) II 861  
 Wala Czesław I 395  
 Wala, Family I 395  
 Walczak, Mr. I 280  
 Wald Halina II 579  
 Wald Joanna I 299  
 Walewska Maria II 1044  
 Walega Janina (Filozof-Walega) I 285  
 Walker Fay II 1050

- Walke-Rozenblit Fela II 1050  
 Walkiewicz Alfons, Rev. I 482–84  
 Walkow Jadwiga see Wałkow Jadwiga  
   (Szejnbaum)  
 Wallach Jafa I 340–41  
 Walshaw Rachela II 796  
 Walshaw Sam II 796  
 Walter Jan, Rev. I 561  
 Walter Magdalena I 163  
 Walter, Family I 546  
 Waltkaus Mykolas, Rev. see Vaitkus  
   Mykolas, Rev.  
 Wałęcki, Family I 229  
 Wałkow Jadwiga (Szejnbaum) II 636  
 Wałkowska Halina (Walkowska) I 502  
 Wand Abraham (Vand Avraham) II 607–8  
 Wand Regina Zofia (Wasner, Zięba Zofia)  
   II 578  
 Wand, Family II 578  
 Wandel Kazimierz II 687  
 Wander Gedalia (Vander) II 761–62  
 Wanderer Rena II 1122  
 Wanderer, Family II 1122  
 Wandycz Damian S. II 796  
 Wang Diana I 301; II 1051  
 Wanielista Wojciech, Rev. II 725  
 Warakomski Michał I 109  
 Warakomski Romuald I 109  
 Waraszynski Władysław see Woroszyński  
   Władysław  
 Warchałowski Stanisław, Rev. I 487  
 Warchol Andrzej see Warchoł Andrzej  
 Warchoł Andrzej I 523  
 Wardzyńska Maria I 57  
 Warman Fania (Stecher) II 583  
 Warpechowski Ludwik, Rev. II 650  
 Warszawsky Dov B. I 136  
 Warso Albert I 45  
 Warszawiak Sara (Jabłońska Irena) II 921  
 Warszawski Józef, Rev. I 492–93  
 Warszawski Yeshayahu (Szyja) II 1106  
 Warunek Marian (Karol) II 950  
 Warzecha Julian I 31  
 Waschkowitz Greta (Małgorzata, Woźniak)  
   I 335  
 Waschkowitz Józef I 335  
 Waser Mina II 764  
 Wasiak Bolesław II 590  
 Wasiak Kazimierz, Rev. I 213–14  
 Wasiak Krystyna II 590  
 Wasiak, Mrs. II 590  
 Wasilewska Józefa, Sister I 254  
 Wasilewska, Mrs. II 584  
 Wasilewski, Rev. II 785  
 Wasner, Family II 578  
 Wasser Mina II 763  
 Wasser Sima (Gleichgewicht, Budna  
   Krystyna) II 587  
 Wasserlauf Izaak I 505  
 Wasserman Janina I 229  
 Wasserman Mira Beth, Rabbi II 1016  
 Wasserman-Waniewska Maria I 229  
 Wasserstein Abraham II 955  
 Wasserstein David J. II 955  
 Waszczyszyn, Rev. II 904  
 Waszkowitz Lorka (Waschkowitz Gizela)  
   I 335  
 Waśniewska Irena, Sister I 263  
 Watychowicz Janina, Sister I 212  
 Wawak, Family II 1054  
 Wawer Pola II 778–79, 792, 1081  
 Wawryk Kalmen II 1062  
 Wawrzycka Eugenia I 194  
 Wawrzycki Karol I 525  
 Wawrzynowicz Dominik, Rev. I 136; II 645–  
   46, 798  
 Wawrzynowicz-Billip Róża II 646  
 Wąchalska Anna I 563  
 Wąskowska-Tomanek Maria II 954–55  
 Wąsowicz Jarosław I 220; II 1009  
 Wąsowska-Renot Eugenia (Sister Alfonsa)  
   I 274–79, 282–84; II 992  
 Wąsowski Zbigniew II 1011  
 Webber Janine (Monat Berta, Kopińska  
   Janina) see Galloway Janine  
 Webber Jonathan II 727  
 Weber Kazimierz, Rev. II 590  
 Wecer Maria (Wecer, Laskowiecka, Thau  
   Miriam) see Thau Maria  
 Wecer Rudolf II 600

- Wecer Sasza (Wetzer Staszek, Thau Szaszka)  
II 592, 599–601
- Wecer Tamara II 600
- Wecer Zbyszko (Weczer Zbigniew) II 599
- Wecer (Weczer), Family II 599–600
- Wechsler Scharlota II 628
- Weckowski Kazimierz see Węcowski  
Kazimierz
- Wedeka Stanisława II 881
- Wegierski Dominik see Węgierski Dominik
- Wehr Hanna II 1118
- Weidel Stefan, Rev. I 492
- Weigler Tsvi II 1079
- Wein Abraham I 67, 69
- Weindling Mania (Feldbaum) I 346
- Weingartner Steven I 255, 535
- Weingrün Felicja I 529
- Weingrün Gustawa I 529
- Weingrün Westreich Stefania I 529
- Weingrün Józef I 529
- Weingrün, Family I 529
- Weinkiper-Antonowicz Jakub I 368
- Weinles Jakub (Weinloes) II 885–86
- Weinman Danuta (Wajnman, Dana, Danusia,  
Axelrod Dena) I 217–19
- Weinman Eva (Wajnman) I 217
- Weinman Henryk (Wajnman) I 217–18;  
II 910
- Weinman Moshe (Wajnman) I 217
- Weinman Ruth (Wajnman, Kowalska  
Krystyna) I 217
- Weinman Witold (Wajnman) I 217–18
- Weinreb Zew I 546
- Weinreb Zygmunt (Yizhar Alon) II 924–25
- Weinreb, Family II 924
- Weinstein Eddi II 1113
- Weinstein Leon I 320–21
- Weinstein-Beer Zila (Re'em Cipora, Ram  
Zippora, Dudek Cecylia) II 667–69,  
1048
- Weinstein-Rubin Sonia II 763
- Weinstock Yehuda II 964
- Weintraub Klara see Fishman Lala
- Weisenberg Nechama II 762
- Weisenberg Perl II 762
- Weisenberg Yaffa II 762
- Weiser Leon I 554; II 1003
- Weiser-Nahel Rachel I 71
- Weisfeld Jakub II 859
- Weiss Aharon I 67
- Weiss Icek II 915
- Weiss Moshe I 80
- Weiss Szewach II 1120
- Weissberg Aleksander I 195
- Weissberg Anna I 393
- Weissberger Berta (Zolkos (Zołkos)  
Krystyna) I 321–22
- Weissbord Abraham II 1075
- Weisselberg Jakub II 608
- Weisselberg Ludwika (Steinfeld) II 608
- Weisselberg Natalia II 608
- Weissenberg Cohen Judy II 1094
- Weissglas Neustein Carol I 456
- Weiss-Löwy Margita (Miriam) II 1046
- Weissman Schrage Tosia II 577
- Weisz George M. I 363
- Weit Henia II 948
- Weitman, Family I 285
- Weitz Eric D. I 233
- Weitzenblum Baar Frederick II 1087
- Weksler Scharlota see Wechsler Scharlota
- Weksler Tekla II 644
- Weksztein Irena II 832
- Welian Peta II 1090
- Wells Leon II 727
- Wenklar Michał I 115, 492, 494, 505, 531;  
II 956, 972
- Werbicka Julia II 611
- Werbowski Tecia I 260, 291, 351, 362, 464,  
545; 1053–54, 1080
- Werdinger Rosalia II 581–82
- Werdinger Rozalia I 201
- Werner Harold II 690–91
- Werner Kurt II 666
- Weryk Antoni, Rev. II 745
- Wesołowska Aniela, Sister I 236; II 621–22,  
625, 992
- Westreich Melech II 1016
- Wetmanski Leon, Bishop see Wetmański  
Leon, Bishop

- Wetmański Leon, Bishop I 43, 48  
 Wewryk Kalmen II 1061  
 Wędkowski Kazimierz I 159  
 Wędrychowska Jadwiga I 302  
 Wędrychowska Zofia I 317  
 Wędrzicha Marcelina, Sister II 923  
 Węgier Ryszard (Wanger Richard) I 424  
 Węgierski Dominik I 76  
 Węgierski Jerzy II 1075  
 Węgrzyn Jan, Rev. I 512  
 Wężyk-Widawska Halina II 816  
 Wiatr Ewa I 105, 224–25; II 799, 1102, 1105  
 Wiatrowicz Eufrazja, Sister II 922  
 Wiącek Józef I 549  
 Wicner Gusta II 833  
 Wicner Lea (Weitzner Leah, Lucia, Lachovich, Lachowicz Helena) II 833  
 Wiczak Barbara II 655–57  
 Wiczak Janine II 656  
 Wiczak Stanisław II 655–57  
 Widawska Maria I 463–64; II 913  
 Widlak Jan, Rev. I 545–46  
 Widy-Wirska Marta II 860–61, 1107  
 Widy-Wirski Feliks II 860–61, 1107  
 Widy-Wirski, Family II 861  
 Wiechecki Kazimierz, Rev. II 671  
 Wiecheć Jan II 683  
 Wiecka Bernard, Rev. see Wiecki Bernard, Rev.  
 Wiecki Bernard, Rev. I 47  
 Wielgus Witolda, Sister I 219  
 Wielogórska Rozalia II 1033  
 Wielogórski Franciszek II 1033  
 Wielowieyska, Mrs. I 462  
 Wien Sarah (Richman Sylvia, Hulecka Irena) I 253  
 Wiener Nachman II 839  
 Wiener Samuel II 839  
 Wieniożyndzis Jan, Rev. II 744  
 Wierzba Hieronim, Brother I 90  
 Wierzbanowski Marian, Seminarian I 492, 505  
 Wierzbicka Aniceta, Sister II 922  
 Wierzbicka Janina I 237  
 Wierzbicki Grzegorz II 1011  
 Wierzbicki Marek I 30, 122  
 Wierzbieniec Wacław I 117; II 686, 1066  
 Wierzbowska Maria I 301  
 Wierzchowska Modesta, Sister II 923  
 Wierzejski Józef, Rev. I 45  
 Wiesel Elie II 731, 938–39, 1128  
 Wiesel Stanisław (Wizel) I 371  
 Wiesenberg Artur II 676  
 Wiesenberg Fryda II 676–77  
 Wiesenberg Jona (Teichman) II 676  
 Wiesenthal Saul (Szymon) I 90  
 Wiesławski Stas see Wiesławski Stanisław  
 Wiesławski Stanisław II 594  
 Wiewiórowska Zofia see Wiewiórowska Zofia  
 Wiewiórowska Zofia (Wróblewska-Wiewiórowska) I 202, 207–9  
 Więckiewicz Leon, Rev. I 366; II 1000  
 Więckowicz Leon, Rev. see Więckiewicz Leon, Rev.  
 Wilamowski Jakub I 300  
 Wilanowski Cyprian II 771  
 Wilczek Julia (Sister Bernarda) I 201–2, 207–9  
 Wilczur Jacek E. II 997  
 Wilczynska Marysia see Wilczyńska Marysia  
 Wilczyńska Alina Stanisława, Sister I 330  
 Wilczyńska Marysia I 288  
 Wilczyński Bogusław, Rev. I 492  
 Wilczyński Tomasz, Rev. II 710  
 Wild Helena I 503  
 Wild Izaak I 503  
 Wilder Felicja II 738  
 Wilder Irena (Winecka Krystyna, Wilska Maria) see Winecki Christine  
 Wilder Janina I 538  
 Wilder Oscar I 538  
 Wilder Tadeusz II 738  
 Wilemska Bronisława, Sister I 327–28; II 992  
 Wilemski Czesław, Rev. I 39  
 Wilf Anna (Thau) I 489  
 Wilhelm Teresa, Sister II 923  
 Wili Fink II 1006  
 Wilk Ewa I 371  
 Wilk Józef, Rev. I 549  
 Wilk Stefan, Rev. I 85–86

- Wilk-Witosławski Piotr, Rev. II 954  
 Wilkołek Helena, Sister II 922  
 Willenberg Ada II 1119  
 Willenberg Samuel II 1101–2, 1119  
 Wilman Maria Florentyna, Sister II 1011  
 Wilner Arie (Arieh, “Jurek”) I 21, 357–58, 425–29  
 Wilner, Family II 602  
 Wilucki Edmund, Rev. I 108  
 Wincz, Person from Przemyśl II 918  
 Wincza Stanisława II 822  
 Windisch Irma (Wiśniewska Irena) II 865–66  
 Winecki Christine I 256, 538  
 Wineman Freda II 1128  
 Winiarska Grażyna I 413  
 Winnicka Maria I 320; II 1032  
 Winnik Danuta II 717  
 Winnik Eugeniusz (Winnik Eugene) II 717–18  
 Winokur Bela I 443  
 Winokur Dwora (Danusia, Rozencwaig, Rosenzweig-Vinokur) I 443  
 Winokur, Family I 443  
 Winter Miriam (Kowalska Marysia, Orłowska Maria) see Orłowski Maria  
 Wionczek Mieczysław (Mieczysław) I 198–99  
 Wiorek Stanisław, Rev. I 34  
 Wirball Janina, Sister I 234, 254  
 Wirgowska Kazimiera, Sister II 661  
 Wirowski Henryk I 194  
 Wirszubska Boddy Adela II 765  
 Wirszubska Eugenia II 765  
 Wirszubska Szymańska Regina II 765–66  
 Wisby Gary II 878  
 Wisniowski, Family see Wiśniowski, Family  
 Wisznia Rina I 181  
 Wisznia Shulamit I 181  
 Wisznia Sonia I 181  
 Wiszniewska Bronisława II 812  
 Wiszniewski Stanisław II 812  
 Wiślińska Helena II 1063  
 Wiśliński Stanisław II 1063  
 Wiśniewska Helena I 205  
 Wiśniewska Karolina II 912  
 Wiśniewska Kasia II 947  
 Wiśniewska Marta II 876  
 Wiśniewska Monika II 814  
 Wiśniewski Oskar, Rev. I 254; II 989  
 Wiśniewski Stanisław I 194  
 Wiśniewski Stanisław, Rev. II 590  
 Wiśniewski Tadeusz, Rev. I 462; II 911  
 Wiśniowski, Family I 518  
 Witek Stanisław II 718  
 Witelski Daniel II 947  
 Witer Maria II 666  
 Witeszczak Janina II 903  
 Witomski Ignacy II 616  
 Witomski, Family II 616  
 Witowicz Igor I 118, 226, 230, 285; II 664, 666, 738, 878, 970, 1048  
 Witriol Pauline I 398–99  
 Wittlin Roza (Róża) II 861  
 Wittman, Family see Weitman, Family  
 Witwicka Helena I 319  
 Witwicki Tadeusz I 319, 551  
 Wlazło Jan II 1055  
 Wleklińska Teresa I 236  
 Włodarczyk Zdzisław I 471  
 Włodarz Edward I 508  
 Włodarz Józefa (Kwarcieńska) I 508  
 Włodarz Julian I 508  
 Włodarz Wiktoria I 508  
 Wnęk Maria I 549  
 Wnorowski, Family II 770  
 Wnuk Wawrzyniec (Lawrence), Rev. I 35; II 926, 1092  
 Wochelska Leokadia I 548–49  
 Wochelska Maria I 548  
 Wodzińska Stefania I 134  
 Wohański, Family II 833  
 Wohnout Maurycja, Sister II 923  
 Wońska Janina see Woińska Janina  
 Woińska Janina II 763–64  
 Wojas Stanisław, Rev. I 547  
 Wojciech Maria II 935  
 Wojciechowicz Norbert, Rev. I 251  
 Wojciechowska Stefania (Jadwiga), Sister II 935, 992  
 Wojciechowski Daniel I 546–47; II 972  
 Wojciechowski Jan, Rev. I 492, 494

- Wojczys Józefa I 443–44  
 Wojczys Kazimierz I 444  
 Wojczys Paweł I 443–44  
 Wojdas Antoni, Rev. II 956–57  
 Wojdyla Anzelma, Sister I 234, 236, 251;  
     II 992  
 Wojdysławska Hanna (Franciszka, Perrin)  
     I 199  
 Wojdysławska Ludwika I 199  
 Wojdysławska Maria I 199  
 Wojdysławski Zygmunt I 197, 199  
 Wojdysławski, Family I 199  
 Wojewoda Czesław I 510–11  
 Wojewoda Maria I 510–11  
 Wojewoda, Family I 511  
 Wojewódzki, Family II 1037  
 Wojnar Jan II 869  
 Wojnarowicz Elżbieta I 260  
 Wojnarowicz Zygmunt I 260  
 Wojnarowski Henryk Lewenfisz I 363  
 Wojniusz Henryk, Rev. I 123–24  
 Wojtczak Edward, Rev. II 680–82, 899  
 Wojtkiewicz Leokadia II 857  
 Wojtowicz Alojzy II 1075  
 Wojtowicz Antoni II 1075  
 Wojtowicz Kazimierz II 1075  
 Wojtyła Karol see John Paul II, Pope  
 Wolak Tadeusz II 654  
 Wolberg Ajzyk Adam I 462  
 Wolberg Jadwiga (Galewska) I 462  
 Wolberg Margarita I 462  
 Wolf David II 1112  
 Wolf Feivel II 1112  
 Wolf, Family II 1107  
 Wolfowicz Irena I 209  
 Wolfowicz Nusia (Anna) I 202, 208–9  
 Wolgelernter Icchok, Rabbi II 1133  
 Woliowska Danuta (Malinowska) II 840–41  
 Woliński Henryk (“Wacław”) I 357  
 Wolisch Irka I 210  
 Wolisch Marlena I 210–11  
 Wolman Alina II 865  
 Wolman, Family II 865  
 Wolny Jan, Rev. I 328  
 Wołodarczyk Ludwik, Rev. see Wrodarczyk  
     Ludwik, Rev.  
 Wołoszynska Józefa see Wołoszyńska Józefa  
 Wolska Czesława II 699  
 Wolska Maria (Wolska Maryla) II 779–80  
 Wolski Feliks II 779  
 Wolski Jan, Rev. I 453; II 997  
 Wolski Ludwik, Rev. II 591–93, 599–602, 989  
 Wołynski Włodzimierz see Wołyński  
     Włodzimierz  
 Wołk Bernadetta, Sister II 918, 922  
 Wołkowski, Mr. II 783  
 Wołodarczyk Ludwik, Rev. see Wrodarczyk  
     Ludwik, Rev.  
 Wołosz Artur K. F. II 1045  
 Wołoszyńska Józefa II 654  
 Wołowska Kazimiera (Sister Maria Marta of  
     Jesus) I 447–49; II 998, 1011  
 Wołowska Marta, Sister I 446, 450  
 Wołyński, Family II 884  
 Wondolowicz Issur I 560  
 Wontorek, Rev. II 796  
 Wonżod, Family II 962  
 Wood E. Thomas I 348; II 998  
 Worobiej Teresa II 801  
 Woroniecka Aniela I 390  
 Woroniecki Jacek (Adam), Rev. I 22, 390–91  
 Woronowicz Stanisław, Rev. II 659  
 Woroszyło Aleksandra I 563–64  
 Woroszyło Kazimierz I 563–64  
 Woroszyński Władysław II 609  
 Wortman Stefania I 246, 266  
 Wosiński Jan, Rev. I 389  
 Woś Jan I 33, 48, 97, 116, 125, 405; II 971,  
     995, 1001–2, 1005, 1007, 1010–11  
 Woś Stanisława II 717  
 Woś, Family II 1058  
 Woytowicz Julia Bronisława II 885  
 Woźniak Artur I 335  
 Woźniak, Family II 1045  
 Woźnicka Irena I 195  
 Woźnicki Józef I 195  
 Woźny Bonifacy, Rev. I 108  
 Wójcicki Franciszka II 587  
 Wójcicki Jan II 587



- Wójcicki, Jewish couple II 721  
 Wójcik Aniela (Sister Maria Euzebia) II 814  
 Wójcik Remigiusz (Antoni), Rev. I 556; II 1004  
 Wójcik Stanisław, Railway machinist II 1099  
 Wójcik Stanisław, Rev. I 519  
 Wójcik Zbigniew K. I 520  
 Wright Beasley Nancy II 963  
 Wright Jagna II 1124  
 Wrobel Chaim II 758–59  
 Wrobel Eta Chajt I 105–6  
 Wrobel Goldberg Luba II 757, 759, 1060, 1112  
 Wroblewska Janina see Wróblewska Janina  
 Wrocławska Mira I 236  
 Wrodarczyk Ludwik, Rev. II 645, 650–53, 989, 1070–71  
 Wrona Józef II 1095  
 Wrona Ludwik II 1092  
 Wroncberg Chaja Sara (Zofia, Chmielewska Jadwiga Stanisława) I 155–57  
 Wroncberg Halina (Masri, Chmielewska Jolanta) I 155–57  
 Wroniszewska Danuta II 1062  
 Wroniszewski Aleksander II 1062  
 Wronka Jan, Rev. I 107  
 Wrońska Rozalia II 900  
 Wroński Stanisław I 62–63, 203, 213, 222, 242, 433, 505, 507, 510; II 658, 687, 779, 1009, 1069, 1072, 1087  
 Wroński, Family I 401  
 Wróbel Franciszek, Rev. II 578  
 Wróbel Janusz I 55  
 Wróbel, Family I 306  
 Wróblewska Jadwiga, Sister I 292  
 Wróblewska Janina II 722  
 Wróblewska Maria I 462  
 Wróblewska Zofia I 312  
 Wróblewski (Tomuś) II 909  
 Wróblewski Bolesław, Rev. I 61, 462–63  
 Wróblewski Henryk I 171  
 Wróblewski, Family II 757  
 Wryk Ryszard I 51, 57  
 Wrześniowska Wiktoria, Sister I 163  
 Wrzosek Elżbieta I 424  
 Wulkan Janeta (Gościcki Janeta, Kochanowicz Helena) II 578  
 Wurman Munio II 1077  
 Wurzel Józef (Jozek) I 486  
 Wycislik Franciszek, Rev. see Wyciślik Franciszek, Rev.  
 Wyciślik Franciszek, Rev. I 42  
 Wydrzyński Andrzej I 417  
 Wyman Bill I 218  
 Wyrobek-Pawłowska Wanda I 304–5  
 Wyrwich Mateusz I 22  
 Wyrzykowska Wanda I 441  
 Wyszogrod Diane II 798, 945  
 Wyszynski Stefan, Primate of Poland see Wyszyński Stefan, Primate of Poland  
 Wysomirska Jadwiga, Sister I 161–62; II 992  
 Wyszynski Stefan, Primate of Poland see Wyszyński Stefan, Primate of Poland  
 Wyszyńska-Seidens Anna II 859  
 Wyszyński Stefan, Primate of Poland I 412–13; II 735  
 Wyszyoska-Seidens Anna see Wyszyńska-Seidens Anna  
 Yacub Ibrahim ibn I 73  
 Yahil Leni I 149; II 1025  
 Yakobovich Estarka I 475  
 Yakobovich, Mrs. I 475  
 Yanovska Marishka II 577  
 Yassini A. Wolf II 1093  
 Yones Eliyahu II 1075  
 Zabarko Boris II 1070  
 Zabarnik Nowakowska Jolanta I 236–37  
 Zabiegło Wiktor, Rev. I 127  
 Zabinski Jan see Żabiński Jan  
 Zablocki Matthew, Rev. see Zabłocki Mateusz, Rev.  
 Zabłudovsky David II 716  
 Zabłudowicz Noach II 1093  
 Zabłocka Taylon Esther I 207  
 Zabłocki Mateusz, Rev. I 34  
 Zabraniak Sławomir, Rev. I 18  
 Zabrzeźniak Edmund I 202

- Zacharewicz Wanda II 587  
 Zacharewicz Witold II 587  
 Zachuta Feliks, Rev. I 116  
 Zachuta Szczęsny (Feliks) II 1001  
 Zacny Janina II 933  
 Zacny Konrad II 933  
 Zacny Maria II 933  
 Zacny Stefania II 933  
 Zacny Wiktor II 933  
 Zacny, Family II 933  
 Zagacki Dymitr I 454; II 1009  
 Zagdanski Henry II 797  
 Zagrodzka Julia (Sister Kantalicja) II 878, 992  
 Zajackzowska Maria see Zajączkowska Maria  
 Zajackzowska Regina see Zajączkowska Regina  
 Zajackzowski Ryszard see Zajączkowski Ryszard  
 Zajac Bolesław, Rev. II 785  
 Zajac Bronisława II 1064  
 Zajac Józef II 1064  
 Zajac Wojciech, Rev. I 556  
 Zajac, Mrs. II 702  
 Zajączkowska Maria II 903  
 Zajączkowska Regina II 841  
 Zajączkowski Mariusz II 998  
 Zajączkowski Ryszard II 841  
 Zajączkowski Wacław I 451, 462, 546; II 995, 1011–12, 1017, 1020, 1060, 1079  
 Zajączkowski, Family II 711  
 Zajchowski, Family II 1048  
 Zajd Jakub II 1073  
 Zajdorf Alfred I 214  
 Zajtman Hanna (Chana, Zajdman, Fajgenbaum, Zabielska Anna) I 236, 254  
 Zajtman Helena (Zajdman, Hisenholc, Caspari) I 238, 254  
 Zak Tosia II 931  
 Zak Yakov II 960  
 Zakościelny Jan I 160  
 Zakrzewska Kinga, Sister I 162  
 Zalech, Family II 663  
 Zaleski-Zamenhof Louis Christophe I 368–69  
 Zalewska Halina (Kowalska, Trzonek) I 301  
 Zalewska Irena II 876  
 Zalewski Feliks, Rev. II 759  
 Zalski Aleksander, Rev. II 718–20  
 Zalski Alexander see Zalski Aleksander  
 Zaltsman Marat I 451  
 Zaltsman Moshe I 151; II 1068  
 Zaluska Anna I 463  
 Zaluska Wanda I 561–62  
 Zalwowska Tekla I 422–23  
 Zalwowski Franciszek I 422–23  
 Zalwowski Jozef (Józef) I 422  
 Zalwowski Michal (Michał) I 422  
 Zalwowski Stanisław (Stanisław) I 422  
 Zalwowski Władysław (Władysław) I 422  
 Zalwowski, Family I 422–23; II 1073  
 Załuczowski Tadeusz, Rev. I 210  
 Załuska Wanda (Nelken) II 905–6  
 Załuski Kazimierz II 906  
 Zamenhof, Family I 368  
 Zamojre Michal (Michał) I 422  
 Zamojska Dorota II 878  
 Zamoyski Jan II 949  
 Zand Abram Jakub II 1043  
 Zandberg Lejzor II 1058  
 Zander Sabina II 880  
 Zander Zofia II 880  
 Zaniecka Ewa I 163  
 Zapoz, Benefactor II 787  
 Zaranek Stanisław II 616  
 Zarecki, Family II 1065  
 Zaremba Aleksander, Rev. II 797  
 Zaremska Hanna I 74  
 Zaręba Jan, Rev. I 417  
 Zarębski Stanisław, Rev. II 700  
 Zaryn Aleksandra see Żaryn Aleksandra  
 Zaryn Stanisław see Żaryn Stanisław (Stanisław)  
 Zarzecki Bolesław (Aleksander), Rev. I 30  
 Zarzycka Stanisława (Stanisława) II 841  
 Zarzycka Stefania II 841  
 Zarzycka Zdzisława, Sister II 878  
 Zarzycki Jan II 841  
 Zarzycki Władysław (Władysław) II 841  
 Zarzycki, Family II 841–42, 708–9  
 Zasada Ewelina (Janina), Sister II 901

- Zasadziński Szczepan, Rev. II 704  
 Zasławski Władysław see Zasławski  
     Władysław  
 Zasławski Władysław I 105  
 Zasławski, Jewish man I 289  
 Zavotski Józef see Zawadzki Józef  
 Zawada Edward I 544  
 Zawadzka Ewa II 901  
 Zawadzka Irena II 718  
 Zawadzka Janina I 299  
 Zawadzka Maria I 410  
 Zawadzka Maria, Rescuer of Jews II 891, 894  
 Zawadzka Olga II 842, 903  
 Zawadzka Róża I 299  
 Zawadzka Sabina II 718  
 Zawadzki Bolesław II 687  
 Zawadzki Józef, Dr. II 632  
 Zawadzki Józef, Rev. I 428–29  
 Zawadzki Julian, Rev. I 224  
 Zawadzki Mieczysław (Wincenty), Rev. I 62–  
     64, 287; II 989  
 Zawadzki, Family II 719  
 Zaver, Family I 558  
 Zawrzycki Jan, Rev. II 664–65, 989  
 Ząbecki Franciszek II 1099  
 Zbarski Marian I 306  
 Zborowski Henryk, Rev. I 37  
 Zbucka Józefa II 1033  
 Zbucki Józef II 1033  
 Zdanowicz Kamila, Sister I 330  
 Zdanowska Józefa II 1033  
 Zdanowski Andrzej II 1033  
 Zdanowski Stanisław II 1033  
 Zdobyłak, Family II 700  
 Zdrojewicz Pejsach (Henryk) II 770  
 Zdun Józef, Rev. II 687  
 Zduńczyk Władysław II 687  
 Zechenter Anna I 297  
 Zecker Julia (Chaya) see Miller Julia  
 Zeigersohn Yossel II 610  
 Zeligman Józef II 766–67  
 Zelikman Anna (Niuta) II 785  
 Zelle Laura I 80; II 930  
 Zeller Guillaume I 50  
 Zelwerowicz Aleksander I 238  
 Zelwerowicz Helena (Orchoń) I 238  
 Zelwerowicz Piotr I 197  
 Zelwerowicz, Family I 238  
 Zemaitis, Lithuanian teacher II 778  
 Žemaitis Jonas, Rev. I 438; II 779  
 Žemaitis Vladas I 20, 432, 434  
 Zemaitis Vladas see Žemaitis Vladas  
 Zembrzuski Michał, Rev. II 954  
 Zemelman Izaak II 1065  
 Zemełka Edward [?], Rev. I 415  
 Zgajewska Amelia I 432–33  
 Zgrzembski Stefan I 317  
 Žhemaitis Vladas see Žemaitis Vladas  
 Zhukov Georgii II 958  
 Ziajka Michał, Rev. I 270  
 Zieja Jan, Rev. I 22, 347, 388  
 Zielinska Jozefa see Zielińska Józefa  
 Zielinski Jan see Zieliński Jan  
 Zielinski Mundlak Elizabeth de (Zielinska  
     Elzbieta, Zielińska Elżbieta) see  
     Asch Aliza  
 Zielinski Stanisław see Zieliński Stanisław  
 Zielinski, Family see Zieliński, Family  
 Zielińska Anna (Zielinska-Mohit) I 302–3  
 Zielińska Józefa II 867  
 Zielińska Maria II 1092  
 Zielińska, Benefactress I 553  
 Zieliński Jan, Jewish man II 866  
 Zieliński Jan, Dr. II 887  
 Zieliński Stanisław, Rev. I 286–87  
 Zieliński Zygmunt, Rev. I 18, 29, 111, 125,  
     193–94, 220, 224–25, 234, 251, 263,  
     342–43, 384, 467, 519, 533, 546, 548,  
     553–54, 556, 562, 565; II 607, 620, 622,  
     630, 661, 699–700, 725, 743, 748, 755,  
     768, 777, 789, 804, 816, 878, 901, 970,  
     973, 998, 1000–6, 1008, 1010  
 Zieliński, Pharmacist II 926, 1091  
 Zieliński, Family II 886–87  
 Zielonka Anna II 922  
 Zielonka Gertruda II 912, 842  
 Zielonka Henryk II 842–43, 912  
 Zielonka Jan II 922  
 Ziemacka Maria (Sister Magdalena) I 189  
 Ziekańska Franciszka I 337

- Ziemba Helena II 1087  
 Ziemba Menachem, Rabbi I 341–42  
 Ziemba Tomasz (Tomek) II 639  
 Ziemecki Zenon, Rev. I 379–80  
 Ziemińska Franciszka see Ziemańska Franciszka  
 Ziemniak Józef II 672  
 Ziemniak Maria II 672  
 Ziemniak Ola II 672  
 Ziemny Aleksander II 798  
 Ziemska Wanda (Posner) I 255; II 603–4  
 Zienowicz Helena, Sister I 434–36; II 992  
 Zienowicz Janina I 434–35  
 Zierer Edith II 937  
 Zieve Tamara II 1128  
 Zięba Andrzej A. I 536  
 Zilber Gerta (Orner Magdalena, Szymańska Magdalena) I 286  
 Zilberg Yakov II 963  
 Zimiński Tadeusz, Rev. I 230  
 Zimleich, Family II 746  
 Zimler, Barber II 1036  
 Zimmerman Irena (Wodziszawska) I 560  
 Zimmerman Joshua D. II 1031, 1075, 1110  
 Zimmermann Henryk Zvi II 954  
 Zimoń Regina II 933  
 Zimoń Stefania II 933  
 Zinman Israel II 1070  
 Zins Samuel II 738  
 Ziobroń Jan I 512; II 797  
 Ziontek Artur II 1106  
 Ziółkowska Władysława (Sister Norberta) I 193  
 Zipper Michael II 1073  
 Zisser Sabina I 346; II 1112  
 Zissman Heidocovsky Sonia II 798  
 Złamał Bożena see Złamał Bożena  
 Złotnicka Halina see Złotnicka Halina  
 Złotnik Ella see Złotnik Ella (Perkiel)  
 Złotnik Halina see Złotnicka Halina  
 Złamał Bożena I 285  
 Złotnicka Halina (Złotnik Chana) I 265–66, 318  
 Złotnik Ella (Perkiel) II 582  
 Zmarzły Franciszek, Rev. I 488  
 Zoberman Irene I 310  
 Zoik Róża II 920  
 Zolkiewski Zygmunt see Żółkiewski Zygmunt  
 Zoltinski Adolph, Rev. see Żółczyński Adolf, Rev.  
 Zonszajn Cypora (Jabłoń) II 718–19, 920  
 Zonszajn Rachela II 920  
 Zosia, Friend of Margolis Alina (Margolis-Edelman) I 256–57  
 Zoszak Adam II 578  
 Zub Stanisław (Zborowski), Rev. II 664  
 Zub, Family II 664, 1048  
 Zuckerman Yitzhak (“Antek”) I 146, 150  
 Zugger Christopher Lawrence II 962  
 Zuker Simon I 341–42  
 Zukier, Pharmacist II 926, 1091  
 Żulawska Kazimiera see Żuławska Kazimiera  
 Żulawski Jerzy see Żuławski Jerzy  
 Żulawski Wawrzyniec see Żuławski Wawrzyniec  
 Zwałowski, Family I 422  
 Zwanska Halina see Zwańska Halina  
 Zwańska Halina II 843  
 Zweibaum Juliusz I 363, 370  
 Związek Jan I 461  
 Zwick Elżbieta (Zwiek, Ela) I 504, 520  
 Zwierz Jan, Rev. I 519–20  
 Zwierzowa Natalia I 237  
 Zwolakowa Maria I 62–63, 203, 213, 222, 242, 433, 505, 507, 510; II 658, 687, 779, 1009, 1069, 1072, 1087  
 Zyberberg Lejb I 30  
 Zyberk-Plater Aleksander, Rev. I 366, 371  
 Zybert Selim II 601  
 Zybert Stanisława I 299  
 Zych Sławomir, Rev. I 118, 406; II 664, 868, 954, 973  
 Zychowicz Piotr II 1050, 1084, 1093, 1136  
 Zygarowicz Stanisław I 405; II 1005  
 Zygielbojm Szmul II 1065–66  
 Zygmunt, Son of Pik-Szafrńska Stefania I 392  
 Zylberbaum Sala II 1047–48  
 Zylberberg Henrietta I 250  
 Zylberberg Ignacy I 385

- Zylberberg Michael I 250, 356–57, 495  
 Zylberberg Tirza I 292  
 Zylberklang Chaim II 1052–63  
 Zylberman Halina I 255, 497  
 Zylberman Shamaï II 853–54  
 Zylbersztajn Stella I 256; II 700, 1033  
 Zyskowski, Family I 416  
 Zysman Józef (Józef) I 192; II 860  
 Zysman Piotr (Świątkowski) I 192; II 860  
 Zysman Teodora I 192; II 860  
 Zysman Zofia (Zusman) II 671–72
- Ż**  
 Żabiński Jan I 309  
 Żaboklicka Hinda II 1053  
 Żak Adam II 1032  
 Żak Franciszek, Rev. II 1001  
 Żak Jadwiga I 407  
 Żaryn Aleksandra I 241  
 Żaryn Jan I 70, 104, 107, 162, 184, 188, 198,  
     204, 235, 297, 310, 330, 347, 389, 396,  
     406, 411, 413, 467, 503, 506, 540, 565;  
     II 644–45, 699, 803–4, 814, 852, 882,  
     897, 899, 905, 956–66, 972, 979, 1003,  
     1007, 1045, 1049, 1055, 1057, 1113  
 Żaryn Stanisław (Stanisław) I 241  
 Żbikowska Zofia I 565  
 Żbikowski Andrzej I 62, 113, 134, 137, 139,  
     183, 184, 225, 250, 349–350, 394, 406;  
     II 576, 604, 685, 757, 766, 876, 933,  
     973, 1029, 1055, 1061, 1071, 1075,  
     1106, 1116
- Żbikowski Stefan I 565  
 Żbikowski Zdzisław I 565  
 Żdaniuk Henryk I 424  
 Żebrowski Leszek I 344  
 Żelazko Joanna I 55  
 Żelazko Sabina I 300  
 Żelski Faustyn, Rev. I 484  
 Żmuda Ryszard I 265  
 Żołnierczyk Antoni, Rev. I 545  
 Żołnierczyk Czesława (Kagan) II 744  
 Żołąk Etki II 1034  
 Żołąkowski, Family I 491  
 Żorska Hania II 876  
 Żółczyński Adolf, Rev. I 557  
 Żółkiewski Zygmunt II 828  
 Żółtek Aleksa, Sister II 644  
 Żuchowska Waleriana, Sister II 923  
 Żuk-Skarszewski Ludwik II 1093  
 Żuławnik Małgorzata I 362  
 Żuławska Kazimiera II 861  
 Żuławski Jacek I 494  
 Żuławski Jerzy II 861  
 Żuławski Wawrzyniec II 861  
 Żur Leon II 653  
 Żurek Jacek I 507; II 604  
 Żurowska Krystyna (Grodzicka) I 238  
 Życiński Ignacy (Życzyński, Zyczynski), Rev.  
     II 671–72, 989  
 Żywulska Krystyna (Landau Zofia Sonia)  
     II 932–33

## Index of Place Names

- A**  
Adamów II 1035, 1044  
Adampol II 956–57  
Adamy I 553; II 1078  
Adolfów II 1110  
Albertów I 56  
Albertyn I 450; II 995  
Albertyna see Albertyn  
Albinów I 197  
Aleksandria II 659, 1071  
Aleksandrów I 70  
Alytus II 961  
Amsterdam I 112; II 1031  
Angleniki I 435  
Anin I 233–34, 244, 252, 261, 264; II 981  
Annopol I 230; II 975  
Annopol-Rachów II 1035  
Antwerp I 112  
Ashdod II 746  
Augustów I 135  
Auschwitz see Oświęcim
- B**  
Babice II 975  
Babińce I 272  
Bablin see Bąblin  
Bachórzec II 977  
Baden-Baden II 596  
Bagatelka II 837–38  
Bakończyce I 281; II 918  
Balcery II 813  
Balingródek II 792, 835, 977  
Bar II 1073  
Baranowicz see Baranowicze  
Baranowicze I 135, 418, 423–24, 454;  
II 813, 1008–9  
Baranów Sandomierski I 525; II 976  
Bartne I 406  
Barycz I 405; II 977  
Barysz I 483; II 620, 623, 976  
Basinów II 1064, 1106  
Baworów II 915, 922–23, 976, 979  
Bąblin I 38  
Bączal II 977  
Bąkowa Góra I 545  
Bedzin see Będzin  
Belmont II 786, 977  
Belsk see Bielsk Podlaski  
Belzec see Bełżec  
Bełchów I 379–80; II 975  
Bełż II 976  
Bełżec I 530; II 610, 630, 635–36, 640–41,  
723, 823, 833, 847, 850, 908, 1042,  
1062–63, 1073, 1098–99, 1106, 1135  
Bełżyce II 710, 1063, 1106  
Berecz II 1080  
Beresteczko II 981, 1120  
Bereza II 577  
Berezne see Bereżne  
Berezołupy II 1071  
Berezwech II 788–89, 1006  
Bereżne II 1069, 1072  
Bergen (Bergen-Belsen) I 184–85; II 773,  
833, 872  
Bergen-Belsen see Bergen  
Berlin I 48; II 666, 864, 1023  
Bethlehem II 916  
Bezwola II 981  
Będzin I 63, 65, 226, 288; II 824, 976, 983–  
84, 989, 1054



- Białowieża see Białowieża  
 Białystok see Białystok  
 Biała I 66  
 Biała Niżna II 981  
 Biała Podlaska I 162, 166–67, 254, 310;  
     II 691, 798, 980, 984, 1069  
 Białka II 1060  
 Białobóżnica II 630, 976  
 Białobrzegi II 675  
 Białogon I 547; II 976  
 Białotęka Dworska I 233–34, 246, 252, 262,  
     264; II 981  
 Białowieża I 331–32; II 977  
 Białowola II 1047  
 Białozoryszki II 1081  
 Biały Kamień I 558; II 976  
 Biały Kościół I 115, 397–98; II 976  
 Białystok I 131–34, 225–26, 333, 394, 406,  
     429, 490, 517; II 632, 634, 682, 754–55,  
     758, 760, 762, 764–69, 773, 828, 859,  
     926, 953, 977, 982, 984, 991, 1001,  
     1011, 1061, 1090, 1112  
 Biecz I 342, 549  
 Biegonice II 998  
 Bielany II 986  
 Bielawa II 687  
 Bieliny II 725, 977  
 Bielsk Podlaski I 333, 346; II 765, 977, 996,  
     1052  
 Bielsko I 66; II 705, 917  
 Bielsko-Biała II 686, 1054  
 Bieniakonie II 977  
 Bierun see Bieruń  
 Bieruń I 42  
 Bieruń Nowy II 932  
 Bietigheim II 898  
 Bieżanów I 415  
 Bieżuń II 1045  
 Biłgoraj I 55, 493; II 712, 725, 949, 951, 975,  
     998, 1065  
 Birkenau see Brzezinka  
 Biskupice II 982  
 Bizne II 785  
 Blizne II 977  
 Bliżyn I 205; II 976  
 Błaszki II 796  
 Błazny II 984  
 Błonie II 798  
 Bobowa I 487; II 727, 976  
 Bobric see Bobryk  
 Bobrowa II 1067  
 Bobrowce I 314  
 Bobryk I 126  
 Bochnia I 408, 487; II 913–14, 922–23, 928,  
     976, 979, 983, 1055  
 Bocianka II 989  
 Boczki Domaradzkie II 1043  
 Bodzanów II 798  
 Bodzentyn I 478  
 Bogucice I 42  
 Bogumin I 42  
 Boguszyn (Buchenhof) I 99  
 Boguszyn-Bronikowo II 975  
 Bojanowo I 48, 110–11  
 Bokowo Wielkie II 1045  
 Bolechów II 640, 976  
 Bolesław I 509–10; II 976  
 Bolesławiec I 474, 476  
 Bolimów II 1043  
 Bołszowce I 556; II 985  
 Borki I 126; II 1047  
 Borki Nizińskie II 1067  
 Borki-Łuków II 980  
 Borkowo II 977, 1007  
 Borkowszczyzna II 785  
 Borodzienicze II 788, 977  
 Borownica I 405; II 988  
 Borowskie Budki see Budki Borowskie  
 Borów II 975  
 Borszczów I 272; II 981, 1074  
 Bortnica II 1072  
 Borusowa II 1005  
 Borysław I 489–90; II 914, 977, 988, 996  
 Borzęcin I 399  
 Boże II 675, 976  
 Bóbrka II 641, 981  
 Bójki II 1060  
 Braciszewo I 37  
 Brańsk II 726, 751, 756–58, 763–64, 977,  
     988, 996, 1060

- Brasław I 136; II 784–88, 977, 1001–2, 1006–7  
 Bratkowice II 977  
 Brno II 1019  
 Brodnica II 983  
 Brody II 632–37, 649, 921, 976, 982, 985, 1001, 1076, 1078–80  
 Bronikowo I 99  
 Bronowice I 391  
 Bronów II 1037, 1118  
 Broskuny II 1081  
 Bruxelles I 149  
 Brwinow see Brwinów  
 Brwinów I 187, 195–96, 234–35, 242, 246–49, 262, 324; II 975, 981, 984  
 Brzaczowice see Brzeczowice  
 Brzeczowice I 326; II 992  
 Brzesc-on-Bug see Brześć nad Bugiem  
 Brzesko I 399, 486, 506; II 1037, 1055  
 Brześć II 1007–8  
 Brześć nad Bugiem I 20, 135; II 977, 996–97  
 Brzezany see Brzeżany  
 Brzezinka (Birkenau) II 930, 938, 1092, 1095, 1132  
 Brzezinki I 234; II 981  
 Brzeźnica I 485; II 976, 988  
 Brzeżany I 226, 234, 272–73; II 609, 613–15, 916, 922–23, 976, 979, 981–83, 990, 1074, 1122  
 Brzostek I 404; II 977  
 Brzozdowce II 976  
 Brzozowa I 504; II 976  
 Brzozów I 226–27, 229, 504, 520–21; II 977, 986, 1104  
 Bucharest II 956  
 Buchenhof see Boguszyn  
 Buchenwald I 48, 393, 473; II 926  
 Buczacz I 226, 482–83; II 620–23, 625–26, 963, 976, 981, 988, 992, 1041, 1076–77  
 Budapest I 44, 467; II 950, 953, 955, 1125  
 Budki Borowskie II 652, 1071  
 Budki II 1070  
 Budśląw II 977  
 Budzanów I 27; II 616–18, 976, 984  
 Bujaków II 1054  
 Bukaczowce II 846  
 Bukowa Stara II 829  
 Bukowina Tatrzańska I 407–8, 410; II 981, 984  
 Bukowsko II 977  
 Buków II 689  
 Bursztyn II 639, 825, 976  
 Busk I 553; II 976, 1078  
 Busko see Busko-Zdrój  
 Busko Zdroj see Busko-Zdrój  
 Busko-Zdrój I 171; II 830–31, 842, 852, 903, 918, 922–23, 976, 979, 982  
 Butrimoniai see Butrymańce  
 Butrimonys see Butrymańce  
 Butrymańce (Butrimoniai, Butrimonys) I 435; II 962–63  
 Bybło II 976  
 Bychawa II 832, 983, 1058  
 Bychawka II 982  
 Bydgoszcz I 34–37, 290, 483; II 578, 760, 854  
 Bydlin I 546; II 976  
 Bystrzejowice II 712  
 Bystrzyca Nowa II 1058  
 Bystrzyca Stara II 1058  
 Bytom I 422; II 612, 619  
 Cecylówka I 66  
 Cegłów I 316; II 798, 975  
 Celestynów II 600  
 Chabówka see Chabówka  
 Chabówka I 506; II 950  
 Chainovka see Hajnówka  
 Chałuch II 1070  
 Chełm see Chełm  
 Chełmno see Chełmno  
 Chełm I 87, 137, 421, 478; II 577, 722, 736, 857, 975, 981, 1062  
 Chełmca Duża I 51; II 975  
 Chełmno I 39–40; II 587, 825, 900, 930, 975, 1132, 1135  
 Chlebowice Świrskie I 186; II 976  
 Chłudowo see Chłudowo  
 Chłudowo I 38  
 Chmiel II 712  
 Chmielew II 584

- Chmielnik I 329, 520; II 977, 982  
 Chobotki II 770  
 Chobrzany II 670, 976  
 Chociszewo II 1046  
 Chodaczków Wielki II 614, 976  
 Chodel II 725  
 Chodorów II 640–41, 643, 976  
 Chojnice II 869  
 Chomiatówka II 630, 976  
 Chorłupy II 659  
 Chorostków I 226; II 796, 983  
 Choroszcz II 766, 977  
 Chorowice I 158  
 Chorzów II 761, 981, 1054  
 Choszczowka see Choszczówka  
 Choszczówka II 857  
 Chotcza II 578, 976  
 Chotomow see Chotomów  
 Chotomów I 162, 226, 230, 237, 386–88;  
     II 858, 983, 991  
 Chotyłów II 691–93  
 Chronów II 940  
 Chruslin II 1043  
 Chrzanów I 561  
 Chrzastów II 1068  
 Chwałojnie (Kolainiai) II 959–60, 988  
 Chylce II 979  
 Ciechania I 406  
 Ciechanow see Ciechanów  
 Ciechanowiec II 1110  
 Ciechanów I 44; II 1046  
 Cielądz II 577  
 Ciepeliów II 675  
 Cieszyn I 42, 66, 507; II 981  
 Ciężkowice I 403–4  
 Copenhagen II 1024  
 Cracow (Kraków) I 18, 21–22, 37, 41, 58,  
     87, 95, 99, 108, 113–17, 154, 158, 170,  
     172–73, 181, 184, 204, 217, 220, 231,  
     255–57, 260, 267, 272, 275, 278, 290,  
     309, 314, 324, 326–29, 335, 337–40,  
     353, 356, 361, 381, 384, 391–95, 397–  
     99, 408, 412, 415–17, 421, 425, 435,  
     454–55, 461, 469–70, 477–86, 488, 490,  
     492, 494, 497, 501–4, 507, 510, 518–19,  
     531, 541–44, 546, 549, 558, 561–62;  
     II 578, 612, 618, 628, 665, 669–70, 680,  
     683–87, 723, 739, 751, 771, 796–98,  
     821–24, 827–28, 833, 838–40, 842,  
     846, 853–54, 857, 863, 865, 875–76,  
     892, 896–97, 899–900, 902–6, 908–9,  
     911, 913–14, 917, 920–26, 935–36, 938,  
     940–42, 948–50, 952, 964, 976, 979–82,  
     984–86, 988, 992, 1001, 1010, 1014,  
     1034, 1055, 1059, 1066, 1083, 1087–88,  
     1090, 1093, 1123, 1139  
 Cudzeniszki II 977  
 Czajkowa II 1066  
 Czajków II 1050  
 Czarkowy see Kamienna  
 Czarna Duża I 195; II 984  
 Czarny Bór I 195; II 804, 984  
 Czarnystok II 712, 1058  
 Czychów I 400, 506; II 612, 976, 1033, 1055  
 Czechow see Czechów  
 Czechowice I 41  
 Czechów II 827–28  
 Czekanów II 1052  
 Czelatycze II 1050  
 Czeplie [?] II 951  
 Czymna II 976, 1050  
 Czerna I 288, 411; II 980, 983  
 Czerniaków I 396; II 975  
 Czernice Borowe II 976  
 Czernichów II 814  
 Czerniejew I 164  
 Czersk I 231–32  
 Czersk nad Wisłą II 983  
 Czerwin II 977  
 Czerwinsk see Czerwińsk  
 Czerwińsk I 44  
 Czerwona Wola II 983  
 Czerwotka Liwska II 590, 976  
 Czerwonogród see Czerwonogród  
 Czerwonogród I 27; II 882–84, 886, 976, 984  
 Czeskie Nowosiółki II 1120  
 Czystochowa see Częstochowa  
 Częstochowa I 46–47, 56, 161, 186, 204, 209,  
     226, 263–64, 309, 324, 346, 350, 371–72,  
     383, 387, 411, 413, 416, 461–71, 473,

- 476; II 655, 739, 798–99, 832, 842–43, 857, 859–60, 865–68, 911–13, 918, 920, 922–23, 948, 976, 979, 981–84, 986, 988, 991, 996, 1056, 1101, 1104
- Częstoniew I 218
- Czołomyje II 1112
- Czortków I 122, 229, 233, 395, 535; II 617, 623, 630, 887, 982, 985, 1074, 1078
- Czudec I 512; II 631
- Czukiew II 1074
- Czuszow see Cuszów
- Czuszów II 842, 903
- Czyski II 901, 985
- Czyżczka II 1055
- Czyżew II 1034
- Czyżów Szlachecki I 343; II 983
- Czyżyny II 976
- Ćmielów II 976
- Dabrowa Tarnowska see Dąbrowa Tarnowska
- Dachau I 48, 50, 86, 95–96, 108, 111, 504, 547; II 650, 678–79, 926–29, 935, 1007, 1010
- Daleszyce II 1014
- Danzig see Gdańsk
- Dąbie I 77
- Dąbrowa Białostocka II 977
- Dąbrowa I 333; II 590
- Dąbrowa Rzeczycka I 522–24; II 1047
- Dąbrowa Tarnowska I 29, 346, 509; II 827, 964–65, 1041
- Dąbrowa Wielka I 331, 333
- Dąbrowica I 127; II 977, 989, 1053
- Dąbrówka II 975
- Dąbrówka Szlachecka II 587
- Dederkały II 646, 977
- Denver, Colorado II 903
- Deputyce Królewskie II 975
- Derdy I 204; II 982
- Dereczyn II 797, 977
- Derewna II 998
- Derewno II 977
- Dębe II 1105
- Dębica I 353, 401–4, 469, 485–86, 505, 509, 517–18; II 875, 983, 988, 991, 1014, 1067, 1123
- Dęblin I 213, 216, 493; II 663, 923, 979, 1065
- Dębniki II 797, 941
- Dębowiec II 1047
- Divenishok see Dziewieniszki
- Dobczyce II 686, 976, 1066
- Dobiesławice I 519
- Dobra II 976, 996
- Dobranowice II 981
- Dobre II 734–35
- Dobropole II 976
- Dobrzejowice I 235
- Dobrzyjałowo II 977
- Dobrzyniewo Fabryczne II 1061
- Dociszki II 1037
- Dolina I 554–55; II 976, 1001
- Dołhań II 652, 1070
- Dołhinów II 790, 977
- Domanice II 976
- Domaradz II 977
- Dombrovo see Dąbrowa Wielka
- Dominikowice I 401–2; II 983, 991
- Dominopol II 1072
- Domostawa I 525; II 977
- Dorohucza II 707
- Dowgidańce II 1038
- Draganówka II 1073
- Drobin II 1133
- Drohiczyn I 136, 227; II 694–95, 796, 799, 977, 983
- Drohiczyn Poleski II 953, 977
- Drohitchin see Drohiczyn
- Drohobycz I 212, 256, 404, 487–88, 491; II 581, 605, 676, 796, 882, 917–18
- Dryssa II 789, 1006
- Dryświaty II 787, 977
- Drzdkowitz see Dzietrzkowice
- Drzewica II 983, 1053
- Dubeczno II 690, 1062–63
- Dubinki II 812
- Dubno I 510; II 660, 977, 981, 1072
- Duchnice II 982
- Dunajów II 631, 976

Duniłowicze II 789–90, 977  
Dursztyn I 503; II 986, 1055  
Dworzysk II 1061  
Dydnia II 977  
Dynów I 66; II 977  
Dziadkowice II 849, 977  
Działdowo (Soldau) I 48, 206  
Działoszyce II 976, 1037, 1118, 1133  
Działoszyn I 56  
Dziatkowicze I 454; II 986, 1008–9  
Dzibułki II 981  
Dzierzkowice II 675, 975  
Dzietrzkowice I 475  
Dziewieniszki II 745, 783, 844, 977  
Dziewule II 581  
Dzisna II 798  
Dziurków II 1056  
Dzwonica II 636, 1078  
Dżwiniaczka I 272; II 981  
Dżwinogród II 1076–77  
Dziewieniszki see Dziewieniszki

Ejsymonty Wielkie II 977  
Ejszyszki II 726, 977, 1038, 1081  
Elizarow see Elizarów  
Elizarów II 654

Feliciental see Felizienthal  
Feliksin II 1057  
Felizienthal II 976  
Felsztyn II 664, 977  
Filipy II 922  
Firlej I 86; II 707, 975  
Flers II 958, 991  
Flossenbürg II 933, 1094  
Fordon nad Wisłą I 40; II 578  
Fordon see Fordon nad Wisłą  
Frampol II 712  
Franciszków II 1111  
Frankfurt II 899  
Frysztak I 405; II 977  
Futory II 610

Goć II 977  
Gajluny II 1081

Gałaszowice II 1068  
Garbartka II 674  
Garbatka-Letnisko II 688, 976  
Garbów II 975, 1004  
Garliz see Gorlice  
Garwolin I 85, 150–51; II 976, 1068, 1106  
Gawareczyna Górna I 558  
Gąbin I 111  
Gdańsk (Danzig) I 39, 47; II 663, 748, 776  
Gdynia I 40  
Gidle I 416; II 976  
Giedraičiai see Giedrojcie  
Giedrojcie (Giedraičiai) II 962  
Gierałtowice see Gierałtowice  
Gierałtowice I 41  
Gierczyce II 1055  
Gliniany II 1076  
Glinki II 879  
Glinna Nawaria I 528  
Gliwice II 735, 934  
Głowno see Głowno  
Głęboczyca II 1072  
Głębokie II 788–89, 792, 801, 1006  
Głogowska II 982  
Głogów Małopolski II 982  
Głosków II 986, 988  
Głosków-Zielone I 218, 220, 222–23  
Głowczowca II 1067  
Głowno I 87, 265, 287, 478; II 975, 984, 1043  
Głowsiewicze II 746  
Głuchów II 1051  
Głupianka II 1043  
Głusk II 975, 1060  
Gniewczyna II 977  
Gniewkowo I 35  
Gnieszno I 33–35, 38, 48; II 735, 926, 975, 1092  
Godowa II 665, 982  
Goerlitz see Görlitz  
Golcowa II 977  
Golkowo see Gołków  
Golub II 825  
Gołąbek I 164  
Gołębki II 702, 976, 1053  
Gołków I 540

- Goniądz II 768, 795  
 Gończyce II 1057  
 Goraj II 797  
 Gorajec II 712, 1058  
 Gorce I 508  
 Gorki Pantalowickie I 448–49  
 Gorlice (Garliz) I 68, 83–84, 226, 401, 404, 406, 487–88; II 727, 798, 976, 983, 986, 988, 1049  
 Görlitz I 468  
 Górna Grupa see Górna Grupa  
 Gorzkowice I 550; II 976  
 Gorzków II 976  
 Gorzyce II 977  
 Goscieszyn see Gościeszyn  
 Gostyn see Gostyń  
 Gostynin I 51; II 976, 1006  
 Gostyń I 41  
 Goszcza II 1067  
 Goszczyn II 590–91, 975, 1035  
 Gościeszyn I 34  
 Gowstany II 801  
 Goźlice I 30  
 Góra Kalwaria I 231, 298; II 583–84, 975, 984, 1106  
 Góra Pietralewicka I 447, 450  
 Górka Klasztorna I 36  
 Górna Grupa I 39  
 Grabie II 591, 595  
 Grabowiec II 975  
 Grajewo I 125; II 771, 977, 1007  
 Grębków II 976  
 Gręboszów I 511; II 976  
 Grodek see Gródek  
 Grodno I 20, 134, 235; II 742–43, 771, 798, 977, 983, 986, 996, 1007, 1037, 1082  
 Grodziec I 51, 96; II 975, 1006  
 Grodzisk I 468; II 975, 1068  
 Grodzisk Mazowiecki I 234, 262; II 581, 585–86, 837, 981  
 Grodzisko Dolne I 226, 274; II 977, 983, 1049  
 Grodzisko I 226  
 Gromadno I 34  
 Gross-Rosen see Rogoźnica  
 Gródek I 133; II 813, 977  
 Gródek Jagielloński I 533; II 699, 878, 976, 980, 1073  
 Grójec I 189, 221, 381; II 590, 604, 975, 981, 1035, 1057, 1068  
 Grudusk II 1046  
 Grudziądz I 40, 218  
 Grywałd I 503; II 976  
 Gudogaj II 812  
 Gulbiny II 780, 865, 982  
 Gumniska II 976  
 Gusen I 48, 547  
 Gutyszyna II 622  
 Hague I 112  
 Haifa II 713  
 Hajduszowo II 789  
 Hajnówka I 333  
 Halicz I 555; II 986  
 Hanaczów II 901, 986, 1075  
 Hancewicze II 977  
 Hańsk II 690, 976  
 Heilbronn II 898  
 Helenów II 1034, 1082  
 Henryków I 21, 193, 387; II 689  
 Hermaniszki II 800, 977  
 Hińkowce II 643  
 Hnilcze II 622  
 Hnizdyczow see Hnizdyczów-Kochawina  
 Hnizdyczów-Kochawina II 833  
 Hoduciszki I 128–29; II 977  
 Hodyszewo II 751–53, 756–59, 977, 1109  
 Holszany II 771, 977, 982  
 Hołosko I 551  
 Hołosko Wielkie II 1078  
 Horochów II 1072  
 Horodek II 813  
 Horodenka I 536; II 821, 883, 976, 1078  
 Horodyszcze II 813–14, 977  
 Horyhlady II 1078  
 Horyniec II 976  
 Hrubieszów I 87, 227, 330; II 980, 986, 990–92, 1052  
 Hucisko I 512  
 Hucisko Olejskie II 1076  
 Humniska II 977, 1037



- Husiatyn II 829  
 Husów II 977  
 Huta Brodzka II 1078  
 Huta Krzeszowska II 949  
 Huta Nowa II 626–27, 976, 988  
 Huta Olejska see Hucisko Olejskie  
 Huta Pieniacka II 636–37, 1079–80  
 Huta Sopaczewska II 1071  
 Huta Stara II 646  
 Huta Stepańska II 1072  
 Huta Werchobudzka II 636–37, 1079–80  
 Huta Wierchobuska see Huta Werchobudzka  
  
 Ibramowice II 1066  
 Idołta II 977, 1001  
 Ignacow see Ignaców  
 Ignaców I 291–93, 295–96; II 984, 991–92, 1037  
 Ignalino I 445  
 Ikaźń II 785, 788, 1006  
 Iża II 675  
 Imbramowice I 546; II 976, 984  
 Indura II 743, 977  
 Inowrocław see Inowrocław  
 Inowrocław I 34–35  
 Insterburg II 754  
 Istanbul II 956–57  
 Istebna I 42  
 Iszczoła II 977  
 Iszkoldź see Iszkołdź  
 Iszkołdź II 819  
 Ivano-Frankivsk II 846  
 Iwaniska II 671, 976  
 Iwie II 998  
 Iwie see Iwie  
 Iwonicz see Iwonicz-Zdrój  
 Iwonicz-Zdrój II 666, 977  
 Izabelin I 234, 238; II 975, 981  
 Izbica II 677–78  
 Izbica Kujawska II 798  
 Izdebno II 1057  
  
 Jablonkow see Jabłonków  
 Jabłeczna I 417  
 Jabłonka Kościelna II 760  
 Jabłonków I 41–42  
 Jabłoń II 1060  
 Jabłoń Kościelna II 761–62, 977, 988  
 Jabłoń-Zarzeckie II 761–62  
 Jaciazek see Jaciążek  
 Jaciążek I 44  
 Jaćmierz II 977  
 Jadwinów II 981  
 Jagielnica I 233; II 983  
 Jagodne I 151; II 1068  
 Jakszyce I 423  
 Jaktorowo I 34  
 Jakubkowice II 1005  
 Janow see Janów Lubelski  
 Janowa Dolina II 645–46, 977  
 Janowa see Janów Lubelski  
 Janowicze II 769, 991, 1061  
 Janowiec I 34  
 Janów I 492  
 Janów Lubelski I 286, 296; II 975, 984  
 Janów Podlaski I 162; II 980  
 Janów Poleski I 195, 453; II 984, 998  
 Janówka II 605, 976, 1036  
 Januszyszki II 1038  
 Jarocin I 36  
 Jarosław I 183, 405; II 578, 644, 796, 983–84, 1005, 1050  
 Jasionów II 983  
 Jasionówka I 125; II 977  
 Jasło I 404–6, 510–11, 518, 549; II 797, 977, 1048, 1050  
 Jasna Polanka II 1038  
 Jastrzębie-Zdrój II 932  
 Jaśliska II 797, 977  
 Jaświły II 1061  
 Jawiszowice II 932  
 Jaworów I 405; II 578, 878, 977, 981, 986, 992  
 Jazłowiec II 976  
 Jedlanka II 1060  
 Jedlicze II 664, 977, 1048  
 Jedlińsk II 672, 976  
 Jedwabne I 123, 394; II 977  
 Jelechowice I 559–60; II 976, 1123  
 Jelna II 1069

Jerozolimka II 813  
 Jersusalem I 171; II 651, 717, 962  
 Jezierna II 609, 611, 976, 983, 1074  
 Jeziorna II 687  
 Jeziorzany II 797  
 Jeżewo II 983, 1053  
 Jędrzejów I 343, 478; II 576, 976  
 Jędrzejów Nowy II 705  
 Jodłowa I 404; II 976  
 Jonava II 961  
 Józefów I 408, 413; II 600  
 Józików II 988  
 Juchnowiec Kościelny II 769, 977, 1061  
 Julków II 1035  
 Jurele II 1038  
 Jurków I 486  
  
 Kaišiadorys see Kielerszki  
 Kajetanówka II 712–13, 975, 1058  
 Kalembyna I 480–81  
 Kalinin see Tver  
 Kalisz I 46, 204; II 880, 982  
 Kałuszyn see Kałuszyn  
 Kalwaria see Kalwaria Zebrzydowska  
 Kalwaria Zebrzydowska I 507; II 901, 913, 917, 984–85  
 Kałdowo I 56  
 Kałuszyn I 165, 464–66; II 913, 1053  
 Kamenka see Kamionka  
 Kamienna Góra see Kamienna Góra  
 Kamienna Góra I 40  
 Kamienna II 976  
 Kamień I 451; II 977, 998  
 Kamieński I 545; II 733  
 Kamionek I 311–12; II 991  
 Kamionka II 844  
 Kamionka Strumiłowa II 636  
 Kampinos I 19, 103–4; II 975  
 Kanie II 722  
 Kańczuga I 273; II 977, 1050  
 Kapčiamiestis see Kopciowo  
 Karczew I 463; II 593  
 Karczówka I 547  
 Karczun II 1071  
 Karoliszki II 806

Karviná see Karwina  
 Karwina (Karviná) I 441  
 Katowice I 41–42, 65, 278, 521; II 678–79, 932, 937, 976, 983  
 Katyn see Katyń  
 Katyń I 122, 335; II 705  
 Kaufering II 935  
 Kaunas (Kowno) I 109, 112, 425; II 807, 959, 961, 1012  
 Kazimierza Wielka II 976  
 Kazimierzów I 545  
 Kcynia I 35  
 Kėdainiai see Kiejdany  
 Keleriškiai see Kielerszki  
 Kelmė II 959–61  
 Kępa I 523–24; II 1047  
 Kępno I 51, 469; II 975  
 Kęty II 1095  
 Kharkov I 122, 532  
 Kiciny II 1064, 1106  
 Kiejdany (Kėdainiai) II 962  
 Kielce I 47, 115, 183, 218, 263, 289, 310, 330, 391, 464, 478, 546–47; II 796, 827, 830, 836, 839–42, 866, 874, 903, 913–14, 918, 923, 976, 979, 980–82, 984, 1005, 1010, 1014, 1056  
 Kielczewice II 982  
 Kielerszki (Kaišiadorys, Keleriškiai) II 963  
 Kiemelin see Kiemieliński  
 Kiemieliński I 123–34; II 977, 1081  
 Kiernožia II 975  
 Kije I 218  
 Klarysew I 298; II 687, 984  
 Kleck I 423; II 977, 1007  
 Klembów II 981  
 Kleparów I 553  
 Klesów II 653, 977  
 Klimakówka II 1068  
 Klimatow see Klimontów  
 Klimontów I 289–90; II 982  
 Kliny I 469  
 Kliszów I 343  
 Kłobuck see Kłobuck  
 Kluczbork II 621  
 Klukowo II 755

- Kłobuck I 477  
 Kłoczew II 703, 976, 1044  
 Kłomnice I 463  
 Knyszyn I 125; II 770, 977  
 Koblenz I 74  
 Kobryń I 453–54; II 977, 986, 997, 1008  
 Kobylanka I 401–4; II 986  
 Kobylin I 38; II 770  
 Kobylniki II 829  
 Kobyłowo I 617  
 Kochanów II 900, 925  
 Kochawina II 833  
 Kock I 86, 216; II 797, 976  
 Kocmyrzów I 483  
 Kocowa [?] II 594  
 Kokoszka II 1057  
 Kokutkowce II 619–20, 976  
 Kolainiai see Chwałojnie  
 Kolbuszowa I 80, 514–15, 517–18; II 823, 976, 982, 988  
 Kolno I 162; II 977, 980  
 Kolonia Dworska II 1069  
 Kolonia Góry II 1037  
 Kolonia Wileńska see Vilnius Colony  
 Kołaczyce II 665  
 Kołdyczewo II 814, 817, 997  
 Kołomyja I 21, 234, 536; II 617, 640–43, 897, 900–1, 917, 922, 976, 979, 981, 983–84, 1009  
 Komancza see Komańcza  
 Komańcza II 865, 868, 982  
 Komarów II 1047  
 Komorniki II 1056  
 Konczyce Wielkie see Kończyce Wielkie  
 Koniecpol I 468; II 1056  
 Koniecpol-Chrzastów II 976  
 Konin I 96, 455; II 975, 1006  
 Konińsk II 1072  
 Konopki-Błonie II 1062  
 Konstancin I 163, 394, 408; II 687, 975  
 Konstantinów see Konstantynów  
 Konstantynów I 51; II 702, 798, 976–77  
 Konwaliszki II 781–83  
 Kończyce Wielkie I 41  
 Końskie I 217, 286, 330; II 577, 875, 922, 976, 980, 984, 988, 1056  
 Końskowola II 1046  
 Kopciowo (Kapčiamiestis) II 963  
 Koperniki I 272  
 Kopyczyńce see Kopyczyńce  
 Kopyczyńce I 226; II 615, 829, 976, 983  
 Korczewie II 648  
 Korczyna II 665  
 Korkożyski II 794  
 Kornatka II 686–87, 1066  
 Kornica II 700  
 Koryczany II 1057  
 Korzec II 1070  
 Korzeniówka II 1057  
 Korzenna I 508  
 Koscierzyna see Kościerzyna  
 Košice see Koszyce  
 Kosów Lacki II 1098, 1105–7, 1110  
 Kostopol II 645–46, 648, 1069, 1071–72  
 Kostowiec I 234–35, 265–67, 269; II 981, 986  
 Kostów II 981  
 Kostrzyn II 661  
 Koszedary II 963  
 Koszyce (Košice) I 478–81; II 798, 950, 976  
 Kościejów II 635, 976, 1073  
 Kościelna I 468; II 976, 1056  
 Kościerzyna I 40  
 Kotuń I 165  
 Kowale II 767  
 Kowel I 125; II 654, 657, 734, 798, 977  
 Kownanica II 1057  
 Kowno see Kaunas  
 Kozaki II 1062  
 Kozienice I 66, 69, 107; II 584, 981, 1108  
 Kozłówka I 410  
 Kozowa II 1074  
 Koźle II 983  
 Kraczewice II 975  
 Krajewo Budzyle II 1100  
 Krakow see Cracow  
 Kraków see Cracow  
 Kraków-Azory II 982  
 Kraków-Bronowice II 863, 925–26  
 Kraków-Podbrzezie II 979

- Kraków-Prądnik Biały II 982  
 Kraków-Prądnik Czerwony I 226; II 979, 983  
 Kraków-Prokocim II 985  
 Kraków-Skotniki II 982  
 Krasice I 387  
 Krāsłava II 785  
 Krasne II 796–97  
 Krasnik Lubelski see Kraśnik  
 Krasnobród I 491  
 Krasnystaw I 22, 234, 406, 410; II 676–77, 828, 975, 981, 1069  
 Kraszewo I 416  
 Kraśne II 1001  
 Kraśniczyn I 413; II 981  
 Kraśnik I 286–87, 395, 491; II 675, 719, 722, 733, 975, 1037  
 Krażiai II 960  
 Kremlin I 16  
 Krempna I 406  
 Kretowce I 422; II 1073  
 Krężnica Jara I 30; II 721, 975, 988  
 Kroczyce II 976  
 Krosno I 335, 402; II 664–65, 667–70, 797, 910, 940–41, 982, 986, 989, 1048  
 Krośniewice II 583  
 Króle Duże II 1061  
 Królik Polski II 797  
 Krytowce see Kretowce  
 Krzczonów II 710, 975, 1064  
 Krzemieniec II 821  
 Krzepice I 56  
 Krzesk I 256  
 Krzeszowice I 288, 411; II 942, 980, 985  
 Krzyczki-Pieniążki II 1046  
 Krzyż see Krzyż  
 Krzyż II 824  
 Książenice II 933–35  
 Kubra I 393; II 1062  
 Kukawki II 1064, 1106  
 Kulików II 1073  
 Kuliszki II 804  
 Kundzin II 977, 1001  
 Kurdybań Warkowicki II 1072  
 Kuropatniki II 615, 976  
 Kurozwęki II 983–84  
 Kurów II 708  
 Kurzeniec I 440–41; II 977  
 Kutno I 508; II 583  
 Kutry I 536; II 977  
 L'viv see Lviv  
 La Salette II 986  
 Łaczka see Łączka Zaklikowa  
 Lancut see Łañcut  
 Landowa see Lendowo  
 Landsberg II 935  
 Landwarów I 125, 442; II 804, 977  
 Lapy see Łapy  
 Lask see Łask  
 Laski I 21–22, 155, 187, 389, 406–7, 410–14; II 857, 975, 981, 990  
 Laskowa II 1055  
 Laurów II 982  
 Lawrence, New York II 1132  
 Le-Chambon-sur-Lignon II 1041  
 Lechlin I 38  
 Leczyca see Łeczyca  
 Ledziny see Łędziny  
 Legnica II 918  
 Leitmeritz (Litoměřice) I 495  
 Lelów II 976  
 Lendo Wielkie II 1045  
 Lendowo II 757, 1060  
 Leńce II 1061  
 Leokadia II 1057  
 Leonberg II 934  
 Lesko I 226, 526; II 983  
 Lesno see Leszno  
 Leszczyna II 976  
 Leszno I 104, 208, 315, 371, 375; II 600, 935, 975  
 Leśniczówka I 478, 491  
 Leśniów I 467; II 986  
 Letniki II 1061  
 Leżajsk II 977, 982  
 Łędziny I 41–42  
 Librantowa II 1069  
 Liczkowce II 615–16, 976  
 Lida I 330; II 745–48, 783, 796, 799, 844, 977, 980

- Limanowa I 58, 544; II 976, 996, 1066  
 Linovo see Linowo  
 Linowo I 332  
 Lipinki I 487–88; II 988  
 Lipnica Wielka II 976  
 Lipniki II 976  
 Lipowiec I 135  
 Lipówka II 781–82  
 Lipsko-Polesie II 1047  
 Lisia Góra II 976  
 Lisków I 226; II 983  
 Lisowce II 886  
 Liszki II 1055  
 Litoměřice see Leitmeritz  
 Lobzenica see Łobżenica  
 Lochow see Łochów  
 Łodz see Łódź  
 Lomna see Łomna  
 Lomza see Łomża  
 London I 22, 353–54, 373, 539; II 605, 717, 872, 938, 1065  
 Lowicz see Łowicz  
 Lubaczów II 724–25, 975–76, 980–81  
 Lubartów I 86, 410; II 707, 797  
 Lubasz II 1067  
 Lubatowa II 977  
 Lubcza I 510–11; II 989  
 Lubień I 88, 545  
 Lubień Kujawski I 269  
 Lubieńce II 640  
 Lublin I 16, 18, 21, 30–31, 46, 48, 55, 132, 170, 226, 237, 296, 301, 389, 491–94; II 635, 663, 677, 690, 699, 702, 704–12, 714–18, 721–22, 728, 735, 752, 797–99, 827–28, 831, 833, 841, 857, 866, 869, 873, 891, 897, 900, 906, 947, 949, 951, 964, 975, 980, 982–85, 988, 997, 1004, 1051, 1055, 1060, 1063–64, 1069, 1106, 1134  
 Lubliniec I 42  
 Luboml II 655, 977, 984  
 Luborzyca I 115, 483; II 976  
 Luck see Łuck  
 Ludwipol II 646, 1069, 1072  
 Lukow see Łuków  
 Luszowice I 509–11; II 976  
 Lutocin II 1045  
 Lutomiersk I 43  
 Lutowiska II 977  
 Lutsk see Łuck  
 Lviv (Lwów, L'viv) I 18, 21, 25, 30, 37, 55, 71, 108, 116, 137–38, 159–61, 174, 181–82, 186, 210, 223, 229, 234–35, 241, 252–56, 264–65, 267, 269, 272, 286, 311, 318–19, 338, 340, 353, 388, 393, 395–96, 405–6, 411, 415, 417, 469, 494, 500–1, 504, 506, 509, 512, 517–19, 525, 527–43, 545, 551–53, 558–59; II 576–77, 581, 588–89, 604–5, 610, 613, 618, 627, 629–31, 635–36, 638, 640–44, 655–56, 663, 724–25, 727, 738, 741, 798, 822, 825–27, 830, 833, 840–42, 845, 847, 852, 858, 861–62, 871–74, 878, 882, 890, 896–97, 900–3, 905, 908, 915–17, 922–23, 944–45, 948–50, 976–77, 979–86, 988, 991–92, 997, 1004, 1048, 1050, 1055, 1063, 1073, 1075, 1078, 1118  
 Lvov see Lviv  
 Lwow see Lviv  
 Lwów see Lviv  
 Lwów-Persenkówka II 979  
 Lwów-Zamarstynów II 979  
 Lyon I 353, 522  
 Łabunie II 869–70  
 Łachwa II 1080  
 Łagiewniki I 204, 231  
 Łańcut II 634, 821, 980, 983, 1051, 1069  
 Łapczyca II 976  
 Łapy I 331, 333; II 758–60, 977  
 Łask I 550  
 Łaskarzew II 1057  
 Łaszczów II 644, 982  
 Łążniew I 219, 226; II 986  
 Łączka Zaklikowa I 286  
 Łąka Zaklikowa II 984  
 Łęczna I 491  
 Łęczycza I 43  
 Łęg I 472; II 687

- Łęki Dukielskie II 669  
 Łęki II 704, 1057  
 Łętowice II 910  
 Łęzkowice II 976  
 Łobżenica I 35  
 Łochocin I 85  
 Łochów II 751, 888, 976, 1064, 1105–6, 1111  
 Łojów II 1111  
 Łomianki I 347; II 975  
 Łomna I 234, 265–70; II 981, 990–91  
 Łomża I 20, 29, 123; II 742, 748–49, 752–53, 755–56, 762, 771, 927, 946, 977, 983, 1007, 1062, 1109  
 Łopatyn I 544; II 577, 628–29, 976  
 Łosice I 256; II 700, 702, 799, 976, 1033  
 Łowicz I 242, 287, 325, 331, 333, 379; II 705, 980–81, 1057  
 Łódź I 42–43, 48, 51, 69, 82, 86–87, 91, 95, 105–6, 109–11, 124, 134–35, 157, 194–95, 197, 199, 210, 214, 224, 226, 242, 286, 334, 342, 421, 431, 468, 478, 493, 499, 522, 546, 563; II 576, 585, 617, 653, 661, 663, 665–66, 669, 683, 689–90, 756, 763, 768, 771, 792, 798, 806, 813, 828, 839, 942, 975, 979, 983–84, 986, 1093  
 Łowcza II 724  
 Łuck II 645, 655–56, 658–62, 799, 840, 848, 977, 980, 1071–72  
 Łukowica II 944  
 Łuków I 105–6; II 581–82, 702, 975–76, 1033, 1044, 1108–9  
 Łunin II 796, 977, 997, 1008  
 Łunińsk I 179  
 Łyntupy II 791–92, 977  
  
 Magdeburg I 74  
 Magnuszew II 584, 1045  
 Mainz I 74  
 Majdan Królewski II 977  
 Majdan Nepryski II 1063  
 Majdan Pieniacki II 1076  
 Majdanek I 26, 48, 53, 173, 200–1, 203–5, 207–9, 213–14, 254, 379, 488, 493; II 587–89, 635, 640–41, 657, 715, 722, 725, 767, 930, 1132  
 Majówka I 323  
 Makocice II 683  
 Makoszka II 1060  
 Makowo II 770  
 Maków Mazowiecki I 70; II 976  
 Maków Podhalański I 503; II 976  
 Malechów II 981  
 Maliniak II 846  
 Malinowka see Malinówka  
 Malinówka I 124  
 Maliszewo II 1106  
 Małe II 976  
 Małkinia I 331, 333; II 1098  
 Manasterz II 977  
 Maniów II 976  
 Mariówka I 343; II 689, 748, 983  
 Marki I 385  
 Markowa II 626–27, 976, 988  
 Markowice I 36  
 Marszałki see Marszałki  
 Marszałki I 38  
 Masłowice see Masłowice  
 Masłowice I 42  
 Mateuszówka II 1077  
 Mauthausen I 48, 547; II 678, 854, 954, 1092–93  
 Mchy II 1069  
 Medenice I 487–88  
 Medynia Głogowska II 1069  
 Mejszagoła II 977  
 Melbourne II 903  
 Mełgiew II 714, 980  
 Merseburg I 74  
 Meszajgoła II 1081  
 Mętów II 1060  
 Michaliszki I 125; II 977  
 Michałowice II 684–85, 976  
 Michałówka I 405; II 977, 1005  
 Mickuny II 977, 981  
 Miechowice II 976  
 Miechów I 226, 340, 411, 416, 454–55, 545–46; II 683, 906–7, 976, 983, 1014, 1067  
 Miedzeszyn I 464, 500; II 982, 1085



- Miedzylesie see Międzyzlesie  
 Miedzyrzec see Międzyrzec Podlaski  
 Miedźna II 935  
 Miejsce Piastowe II 664–66, 982, 986  
 Mielec I 66, 226, 340, 508–9; II 982–83, 1066–68, 1096  
 Mieleniszki I 443–44  
 Mienia II 984  
 Miernów II 840  
 Mierzanowo II 1046  
 Mierzwin II 976  
 Miezańce II 1038, 1082  
 Międzyzlesie I 234, 242, 253, 260–61, 264, 390; II 674, 714–15, 854, 897, 980–81, 992  
 Międzyrzec Korecki II 1070  
 Międzyrzec Podlaski I 20, 133, 413; II 577, 697–99, 977, 980, 986, 1100  
 Miękinia II 943  
 Mikołow see Mikołów  
 Mikołów I 42; II 933  
 Mikuláš see Mikulasz  
 Mikulasz (Mikuláš) II 949–50  
 Mikuliczyn II 983  
 Mikulińce II 638–39, 976  
 Milanówek see Milanówek  
 Milanówek I 192, 195–97, 199, 246, 290, 304, 384, 493; II 984, 1065  
 Milejów I 491  
 Milkiewicz II 785  
 Minsk-Mazowiecki see Mińsk Mazowiecki  
 Mińsk I 451  
 Mińsk Mazowiecki I 291–93, 295, 302–3, 316, 492; II 583, 589–90, 703–5, 798, 823, 947, 975, 981, 984, 991–92, 1037, 1057, 1059, 1112  
 Mir II 814–19, 977, 984, 990  
 Mirków II 687  
 Mirzec I 234; II 981  
 Mittelbau-Dora II 926  
 Mizhantz see Miezańce  
 Mława see Mława  
 Młyny see Młyny  
 Mława I 44; II 582, 976, 1065  
 Mława-Wólka II 976  
 Młyniec II 975, 1045  
 Młyny II 934  
 Mników II 920, 922–23, 976, 979  
 Mniszew II 577  
 Modlin I 261, 387; II 740  
 Mogielnica I 381, 540; II 591  
 Mogiła I 340; II 985  
 Mokiny see Małkinia  
 Mokrzyszów see Mokrzyszów  
 Mokrzyszów II 874, 1050  
 Mołodecno see Mołodecno  
 Mołodecno I 130–31; II 977, 1001, 1007  
 Monasterzyska I 482–84; II 623–24, 626, 988  
 Monowice II 933, 1095  
 Mońki II 1061  
 Mordarka I 58  
 Mordy II 1112  
 Morze II 697  
 Moscow I 334; II 646, 848  
 Mostówka II 1106  
 Mosty II 976  
 Moszczenica II 1049  
 Mościce I 504; II 976, 1010  
 Mościska I 548–49; II 983, 986  
 Motejkany II 1081  
 Mroczkowice II 577  
 Mstyczów II 976  
 Mszana Dolna I 234; II 981  
 Mszczonów see Mszczonów  
 Mszczonów I 314; II 688, 975  
 Muławicze II 1052  
 Muniakowice II 1090  
 Munich I 422; II 756  
 Munina II 644  
 Mysłowice I 326  
 Mysłów I 56  
 Mystków I 508  
 Myszków I 346  
 Myślenice I 502; II 904, 976, 1066  
 Myufka see Majówka  
 Nacza II 745, 977  
 Nadvorna see Nadwórna  
 Nadwórna I 557–58; II 976  
 Nagoszyn II 976, 1067

- Nakło see Nakło  
 Nakło I 35  
 Naleczów see Nałęczów  
 Nałiboki I 123; II 977, 998  
 Nałęczów I 333; II 710, 975  
 Narajów II 982  
 Narew II 765, 977  
 Narol II 724, 976  
 Nasielsk II 1046  
 Naujoji Vilnia see Nowa Wilejka  
 Nawaria II 976  
 Nazaret see Nazareth  
 Nazareth (Nazaret) I 155, 161; II 897  
 Nemenčine see Niemenczyn  
 Netreba II 651, 1070–71  
 Netrebe see Netreba  
 New York II 619, 727, 730, 850, 938, 1129  
 Nieborow see Nieborów  
 Nieborów I 234, 242, 380; II 981  
 Niecew I 508  
 Niechcice I 31; II 733  
 Niedzieliska II 839  
 Niedźwiada II 1060, 1068  
 Niedźwiedzica II 977, 1003, 1008  
 Niegardów I 415; II 976  
 Niegów see Niegów-Samaria  
 Niegów-Samaria I 21, 193; II 975, 980  
 Niemenczyn (Nemenčine) I 438; II 801, 806, 834, 977, 1081  
 Niemirów II 890  
 Nienadowa II 981  
 Nienadówka I 226, 232; II 983  
 Niepla II 1048  
 Niepokalanów I 51, 87–90, 163; II 986, 1005  
 Niepołomice see Niepołomice  
 Niepołomice I 115, 518; II 823  
 Niepołomice Wielickie II 924  
 Nierada I 56  
 Nieśwież I 418–19; II 797, 817, 977, 979, 1007–8  
 Niezabitów II 718  
 Nisko II 577, 725, 977  
 Niżniów II 1074  
 North Woodmere, New York II 1132  
 Novy-Dvor see Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki  
 Nowa Góra II 942  
 Nowa Słupia II 976  
 Nowa Wieś I 115; II 1059, 1095  
 Nowa Wilejka (Naujoji Vilnia) I 438; II 815, 977, 1081  
 Nowe Aleksandrowo II 1061  
 Nowe Brzesko II 684, 687, 976  
 Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą I 162; II 689, 976, 980, 983, 985  
 Nowe Troki I 442; II 977  
 Nowinki I 407  
 Nowogrodek see Nowogródek  
 Nowogródek I 134, 448; II 748, 768, 800, 820, 837, 865, 977, 982, 984, 997–98, 1000, 1007, 1011, 1038, 1080  
 Nowolipie I 375  
 Nowolipki I 378–79  
 Noworytas II 943  
 Nowosielce II 738–39, 976–77  
 Nowosiółka Koropiecka II 1077  
 Nowotaniec II 977  
 Nowy Borek II 1049  
 Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki I 388; II 740–41, 975, 977, 1007, 1046  
 Nowy Dwór see Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki  
 Nowy Kawęczyn II 1044  
 Nowy Korczyn II 850  
 Nowy Orzechów II 1062  
 Nowy Sącz I 183, 328, 505–8; II 599, 901, 944, 976, 981, 983, 986, 998, 1005, 1055, 1068–69  
 Nowy Soncz see Nowy Sącz  
 Nowy Targ I 115, 211–12, 328, 407, 501, 503; II 976, 984, 1055  
 Nowy Wiśnicz II 940  
 Nowy Żmigród II 977  
 Nyrków I 27; II 882, 884, 886–87, 984  
 Nysa I 272  
 Obórki II 1072  
 Odrzykoń II 667–69, 977, 1048  
 Ohdruf II 930  
 Ojców I 398; II 618  
 Ojrzanów I 415  
 Okopi see Okopy

- Okopy II 645, 650–53, 986, 989, 1070–71  
 Oksywie I 40  
 Oleksin II 763, 976  
 Olesk II 1069  
 Olesko II 636  
 Olesnica see Oleśnica  
 Olesnik II 857  
 Olesno II 976  
 Oleszyce II 976  
 Oleśnica II 836, 976  
 Olizarów see Elizarów  
 Olkusz I 97, 477, 546; II 976  
 Olszanica II 685  
 Olszanka II 710, 1064  
 Olsztyn I 457; II 739, 865, 868, 976, 982, 1056  
 Ołtarzew see Ożarów Mazowiecki  
 Ołyka II 659, 977  
 Onzadowo see Onżadowo  
 Onżadowo II 804  
 Opatów I 71, 197; II 671  
 Opoczno I 310, 464; II 689, 918, 923, 979, 984, 1056  
 Opoka Duża II 1035  
 Opole (Oppeln) I 263; II 621  
 Opole Lubelskie II 578, 725–26, 975, 1060, 1068  
 Oppeln see Opole  
 Opsa II 786–87  
 Oranienburg II 927  
 Orwidów Dolny II 805–6  
 Oryszew II 1036  
 Orzeszówka II 1105  
 Osieck II 583–84  
 Osieczny II 1066  
 Osiek II 976  
 Osięciny II 975  
 Osiny II 703, 1044  
 Oslo I 112  
 Ossa II 689  
 Ossowo II 744, 1004  
 Ostra II 981  
 Ostra Mogiła II 1075  
 Ostrava I 108  
 Ostrołęka II 946, 977  
 Ostrovek Vengravski see Ostrówek Węgrowski  
 Ostrow Świetokrzyski see Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski  
 Ostrowiec I 345; II 812, 977  
 Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski I 234, 248, 510; II 981, 1100  
 Ostrow-Mazowiecka see Ostrów Mazowiecka  
 Ostrowy Tuszowskie I 518; II 976  
 Ostrożany II 697, 977  
 Ostrów Kielecki I 212  
 Ostrów Lubelski II 1060, 1062  
 Ostrów Mazowiecka I 85; II 1061, 1098  
 Ostrówek I 159, 234; II 981, 1102  
 Ostrówek Węgrowski II 1103  
 Ostryna II 771, 977  
 Ostrzeszow see Ostrzeszów  
 Ostrzeszów I 38–39  
 Osuchow see Osuchów  
 Osuchów I 314  
 Oswiecim see Oświęcim  
 Oszmiana II 771, 804, 844, 982  
 Ośnica II 658–59  
 Oświęcim (Auschwitz) I 47–48, 58, 79, 91–93, 95, 108, 111, 113, 116, 175, 248, 288, 341, 350, 405, 440, 462, 473, 483, 495, 504, 509, 519, 545, 547, 561; II 575, 587, 686, 706, 732, 735, 797, 826, 837, 854, 871–73, 880, 904–5, 926, 931, 933–34, 938–39, 953, 997, 999, 1005, 1010, 1012, 1016, 1054, 1089–93, 1095, 1124–25, 1128, 1132, 1135  
 Ottawa II 1132  
 Otvotsk see Otwock  
 Otwock I 163, 186, 247, 313, 320, 456, 458, 494; II 591–604, 831, 854, 878, 894, 948, 975, 980–1, 984, 986, 988–89, 991, 1035, 1043, 1069  
 Ożarow see Ożarów Mazowiecki  
 Ozierawce II 786  
 Ozorków II 1043  
 Ożarów Mazowiecki (Ołtarzew) I 189–91, 195, 198, 308, 384, 512; II 671–72, 984, 1059

- Pabianice I 43  
 Pacanów II 982  
 Pakėvukai II 960  
 Pakievukai see Pakėvukai  
 Pakoszówka II 1049  
 Palcze II 659  
 Palikrowy II 637  
 Palūšė see Połusze  
 Panevėžys II 746  
 Panowice I 556; II 621–22, 985  
 Pańska Dolina II 1072  
 Paradyż I 545  
 Parankova see Parankowa  
 Parankowa II 962  
 Parczew II 690, 825, 1060, 1069, 1106  
 Paris I 112, 124; II 776, 958  
 Parzymiechy I 56  
 Pelplin I 39  
 Petrółowicze see Pietralewicze  
 Piaseczno I 382, 540; II 983  
 Piaski I 506; II 711–12, 975, 1051, 1055  
 Piaski Wielkie I 99; II 976  
 Piastow see Piastów  
 Piastów I 178–79, 187, 250; II 827, 840, 854–55  
 Piaśnica I 47, 84–85  
 Piekuty Nowe II 751, 753, 756–57, 977, 988  
 Pielasa II 744, 977  
 Pieńki II 734  
 Pietkowo II 760, 977  
 Pietralewicze I 447–48  
 Pietrolesie II 716  
 Pietryłowicze see Pyatrovichy  
 Pietuszki II 786  
 Pilica II 942, 976  
 Pilzno I 486–87; II 921, 976, 985, 989  
 Pilźnionek I 486  
 Pińczów I 218; II 827, 840, 1100  
 Pińczyce I 56  
 Pińsk I 22, 126, 162, 197, 366, 373, 424, 452; II 799, 977, 980, 998, 1000, 1003, 1007–8  
 Pionki I 497; II 672, 1108  
 Piotrków Trybunalski I 107, 188, 226, 545; II 914, 918, 979, 983  
 Pistyń II 976, 981  
 Piszczac II 691–94, 976, 1069  
 Płaszow see Płaszów  
 Plebania II 928, 977, 1001  
 Plesna see Pleśna  
 Pleszew I 36, 107, 110, 231; II 983  
 Pleszewicze II 1008  
 Pleszów II 980  
 Pleśna II 824  
 Płock see Płock  
 Plody see Płudy  
 Płonkowo see Płonkowo  
 Pludy see Płudy  
 Plusy II 785  
 Płaszów I 115, 327, 337–38; II 686, 838, 876, 1090  
 Pławanice II 857  
 Płock I 43, 48, 106, 200; II 798, 949, 976, 1065, 1101  
 Płonkowo I 34  
 Płońsk I 99; II 984  
 Płoskirów I 348  
 Płoszowice II 707  
 Płudy I 234, 236, 238, 242–46, 250, 253, 260–62, 264–65; II 648, 860, 981, 991–92  
 Pniewy I 38  
 Podborze II 977  
 Podbrodzie II 778, 791–94, 977, 1081  
 Podbrzezie II 1081  
 Poddębice I 69  
 Podegrodzie I 507; II 976  
 Podgórze I 115–16  
 Podhajce I 234, 253, 272–73; II 626, 981, 985, 988, 990  
 Podkamień II 637–38, 985  
 Podkowa Leśna I 324; II 861, 975, 1087, 1107  
 Podleszany II 976  
 Podwierzbie II 584, 1045  
 Podzamek I 491  
 Pohost Zahorodny I 126; II 977  
 Pokrzywno II 984  
 Polonezköy II 956–57  
 Polonezkoy see Polonezköy

- Polska Wieś I 36  
 Poltava I 532  
 Połaniec I 509; II 674  
 Połonka I 454  
 Połusze (Palùšë) I 445–46; II 796, 977  
 Pomiechówek I 104  
 Pomorzany II 613, 976  
 Ponary I 426, 435, 441; II 746, 793, 802, 808, 810, 815, 941, 979, 1081  
 Poniatowa II 1054  
 Ponikwa II 976, 1001  
 Poręba II 931–32, 976  
 Poronin I 218, 391; II 1055  
 Porozowo see Porozów  
 Porozów I 131; II 977  
 Porudomino II 800, 977  
 Porzecz II 977, 1003, 1082  
 Posen see Poznań  
 Postawy I 128–29  
 Poświętne II 760, 977  
 Potok Górny II 975, 998  
 Potulice I 36  
 Powidz I 35  
 Powielancy see Powiańce  
 Powiańce II 1082  
 Powisle see Warszawa-Powisłe  
 Powórk I 125; II 977, 1080  
 Powursk see Powórk  
 Poznan see Poznań  
 Poznań (Posen) I 37–39, 48, 51, 86, 88, 95, 138, 199, 240, 403; II 669–70, 847, 860, 877, 935, 975, 984, 1048, 1089  
 Prague I 74, 112; II 935  
 Pravieniškës II 1012  
 Prawiedniki II 831  
 Prądnik Czerwony I 114; II 910, 922  
 Prokocim I 108  
 Proskurov see Płoskirów  
 Proszowa II 976  
 Proszowice I 415, 454; II 683–85, 976, 982, 1034, 1067  
 Proszówki II 983  
 Proushinna see Prużana  
 Prozoroki II 785, 788–89, 1006  
 Pruchnik II 977, 1050  
 Prushkow see Pruszków  
 Pruszkow see Pruszków  
 Pruszków I 21, 111, 158–59, 161, 176–77, 180, 192–95, 205, 219, 222, 235, 313–14, 391, 396, 408, 415–16, 468, 479, 495, 540, 564; II 575, 599, 684, 688, 827, 892, 896, 975, 980, 982, 1086–87  
 Pruszków-Żbików I 176–77, 193–94; II 980, 983  
 Pruzany see Prużana  
 Pruzhana see Prużana  
 Pruzhany see Prużana  
 Prużana I 20, 331, 333–34; II 765, 982, 990  
 Pryszczowa Góra II 712, 975  
 Przasnysz I 44, 206; II 796, 918, 976, 980, 984  
 Przeborz see Przedbórz  
 Przebraże II 1072  
 Przeciszów II 1054  
 Przedbórz I 218, 545; II 976  
 Przemyśl see Przemyśl  
 Przemyśl I 159, 175, 220, 227, 252, 274–76, 278–81, 283–86, 353, 402, 405, 416, 469, 545, 548; II 699, 724, 798–99, 824–25, 858, 876, 882, 916, 918, 922, 977, 979–81, 983, 985–86, 990–92, 1049, 1087  
 Przemyślany I 53, 117; II 630–31, 845, 976  
 Przemyśl-Bakończyce II 979  
 Przemyśl-Błonie II 982  
 Przemyśl-Panewniki II 986  
 Przeradz Mały II 1045  
 Przesmyki II 983  
 Przeworsk I 27, 65, 226; II 737–38, 824, 882, 977, 983–84, 992, 1049  
 Przyborów I 486  
 Przybówka II 1048  
 Przybyszówka II 666, 798  
 Przybyszyce II 1053  
 Przydonica II 976, 1068  
 Przyrów I 411, 463; II 976, 981  
 Przysucha II 689, 983  
 Przytoczno I 216  
 Przytuły I 393; II 977, 982  
 Pstrągowa II 666, 977

- Pszczyna II 931, 933  
 Puławy II 716–17, 726, 906–7, 975, 1046  
 Pułtusk I 70, 80  
 Punia II 961  
 Pustelnik I 234; II 981, 990  
 Pustków I 485, 517, 519  
 Pustomyty II 981  
 Pużniki II 621–25, 976, 981, 988, 992  
 Pyatrovichy (Pietryłowicze) I 451  
 Pysznica II 977, 984  
  
 Raba Wyżna II 976, 1012  
 Rabka I 115, 186, 211–12, 435, 506, 549;  
     II 798, 981–82, 984, 1012  
 Raciborowice II 976  
 Raciechowice II 901  
 Raclawice I 488; II 977  
 Radecznica II 725, 869–70, 981, 985  
 Radgoszcz see Radogoszcz  
 Radogoszcz I 42–43  
 Radom I 80–82, 330, 407; II 672, 685, 688–  
     89, 797, 861, 876, 976, 980, 982, 984  
 Radomsko I 171, 472, 550; II 912, 982  
 Radomyśl nad Sanem I 522–23; II 977  
 Radomyśl Wielki I 511; II 797, 976  
 Radość I 195, 325, 381, 389, 540; II 984  
 Radun see Raduń  
 Raduń II 744, 977, 1082  
 Radymno I 405; II 1005  
 Radzanów II 976  
 Radziechowice I 472; II 976  
 Radziechów II 577, 628–29, 977, 988  
 Radzików II 701, 976, 1062  
 Radziłów I 393–94; II 977  
 Radzymin I 105, 159; II 577–78, 590, 975,  
     1069  
 Radzyń Podlaski II 981  
 Rafałówka II 648  
 Raj II 613  
 Rajca II 748, 984  
 Rakow see Raków  
 Rakowiec II 1078  
 Raków II 812, 843, 977, 981  
 Rakszawa II 977, 1069  
 Raszyn I 186  
  
 Ratoszyn II 1106  
 Ravensbrück I 235, 248, 337; II 873, 893  
 Ravensbruck see Ravensbrück  
 Ravensbrueck see Ravensbrück  
 Rawa Mazowiecka I 68, 330; II 980  
 Rawa Ruska I 137, 544; II 636, 862, 917, 923,  
     979, 986  
 Rawica-Kolonia II 672  
 Rekówka II 675  
 Rembertov see Rembertów  
 Rembertów II 1104  
 Ręčno I 545  
 Rękawka II 900  
 Rękawki see Rękawka  
 Robercin II 981  
 Rodamina see Rudomino  
 Rodatycze II 699, 976, 980  
 Rogalin II 1052  
 Rogoźnica (Gross-Rosen) I 48; II 641, 650,  
     935, 1010  
 Rogów II 976  
 Rohatyn I 556; II 846, 981, 985  
 Rokiciny Podhalańskie II 984  
 Rokietnica II 578  
 Rokitno II 645, 650–53, 975, 1070–71  
 Romanów I 421; II 1057  
 Rome II 936, 955–56  
 Ropa II 1049  
 Ropczyce I 519; II 976  
 Rozalin II 598  
 Rozbity Kamień II 976, 1011  
 Rozdół II 615, 976  
 Rozki see Rożki  
 Roznowo see Różnowo  
 Rozprza II 734  
 Rozwadów I 522; II 577, 626–27, 666, 977  
 Rożki II 828, 1052, 1069  
 Roźniatów II 976  
 Rożyszcze II 627, 653–54, 661, 663, 977,  
     1071  
 Równe II 645, 648–50, 659, 977  
 Róża I 226; II 983  
 Różan nad Narwią I 70  
 Różanówka II 884, 886  
 Różnowo I 38



- Rubieżewicze II 1038  
 Ruczynów see Ruczynów  
 Ruczynów II 830  
 Ruda Śląska II 678  
 Ruda-Huta I 478  
 Rudamina see Rudomino  
 Rudawka I 420  
 Rudka II 1060  
 Rudki I 469; II 977  
 Rudna II 977  
 Rudnik I 395  
 Rudomino II 799, 844–45  
 Rukojnie II 799, 977, 989  
 Runów I 221; II 1068  
 Ruszcza I 399; II 976  
 Rutki I 389; II 977  
 Rybnik I 42; II 679, 934, 976, 1054  
 Ryglice II 1067  
 Ryki II 718–20, 976, 1035, 1045  
 Rykociny Podhalańskie II 1012  
 Ryków I 537  
 Rymacze II 977  
 Rymanów I 335; II 664–66, 910, 977, 979, 989  
 Rymanów Zdrój II 982  
 Rytwiany I 289; II 840, 976, 1051  
 Rzadkwin I 34  
 Rząska II 921–22, 979  
 Rzeczyca Okrągła II 1048  
 Rzepiennik Strzyżewski II 1049  
 Rzepińce I 226; II 982  
 Rzesza II 780  
 Rzeszów I 65, 137, 226–27, 232, 353, 514, 518, 520; II 631, 699, 797–98, 823–24, 868, 874, 977, 980, 982, 988, 1049, 1069  
 Rzędowice I 415  
 Rzgów I 96  
 Rzychki II 636, 976  
  
 Sachsenhausen I 48, 455; II 927, 1010  
 Sadłów II 1045  
 Sadowne II 888, 890, 1101  
 Sadurki II 710  
 Sakiškes see Sakiszki  
 Sakiszki (Sakiškes) I 437–38; II 982  
 Saldutiškis see Syługudyszki  
 Samaria see Niegów-Samaria  
 Sambor I 234–35, 270–72, 469, 490, 544–45; II 916, 923, 948, 977, 979, 981, 1074  
 Sandomierz I 47, 71–72, 184, 289, 343–46, 522–25; II 670–72, 796, 827, 871–72, 874, 976, 983, 1052, 1056, 1112  
 Sanok I 111, 405, 483–84, 490–91; II 865, 868, 977, 982, 986, 988, 1049  
 Sarnaki II 799  
 Sarny II 653, 822, 977, 1071–72  
 Sasów II 636, 1080  
 Sawin II 975  
 Sądowa Wisznia II 878, 981, 986, 992  
 Schirmeck I 531  
 Serock II 1064  
 Sewerynow see Sewerynów  
 Sewerynów I 355  
 Sękocin I 186  
 Šiauliai II 959–60  
 Siedlce I 20–21, 162–64, 166–67, 187, 310, 416; II 581, 701, 703–4, 718, 720, 799, 919–20, 922–23, 945, 976, 979–80, 984, 990, 1057–58, 1108  
 Siedlecza II 1069  
 Siedliska II 711, 1014  
 Siedliska-Bogusz I 518–19  
 Siedlisko II 647–48  
 Siedliszcze II 577, 975  
 Siedliszczki II 711  
 Siemianówka I 543; II 976  
 Siemiatycze II 697, 849, 989, 1103  
 Siemiątkowo II 1045  
 Sieniawa II 738, 977  
 Sieradz I 195, 550; II 984  
 Sierakowice I 40  
 Siercza II 897, 899, 984  
 Sierpc II 649, 1045  
 Sieški II 759  
 Sikórz II 1065  
 Sitnik I 162, 166–67; II 980  
 Skała Podolska I 226; II 631, 983, 1076  
 Skałat II 644–45, 797, 887, 982, 1075  
 Skałbia I 486

- Skarżysko-Kamienna see Skarżysko-Kamien-  
na  
Skarżysko-Kamienna I 47, 205, 217, 290;  
II 840, 918–19, 922–23, 937, 976, 979,  
982, 990, 992  
Skawina I 158  
Skierniewice I 192, 544, 548; II 975, 1035,  
1043–44, 1069  
Skole II 615, 699, 980  
Skolimov see Skolimów  
Skolimów II 866, 891, 983  
Skołyszyn I 518; II 847, 977, 1048  
Skorzec see Skórzec  
Skórzec I 162, 164–66; II 976, 980, 990  
Skrzelew II 1037  
Słaboszewo see Słaboszewo  
Sliwice see Śliwice  
Słupno see Słupno  
Słaboszewo I 34  
Sławęcin I 405; II 977  
Słobódka II 785, 977  
Słomczyn II 687, 975  
Słonim I 136, 138, 446–50; II 746, 977, 983,  
986, 988, 995, 998, 1002, 1011  
Słowikowa II 1069  
Słupia II 1053  
Słupno I 43  
Smorgonie II 806  
Smoryń II 712, 1058  
Smyga II 660  
Snodovich see Snowidowicze  
Snowidowicze II 1070–71  
Sobibor see Sobibór  
Sobibór II 869, 1061, 1064, 1098–99, 1122,  
1132, 1135  
Sobienie-Jeziory II 1106  
Sobieska Wola I 833  
Sobieszyn II 718–20, 976  
Sobole II 1057  
Sochaczew I 51, 87, 499–500; II 688, 940,  
986, 1059  
Sokal II 643–44, 976, 982, 1057  
Sokoloff see Sokołów  
Sokoły see Sokoły  
Sokołów I 232  
Sokołów Małopolski II 1069  
Sokołów Podlaski II 699, 751, 795, 965, 976,  
980, 1011, 1052, 1060, 1098, 1107  
Sokołówka I 553  
Sokoły I 331, 333, 394; II 757, 760–61, 977,  
1060  
Soldau see Działdowo  
Solec Stary II 1037  
Soleczniki Wielkie II 1008  
Soły II 794  
Soplicowo I 234; II 981  
Sosnica see Sośnica  
Sosnowiec I 287–88; II 678–79, 806, 837,  
976, 980, 991, 1054  
Sośnica I 35  
Sośninka II 1057  
Sowina II 1048  
Srem see Śrem  
Sroczek Węgrowski II 1106, 1110  
Srodula see Środula  
Sromowce Wyżne II 922  
St.-Vincent-de-Paul II 958  
Stakliškės see Stokliszki  
Stalowa Wola I 395, 479, 522; II 577, 823,  
984, 1047  
Staniatki see Staniątki  
Staniątki I 272, 417–18; II 876–77, 979, 981  
Stanisławow see Stanisławów  
Stanisławów I 21, 292, 353, 456, 510, 536,  
538, 554–57; II 624, 639–40, 821, 825,  
841, 846, 899, 901, 916–17, 923, 976–  
77, 979, 984, 989, 1001, 1004, 1039–40  
Stanisłówka II 1074  
Stańkowa I 400  
Stara Chuta II 1070  
Stara Miranka II 819  
Stara Wieś I 27, 64, 110, 162, 219, 226–33,  
237, 303, 386, 388–89, 404, 454, 462,  
512; II 631, 716, 858, 983, 986, 990–92  
Stara Wilejka I 441  
Starachowice II 981  
Starawieś I 156–58; II 984  
Staromieście I 227; II 983  
Staroniwa II 977  
Stary Korczyn I 341

- Stary Lubotyń II 977  
 Stary Sambor I 530; II 833  
 Stary Sącz I 505–6; II 980  
 Stary Żmigród II 977  
 Staszow see Staszów  
 Staszów I 289; II 674, 839–40, 983–84, 1037, 1050–51  
 Stawiski II 977  
 Stayatishok see Stojaciszki  
 Steibitz II 814, 817  
 Stepań II 647–48  
 Sterdyń II 699, 976, 980  
 Stoczek II 1102  
 Stoczek Łukowski II 703, 1047  
 Stoczek Węgrowski II 976  
 Stojaciszki I 129  
 Stojańce II 977  
 Stokliszki (Stakliškės) II 963  
 Stolin I 452; II 577, 977, 988  
 Stołowicze I 424; II 977  
 Stołpce II 814, 817, 997, 1082  
 Stopnica II 984  
 Straków II 660  
 Stredyń II 1060  
 Stróża I 395; II 1066  
 Struga I 246; II 986  
 Stryj I 229–30; II 610, 615, 640, 699, 841, 976, 980, 982, 984  
 Strzyżewice II 1058  
 Strzyżów I 480; II 665–66, 977, 982  
 Studzieniczna I 135  
 Stuthof see Stutthof  
 Stuttgart II 934  
 Stutthof I 39, 48, 446; II 930–31, 941, 1000, 1012, 1090  
 Stydyń II 648  
 Subaćius II 746  
 Suchary I 36  
 Suchedniow see Suchedniów  
 Suchedniów I 290; II 982, 990, 992  
 Suchowola II 977  
 Sulejówek see Sulejówek  
 Sulejów I 545; II 914, 922, 979  
 Sulejówek II 861  
 Sulisławice I 29  
 Sułkowice II 976  
 Supraśl I 224; II 984, 986  
 Suraż II 828, 977  
 Švenčionėliai (Švenčionėliai or Nowe Święciany) I 129  
 Švenčionys see Świeściany  
 Svir I 130  
 Swider see Świder  
 Swietchlowice see Świętochłowice  
 Swislocz see Świsłocz  
 Swojczów II 657, 977, 1072  
 Sydonówka II 633  
 Syługudyszki (Saldutiškis) I 438  
 Synowódzko Wyżne II 610  
 Szamotuły I 110  
 Szańków II 700  
 Szarkowszczyzna I 123; II 977  
 Szarwark II 976  
 Szczaki Złotokłos see Szczaki Złotokłos  
 Szczaki Złotokłos I 314  
 Szczawnica I 327–29; II 922, 976, 984, 992, 1059  
 Szczawnica Zdroj see Szczawnica  
 Szczaworyż II 976  
 Szczecbrzeszyn I 20, 77–78; II 670, 797, 975  
 Szczepanowo I 34  
 Szczęśniówka I 203  
 Szczucin I 20, 59, 66, 346; II 850, 976, 1112  
 Szczuczyn II 771  
 Szczurowice II 628–29, 977, 988  
 Szczurzyn II 645  
 Szemelki II 785  
 Szepietowo II 752–54  
 Szereszów II 977  
 Szerzyny I 549  
 Szlachecka II 975  
 Szańkówce II 982  
 Szańkówczyki II 982  
 Szojadel [?] I 296  
 Szreniawa II 902  
 Szreńsk II 1065  
 Szumbar II 646, 977  
 Szumowo II 977, 1002  
 Szumsk II 1070  
 Szydłowiec see Szydłowiec

- Szydłowiec I 288  
 Szymankowo I 56  
 Szymanowo I 191  
 Szymanów I 176, 183, 187–91, 492; II 975, 983, 1059  
 Szynwałd I 227; II 983
- Śliwice I 39  
 Śliwna II 1011  
 Śliwowo II 761  
 Śniatyn II 643, 916, 923, 979  
 Śniatyń see Śniatyn  
 Śrem I 38  
 Środa II 837  
 Świaniry II 976  
 Świątniki Górne I 381  
 Świder I 162–63; II 591, 595–98, 600, 889–90, 947, 980  
 Święcany I 549; II 976–77  
 Święciany (Švenčionys) I 124, 128–29, 430, 444–45; II 791–92, 846–47  
 Święta Anna II 981  
 Święte Jezioro II 1069  
 Świętochłowice I 41; II 983  
 Świętomarz I 478; II 976  
 Święty Stanisław I 555–56  
 Świnarzyn II 1072  
 Świniarów II 700  
 Świńska Wola II 736  
 Świr II 802  
 Świrz II 630, 977  
 Świsłocz I 132; II 977
- Tapin I 227; II 983  
 Tarłów II 1056  
 Tarnawica Polna II 976, 985  
 Tarnobrzeg I 525; II 833, 871–75, 951, 975, 1050  
 Tarnogóra II 678  
 Tarnopol I 83–84, 227, 229, 421–22; II 605, 607–9, 611–18, 620, 626, 628–32, 636, 638, 644, 821, 829, 845, 882, 915–16, 922–23, 976–77, 979, 983, 986, 1073, 1079  
 Tarnow see Tarnów
- Tarnowskie Gory see Tarnowskie Góry  
 Tarnowskie Góry I 42  
 Tarnów I 65, 78, 227, 285, 290, 346, 355, 404, 483, 487, 504–5, 509, 511–13, 515, 517–20; II 685, 706, 797, 821, 824, 826, 897, 900–1, 910, 914, 922–23, 976, 979, 982–84, 986, 1010, 1067, 1087
- Tartak I 323  
 Tarzymiechy II 1046  
 Tczów II 672–73, 976  
 Tel Aviv I 531; II 909  
 Telšiai see Telsze  
 Telsze (Telšiai) II 960–61, 963  
 Teresin II 1062  
 Tłuste see Tłuste  
 Tłumacz I 554–55; II 623, 976, 985, 989, 1003, 1074, 1078  
 Tłuste I 125, 234; II 885–87, 977, 981, 1111  
 Tłuszcz I 352  
 Tołwin I 346; II 849  
 Tomaszów Lubelski I 136–37; II 723–24, 797, 975, 982, 1063  
 Topczewo II 759, 977  
 Toplin I 476  
 Toronto I 422, 455, 463; II 1016, 1127, 1133  
 Torun see Toruń  
 Toruń I 40; II 591, 595, 825  
 Trawniki II 707  
 Treblinka I 20, 84, 150–51, 165, 180, 198, 247, 292, 308, 341, 350, 408, 493, 499, 563; II 579–80, 588–89, 666, 699, 703, 715, 726, 742, 750–52, 756, 758, 761, 764, 768, 806, 823, 825, 828, 837, 849, 856, 867, 1064, 1098–99, 1100–12, 1122, 1132, 1135  
 Trembowla II 608, 616–17, 977, 1037  
 Tresteniec II 1071  
 Trinec see Trzyniec  
 Trokiele II 977  
 Tropie II 976  
 Trościaniec Wielki II 977  
 Trójca II 671, 976, 989  
 Trylisica II 645, 977  
 Trzaczaniec Mały II 1106  
 Trzcieniec I 549; II 977

- Trzcinica II 977  
 Trzebień II 1045  
 Trzemeszno I 35  
 Trześnia II 977  
 Trześniów II 977  
 Trzęsiny II 712, 975, 1058  
 Trzęsówka I 515–17; II 982  
 Trzyniec (Trinec) I 41  
 Tuchow see Tuchów  
 Tuchów I 519; II 965, 986  
 Tuczyn II 663  
 Tumacz II 903  
 Turgiele II 812, 977, 1010  
 Turka I 234, 265, 267, 269, 554; II 663, 977, 981  
 Turkowice I 143, 227–31, 237, 301–3, 386; II 975, 983, 986, 990–92  
 Turmont II 787  
 Turobin II 975  
 Tustogłowy II 611  
 Tver (Kalinin) I 122  
 Tworki I 180  
 Tworkowa I 486  
 Tyczyn II 797  
 Tykocin II 769–70, 977  
 Tyniec I 340; II 985  
 Tyśmiennica II 1060  
  
**U**  
 Ubiad II 1068  
 Ugoszcz II 750, 976  
 Uherce I 526  
 Uhnów I 544; II 976  
 Ujazdy II 983  
 Ujście Jezuickie I 511  
 Ulanów II 577, 977, 1053  
 Ulanówek I 234, 261  
 Ułaskowce II 884, 1078  
 Ułęż Górny II 720  
 Umiałstów II 782–83  
 Urbany II 785, 977  
 Urwiedź I 423  
 Urzejowice II 737, 977, 1049  
 Urzędów I 258; II 722, 975  
 Ustrzyki Dolne II 977  
 Uściąg II 655–56, 977  
 Užventis II 959–60  
  
**V**  
 Vác II 954–55  
 Vac see Vác  
 Vaiguva II 960  
 Vandziogala see Wędziagoła  
 Vatican I 33, 353  
 Verdun I 74  
 Vetrino II 848  
 Vichy II 1041, 1126  
 Vienna II 773, 825  
 Vilna see Vilnius  
 Vilnius (Wilno) I 17–18, 20–21, 27, 123–25, 134, 137, 162, 195, 206–7, 235, 290, 327, 424–27, 429–43, 450; II 728, 744–45, 747, 771–74, 776–84, 787, 792–93, 799–810, 812–13, 815, 820, 822, 829, 834, 836, 838, 843–44, 846, 848, 865, 930–31, 941, 948, 952, 977, 979–82, 984, 986, 988–92, 1000, 1002, 1004, 1006, 1008, 1010, 1012, 1080–81, 1098  
 Vilnius Colony (Kolonja Wileńska) I 124, 357, 425–26, 428–31; II 807, 977, 981, 990–92  
 Vittel I 184  
 Vogrow see Węgrów  
 Volodymr-Volynskiy see Włodzimierz Wołyński  
 Voronezh II 750  
 Voughan, Ontario II 1132  
  
**W**  
 Wadowice Górne II 976  
 Wadowice I 235, 503, 507; II 797, 936, 976  
 Wadowice Solne II 976  
 Walendów I 204; II 982  
 Wałbrzych I 508  
 Wałcz II 941  
 Waniewo II 760, 977  
 Wannsee II 1136  
 Warka II 577, 674  
 Warsaw (Warszawa) I 16–17, 19, 21–22, 27, 40, 51–52, 56, 58–70, 84, 90, 98–99, 103, 105, 107, 112–13, 124, 134, 142–44, 151, 153–65, 168–78, 181–99, 215–16, 218–20, 222–24, 226, 230–31, 233–35, 237–46, 250, 252, 254–57, 259, 260–67,

- 269, 288–91, 298, 300–12, 315–18, 321, 323–26, 328–30, 333, 335, 342, 347, 350, 356–57, 360, 365, 371, 374, 381–85, 389, 391–92, 397, 399, 401, 406–9, 411–18, 424, 427–30, 434, 450, 456–58, 462–65, 468–70, 479, 492–97, 499–500, 502, 505–7, 529, 538–41, 544, 547–48, 550–51, 562–66; II 575–76, 578–605, 628, 639–40, 648–49, 660, 664–66, 674, 676, 679–85, 687–89, 696–97, 702–5, 710–11, 714–18, 720, 722–23, 725, 727, 734–36, 740–41, 750–52, 754, 756, 758, 773, 776, 798–99, 804, 806, 821, 823–31, 836–37, 839, 844, 846, 852–62, 864–66, 868, 872–73, 878–81, 888–90, 892–93, 895–99, 901–4, 906–7, 909, 913, 919–20, 927, 930, 936, 941, 943–44, 947–49, 964–65, 975, 979–86, 988–93, 999–1000, 1009, 1011–13, 1015, 1027, 1030–31, 1033–38, 1043–46, 1053–55, 1057–58, 1064–65, 1068, 1082–86, 1096–98, 1101–4, 1107–11, 1118, 1133–35, 1138
- Warszawa see Warsaw
- Warszawa-Bielany I 164, 264, 390–91, 407, 456, 467; II 701
- Warszawa-Bródno I 463
- Warszawa-Czerniaków I 387, 396
- Warszawa-Grochów I 160, 203–4, 261; II 581, 982
- Warszawa-Marymont I 564
- Warszawa-Mokotów I 287, 394
- Warszawa-Muranów I 319
- Warszawa-Ochota I 317
- Warszawa-Okęcie I 415
- Warszawa-Powisłe I 19, 382
- Warszawa-Praga I 54, 142, 160, 200–1, 213, 247, 260, 311, 378, 383–84, 500; II 580, 593–95, 1116
- Warszawa-Rembertów II 586
- Warszawa-Saska Kępa I 261
- Warszawa-Tarchomin I 387
- Warszawa-Wawer I 173; II 879–81, 991
- Warszawa-Wesoła I 264
- Warszawa-Włochy I 309, 395, 470; II 587–88
- Warszawa-Wola I 310, 313, 320, 382
- Warszawa-Żoliborz I 304, 407, 500, 566, 598–99
- Wartheland I 51, 109
- Warzyce II 977
- Wasilków II 926, 977
- Wawrzeńczyce I 115; II 683–85, 976, 988
- Wąchock II 796
- Wąwolnica II 717–18, 975, 988
- Wegelina see Wiegolino
- Wegrocia [?] I 269
- Weimar II 926
- Wejherowo II 984
- Wełnianka II 977
- Werbkowice I 229
- Werenowo II 744, 773, 844, 977
- Werenów see Werenowo
- Werki II 982, 984
- Wesoła II 977
- Wędziagoła (Vandziogala) II 962
- Węgrów I 156, 158; II 750, 976, 984, 1104, 1108
- Węsławienięta II 977
- Wianiszki II 1081
- Wiązowna II 1036
- Wicyń I 561; II 977
- Widawa II 981
- Widze I 443–44; II 977, 1002
- Wiegolino II 834
- Wielącza II 839
- Wielgie Ogrodniki II 1102
- Wieliczka II 726, 876, 897, 981, 984, 1059
- Wielka II 977
- Wielka Wieś II 578
- Wielki Las II 1057
- Wielkie II 976
- Wielkie Lendo II 1035
- Wielkie Oczy II 797
- Wielkie Soleczniki II 782
- Wielopole Skrzyńskie II 982
- Wielowieś II 977
- Wieluń I 51, 287, 471, 474–76, 497, 546; II 932, 979



- Wierszuliszki II 808  
Wierzbnik I 323–24; II 1056  
Wiesielub II 1038  
Wietrzychowice I 511  
Więckowice II 1050  
Wijewo II 935, 992  
Wilejka I 130, 440; II 790, 977, 1001, 1007–8  
Wilga I 151  
Wilkołaz I 491  
Wilno see Vilnius  
Winna-Chroły II 1110  
Winnica I 387  
Winniki II 822  
Winogród see Dżwinogród  
Wirów I 227; II 983  
Wiskitki II 1036–37  
Wisniowiec see Wiśniowiec  
Wiszenki II 654, 977  
Wiszniew I 330; II 837–38, 977, 980, 1008  
Wiśniew I 387; II 704  
Wiśniowa I 481  
Wiśniowiec II 821  
Witoldów II 1064  
Wizna II 798, 977  
Włocławek see Włocławek  
Włodzimierz Wołyński see Włodzimierz Wo-  
łyński  
Władysławówka II 657, 1072  
Włochy II 975  
Włocławek I 37, 44–45, 48, 85, 137, 352, 412;  
II 975, 984  
Włodawa II 690, 976  
Włodzimierz Wołyński II 655–57, 840–41,  
977, 984, 1072  
Włodzimierzec I 136; II 645–46, 798, 977  
Włodzimierzów II 983  
Włoszczowa II 989  
Wodziów II 1072  
Wohyń II 1112  
Wojakowa I 400; II 976, 1033  
Wojciechowo I 451  
Wojciechówka II 1077  
Wojcieszków II 862  
Wojcin see Wójcin  
Wojnarowa I 508  
Wojśławice II 798, 1064  
Wojstom I 442; II 977  
Wola Bobrowska II 1067  
Wola Gołkowska I 234, 242; II 981  
Wola Justowska II 980  
Wola Przemykowska I 511  
Wola Przybysławska II 1051  
Wola Rzeczycka I 522, 524; II 977, 1047  
Wola Rzędzińska I 227, 512–13; II 976, 983  
Wola Zgłobieńska II 824  
Wolbrom I 546; II 976, 984, 1066  
Wólka Czarnińska see Wólka Czarnińska  
Wólka Czarniejowska see Wólka Czarnińska  
Wolomin see Wołomin  
Woł II 981  
Wołkołata II 789, 977, 1005  
Wołkowysk I 131, 235; II 977  
Wołków II 630  
Wołomin I 195, 203; II 583, 752, 919, 922–  
23, 953, 975, 979, 984, 1068, 1100,  
1107–9  
Wołosów I 557; II 976  
Wołowysk II 1012  
Wołożyn I 330; II 812, 977, 980, 1008  
Worniany I 123; II 802–4, 812, 977, 988  
Woronów see Werenowo  
Woronówka II 1069, 1072  
Wozniki see Woźniki  
Woźniki I 41; II 1054  
Wójcin I 475  
Wólka Czarnińska I 292, 295  
Wólka Kańska II 722, 975  
Wólka Kotowska II 1072  
Wrocław I 544; II 608, 626, 917, 964, 1045  
Wronki I 38  
Wronów II 710  
Wrząsowice I 340  
Wrzesnia see Września  
Września I 35  
Wrzosowo I 191  
Wrzosów I 176, 187, 190–93  
Wrzosów-Buraków II 983  
Wsielub II 800, 1000, 1008  
Wyciąże I 399; II 1055  
Wyczółki I 417; II 700, 1036, 1106

- Wygoda II 705  
 Wyrka II 647–48, 977  
 Wysoka Głogowska II 982  
 Wysoka II 982  
 Wysoka Strzyżowska II 982  
 Wysokie Litewskie II 765  
 Wysokie Mazowieckie II 751, 756, 760–62, 988  
 Wyszary II 979  
 Wyszaków I 193; II 980, 1052  
  
 Zabłocie II 982  
 Zabłotów II 617  
 Zabojski II 1073  
 Zaborów I 416; II 975, 1037  
 Zabrze II 686  
 Zadoroże II 789, 977  
 Zadroże II 976  
 Zagórów I 96–97  
 Zagórze I 325–26  
 Zagradniki see Zagrodniki  
 Zagrodniki II 1103  
 Zahorie see Zahorze  
 Zahorze II 1080  
 Zajączków I 345  
 Zaklikowa see Zaklików  
 Zaklików I 287  
 Zakopane I 151, 158, 186, 195, 198, 211, 218, 307, 323–24, 391, 407–8, 410; II 901, 905, 937, 949, 976, 981–82, 984, 1055  
 Zakopane-Jaszczurówka I 410  
 Zakroczym II 975  
 Zakrzówek II 719, 733, 1037  
 Zalesie Górne I 382–83; II 975  
 Zalesie II 623, 649, 857  
 Zaleszczyki I 234; II 640, 643, 797, 882, 885, 887, 977, 981, 984, 1078  
 Założce II 618–19, 977  
 Zamarstynów II 922, 997  
 Zambrów I 389; II 749, 752, 1002, 1100, 1109  
 Zamosc see Zamość  
 Zamość I 158, 173, 214–16; II 677–78, 725, 839, 866, 869–70, 947, 981–82, 985, 991, 1046–47, 1069, 1083  
  
 Zaręby Kościelne I 189  
 Zarzecze II 977  
 Zasanie I 279, 282  
 Zaszków II 635  
 Zatrocze I 442  
 Zaturne II 1071  
 Zawichost II 671–72, 989  
 Zawiercie I 473; II 599, 976  
 Zawłocze II 1069  
 Zazule II 981  
 Ząbkowice Będzińskie II 932  
 Zbaraż I 27, 421–22; II 981, 985, 1073  
 Zborów I 561; II 608–11, 618, 977, 983, 988, 1074  
 Zdołbunów II 1071  
 Zduńska Wola I 100; II 981  
 Zdziebórz II 1052  
 Zdzięcioł II 798, 977  
 Zebrzydowice I 507; II 984  
 Zelechow see Żelechów  
 Zeniow see Żeniów  
 Zgierz I 342; II 1043  
 Zgoda II 983  
 Zielonka II 598, 981–82  
 Zielonki II 680, 976, 982  
 Zimna Woda I 210, 252, 551–53; II 627, 976  
 Zimnowoda I 56  
 Zimodry I 440–41  
 Ziniówka see Żeniówka  
 Złoczew I 497  
 Złoczów I 537, 558–61; II 609–10, 636, 948, 977, 981, 1076, 1078–80  
 Złotokłos II 1053  
 Znin see Żnin  
 Zochcin I 72  
 Zochcinek I 71  
 Zolkiew see Żółkiew  
 Zosin II 657  
 Zosinek I 234  
 Zrębice I 56  
 Zwierzyniec I 440; II 670, 823, 1059  
 Zwolen II 1056  
 Zyglin see Żyglin  
 Zygmunt II 1057  
 Zymodry see Zimodry

- Żabianka II 721  
 Żabno II 1051  
 Żarki I 467; II 986  
 Żarnów I 545  
 Żbików I 111; II 575  
 Żelazna I 69  
 Żelechów I 66, 85, 150, 209; II 584, 976,  
     1044, 1057, 1108  
 Żeliszew Duży II 704  
 Żeliszew Podkościelny II 703, 976, 1057  
 Żeniów II 1076  
 Żeniówka II 1072  
 Żnin I 35  
 Żochy II 1106  
 Żodziszki II 806  
 Żołyńa II 983  
 Żółkiew I 20, 136, 544; II 798, 944, 976, 981,  
     1074  
 Żółkiewka II 828, 975, 1051–52, 1063  
 Żułów I 22, 406, 410, 412–13; II 975, 981  
 Żuromin II 1045  
 Żurów II 981  
 Żwirówka II 1059  
 Życzyn I 213–14; II 922–23, 976, 979  
 Żydaczów II 833  
 Żyglin I 42  
 Żyrardów I 192; II 688, 699, 1036, 1044  
 Żyrowice I 446–49; II 998  
 Żyrzyn II 717, 975  
 Żytyń II 977  
 Żytyń Wielki II 650, 659  
 Żywiec II 815  
 Żyznomierz II 621

This work of painstaking scholarship is a major contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century, to modern Polish history, and to Holocaust studies. It is also inspiring reading, as the book bears witness to immense human courage, spiritually inspired, under the most draconian of circumstances.

*George Weigel*

*Distinguished Senior Fellow and William E. Simon Chair in Catholic Studies  
Ethics and Public Policy Center*

All nations on earth consist of the good, the bad and the indifferent, and Ryszard Tyndorf's voluminous volume amply demonstrates the truth of this assertion in regard to the Nazi-occupied parts of wartime Poland. Through exhaustive documentation, Tyndorf paints a convincing picture of self-denying compassion, which counteracts the widespread promotion of exclusively negative stereotypes, and helps to build, as is necessary, a multifaceted panorama of historical reality.

*Norman Davies*

*Honorary Fellow, St. Antony's College  
University of Oxford*

