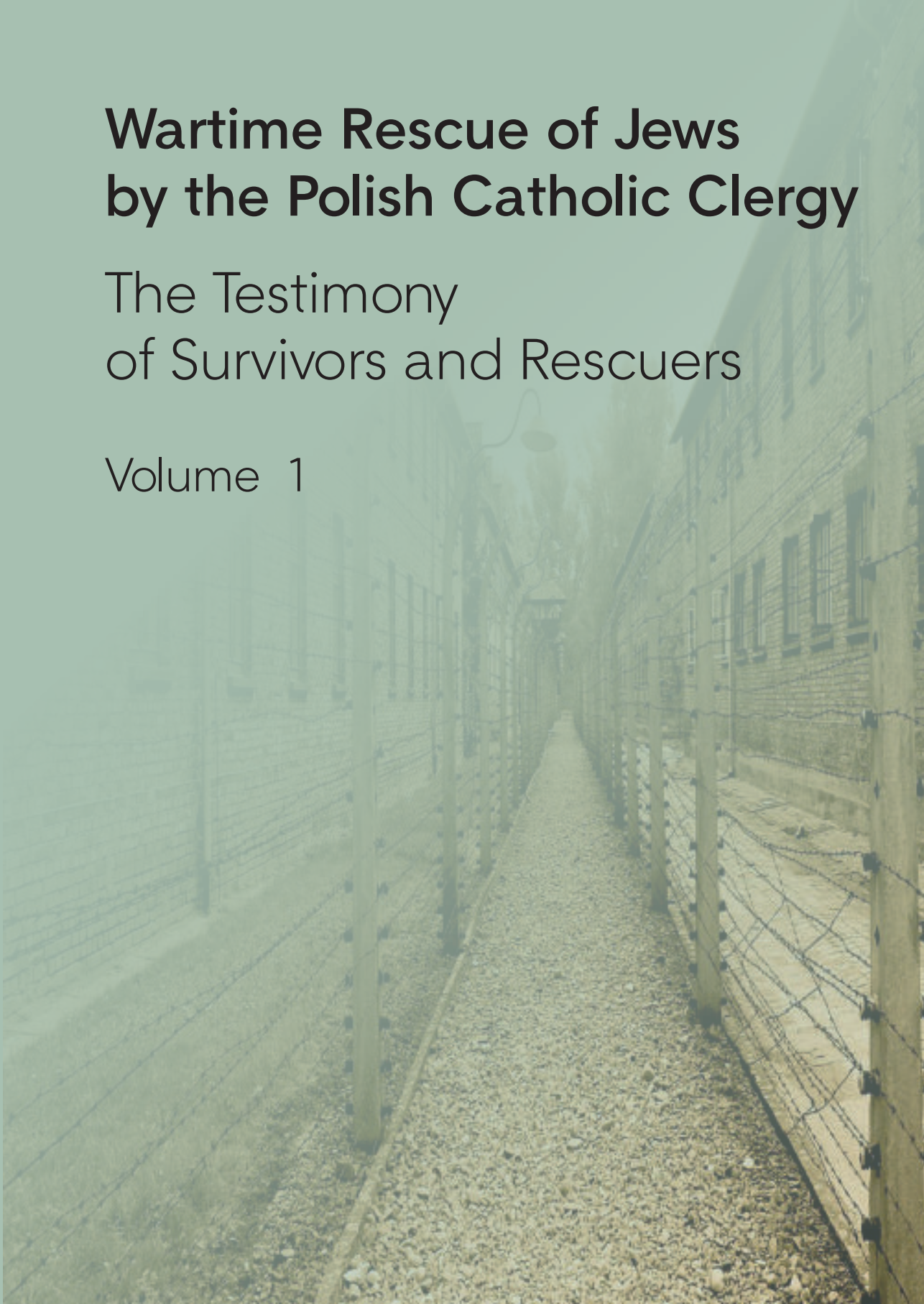


# Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy

The Testimony  
of Survivors and Rescuers

Volume 1



**Wartime Rescue of Jews  
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 1

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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*



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# 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 Internet: <a href="https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en">https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en</a>
RD	The Righteous Among the Nations Database, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem Internet: <a href="https://righteous.yadvashem.org">https://righteous.yadvashem.org</a>
SFV	Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Los Angeles 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 Internet: <a href="https://documents.yadvashem.org/">https://documents.yadvashem.org/</a>



# Maps

Map I. 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 (*Niepokalanki*) 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 Lwow [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, (Lwow 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.

<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 Stokauskas] 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, Tuwie 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 Marcei 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.

<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

<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 Ciechanowiec, 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

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 Krasieńskich: 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

<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 Inowroclaw [Inowrocław].

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

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POLISHRELIGIOUS\_MARTYROLOGY\_main\_01.htm; Jerzy Klistała, *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 Stepczynski [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 Dobrzynski [Antoni Dobrzyński], curate at Żnin [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 Górką 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 [Bałbin] were closed. The Salesians lost their High School, College, and Boarding-School at Ostrzeszów [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 Poznan, 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 Ostrzeszow [Ostrzeszów]; the Sisters of the Resurrection have closed a renowned school for domestics at Poznan.

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 Torun [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] Kukła, parish priest of Konczyce [Kończyce] Wielkie, died in prison in consequence of the atrocious treatment which he suffered. [Fr. Kukła 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 [Gieraltowice]. [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 Swietchlowice [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 [Lędziny], 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. Galuszka [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 Mikolow [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 [Radogoszcz], 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 Ciechanow [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 noviciate at Czerwinski [Czerwińsk] and from their school of arts and crafts at Jaciązek [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 Lad [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 Lad. 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 Lad [Ląd] 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.

**T**he 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>

**A**ccording 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>

**A**lthough this history is not widely 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>

**H**istorian 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 Kloczowski, *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-Ławowicz, *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, Heuner 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 Heuner 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.

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<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) Świrski, 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 Świrska, 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 Świrska. 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

<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 Marceli Ryszard Gęśła 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

<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 Poddębice 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 Koziernice, 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

<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 Koziernice Organization, 1985), 546, translated as *The Book of Koziernice: The Birth and the Destruction of a Jewish Community*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/koziernice/Koziernice.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\\_koziernice,11922,zdjecie.html](http://www.foto.karta.org.pl/nasze-zbiory/kolekcje/ok_0782_berneman_chaim_koziernice,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

<sup>90</sup> Testimony of Sister Joanna (Halina) Lossow in Jan Żaryn and Tomasz Sudoł, eds., *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Historie niezwykłe* (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>

<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>

**D**uring 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

<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 Bieżyńska-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

<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., *Khurban 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 Węgiński.

<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–Dabrowa Bialostocka: 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 Szczebrzeszyn 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.

<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 Opiekuńczy) in Szczepieszyn, which extended assistance to both Poles and Jews.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Dov Shuval, ed., *The Szczepieszyn 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 Gottowt (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.

**K**arol 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 Lodz [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>

**W**illiam (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 Bryzewski, 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 Zelechow [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 Zelechow. 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 Chełmica 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

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

<sup>125</sup> “Zelechow,” *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

<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-Kulikow, 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>

<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 Niepokalanow 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-impooverished 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 Wierzba. 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. Schlafly, 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



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>

**B**oth 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 Niewęglewski [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?"

<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

<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.

<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 (Boguszyn), 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>

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

<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

<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.

**M**ichael 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>

**I**n 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.

<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 (*franciszczanki 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>

<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. Benjamin, 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 Tylżanowski, 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 Koźienice," *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

<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 Emonah 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-

<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 Chwalba, *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 Holocaust,” *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 Wenklar, 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. Małecki, "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 Waclaw 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>

**E**arly 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 Przemyślu 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 Dziękaniec, 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 Wojniusz, 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. Wojniusz 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 Bielorussia 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-azor Svintzian* (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 Swieciany [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 [Kiemieliszki] 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 Wojnusz 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. Wojnusz 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 beczce* (Grajewo: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół 9 PSK, 2007), 173–76.

<sup>222</sup> George Gorin, ed., *Grayever yizker-bukh (Grayev 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, Troyanuvka, 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 Obersturmbannfuhrer called to his sergeant, "Is that all you found?"

"Yes, Herr Obersturmbannfuhrer," 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 Świąciany, 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.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>

**A**n 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, *Katolickeskkii kostël 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 Braślów, 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 Kalenkovitch 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 Czaplński] 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>

**P**riests 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 Diatłowicki, 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 Słonim [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>

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<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>

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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 Laski. 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 Laska 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 Volksdeutsche. 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 Bilaska (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 Przemysl [Przemysł] 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 Pruszkow [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 Zoliborz [Zoliborz] 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 Alshuler 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.)

The Daughters of the Purest Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Zgromadzenie Córek Najczystszeogo 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 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 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 Najczystszeogo 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 Wrzeźniowska. 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 Górska, were reunited with their elder sister, Halina, who was employed on a local farm. Two nuns—Bronisława Hryniewicz and Stanisława Józwickowska—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 Jozwickowska [Stanisława Józwickowska], in the Heart of Jesus convent near the village of Skorzec [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 Gołąbek, 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 Estera 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 [Kaluźyn] 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 Estera 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>

**G**itta 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 Szózdzińska 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 Czeakańska. 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>

**M**ichal 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. Michal 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.

**A**viva 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 Grzibowska 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

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<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 dojrzała 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 Pyłowski, 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 Trzcńska, and Seva (Sheva) Pyłowski.

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

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<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 Bronislaw [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. Bronislaw, 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 Amscislowski 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 Lwow [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 Waclaw,” 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 Flipek, “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 Ghettokurierin 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 Miałkiewicz 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 Miałkiewicz'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 Franciszkanek 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 Szymanow [Szymanów], where the sisters ran a boarding school for older girls. At a certain point, the sisters decided to move her there permanently, since Szymanow 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 Piotrkow [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 Zareby 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 Irenea, 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 Andrzejka, actually Maria Stefania Górka, about whom there will be more to say later. Sister Andrzejka 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 Szpilfogel [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 name, 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 Chrusciak (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 Benedyktynek 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 Konsekrowane*, 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 (Kuszner), 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 Górska], 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>

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<sup>366</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 4, 249–50.

<sup>367</sup> Testimony of Sister Andrzejka (Maria Stefania Górska), 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 Wojdysławski 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 Krzysztoporska 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 Krzysztoporski 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 Perc] 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 Perc (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 Perc, 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 Wiślana 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 Żytnia 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 Czer-nice 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 Brozek, 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 Bronislaw [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 *Kennkartes* (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, Nusia (Anna) Wolfowicz. Nusia 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 Nusia 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 Szarowaro [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 Drwęska], 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 Konsekrowane*, 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 Załuczowski, 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 Marlana in but was afraid to keep her because of continued police raids on that same building. That woman took Marlana 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 Marlana 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 Marlana 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

<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. Waclaw 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>

**A**nother 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.

Frانيا [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 Osński 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 O.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 Łazńiew, 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 [Łazńiew], 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 O.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 Skałbania, 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 Mazer-ski, 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 Sz wajger 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 Sz wajger, *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. Skałbania, 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 Skałbania felt that saving the persecuted was his moral obligation, and he willingly sheltered them for no reward. As Father Skałbania 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. Skałbania [Skałbania] offered to orphaned Jan (his father was killed during the occupation) to live with him. Rev. Skałbania, 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 (Dorobiałą), 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-skalbania>.

<sup>439</sup> Zieliński, *Życie religijne w Polsce pod okupacją hitlerowską 1939–1945*, 745–46; Ewa Rogalewska, “Siostry szarytki i księży 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, Łązniew (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), Szywnaład, 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 Polechajłło (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 Pośluszna.

The Turkowice convent in Hrubieszow [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 Polechajłło [Polechajłło], 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. Polechajłło was an educational role model and inspired her students with her own spirit of tolerance. Helped by the nuns Antonina Manaszczuk (Sister Irena) and Jozefa [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 Jackl 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 O.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, chliborobi, 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.

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<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. Marcei 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; Międzyzlesie, 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; Ostrówek; 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; Sopicowo, 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 Międzyzlesie; 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 Marii 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 Konsekwane*, 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 Kruszewska, 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: Dzielily 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: Świadcetwo 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 Pięłowska, 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 Płudy—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 Konsekwowane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 183; Teresa Anotnieta 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 Górńska, Ryszarda Górńska, 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 Stanislaw [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 Chotomow [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 Smólski], 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 Chotomow [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, Lusia-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 Łódz 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 Skrzyszewy, 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 Konsekwane*, 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 Płudy. It was revealed that of the 160 girls, about 40 were Jewish. The same Franciscan Sisters also maintained another home at Płudy, 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 Konsekwane*, 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 Szeliği 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 Woła 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 Żydzii 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.

Płudy, 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 Szysz-kowski], my parents' friend. ... I stayed there two or three weeks. ... Then my sister and I were taken into a convent near Warsaw, at Plody [Płudy]: 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: Świąty 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

<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 Płudy. 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 Płudy 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 Białołęka 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 Białołęka 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

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<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 Poznanska 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 though 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-acquainted 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 O.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 Białołęka. 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 Kuchler. 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 Konsekwane*, 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 (Ester) 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 Franciszkańki 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 Franciszkańki 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 policeman 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 Celemenski 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 Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland, 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski 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>

**F**elicja 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>

**T**he 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 Kruszewska (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 Tecia Werbowski, *Żegota: The Rescue of Jews in Wartime Poland*, 1st ed. (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1994), 125; Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski, *Żegota: The Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Price-Patterson, 1999), 116; Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski, *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 Białołęka 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 Białołęka 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 extricated 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 Czestochowa [Częstochowa] 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 Częstochowa, 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 Częstochowa 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, “Ratowały, 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 Baczkowska, 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 Białołęka.<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 Franciszki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem,” *Życie Konsekwane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 177.

<sup>519</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Siostry Franciszki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem,” *Życie Konsekwane*, nos. 3–4 (131–32) (2018): 172–92, at p. 181.

<sup>520</sup> Teresa Antonietta Frącek, “Dzieci żydowskie uratowane przez Siostry Franciszki 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 Złotnicka (Chana Złotnik), 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 Lwów. 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 Złotnik, known as Halina Złotnicka, 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-franciszkancki-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 Woloszynska [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 Franciszkańki Rodziny Maryi: Dzieliły się z Żydami chlebem, sercem, schronieniem," *Życie Konsekwane*, 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) Kędzińska 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: Dzielili 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 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 Ligorina (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 Paldi:

<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 Reinhartz 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 [Przemysl] 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 veba-’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 Laczka [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](http://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](http://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 Schtemberg.<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 *marylki*) 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 Rytwiány 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 Szumielewiczés, 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 Szumielewiczés 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 Dortheimer, 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 Dortheimer 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-Olejnik 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-Olejnik, 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: Lugus, 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 Czarnińska [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 Ignaców [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 Bronislawa [Bronislawa], 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 Bronislawa 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 Bronislawa 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 Bronislawa 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 Krasnodębska, Stanisława Zybert, Lucyna Franciszkiewicz, Jadwiga Koszutska, Helena Małuszyńska, Helena Grobelna, Stanisław Papuziński, 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 Lodz," 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 Grynszpan 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 Rzczycka while they looked for private accommodations.<sup>606</sup> As one of a network of Poles who rescued a number of Jews, Rzczycka stated that Catholic parishes were very accommodating in providing false birth certificates.<sup>607</sup> Rzczycka 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 Rzczycka, JHI, record group 301, no. 5987.

<sup>608</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Righteous*, vol. 5, 689.

<sup>609</sup> Jadwiga Kisieleska, "Heroiczne zaangażowanie Sióstr Miłosierdzia św. Wincentego a Paulo prowincji warszawskiej w dzieło ratowania ludności żydowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej," *Życie Konsekwane*, 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 Konsekwane*, 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 *Zegota*'s most courageous and outstanding couriers. Risking her own life, Kwiatkowska helped Dr. Jozef [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 Bajer 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 Szylkret 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 Włochy [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 Kuryłowicz 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 Górska, 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 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. 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.

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<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 Treblinki ratujący Żydów* (Oxford and Treblinka: Drohiczyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe and Kuria Diecezjalna w Drohiczyńnie, 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 Papuziński. In the apartment where she lived, there were already four children of Stanisław Papuziński 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 Papuziński 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 Zgrzebnski.<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 Zlotnicka [Złotnicka, actually, Złotnik], Josesek 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>

**A**nother 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>

**M**aria 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>

**L**eon 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>

**D**uring 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 Chmielenska [Chmielińska], 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 Mysłówice (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 Płatek, 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 Płatek'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 Spigel 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 Roliccka, “A Memoir of Survival in Poland,” *Midstream*, vol. 34, no. 3 (April 1988): 26–27. See also Mary Roliccka, “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 [Pruzana], 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

Bialowieza and headed for the Catholic Church. Then we went to Chainovka [Hajnówka], from there to Belsk [Bielsk Podlaski], and from Belsk to Bialystok [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 Bialystok 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 Bialystok 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 Bialystok on February 13 by train and went to the Lapy [Łapy] Station.<sup>673</sup> From there we went by cart to various Catholic churches—Dombrovo [Dąbrowa Wielka], Sokoly [Sokoły], Mokiny [Małkinia]. From there we travelled to Warsaw by train. ... From Warsaw we went to Lowicz [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 Prużana 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, *Kościół 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: [341](http://thejewishstar.com/stories/The-Kosher-BookwormThe-70th-yahrtzeit-of-Rabbi-Menachem-Ziembas-martyr-</a></p>
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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 holokaufcie 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 Szwagrzyk, “Żydzi w kierownictwie UB: Stereotyp czy rzeczywistość,” *Biuletyn*

**A**nother 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-gevornen 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 Tłuszcz 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

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<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 [Sewerynow] 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,

<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. Marcei 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 vari-  
ously 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 soci-  
ety.” 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, *Cor-  
riere 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 ‘Informer’ 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 Marcei 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 Złota 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. Marceł 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 Arensztajn, 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 Hirszfeld 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 Labeledz [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 Brodzką-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 Hoza 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>

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 Józwick, 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 Konsekwane*, 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 Krakowecka; 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, riffraff!” 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 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; 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>

**D**r. 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>

**W**ith 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>

**T**hrough 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] Strzałecka 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 Strzałecka 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-Szafrańska, 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) Hądzyńska.<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-Szafrańska.

<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).

Leonia 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 Sztegiec girl spent a month in their home. Józef Bratter, a doctor friend from Lwów, spent a few weeks there.

The Hirsch family, the Sztegiec girl and Dr. Bratter all survived the war. Ignacy took his wife's surname. In the 1990's, Eugenia was present when Leonia was awarded the title "Righteous Among the Nations."<sup>778</sup>

**A**fter 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>

**R**ev. 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>

**R**ywka 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, Icchak (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; Machcewicz 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-

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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 Podróżnik, *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 Rubín, *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>

**P**auline 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 Ruszczka, 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 Ruszczka after the Warsaw

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<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>

**R**egina 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 Mleczek, Julian Mleczek, 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 Kurzyzna, 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 Przemysł, 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 O.62/172A (Item 3732366), renumbered as file O.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 O.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 Jedynek, eds., *Świadkowie wiary Diecezji Przemyskiej z lat 1939–1964* (Przemysł: 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 Franciszki 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 Kornilowicz 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-Kończak, "'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 Religiologiczne*, 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); Immakulata 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/V.T/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 Laski (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.

It 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>

**H**elena 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>

**A**fter 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>

**P**ola Sternlicht Tur was able to remain outside the ghetto in her hometown of Lwów 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>

**T**he 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

<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

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<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/אריס%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 Kombatantów 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 Wanger, 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 Arieh (Izrael) 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

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<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 Arieh 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, Arieh 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 [Kolonja 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 Zionism 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 Kmieciniski [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 Kmieciniskis. That night, the whole family was taken by cart to Maria’s mother’s estate in the district of Swięciany [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 Kmieciniskis, Wanda and Waclaw [Wacław] Kanczanin, who had an estate called Malinowka [Malinówka] near Kiemieliszki. ... The Kmieciniskis 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

<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 [Kościałkowska] 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 Paluszkiwicz, *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 [Wiktorja 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 [Sakiszki], 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 Nemenčine [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, Maksymilam 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 nieznaný 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. Marcei 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>

**R**ev. Wojciech Stanisław Tyszka, vicar at the parish of Nowe Troki, near Wilno, came to the assistance of Jewish prisoners in the Zatrocze labour 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 Zatrocze 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 get 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, Tyszka [Rev. Stanisław Tyszka], 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 Tyszka'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-pinskera-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>

**D**wora Winokur (later Rozenywaig) 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>

**D**awid 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 Landmanshaft, 1954), 313–14, translated as *Commemoration Book Chelm*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/chelm/Chelm.html>.

<sup>879</sup> “Dwora Winokur-Rozenywaig and Her Mother Bela Winokur-Kantorowicz-Shechter—The Survivors,” PRP, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/your-stories/dwora-winokur-rozenywaig-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. Nikodemus Vaišutis (Nikodem Wojszutis), the pastor of Połusze, near Święciany, 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>

**F**r. 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 Glickson (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 Orłinski) 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 Orliński, 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 Pietralewicze (Góra Pietralewicka, Petrołowicze), 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 [Petrołowicze or Pietralewice].

In the same town of Slonim, the Jews received much help from Dr. Nojszewska [actually, Bogumiła Nojszewska—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] Nojszewska (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 Pietrołowicka]. 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 Dzieciółowska, “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 Dzieciółowska, “The Crime in Słomim: 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> Waclaw Zajaczkowski, *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. Hersh 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 Brajnes (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 Miechow [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>

**A**n 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, Tazio Łuszczuk (Tadeusz Rosentreter) and his sister Teresa, Julian (Julek) Brzeziński, 16-year-old Hanka Sokołowska, Zygmunt Zdzisław Kulas (known as Zygmus), 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 Konsekwane*, 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 Grzewiński 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 (Wisia) was placed in a convent school. See Lech Mastalski, “Bohaterowie Częstochowy: Porucznik Bolesław Grzewiński,” *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>

**M**aria 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 Przyrów, they received food from the sisters through the intervention of their confessor, identified as Rev. Księżyk, but probably Rev. Józef Krzyżanowski, the pastor of Przyrów. 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 Zaluska, USHMM, Accession no. 1995.A.1280.11, RG-50.225.0011; Anna Z. [Załuska] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-3162), FVA; Testimony of Hanna Zaluska, 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 Rylski, 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 Rylski 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 Rylski's factory began to arouse suspicion.

At this juncture Rylski 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 Czestochowa [Częstochowa]. ...

In Czestochowa, they met a man [Mieczysław Rylski] 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 Rylski, 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 Kaluszyn [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 Czestochowa. ...

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 Czestochowa ... 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 Czestochowa. 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 Konięcpol. 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 Konięcpol, 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, JHL, 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/artukul.php?dz=polska&id\\_art=00062](http://sunday.niedziela.pl/artukul.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 Opałko (Lederman), who was rescued as a Jewish boy, recalls:

Opałko'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," Opałko stresses. One of the priests also doctored Opałko's mother's birth certificate to use the more German sounding "Leder" instead of her birth name of "Lederman," which Opałko says "was recognizably Jewish." These brave acts allowed Opałko's parents to pass as non-Jews.

Opałko'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, Opałko explains. The priest came to visit him and the two became friends.

Although Opałko's parents knew each other growing up, there was a 7-year difference between them. Near the end of the war, though, when Opałko'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 Jastrząb, have been recognized by Yad Vashem.

Antoni Jastrzab [Jastrząb] 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 Opałko, Internet: <https://www.shavei.org/blog/2013/07/08/shavei-israel-profile-mariusz-opalko-64-year-old-bar-mitzvah-boy-shares-his-astonishing-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, 1919, 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 (Konicpolski) 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 [Dzietrzkowice], 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 Czestochowa [Częstochowa].

We went to another village, named Toplin. It was the village in which Alter was born. Toplin was 28 kilometers from Boleslawiec. There we went to a Christian named Antos Krzyzos [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 Czestochowa 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 Krzyzos' 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 Krzyzos 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>

**D**uring 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>

**T**hroughout 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 Świętomarz, 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 Kalembina, 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 Kalembina, [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 Kalembina]. ...

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 Luborzycza.

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>

**R**ozalia 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, Stanislaw [Stanisław], and their sons, Czeslaw [Czesław], Jerzy, and Bronislaw [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>

**H**enryk 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 Pustkow [Pustków], near Brzeznica [Brzeźnica], the village where they were born in Debica [Dębica] county, Rzeszow [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-przetrwali-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 Marceli 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-jozefa-rysinckiej-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, Waclaw 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-Tepper 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 Szwarz—state that Rev. Osikowicz helped them and many other Jews, among them Lusia 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>

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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-Tepper, *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 Szwarz 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 Bazyliań [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 Rostworowski, Stanisław Skudrzyk, Henryk Sokołowski, Adam Sztark, Bogusław Waczyński, Józef Warszawski, Stefan Weidel, Marian Wierzbanowski (seminarian), Bogusław Wilczyński, and Jan Wojciechowski. See Stanisław Cieślak, "Jezuici ratujący Żydów podczas hitlerowskiej okupacji," *Życie Konsekrowane*, 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 Paluszkiewicz, *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 Neuberger (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 Złoczew, 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>

**E**sther 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 [Wałkowska]. 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 Wierzbanowski, 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 Kollątaj 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 Kwarciańska), 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 Luszuwice, 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>

**R**ozalia Polanecka, a Jewish woman from the village of Ujście Jezuickie, near Gręboszów, was hiding in the village of Wola Przemyskowska 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>

**R**ev. 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 Rzedzińska [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>

<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 Dunajewski] 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>

**A**fter 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 [Skolyszyn].<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>

**R**ev. 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 Dobieslawice [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 Bdzozow [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 Orłowski [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 Bdzozow, 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 Bdzozow. 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 Rozwadów 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 brutally 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 [Wacław] 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 [Okoń]. ...

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 [Warchoń]. ...

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 Okoń 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 Kupa, 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 Rzczycka, 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 Rzczycka, 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 O.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 (Stronnictwo 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 Kobyłko and provided Kobyłko 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 Kobyłko [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, Kobyłko 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. Kobyłko, 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 Kobyłko informing him that she had left her four-year-old daughter, Ita, behind in the bunker. At great personal risk, Kobyłko made his way to the bunker and took little Ita back with him to Lwow. When the neighbors became suspicious, Kobyłko 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, Kobyłko 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, Kobyłko 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 Kobyłko [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 Kobyłko, 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 Głębicka, 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 Głębicka, 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 sacriligious [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 Kutu; 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 Warrantowicz), 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 Kutu 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 "Kutu," 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 Czaprán, 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. Czaprán 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 Czaprán, 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 Zbyszczek, 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 interred 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 Pruszkow [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 Rzottky, 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 Rzottky 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 Rzottky 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 Rzottky, 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, Waław 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 O.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 O.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 Widłak, 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 Podsjedlik. 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>

**B**ishop 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>

**R**ev. 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 Klasztorna spoke out at his show trial, testifying to the assistance he provided for Jews and bearing witness to his righteous character.<sup>1102</sup>

**M**onsignor Witold Dzięcioł, 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, “Piorzyński Marian,” in Ludwik Grzebień ed., *Słownik polskich teologów katolickich 1918–1981*, vol. 6 (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1983), 684–85; Ryszard Bender, “Piorzyński Marian,” in *Encyklopedia “Białych Plam”*, vol. 14 (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2004), 150–53; Kazimierz Pelczarski, “O. Marian Piorzyński 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 Świącany, near Jasło.

Not wanting to endanger the Sikorskis, Mother decided to move to the nearby village of Świącany. 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 saver-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 Kolonna [?]. 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 Masłowski. Rev. Masłowski 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. Masłowski 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: Izcór-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 Masłowski 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, Mahorowska, and Umińska, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespół 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 0.62/53 (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, *Przemienili zagończycy, chliborobi, 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 Tlumacz [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, Jozef [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, chliborobi, 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 Przygodzki. 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>

**A**fter 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 Kawareczyzna [Gawareczyzna] 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 Heszcles, then a young boy of nine living outside the ghetto.<sup>1135</sup> Irena Zimmerman (later Wodzislawska, 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 Perec [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 Heszcles, 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 Chrzanow [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-Załużska, 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 [Trószczyński] 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. Trószczyński 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. Trószczyński.<sup>1151</sup>

**F**r. Trószczyński 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 Zoliborz [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.

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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.

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