

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/10977,quotNot-Just-the-Ulmasquot-about-Poles-saving-Jews.html>

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"Not Just the Ulmas" about Poles saving Jews

With this series of films entitled "Not Just the Ulmas", the Institute of National Remembrance would like to pay tribute to the victims of the Holocaust, as well as to the Poles who lost their lives to protect their Jewish fellow citizens during the criminal German occupation of Poland. A prime example of this atrocity was the crime committed by the Germans against the nine-members of the Ulma Family. The 80th anniversary of this crime will be commemorated on March 24.



Red Beads

The film Red Beads depicts one of the bloodiest German crimes committed against Poles rescuing Jews. It resulted in the murder of families from the villages of Wierzbica and Wolica near Miechów: the Gądeks, Kucharskis, Książeks, Nowaks and the members of the Wandersman Jewish family and their relatives who had been rescued. January 29 marks the 81st anniversary of this crime.

When describing the martyrdom of the Jews of Poland, emphasis is usually placed on the Jews who hid on the “Aryan side,” and suffered at the hands of Polish blackmailers and informers, Fascist hooligans and other underworld elements. Less is written about the fact that thousands of Poles risked their lives extending aid to Jews. The froth and scum on the surface of a stormy river is more noticeable than the pure stream in the depths. That stream did exist, and it was effective. ... wrote Adolf Berman, during World War II, who was one of the leaders of Jewish underground political life in Poland, working with the Government Delegation for Poland, co-author of appeals to the world to respond to the German Holocaust of Jews.

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Researchers estimate that the Germans murdered about a thousand Poles during World War II for helping Jews. Thanks to the heroic actions of many Polish residents, tens of thousands of Polish citizens of Jewish descent were saved.

Subsequent episodes will be presented until the end of May 2024 every Friday at 10 am.

Red Beads, a story based on the research of Martyna Grądzka-Rejak Ph.D., an employee of the IPN Historical Research Office in Warsaw, shows first and foremost the criminality of the German occupier aiming to eliminate Polish citizens, primarily those of Jewish descent.

The film portrays the heroism of several Polish families who risked their lives to save their Jewish neighbours. We also learn about the complexity of the situation during the German occupation of Poland during World War II. The Germans organized a bloody manhunt after torturing and forcing one of the captured Jews to confess. In addition to German gendarmes, the raid also involved Poles who, usually under threat of death, were forced to work in the German-commanded *Polnische Polizei*, known as the "Blue Police".

The Helped Ran. The Helpers Died

The Story of the Balawender family is the 2nd episode of the series *Not just the Ulmas*.

The film tells the story about the Jews who escaped from the hiding place but the helpers were killed.

The episode depicts the Balawender family - Feliks and Wiktorja and their son Tadeusz - who, from the fall of 1943 to 2 February 1944, gave shelter to three escapees from the Lubaczow ghetto named Cioma, Fleischer and Dekiel. The men hid in a small hiding place under the floor of one of the rooms. The entrance to the shelter was blocked with a potato chest. The Jews hidden by the Balawender family had previously received the same help from a Ukrainian family. Another Ukrainian reported to the police that someone from the Balawender family committed theft. Little did he know that this was no ordinary theft. It was the men hiding with the Balawender's who had stolen some items from the farm. They left footprints in the snow...

A Shelter Under the Bed

The film tells the story of a mining family from Michałkowice, the current district of Siemianowice Śląskie. An underground bunker in their home became a chance for life for about 70 Jews.

"A shelter under the bed. The Kobylec family" is a story based on the findings collected in the IPN publication "Repressions for helping Jews in occupied Polish lands during the Second World War" authored by Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysło, Warsaw 2019, vol. I.

The film depicts the heroism of the Kobylec family, who risked their lives to save their Jewish fellow citizens. In August 1943, the Germans carried out the liquidation of the Sosnowiec and Będzin ghettos, the inhabitants of which were to be deported to the German Auschwitz concentration camp. A few managed to survive by hiding in secret bunkers. One of them was located in the house of the Kobylec family in Michałkowice, then a village near Siemianowice Śląskie.

Karolina and Piotr Kobylec and their children lived in a house at 4 Stabika Street. It turned out that one of their sons, Mieczysław, had been hiding a young Jewish girl in their home without his parents' knowledge. When this secret came to light, they decided to build a bunker in the kitchen under the floor. The hideout was equipped with ventilation and light, as well as places to sleep. The sizable space provided shelter for a dozen people, although there were times when dozens stayed there. It is estimated that from the autumn of 1943 to January 1944 about 70 Jews found shelter in the Kobylec family home, among them young members of the resistance movement: Kasia Szancer, Fela Katz, Shmuel Ron and Chajka Klinger. The neighbours were also involved in offering help to the Jewish inhabitants.

The Jews from the hiding place in Michałkowice tried to get transported to Slovakia and Hungary, in order to then reach the Middle East. Mieczysław Kobylec was involved in organizing the transport, and it was thanks to his efforts that several groups managed to successfully reach Slovakia. On 10 January 1944, the Germans stopped one of the groups, Mieczysław Kobylec was then arrested and sent to Auschwitz.

Piotr, Wiktor and Alojzy Kobylec were also arrested at the same time. The German occupiers imprisoned Piotr in Auschwitz, and soon transferred Mieczysław from Auschwitz to Gross-Rossen Concentration Camp, where he was imprisoned until the camp's liberation.

Thanks to the efforts of the Jews rescued in Michałkowice, Piotr, Karolina, Mieczysław, Klara and Wiktor were awarded the Medal of the Righteous Among the Nations.

Shelter Door concealed under a Rug

The film "Shelter Door concealed under a Rug" depicts the heroism of Emilia Dembska, who risked her life to save her Jewish fellow citizens. Involved in the activities of patriotic organizations in Kołomyja, she was a member of the local structures of the Polish Gymnastic Society "Sokół." Probably from the autumn of 1941, she hid a group of eleven Jews in her single-family house at 5 Gazowa Street.

The fugitives had found shelter in her home even before the Germans closed off the Jewish quarter, which did not happen until March 1942. Among them were presumably representatives of local wealthy Jewish families, such as the wives of the Gottfryd brothers and the three-member family of lawyer Karpel. The Jews hid in a special

basement room, the entrance to which was located in the kitchen. It was camouflaged by a carpet. A hard of hearing named Marysia, was also involved in helping them.

Killed in the Yard

The film "Killed in the yard " depicts the heroism of the Krysiewicz family, who risked their lives to save their Jewish fellow citizens. In the village of Waniewo, located during the occupation in the Sokołów region, and now in the Sokoły municipality of the Wysokie Mazowieckie district, one of the farms was run by Władysława and Stanisław Krysiewicz. It was there that they had dug an underground shelter in the barn, under the floor. It became a chance of life for about 10 people. The couple took it upon themselves to supply food and care to those in hiding, keeping it a secret even from their children. However, on the night of 7-8 September, 1943, the farm was surrounded by Germans. Stanislaw was captured in the yard, the gendarmes began beating him, wanting to force him to say where the hiding place was. Then the Jews began to flee - all of them were shot. Heavily beaten, lying on the ground, Stanisław was shot in the head by one of the gendarmes. Władysława was arrested and later murdered in the Jewish cemetery in Tykocin. The crime carried out by the gendarmes against Władysława and Stanisław Krysiewicz was a tragedy for their five children. Although they survived the German occupation, after it ended

they were sent to an orphanage, where they were separated. The two youngest were adopted by a foster family who gave them their own name, which contributed to the loss of contact with the rest of the siblings. The children finally reunited many years after the war.

Eighteen Jews found shelter there

The film "Eighteen Jews found shelter there" depicts the heroism of the Andrzejczyk family, who risked their lives to save their Jewish fellow citizens. In the fall of 1942, when the mass liquidation of ghettos was underway in Białystok, three of his good friends, Judel Węgorz, a man named Szczupakiewicz and a man called Moniek, showed up at the home of Franciszek Andrzejczyk.

They asked the farmer to hide not only them but also other fugitives on his farm. Franciszek Andrzejczyk provided them with assistance. He agreed to let a total of 18 people hide in his house. Two underground shelters were prepared for the fugitives - one underneath the house and the other in a nearby potato cellar. On 20 March 1943, German gendarmes from Czyżewo showed up at the farm. When the farmer denied that he was hiding Jews, the gendarmes began a search. At one point, one of them fired a series of shots from his machine gun killing Franciszek. All the Jews in hiding were captured and killed, and Franciszek's relatives were severely beaten; their home was also robbed of clothing, shoes and valuables. Shortly after the incident, the

widow and children were informed that their entire property would become the property of the German occupation authorities.

A Helper is a Helper, Even in KL Auschwitz

The film *A Helper is a Helper, Even in KL Auschwitz* depicts the heroism of a married couple, the Ciesielskis, who risked their lives to save their Jewish fellow citizens. In an apartment in Cracow's Kazimierz district, a neighborhood that had been home to a Jewish community for centuries, Romualda and Feliks Ciesielski decided to provide shelter for Jews fleeing the ghetto. Among those who found safe refuge in their home were: Edmund Fiszler and his wife Leonora, and the Horowic family of four. The couple supported those in need in many ways, risking their own lives. Probably as a result of denunciations, the Ciesielskis were arrested by Germans in the summer of 1942. During the investigation Romualda was beaten and tortured. She was sent to Auschwitz Concentration Camp, where she was subjected to experimental pseudo-medical tests. In the camp, however, she did not stop helping; she hid children, she organized extra rations for children and falsified children's birth certificates. She stayed in Auschwitz until she escaped from an evacuation transport in Jawiszowice in January 1945. Her husband Feliks was also imprisoned in Auschwitz. From there he was transported to Mauthausen concentration camp, where

he was murdered on 18 March 1945.

She saved 200 Jews

On the eve of the National Day of Remembrance of Poles rescuing Jews under German occupation, we present another episode of the series "Not Just the Ulmas". The film "She saved 200 Jews" tells the story of the heroic Zofia Klemens, who hid a total of 200 Jews from the spring of 1943 to February 1944.

The film tells the story of Zofia Klemens, who risked her life to save her Jewish fellow citizens. Initially she took care of Szmuel Ron (Edek Rozenchwajg), who had previously been hiding in a shelter under the kitchen floor of the Kobylce family of miners. Having found shelter with Zofia Klemens, Szmuel aided others in hiding, whom he systematically brought to her apartment. Subsequent groups of Jews were then illegally led by Pawel Jaworski across the border to Slovakia. On one such trip, Paweł Jaworski was shot by the Germans.

These people hid at my place, rested, ate, spent the night, and the next day in the evening Edek led them out. He drove them to Bielsko. After some time, Edek brought a few people to me (always Jews) and again drove them to Bielsko. Sometimes there were as many as 30 people with me at a time. It lasted like this from the spring of 1943 to February 1944, during which time about 200 people passed through my apartment," Zofia Klemens recalled years later.

They Kept Holding Hands

The film *They Kept Holding Hands* depicts the heroism of the Baranek family, who risked their lives to save their Jewish fellow citizens. They paid the highest price for helping the Jews. Wincenty and Lucja, along with their sons, were murdered by the Germans on their own farm. It was part of a wider effort to catch Jews fleeing the Holocaust and intimidate local communities.

On 15 March 1943, a group of armed Germans surrounded the Baranek's home and led the household members out into the yard. Only Wincenty's foster mother, Katarzyna Baranek, managed to hide in the narrow gap between the stove and the wall. At the same time, local residents of Siedliska were forced to search the buildings to find the hiding Jews. The Germans murdered four Jews, as well as members of the Baranek family - Wincenty, his wife Lucia and his sons, 12-year-old Henryk and 10-year-old Tadeusz. They also knew that one other person had lived in the house. The occupiers announced to the villagers that they had 24 hours to bring the missing person to the gendarmerie headquarters in Miechow. They threatened that otherwise they would execute dozens of Siedliska residents and burn down the village. The terrorized people drove Katarzyna to the place indicated by the Germans. There she was murdered. The Germans ordered the

bodies of the slain Jews to be buried near the barn. The Baranek family was allowed to be buried in Miechow's parish cemetery, but any funeral ceremonies were forbidden.

Mother of Four

Maria Strutyńska took care of her four children and gave shelter to thirteen people of Jewish origin persecuted by the German occupiers. During the German occupation on Polish territory, Maria Strutyńska née Gajewska and her husband Klaudiusz lived in Drohobych in the Galicia district of the General Government. Maria worked as a Polish and German teacher, whereas Klaudiusz was a mining engineer. Together they raised four children: Teresa, Kazimiera, Lesław and Stanisław. It was a very pious and religious Polish family. Before the war, they maintained friendly relations with the local Jews. Klaudiusz Strutyński had an acquaintance named Henefeld. When the Soviet authorities evicted the Henefeld family from their home in 1939, they rented a room in the Strutyńskis' house.

Klaudiusz Strutyński died at the beginning of 1941. Half a year later, on 22 June, Adolf Hitler gave the order to start the Operation Barbarossa, breaking the German-Soviet pact concluded two years earlier. German troops entered Drohobych on 3 July 1941, beginning the three-year period of German occupation. The Germans sought to liquidate the Polish elite and to completely exterminate people of Jewish origin.

Mother of Eight Shot Dead

The film depicts Anna Niepsuj of Klikowa who was a mother of eight. She was killed on her farm by Germans for hiding the Kurz family – a Jewish husband and wife. On 9 April 1943 in Klikowa, now part of the city of Tarnów. Her six-year-old daughter Maria was a witness to the tragedy. The genesis of this crime has to do with the German operation launched a year earlier to exterminate the Jewish population in the General Government.

In 1942, Tarnów was the largest concentration of the Jewish population in the Kraków district. Its Jewish population was around 40,000 people. In June of that year, the first deportation operations to the Bełżec death camp were carried out. On orders from the Germans, Jewish residents of Tarnów had to register and have their work cards stamped. In total, about 8,000 Jews were deported from Tarnów to the Bełżec death camp in June 1942. On the other hand, all those deemed unfit for transport – the elderly, the sick, the crippled, and mothers with small children – some 8,000 people – were slaughtered in the Jewish cemetery and nearby forests.

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