

Institute of National Remembrance

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The unveiling of a plaque dedicated to the wartime activities of the Holy Family of Nazareth Warsaw Convent - Warsaw, March 16, 2024

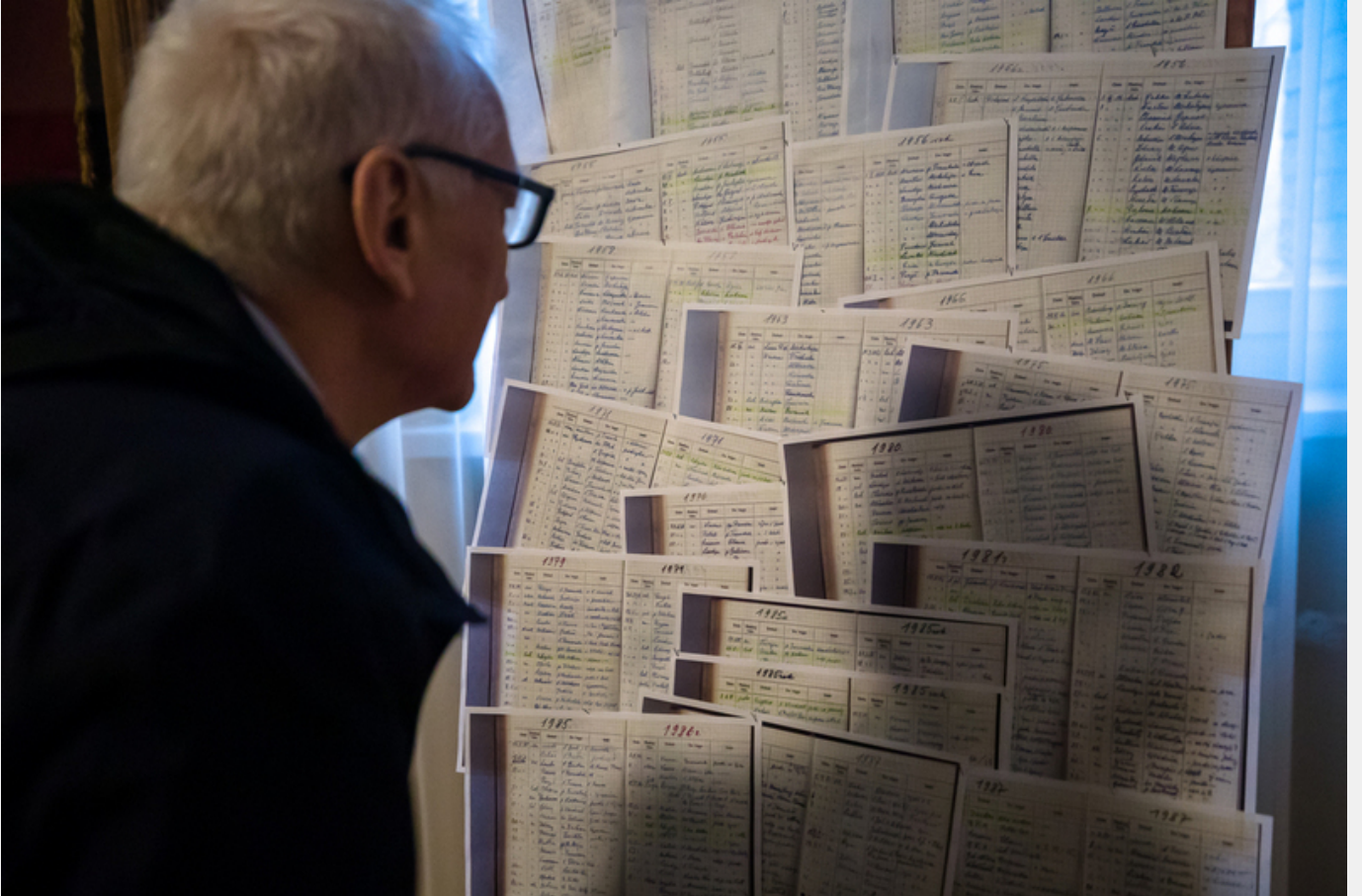
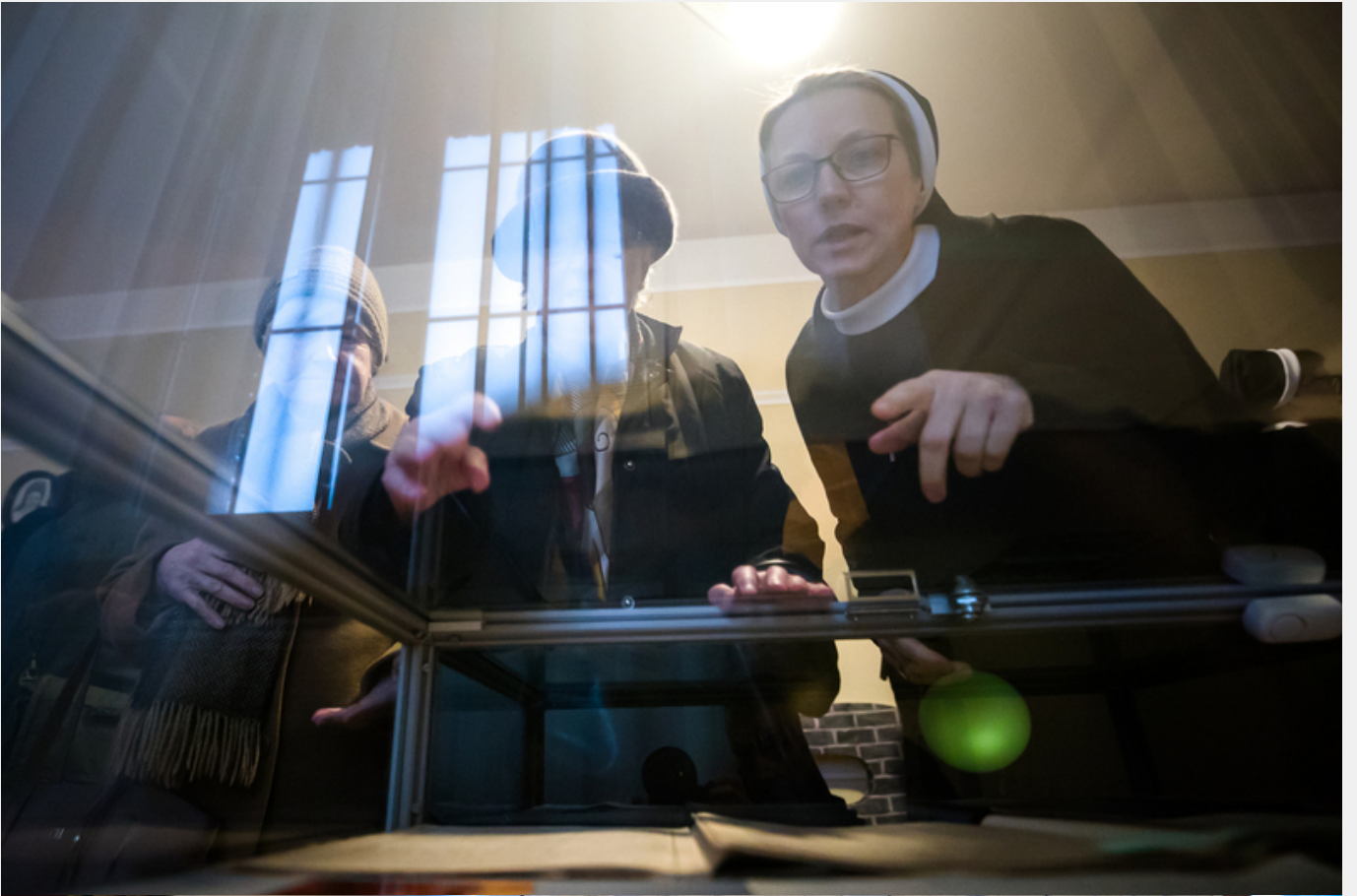














A plaque dedicated to the deeds of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth Warsaw Convent was unveiled on Saturday, 16 March 2024 at 1:00 at 137 Czerniakowska Street in Warsaw. The IPN was represented by its Deputy President Mateusz Szpytma, Ph.D. and the Director of the Warsaw Branch of the Institute, Tomasz Łabuszewski Ph.D.

The Institute of National Remembrance will never rest in commemorating national heroes such as Poles who saved Jews, said Deputy President Mateusz Szpytma during the ceremony in Warsaw.

The plaque was funded by the IPN Warsaw Branch Office of the Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom.

The event was enriched by an exhibition of memorabilia and documents related to the involvement of the Sisters of Czerniakowska Street in saving Jewish children and girls from death at the hands of the Germans.

The ceremony is part of the celebration of the National Day of Remembrance of Poles who Rescued Jews under German occupation, which falls on 24 March.

This day was established, as stated in the act, "in tribute to Polish citizens - heroes who, in an act of heroism and courage, unbelievable valor, compassion and interpersonal solidarity, remaining faithful to the highest ethical values, the precepts of Christian mercy and the ethos of the sovereign Republic of Poland, saved their Jewish neighbors from the Holocaust planned and implemented by the German occupiers."

On this very special day we honour all Poles who, showing mercy and compassion, helped Jews who were systematically being murdered by the German oppressors. They motivated their acts in different ways - by the love of thy neighbor rule, the teachings of the Church, civic duty or ordinary human decency. Regardless of their motivation, every manifestation of help rendered to Jews in hiding was an expression of the greatest heroism, given the fact that such deeds were punished by the death penalty imposed by the Germans on the territory of occupied

Poland.

As soon as a week after the capitulation of Warsaw, on 3 October 1939, the Nazareth sisters reopened a primary school, a middle school and a high school. The latter two institutions, had been closed down in November as a result of orders from the German occupation authorities. Only the common school could operate. Its official head was Sister Florencja Irena Jankowska, who spoke German well. The school was, in fact, headed by the pre-war headmistress Sister Ezechiela Janina Szupenko. In January 1940, Sr. Ezechiela organized secret classes, which were held in private apartments, mostly of teachers, and in the school building. The first secret matriculation was held in the spring of 1940.

As of the fall of 1940, some seventh-grade students became familiar with the material of the first year of junior high school. From September 1940 to March 1942, with the permission of the occupiers, a preparatory course for second-level vocational schools was held in the school building. The sisters obtained permission to run preparatory courses for tailoring schools, and later to open a vocational tailoring school under the name Priv. Handwerkschule fur Schneiderinnen von S.E. Wismont (Private Female Tailor Craft School owned by S.E. Wismont). Its headmistress was officially Sister Superior Eutalia Jadwiga Wismont. Some of the female students studied the material that was obligatory from the second year of junior high school, so they could later take the secret high school diploma exam. Throughout the occupation, some of the students lived in the adjacent boarding school.

The boarding schoolgirls received hot, filling soups prepared by the sisters, which were given to the poorest free of charge, and to the slightly wealthier - for a small fee.

In late 1941 and early 1942, Jewish girls found shelter on the school and boarding school grounds. Sister Ezechiela recalled that there were nine of them, while former student Magdalena Czerkiewicz-Tempska writes about a dozen Jewish girls who survived the occupation and graduated from the school. It was possible to establish the names of only a few girls rescued by the Nazareth sisters. These are: Ewa Herman, Alicja Kirkien, Irma Windisch, Paula Windisch and Zuzanna Windisch. A group of Jewish children were also hidden at the convent.

Sister Superior Eutalia Jadwiga Wismont was awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal by the Yad Vashem Institute for her work, but in addition to her and the above-mentioned sisters, Sister Izabella Jadwiga Machowska, head of the boarding school, Sister Lauretana Barbara Gumowska, Polish language teacher, and Sister Amabilis Maria Filipowicz, Polish language and history teacher at the clandestine middle school, played a significant role in rescuing, helping and educating Jewish girls. Recalling those events, the last-mentioned sisters stressed that the Jewish schoolgirls received not only care, but also a full secondary education, allowing them to begin higher education.

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