

# Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/10474,Poles-Who-Rescued-Jews-The-Story-of-the-Ulma-Family.html>

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## Poles Who Rescued Jews. The Story of the Ulma Family



**On 24 March 1944, in Markowa, Poland, the Germans murdered the whole family of Józef and Wiktoria Ulma along with the Jews they were hiding. The Polish President has designated this day as "Poles Who Rescued Jews Under German Occupation Remembrance Day". On 10 September 2023 the beatification of the Ulma family will take place in Markowa.**

In early 1935, Jozef Ulma proposed to Wiktorja Niemczak. On 7 July 1935 they were married in St. Dorothy's parish in Markowa. Nine years later, they were expecting their seventh child. Unfortunately the entire family and the Jews were murdered by the Germans on 24 March 1944. Jozef was remembered by neighbors as an amateur photographer, while Wiktorja was said to have been a promising actress in a local theater group.

## **Jews from Markowa**

During World War II, Józef and Wiktorja Ulma lived in the village of Markowa near Łańcut (Podkarpackie Province). They ran a farm – Józef specialised in the cultivation of vegetables and fruit, beekeeping and silkworm breeding. His passion was photography and he was active within his community. Wiktorja took care of the children at home. Around twenty Jewish families lived in Markowa. About 1,000 Jews overall lived in the district. In the first half of 1942, the majority of them were deported and murdered in the German Bełżec extermination camp or shot on the spot. From July, hunts began searching for those who were in hiding in the forests and fields, outside that area. Hiding-places were built mainly amid thickets and ravines. Józef Ulma helped one family to build one such hideout.

## **Hiding with the Ulma family**

In the autumn of 1942, the Goldman family of Łańcut knocked on the door of the home of Józef and Wiktorja Ulma – Saul Goldman, who before the War was a local cattle trader, and his four sons. The Ulmas

offered them shelter in the attic of their own home. Soon after, those in hiding were joined by the two daughters and granddaughter of Chaim Goldman of Markowa – Lea (Layca) Didner and her daughter and Genia (Gołda) Grünfeld.

For over a year, eight people lived in the attic. The men helped in the tanning of hides, sawed timber and chopped wood for fuel. It seemed as though the hell of the occupation was far away.

### **Crimes in Markowa**

Just before dawn on 24 March 1944, German policemen arrived in Markowa. They knew why they were coming to Markowa and whom they were looking for. They found the Jews hiding in the attic. Shots rang out. Within a few minutes – Józef Ulma, his heavily-pregnant wife Wiktoria, their six children and all the hidden Jews perished at the hands of the Germans. One of the perpetrators, Joseph Kokott is remembered to have said: *“Look at how those Polish pigs are dying – those who were hiding Jews.”*

On the orders of the Germans, the local villagers buried the bodies of the victims. One of Józef's brothers, Władysław Ulma, wrote the following for the Jewish Historical Institute:

*A week after this incident, we put the bodies of my brother's murdered family into coffins and took them to the cemetery. Following liberation, a Jewish organisation took the bodies of the Jews.*

### **Remembering the fate of the Ulma family and the hidden Jews**

On 13 September 1995, the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem posthumously honored Józef and Wiktoria Ulma with the title of the Righteous Among the Nations. In 2016, a museum bearing the Ulmas name was opened in Markowa. It is devoted to all Poles who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. In 2018, the anniversary of that tragic event in Markowa – 24 March – was designated as "Poles Who Rescued Jews Under German Occupation Remembrance Day" by a decision of the Polish President.

### **Awaiting the beatification of the Ulma family**

On 17 December 2022, Pope Francis approved the decree on the martyrdom of the Ulma family and authorized the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to publish it. The beatification of the Ulma family will take place in Markowa on 10 September 2023. The date of Ulmas' wedding — 7 July — will be the day of the liturgical commemoration of the Polish martyrs. It is the second case in the history of the Catholic Church when the date of the wedding will mark the commemoration of the blessed. The first were Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi on 21 October 2001.

Yet never in the recent history was an entire family beatified. John Paul II played an important role in shifting the paradigms of believers in many ways. He will certainly be remembered as a great pilgrim, an advocate of Divine mercy and the author of the new Catechism of the Catholic Church. But two aspects that clearly resonated in his pontificate are the dialogue with Judaism and reminding the faithful of the sanctity of marriage. These two dimensions of his apostolic work

come together in the case of the Ulma family.

More:

## **THE ULMA FAMILY FROM MARKOWA**

[It was our national duty to establish this day](#)

[COLLECTED CONTENT: Poles Saving Jews](#)

[The Risk of Survival. The Rescue of the Jews by the Poles and the Tragic Consequences for the Ulma Family from Markowa](#)

[POLES RESCUING JEWS UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION - THE ULMA FAMILY](#)

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