Institute of National Remembrance

The IPN remembers about the oldest holder of the Righteous Among the Nations title

Anna Koźmińska, the oldest living holder of the Righteous Among the Nations medal (granted individually), is celebrating her 101st birthday on 22 May 2020. Her story had remained unknown for decades. Risking their own lives, Anna Koźmińska and her foster mother Maria, hid four Jews, including providing long-term shelter for a boy – Abraham Jabłoński – during German occupation.
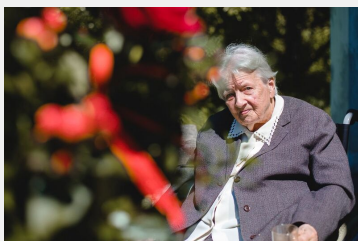
During the war, Maria Koźmińska and her stepdaughter Anna lived in Częstochowa. In the years 1943–45, they provided shelter for a Jewish boy, Abraham Jabłoński (who was in possession of documents belonging to a child killed by the Germans – Bohdan Wojciech Bloch). They also temporarily sheltered Mr. Rubinstein, a distant relative of the Jabłoński family and his friend Rita, along with her mother Stefa.

Eight-year-old Abraham managed to escape from the ghetto in Częstochowa during its liquidation by the Germans in September 1942. He was helped by his older sister Iza, who organized the escape with the aid of a so-called Navy-Blue policeman. Among other places, Abraham hid in a coal-cellar, where he began to lose his eyesight. Upon his uncle's request, Maria Koźmińska and her stepdaughter Anna agreed to shelter the boy. They told their friends and acquaintances that the boy had been through a family tragedy, had lost his father and was temporarily under their care.

Maria and Anna Koźmińska took very good care of Abraham and comforted him. They also did their best to ensure his education and took him for walks. They managed to save the boy despite the fact that the Germans had searched their home.

After the war, Abraham Jabłoński emigrated to Israel, where he testified to the humanity and courage of both women. After forty-seven years, he found Anna Koźmińska in Warsaw. He asked her to write her memoirs from that time, which she did. Upon Abraham Jabłoński's motion, Maria and Anna Koźmińska were honored by the Yad Vashem Institute with the title of Righteous Among the Nations on 11 February 1991. In 2016, Anna Koźmińska received the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta from the President of Poland Andrzej Duda.

At the beginning of March 2020, in connection with the National Day of Remembrance of Poles Rescuing Jews under German Occupation, Mateusz Szpytma Ph.D., the Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance, met with Anna Koźmińska (photos below). He also planned to visit her on her birthday. The meeting was unfortunately not possible due to the current epidemiological situation. The IPN's Management has sent Anna Koźmińska its best wishes and a bouquet of flowers.

Sources:

1. Polacy ratujący Żydów w czasie Zagłady. Przywracanie pamięci/Poles who Rescued Jews during the Holocaust. Recalling Forgotten History, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Kancelaria Prezydenta RP, Muzeum Zydów Polskich POLIN, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warszawa 2016.

2. Israel Gutman (red.) *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Polska/The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations. Poland*, Yad Vashem, Kraków 2009.

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