

# The Righteous

## Anna Stupnicka – Bando



She used to go to the ghetto with her mother. Her mother, a house administrator, would carry the residence register books; she would carry bread and marmalade in her satchel. Anna was twelve. In the winter of 1941 her mum said: “We will lead a Jewish girl out from the ghetto.” They were waiting for her until dusk. She came with her father. Liliana was eleven. She had big, green, long-lashed eyes and curly black hair. Her father was crying. Anna would never forget their farewell scene. Hilary Alter was a Bund activist; he knew that he was bidding farewell forever to his daughter. The girls swapped clothes. Lilka put on her navy-blue coat and the beret with the edelweiss symbol – a uniform obligatory in convent schools. Mum told them: “And now heads up.” They left the ghetto thanks to the mother’s pass.

“Lilka became our cousin,” says Anna. “Mum issued her the papers on her own maiden name, Krysia Wójcik. Lilka did not stay with us for a day, or for a month, but for four years, until the liberation. Together we survived the Uprising, the camp in Pruszków and a three-day exportation in stock cars. And the threat lurked every hour. All of us could die any time.” Anna lived with her mother and grandmother in a two-room flat at 25 Mickiewicza Street in the Warszawa district of Żoliborz. Ryszard Grynberg, who was hiding at her aunt’s place at Złota Street, used to stay there from time to time. Doctor Mikołaj Borenstein from Łódź visited them almost every day. Anna obtained a Kennkarte for him which enabled him to work as a stoker in the central heating boiler room. Anna Bando has retired, she used to be a neurologist. She was awarded the Righteous Medal along with her mother, Janina Stupnicka.

## Ireneusz Rajchowski



He was fourteen years old when his mother, Maria Rajchowska, brought home a man named Witold Góra, whom she met while working at a factory in the ghetto at Pawia 38. Góra stayed with the Rajchowskis from autumn of 1942 to spring of 1943. The entire Rajchowski family selflessly devoted themselves to helping Jews. Ireneusz's aunt, Kazimiera Kurek, hid a Jew in her apartment in the Praga district. Another aunt sold hats smuggled out of the ghetto, exchanging them for food and money. It was during one of these transfers of goods that her husband was killed. Ireneusz tried to help the children coming out of the ghetto. Often, he would bring them food. In mid-April, 1943, Maria led a teenage girl out of the ghetto. When nobody showed up to claim her after the outbreak of the ghetto uprising, Ireneusz took the girl himself by ship to the village of Mniszew outside Warsaw, where she stayed in hiding in a cabin in the woods. Her further whereabouts are unknown.

Before the war ended, the Rajchowski's were placed in a labour camp in Germany. Afterwards, Witold Góra, who had stayed in Poland, found the Rajchowski family in Gdańsk. In 1986, he gave his account of the help he received to the Yad Vashem and Jewish Historical Institutes.

## Alicja Schnepf z d. Szczepaniak



After having lost her husband, alone with two daughters, Alicja and Barbara, in a tiny one-room apartment in Praga in Warszawa, Natalia Szczepaniak sheltered people. Everyone in the building knew each other so well that they never locked their doors. When Natalia decided she would help Jews, she had to change that custom. "At least one lock always had to be shut," recalls Alicja Schnepf, "so that there would be time to hide before the door was opened."

When late in 1943 two Jews were brought to the Szczepaniak's home: Anna Albert and the five-year-old Nina Zajdel, Natalia was not home. As it had already been decided for her, she let them stay. They remained with her until the Soviet troops landed on the right banks of Warszawa. From time to time the Oszmiańska Street apartment also sheltered Anna Albert's two daughters – Krystyna and Maria. An old wooden closet had to serve as a hiding place, and sometimes only the bed had to suffice. Just how backbreaking it all was and just what a miracle the end result turned out to be is even more evident, when one realizes that immediately before the Warsaw Uprising, three more Jewish refugees moved into the Szczepaniak's apartment: Wacław Nowicki or Nowacki with his wife Ewa and cousin Stasia.

Eventually, the Red Army came. Alicja remembers running into the street when she heard the Russians were coming. People were hugging the Soviet soldiers, they in their old workers' coats. People were bringing them vodka. "I started crying. Simply weeping. It was joy and happiness, they had finally arrived. I couldn't stop. Every day we had been at the edge of death."

## **Tadeusz Stankiewicz**



He was born in 1930 in Pulawy. Before the war his family had many contacts with Jews. After the outbreak of war the Stankiewicz family lived in a forester's lodge in Głodno near Opole Lubelskie. Tadeusz's father worked there as a forester. Janek Szmulewicz from Opole Lubelskie and a few other Jews were hidden by him in the lodge. Tadeusz's father, Józef, in cooperation with Jewish authorities, helped Jews temporarily leave the ghetto to work for him. Legally thirty people were leaving the ghetto to work in the forest, illegally, many more. After the closing of the ghetto, about 200 people stayed in the forest. Some of them (around 60) stayed in dugouts near the forester's lodge. In the Spring of 1943, one Pole alerted the Germans. They discovered the people in the forest bunkers and killed most of them. Those who survived hid in the buildings of the forester's lodge. These were: Sabina and Elena Wolfram, Mrs. Bas, Szpiegelsztajn, Jakub Nagelsztajn and Janek Szmulewicz. Tadeusz, his parents and sister were (posthumously) awarded the medal 'The Righteous Among the Nations' in 2006.

## **Józef Walaszczyk**



So many exceptional and perilous things are linked with this story, that it is truly a miracle that anyone can even tell it anymore. Faking an upset stomach in front of tormentors from the Gestapo, pretending to be an arrogant representative of the “chosen race” during a search by the Germans, and finally negotiating the freedom of 21 Jewish hostages for a kilogram of gold, are all fragments of Józef Walaszczyk’s life story.

The gold, which he had to bring to an apartment in the center of Warszawa, he collected together in the span of five hours. “I had many friends,” he explains. Among the hostages was his Jewish friend, Irena Front. She was arrested when she went to meet with fellow Jews who were in hiding. He must have saved Irena from certain death many times. He hid her and her Jewish friends in his Warszawa apartment until the end of the war. Besides that, he also helped a group of almost twenty people, whom he first hired in his cousin’s factory on the outskirts of Warszawa, and later, during the “final solution,” he helped them hide on the Aryan side.

Irena and her friends survived the Warsaw Uprising in Józef’s apartment, who was himself not in the city at the time, sent by the Home Army to an area outside of Warszawa. He took them out of a transfer camp in Pruszków after the Uprising. After the war, Irena stayed in Poland.

## **Survivors**

### **Krystyna Budnicka**

She was born in 1932 in Warsaw as Hena Kuczer, daughter of Józef-Lejzor and Cyrla, the eighth and youngest child in the family. Her happy childhood came to an end with the outbreak of the war in 1939, she was seven years old. The family home was located in the ghetto, There their hell began. During the searches and hunts, her family sat in a hiding place fashioned inside the ventilation chimney. While Germans were plundering their apartment, they sat there holding their breath. Only the nights brought some peace. In July 1942, two of her married brothers were deported to Treblinka with their wives and children. They could not hide because their small children endangered the rest of the family.

After July 1942, her brother, particularly the most adept and capable, Rafal, age twenty-four, began to organize and build a bunker, dug out below the basement level of their apartment building on Zamenhof Street. They transferred to the bunker shortly before the [Warsaw Ghetto] Uprising. In the bunker, in addition to their family, were about twenty people. After a nine-month stay in the bunker, it was September 1943, there were still four of them: her brother Rafal, her sister-in-law Ants (wife of Izaak Kuczer, murdered in the bunker), her youngest brother, thirteen-year-old Idl, and Krystyna. All four of them were living corpses. They were carried out; no one was able to stand up on his own legs. They were packed into sacks and transported like merchandise to their new hiding place. Unfortunately, within a short time, her dear little brother died, he was too weak. Her older Rafal perished, in January 1944. She was alone with her sister-in-law. After the Warsaw Uprising broke out, she was taken by nuns and joined a group of children from an orphan-age also being evacuated. From whole family only she survived.

## **Barbara Góra**

She was born in 1932 in Warsaw as Irena Hochberg. Barbara had finished her first grade in Primary School when the war broke out. In November 1941 her family was forced to move to the Warsaw ghetto. While Germans were plundering the ghetto and the massive deportation to Treblinka took place, her family hid in the attic. Miraculously they survived the raid. Mr. Hochberg decided they have to escape from the ghetto. In 1942 Barbara was the first that managed to escape to the "Aryan side" with help from Kazimierz Krauze. Later she was moved to Dzierżanowski's house but they were already hiding one Jewish girl. She had to moved to another family – Szmurło. She also lived with Mrs. Zucker, a German, who had a Jewish husband, but unfortunately she was arrested, when she refused to sign *Reichlist*. Barbara had to moved again to another family near Lublin. Because of her Aryan look, she was able to walk around the city and use trains.

In June 1944 Barbara, her father and sister moved to Grochów (Warsaw district), where her mother was still hidden. They lived on the east side of Wisła River, which left them out of the Warsaw Uprising. After The Soviet Army entered Warsaw in 1944, Hochbergs moved to Anin. Barbara went back to school, passed "matura" and went to Moscow to study at the university of agriculture.