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THE REAL PRICE OF HELPING JEWS UNDER GERMAN TERROR. A FEW FAMILY HISTORIES FROM THE ENVIRONS OF CRACOW*

The wartime ordeal of the Kołatacz, Janczarski and Grzybowski families[1] and the tragic story of the Kamrat family from Cracow, appearing in the background, are the stories of people subjected to state oppression by the German

* The text was published for the first time in Polish as: M. Korkuć, "Dwadzieścia sześć miesięcy przestępstw przeciw Rzeszy Niemieckiej. Historia kilku rodzin spod Krakowa", in *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici. Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Wenklar (Cracow, 2021), pp. 217–277. The author would like to thank all those who helped him to gain access to some of the archival material. Above all, the thanks go to Tomasz Domański, Sebastian Piątkowski, and Roman Gieroń.

[1] The story of help given to the Kołatacz family during the war has already been mentioned in various published studies. In particular, mention is due to Genowefa Janczarska's testimony of 19 March 1993 [the typescript is available in the Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter YVA), M. 31/5758]. This testimony has been published as: G. Janczarska, "Lisi schron," in *Czarny rok… czarne lata…*, ed. W. Śliwowska (Warsaw, 1996). The author will generally refer to the text from the archives (G. Janczarska. The testimony of 19 March 1993). It should be also noted that another testimony of hers, containing ample relevant information, also available at the same place (YVA, M. 31/5758), has not been published. It bears the title *Relacja o pomocy udzielonej rodzinie Kołataczów ze Skały k. Ojcowa w czasie II wojny światowej* (Cracow, 2 February 1993). Bogdan Janczarski's testimony of 1985, in this case, has also been published (*Relacje o pomocy Żydom udzielanej przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Dystrykt Krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, ed. S. Piątkowski [Lublin–Warsaw, 2020], pp. 488–489). It is worth mentioning that the activity of the Janczarski family was described relatively extensively by K. Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," *Ilcusiana* 20 (2018), pp. 49–112. Their help for the persecuted is reflected in the databases on aid given to the Jewish population, e.g. on the Virtual Shtetl website of the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews. See N. Aleksiun, *Historia pomocy – Rodzina*

Reich. This is not a paper about Polish-Jewish or Jewish-Polish relations. It is a story about the fate of citizens of the Republic of Poland subjected by the German occupier to terror and racial segregation. It is a story about the fate of human beings subjected to totalitarian enslavement. It is also the story of heroism and attempts to survive made by entire families in the face of the barbaric practices carried out by the German terror apparatus. It is a story about ordinary inhabitants of villages near Cracow who became criminals in accordance with the laws imposed by the German Reich.

The crimes of some consisted in trying to survive the war in defiance of the German Reich. The crimes of others were basic humanity and the fact that they *illegally* gave shelter to people who, according to the German Reich, had been denied the right to life. The forcibly executed regulations imposed by the German Reich, creating a new amoral order for the population of a conquered subjugated though undefeated Poland, are the key to understanding all these events.

Casual Acquaintances

Before the Second World War and the German occupation, Jews and Christians lived side by side in Poland. Jewish families guarded their world against Christians, while Christians were used to Jews being a separate part of a shared society for centuries. Some went to synagogues, others went to Catholic churches. Among Poles and Jews, there were people who concentrated only on themselves and their loved ones, but there were also those who were more sensitive to the needs of others. Among all sides, there were decent, honest people who possessed a well-developed sense of morality often rooted in their respective faiths. There were,

Janczarskich, https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/historie-pomocy/historia-pomocy-rodzina-janczarskich) or on the following webpages: *Mapa Pamięci. Historia Żydów w Małopolsce, Rodzina Janczarskich*, http://mapapamieci.pl/historie/rodzina-janczarskich-2/ (accessed 22 May 2023). Basic information can be found in the study: *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holokaustu*, ed. I. Gutman (Cracow, 2009). These events were also covered by M. Florek, "Społeczność ziemi miechowskiej/powiatu miechowskiego w akcji pomocy Żydom 1939–1945," in *Pomoc świadczona ludności żydowskiej przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945 ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Kielecczyzny*, ed. by J. Gapys and A. Dziarmaga (Kielce, 2016), pp. 84–85. A pretty biased presentation of this story was given in the study *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, for example D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," in *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, ed. by B. Engelking and J. Grabowski, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 2018), p. 127. We will return to comments on this subject in further footnotes. For example, the 2014 documentary film *Lisi schron* (dir. A. Lelito) also tells the story of these events.

of course, also dishonest people. There, as everywhere, were rich and poor. Both communities were united by a shared living space populating the same cities and towns. In a manner typical for human relations, there was cooperation as well as disputes and conflicts. Sometimes friendships were born, whereas among others, on occasions, tensions emerged. The lines of disagreement did not, by any means, correlate exclusively around national and religious divisions, although there was no lack of such situations. The most significant field of mutual contact between Poles and Jews was economic exchange and trade. Children could play with each other in the town's streets and at school. Many liked and respected each other here, while others fell into conflicts and quarrels. Again, the lines of the dispute did not necessarily coincide with national or denominational divisions. In terms of the political system, in the Second Republic, everyone was equal before the law – regardless of religion or nationality, irrespective of mutual likes and dislikes.

The Jewish Kołatacz family and the Polish Janczarski and Grzybowski families came from neighbouring localities, the small town of Skała and the surrounding area. Genowefa Janczarska later recalled:

> Skała is a small town, which it has remained until today. At that time, it was a trading centre for the surrounding villages. Therefore, there were a lot of Jewish and "Christian" shops, stalls and warehouses. A market was held here every Wednesday, attracting farmers from the surrounding villages. It was possible to borrow money at an interest rate or against a pledge from a Jewish acquaintance. You went to Skała to see the doctor and the chemist. Everyone knew everyone here.[2]

The Janczarskis and Grzybowskis thus knew the Kołatacz family only rather vaguely. They recognised each other on the street and exchanged pleasantries. Correctness and standard friendliness stemmed from the generally understood politeness and standards for the good upbringing of the time rather than any closer relationship. These contacts had no reason or opportunity to develop into more intimate relations.

[2] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 1, Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 283.

The Janczarski family consisted of Roman Janczarski, his wife Genowefa, née Makowska,[3] and their children. They lived in Wysocice, in a hamlet called Bocieniec, on the edge of the Cracow–Częstochowa Jura Upland. They bought a farm there in 1935,[4] which was not very far from Skała, some 10 km away. Nowadays, a drive along the voivodeship road takes only a dozen or so minutes. Back then, a horse-drawn carriage ride could take perhaps half an hour.

The Janczarski family had three children. In 1931, their first-born son Bogdan was born; in 1933, Eugeniusz; and in 1935, the youngest child, a daughter, Romana. By the outbreak of war, they had built a small wooden house, a cowshed and stable, and a shed enclosing the courtyard. It was underneath this shed that, after the outbreak of war, a space would be made for a shelter designed as a precaution against any local fighting.[5]

The house was situated on the edge of the village. Roman Janczarski, a former soldier of the Polish Legions, became a forester. Most of the 12-hectare plot was covered with forest and rocks, and only 4 hectares were suitable for cultivation, but this was only possible after a part of the forest had been cleared. "We could not afford any other property," recounted Genowefa Janczarska years later.[6] Later, during the war, it turned out that this proximity of the forest and the hilly terrain was conducive to illegal activities the Germans forbade. At the same time, it also caused the appearance of various other uninvited guests.[7]

The family of Icchak (Icek) Shmuel (Shmul, Samuel) Kołatacz[8] and Bejla (Bajla), née Lewkowicz,[9] ran a general merchandise shop located on the market square

[3] According to a note compiled by Natalia Aleksiun for the Polin Museum, Genowefa Janczarska was "the daughter of a mill owner from the nearby Imbramowice; she attended a secondary school in Olkusz before the war, where she had Jewish friends." See Aleksiun, *Historia pomocy*.

[4] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 4, Janczarska, "Lisi schron," pp. 286–287.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 4.

[6] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy udzielonej rodzinie Kołataczów ze Skały k. Ojcowa w czasie II wojny światowej*, Cracow, 2 February 1993; YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 4, Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 286.

[7] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[8] Sometimes an incorrect version of the surname is given: Kołątacz, as in note on Roman, Genowefa and Bogdan Janczarski, and Władysław and Irena Grzybowski in *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, p. 244; Florek, "Społeczność ziemi miechowskiej," p. 85.

[9] *Mapa Pamięci*.

in Skała. This is where Icchak came from. He was probably born in 1888, and Bejla was a year older than him. She came from Busko-Zdrój, some 80 kilometres northeast of Cracow.[10]

The Kołatacz family had five sons and a daughter. We know little about Aron and Motel (Mordechaj). Aron was born in 1922, and Mordechaj in 1925.[11] The daughter Masza was born in 1917.[12] She appears as Miriam in the studies, but she always appears as Masza in the sources, including in letters written by her.[13] Other sons include Abraham (Adam), born in 1918,[14] Samuel (Sam), born in 1926,[15] and the youngest, Eliezer, born in 1930.[16]

Masza Kołatacz described the family business as "a big shop," in Skała.[17] "I used to buy a lot from them: underwear, stockings, shoes and other things," recalled Irena Grzybowska, a resident of the nearby Ojców, with whom fate would reunite Masza during the war.[18]

Before the war, the Janczarski and Kołatacz families had a nodding acquaintance with each other. They would meet only as customers with vendors.[19] They did not need to enter into any closer contact – because there was no opportunity to do so. "When passing through Skała, we always did some shopping. Most often

[10] Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Krakowie (Branch Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Cracow, hereinafter AIPN Kr), 057/1064, Personal file of the UB officer Edward Majos [Salomon Kołatacz] (hereinafter 057/1064), Special Questionnaire, Cracow, 16 August 1945, p. 26.

[11] *Mapa Pamięci*; Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," pp. 102–103.

[12] Her brother gave the following personal data in a postwar personal questionnaire: Kołatacz Maria, born on 31 December 1917 in Skała. AIPN Kr, 057/1064, Special Questionnaire, Cracow, 16 August 1945, p. 28.

[13] *Ibid*.; YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*; see Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 127; YVA, M. 31/5758, The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

[14] His brother gave the following personal data in a post-war personal questionnaire: Kołatacz Abraham – Kowalski Roman, born on 15 May 1918 in Skała. AIPN Kr, 057/1064, Special Questionnaire, Cracow, 16 August 1945, p. 28.

[15] Salomon Kołatacz was born on 20 September 1926 in Skała. AIPN Kr, 057/1064, Special Questionnaire, Cracow, 16 August 1945, p. 20.

[16] His brother gave modified personal data in a post-war personal questionnaire: Kołatacz Ludwik, born on 30 March 1930 in Skała. AIPN Kr, 057/1064, Special Questionnaire. Cracow, 16 August 1945, p. 28).

[17] YVA, M. 31/5758, The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf of 31 December 2017.

[18] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska of 26 April 1993, p. 1.

[19] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy.*

we bought from the Kołatacz shop, because the prices there were not exorbitant. […] We bought what we needed and set off home."[20]

Under the Rule of the Reich

The Germans captured Skała and the surrounding area on 6 September 1939. On the same day, they burnt down several buildings in the town, including the synagogue on Długa Street,[21] and German soldiers murdered Aron Kołatacz on 5 September 1939 – he was one of the first victims of the German occupation in Skała.[22]

The Janczarski family – like most of society – tried to survive the night of the occupation, concerned mainly with the safety of their children. They wanted to survive regardless of the tragic events that were part of the great history. They also suffered from the increasingly difficult living conditions under the occupation, being affected by German regulations ruining the previous economic cycle, forced deliveries imposed on the population, and so on. "We lived through the first months of the occupation relatively peacefully, on the sidelines of the war events, so to speak. We ran our farm [as before], and my husband worked as a forester in the Ojców forestry division."[23] New household members came under their roof. Two refugees from the western areas of Poland (incorporated directly into the Reich by the Germans) found shelter with them. From there, the German authorities were already expelling both Jews and Poles from their homes and flats in 1939. They resettled them to the area of the just created General Governorate (German: Generalgouvernement, Polish: Generalne Gubernatorstwo, GG). At the Janczarski family's home at the time, there were Maria Pytel, a highlander resettled from the vicinity of Żywiec, and Wojciech Kwiatkowski, "a Silesian insurgent who came from somewhere in the Zagłębie region."[24]

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[20] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 1, Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 283.

[21] I. Cieślik, "Krótka historia pewnego pierścionka," *Więź* 2–3 (2010), pp. 95–102; http://wiez.com.pl/2018/11/01/krotka-historia-pewnego-pierscionka (accessed 9 July 2019); P. Trzcionka, *Skała. Zarys dziejów miasta* (Cracow, 1994), p. 143.

[22] Yad Vashem, Central Database of Holocaust Victims: Aron Kołatacz, born 1922 in Skała – a form filled out by his sister, Masza Kołatacz-Wolf. Central DB of Shoah Victims' Names (yadvashem.org): Aharon Kołatacz; Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," pp. 102–103.

[23] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 1 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 283).

[24] *Ibid*., p. 3.

The Kołatacz family was successively affected by all the restrictions and prohibitions imposed by the occupying forces on Jews in the GG. Despite these circumstances, Icchak S. Kołatacz was undoubtedly one of the active members of the local community. On 30 January 1940, a Jewish Council was established in Skała. Szmul Kamrat became its chairman. However, Icchak S. Kołatacz became a member of the Council and head of the Philanthropic Department. His name appears on various letters from that time when the Germans still allowed Jews limited organisational activities. He was also among the signatories of, for example, letters sent on behalf of the Committee for Aid to Poor Jews at the Board of the Jewish Community in Skała (April 1940),[25] to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (2 June 1940). The latter concerned the impossibility of running a kitchen for the poor Jewish population and philanthropic activities: "Such work is only possible mainly through AJDC subsidies, to which we could add our modest donations. We do not lack honest people for social work, and we could carry out exemplary work with the help of the AJDC."[26] On 18 July 1940, Icchak S. Kołatacz alarmed the Cracow branch of the Joint as the chairman of the Welfare Committee: "Our forces are completely exhausted. We are facing starvation and disease due to cramped housing. Save us – it is not too late yet!."[27]

However, the increasingly difficult situation of the Jews in the town in the first years of the occupation turned out to be nothing compared to what the occupation authorities began to implement as part of the so-called Final Solution of the Jewish Question and the genocidal Aktion Reinhardt. Dawid Nassan, one of the Jews resettled to Skała from Cracow, describing the dramatically difficult living conditions, stated bluntly: "But all this is a trifle and unimportant given what happened later. In 1942, life was quite tolerable until 1 September [1942]." Then, the Germans set about completely annihilating the Jewish population living in Skała.[28]

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[25] Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," p. 58.

[26] As cited in: *ibid*.

[27] As cited in: *ibid*., p. 60.

[28] The testimony of Dawid Nassan in *Olkusz. Zagłada i pamięć. Dyskusja o ofiarach wojny i świadectwa ocalałych Żydów*, ed. by I. Cieślik, O. Dziechciarz, and K. Kocjan (Olkusz, 2007), pp. 306–309.

The Germans carried out the first action, which began the destruction of the Jewish population in Skała, on Saturday, 29 August 1942.[29] Józef Cyra,[30] a Home Army soldier who lived in the vicinity of Ojców and Skała (among other things, he drew up reports for the command on the situation in the area), wrote:

> The Germans resettled most Jews from Skała, and shot the sick and infirm in their homes. Standing near my family home in Przybyslawice, I saw the resettled Jews being driven towards Słomniki on fifty-two carts, which I counted. Some Jews, however, took refuge with Polish families living in Skała and a few Jewish families in the surrounding villages with farmers they knew.[31]

After these events, however, the Germans allowed some of the Jewish population to live in Skała again. They also agreed to the continued activity of the Judenrat and the Jewish Order Service, which was a ploy to bring back some Jews who had managed to hide in and around the town after this first action. The second and final action to destroy the remaining Jewish population in Skała was carried out shortly afterwards: on 10 November 1942.[32]

> The Jews in hiding began to return to their homes, recalled Cyra. This was the case until 10 November 1942, when Germans, the blue police and the juniors of the so-called Baudienst forced labour surrounded Skała once again so that none of the Jews still in the village could escape. They were herded to the market square, where many were shot on the spot. The others were taken to Wolbrom. There they were held for a fortnight in a swampy suburban area, and then they were taken away to be exterminated in a direction unknown to me. […] On the following day, […] the head of the Jewish community, together with a few captured Jews who had not been previously captured, were taken to the local Jewish cemetery, where the Germans shot them. As I have already mentioned,

[29] Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," p. 75.

[30] The author gives an incorrect date of 26 instead of 29 August 1942.

[31] *Wspomnienia Józefa Cyry*, quoted in "Adam Cyra, List do redakcji *Gazety Krakowskiej*, 8 lipca 2006 r.," in *Olkusz. Zagłada i pamięć*, pp. 220–221.

[32] Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," p. 81.

the surrounding rural population gave shelter to several Jewish families from Skała.[33]

The Kołatacz family also belonged to this group. Until the autumn of 1942, the Kołatacz family lived in Skała. They had already been through tragic experiences. Icchak and Bejla had already lost two sons. As mentioned above, the Germans murdered Aron Kołatacz at the beginning of the war, in September 1939.[34] Motel (Mordechaj) Kołatacz was killed in the summer of 1942.[35] He had already been escorted by the Germans to be shot but managed to escape in unknown circumstances.[36] After these events, in 1942, the family consisted of six people: the parents and four children. Two of them were adults: the eldest of the siblings, 25-year-old Masza, and 24-year-old Abraham (Adam). Samuel was 16 years old at the time, and Eliezer was 12.[37]

The Janczarski family received the news of the tragedy of the Jewish population being murdered by the Germans with horror. "In 1942, news of the annihilation of this small Jewish world from Skała began to reach us. The systematic extermination of the ghetto began the mass shooting of the Jewish population, the robbery of abandoned property."[38] They already knew that the German orders were aimed at the murder of all Jews. They had seen the brutal methods used to find fugitives who, against German orders, managed to hide outside Skała. "Not a day went by without some fugitive being captured, the Polish blue police was involved, the village leaders had to provide horse-drawn carts to transport the convicts. We looked on helplessly," Janczarska recounted.[39]

The Kołataczs also joined such fugitives. Eventually, all six of them – albeit in different places – survived the liquidation actions in Skała. They went into hiding.

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[33] *Wspomnienia Józefa Cyry*, pp. 220–221.

[34] Yad Vashem, Central Database of Holocaust Victims' Names: Aron Kołatacz, born 1922 in Skała – a form filled out by his sister, Masza Kołatacz-Wolf. Central DB of Shoah Victims' Names (yadvashem.org): Aharon Kołatacz; Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," pp. 102–103.

[35] *Mapa Pamięci*; Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," p. 103.

[36] AIPN Kr, 057/1064, Application for employment of Edward Majos, 30 April 1945, p. 15.

[37] AIPN Kr, 057/1064, Special questionnaire, Cracow, 16 August 1945, pp. 20, 28.

[38] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 2 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 283).

[39] *Ibid.*

They benefitted from the help of people who had overcome their fear of German threats to murder anyone involved in any form of support for the hiding Jews. They first took shelter with Mieczysław Korzonek from Skała.[40] He illegally hid them on his farm on Wolbromska Street. The old Kołatacz family and three of their sons found shelter with him. Daughter Masza tried to survive elsewhere. She found refuge in a makeshift hiding place in the Grzybowski family's flat in Ojców,[41] and we will return to her story later.

Decision

It soon became apparent that, unfortunately, the Korzonek house would not be safe for the Kołatacz family in the long run. News circulated around the town that "the Germans are systematically searching all the buildings in Skała, liquidating the few Jews who have survived and the Poles who are giving them shelter."[42] Exposure was punishable by the death penalty by the Germans, both for those in hiding and those who were giving shelter. In such a situation, the Kołatacz family and their benefactor had to be rescued from disaster, and Korzonek began looking for a new place to hide them.

Having no better idea, he brought them secretly to Wysocice, to the Janczarski house. Why there? It isn't easy to definitively prejudge what made him decide. He knew the Janczarski family, but there were no special ties. The Janczarski family regarded him as an honest man. No more, no less. He took the Kołatacz family to the new place at night. He chose side roads and then rode straight through "the Ściborski forest, from where it was close" to the Janczarski home. Despite the risks, he used his son to take this dangerous route: "in front of the slow-moving cart, the teenage son of the Korzonek family rode his bicycle insuring its passage."[43]

The situation utterly took aback the Janczarski family. Mieczysław Korzonek, having secretly brought a group of strangers to their house, confronted them with

[40] Mieczysław Korzonek's involvement in rescuing the Kołatacz family was omitted from the notes describing the fate of the Kołatacz family (Note on Roman, Genowefa and Bogdan Janczarski, and Władysław and Irena Grzybowska, *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, p. 244).

[41] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[42] *Ibid*., p. 2.

[43] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 3 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 285).

a *fait accompli*. He did not warn them in any way, despite knowing that they, too, were under the threat of death from the German authorities for any form of help to the Jews. When he arrived with the Kołatacz family, Janczarska was absent at the farm or the village.

> When I returned home two days later, I found the least expected guests in the house – she recounted years later without embellishment – […] the old Kołatacz, the head of the family, his wife Bajla and three sons, two of them – Adam and Samuel growing up to be young men, the third already married, nicknamed "Czarny" because of his dark hair.[44] The wife of "Black" was hiding in the neighbouring village of Władysław – with a farmer.[45]

The Janczarskis were not mentally prepared for such a burden. They faced a dramatic challenge. To agree meant that instead of trying to survive the war safely, they and their family would choose a life of constant, extreme stress. This was not about a one-off act of bravery but about the daily struggle for the survival of a group of strangers. In other words, it was about a prolonged, continuous death threat. They understood that taking in 'illegal' refugees under their roof would destroy the family's entire previous existence and put their children's lives and their own at stake. Under such circumstances, does the head of the family have the right to put his spouse and children at risk of death out of a noble impulse towards others? This is not an easy question.

Already in the General Governor's regulation of 31 October 1939 on combatting of acts of violence in the GG, the Germans introduced the death penalty for committing unspecified "acts of violence," identified simply as "disobedience to regulations or orders of the German authorities." All such acts, freely defined by the occupation authorities, were to be punished by death.[46] By 1941, the Germans

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[44] It is possible that in her testimony, many years after the events, Janczarska mistakenly slightly switched the names of the younger Kołataczs. Everything indicates that Adam was the adult called "Black."

[45] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 2 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 284).

[46] W. Uruszczak, "Perwersyjne funkcje niemieckiego 'prawa' w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie," *Z Dziejów Prawa* 12 (2019), p. 688. Regulation on combatting the acts of violence in the General

already forbade any contact with Jews and any forms of aid to them without the appropriate German permits – precisely on pain of the death penalty (the Third Regulation on the residence restrictions in the General Governorate of 15 October 1941). Hans Frank explicitly announced that "Jews who leave their designated district without authorisation shall be liable to the death penalty and that the same penalty shall be imposed on persons who knowingly give such Jews a hiding place," without distinguishing whether this referred to random occurrences or longer-term hiding of the persecuted.[47] This made the situation in Polish lands under German rule radically different from the conditions of occupation in western Europe.

The Janczarski family was therefore obliged to report to the German authorities even the mere arrival of a Jewish family at their home. And the very fact that they did not do so, when they took the Kołatacz family under their roof ("they knowingly gave shelter"), exposing them to death at the hands of the Germans. After the first years of the occupation, they knew that in such situations, Germans often acted at their own discretion and murdered people on the spot. The occupiers did not give any consideration to who was "at fault" or to what extent. The only chance to avoid criminal responsibility was to report information of an intention to commit a crime at the nearest police station or to the German gendarmerie. The regulation mentioned above of the occupation authorities "to combat acts of violence in the General Governorate" of October 1939 also introduced the death penalty for those who, "having received information of an intention to commit a crime," failed to report it to the authorities.[48] The Janczarskis were already familiar with cases in which people could not endure such pressure and preferred to pay for their safety with someone else's life.

Governorate of 31 October 1939 *Verordnungsblatt des Generalgouverneurs für die Besetzten Polnischen Gebiete* (The Journal of Regulations of the General Governor for the Occupied Polish Territories), No. 2, 2 November 1939.

[47] The Third Regulation on the residence restrictions in the General Governorate of 15 October 1941, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* (The Journal of Regulations for the General Governorate), No. 99, 25 October 1941, p. 593.

[48] Regulation on combatting the acts of violence in the General Governorate of 31 October 1939. *Verordnungsblatt des Generalgouverneurs für die Besetzten Polnischen Gebiete* (The Journal of Regulations of the General Governor for the Occupied Polish Territories), No. 2, 2 November 1939. See Uruszczak, "Perwersyjne funkcje," p. 688.

> In the neighbouring village, during the occupation, worked the forester R. – Janczarska recounted years later – a good forester, but an even greater martinet, something he always took great pride in. In 1942, he came across a primitive hiding place in the forest – a shack with a few Jews. As I heard, food was brought to them by a farmer from Tarnawa. In fear for his own family, the forester reported his discovery to the police station. The unfortunate fugitives were tracked down, loaded onto a cart and shot.[49]

Janczarska understood that the forester was driven by fear of the Germans applying collective responsibility. She realised that he feared that he and his family might pay with their lives for their knowledge of the illegal hiding place of Jews in the forest. However, she did not hide that neither she nor her husband did not intend to justify such behaviour. "My husband never spoke to forester R. about this, but he never shook hands with him again."[50] This forester was later severely punished for cooperating with the Germans – a grenade was thrown into his flat, and the explosion crippled him.[51]

Now they had to choose whether to help the Kołatacz family or to tell them to leave. Even the latter solution would have been incompatible with the German laws in force in the GG. After all, the Germans had imposed an obligation to report the illegal stay of fugitives outside the places designated by the authorities.

This was a matter of the utmost trust. For the Janczarskis, Korzonek was "a person they knew somewhat, and he was worthy of trust, it seemed."[52] However, Janczarska stressed that Korzonek "did it without prior notice or agreement, asking

[49] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 6 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 288).

[50] *Ibid*.

[51] Krzysztof Galon recounted the fate of this forester: "A local forester was suspected of denouncing [a Jew hiding in the forest – M.K.]. For this and other sins, he was severely punished; just before the end of the war, someone threw a grenade into his flat, as a result of which he was seriously maimed. From the time of that murder until the assassination attempt on the forester, I lived with a vague sense of remorse because I blamed myself for the death of the Jew; I knew something about his hiding place, although I did not share this information with anyone. The forester knew the forest like the back of his hand, and as he was a great martinet, he must have notified the police about the hiding Jew." See K. Galon, "Pasąc krowy pod Wolbromiem…," in *Czarny rok… czarne lata…*, ed. W. Śliwowska (Warsaw, 1996), pp. 266–267.

[52] *Ibid*., p. 285.

them to give shelter to the Kołatacz family for a few days."[53] The Kołatacz family asked for the same: "they begged to be given shelter, at least for a few days."[54]

Janczarska had never hidden how much of a burden the decision to illegally provide for the Kołatacz family actually was.

> We knew that the Kołatacz family were telling the truth. And also that they were in mortal danger. We were surprised by all this; my husband and I did not know what to do. The easiest thing to do now [i.e. decades later] would be to write that we decided to hide the Kołataczs without hesitation, driven by human solidarity. But that would not be true. The Kołatacz family were not our family but only somewhat familiar merchants from Skała. They were Jewish, and hiding Jews was punishable by the death penalty of the whole family.[55]

Awareness of the threat was reinforced by information acquired only a little earlier.

> After all, only a few days ago, when my husband and I were in Cracow, we read the placards hanging in all the streets with the names of Poles who had been shot or deported to concentration camps for helping Jews. Even [for] such things as giving a slice of bread to a Jewish child. On one such placard, we saw a familiar name.[56]

Now they had to make a decision themselves. And they understood that there would be no turning back.

Often the illegal hiding of Jews is written about as if the whole problem boiled down to giving them a roof over their heads. Meanwhile, agreeing to help meant that the Janczarski family not only put themselves and their children at risk of death but also faced the challenge of secretly providing for the hidden people twenty-four hours a day. Day after day. This meant a complete reorientation of the family's entire

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[53] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[54] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 2 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 284).

[55] *Ibid*., p. 285.

[56] *Ibid*.

life to underground activity - in the full sense of the word. In doing so, it must be understood that people are not pieces of furniture that can be stored somewhere, locked up and not looked after. Even hiding an illegal weapons cache (which easily captures the imagination and is treated as a display of heroism) is incomparably easier. It requires courage and secrecy to store inanimate objects. Nothing more. When hiding people, every day is a new act of heroism requiring constant hard work, ingenuity and reacting to what is happening in the neighbourhood.

The Janczarski family understood perfectly well that the secretly kept people had to be provided not only with shelter but also with sleeping conditions, daily food, water, and the possibility to maintain personal hygiene. Hence, a system for waste disposal had to be taken care of as well. Even under conditions of everyday life in a time of peace and the absence of any threats, the sheer cost of year-round maintenance of additional five (and then six) people would be a challenge for any family. So what about wartime when aid was given under the threat of death?

Besides, there is always a risk associated with the unpredictability of human nature. Who is able to plan how the people in hiding will behave, what their psychic endurance is, and whether they will be able to adapt to the conditions of the conspiracy when one false move, one ill-advised move (even if caused by fatigue or inattention) can bring annihilation not only to those in hiding but also to those giving shelter? One and the other have since been linked by a common fate of "criminal" interdependence.

Only a detailed analysis of all these circumstances and the baggage of responsibility that the people providing such assistance took on themselves and their loved ones makes us realise how dramatically difficult for the Janczarski family was the moment when they decided to provide illegal, hazardous help to, after all, strangers.

Everyone knew what the policy of the German repressive apparatus was. The Kołatacz family were also aware that their presence brought upon their hosts the threat of the murder of their entire family. They said that they could no longer stay at the Korzonek's, because the Germans, while combing the farms, were murdering not only the Jews but also the Poles who were helping them.[57]

[57] *Ibid*., p. 284.

It would be an ahistorical absurdity to reduce such situations to the dimension of "relations between Poles and Jews" without considering the occupying authorities' orders and conduct. The fundamental problem in this situation was the fear of the cruelty of German terror and not who was who in a society segregated by the German Reich. Only by noticing in these dramatic moments the meeting of two groups of people subjected to German oppression can we understand the reality of those times. A fundamental moral question is whether, under the pressure of the occupation law, the Janczarskis should primarily be guided by the welfare of strangers or by their duty of concern for the safety of their children. Today, years later, would we have the right to condemn the Janczarski family if they had refused? Wouldn't the threat to the lives of an entire family with children be a sufficient reason for the hosts to explain, in accordance with their conscience, that they would not accept such a challenge? Today, in a free world, it is easy to formulate one-sided judgements. Would some "historian" not be found who would qualify this kind of refusal with a light hand as an expression of resentment, prejudice or… anti-Semitism? We shall not know an answer to this question.

Years later, Janczarska made no secret of how important it was while making the decision that the Kołatacz family come to a farm already equipped with an underground shelter (more on this below). Without embellishing the facts, she courageously admitted straightforwardly: "I doubt whether without it [the shelter] we would have been able to make a responsible decision to protect the Kołatacz family."[58] This is a seemingly marginal element of the whole story, which was nevertheless crucial. The fear of German brutality, the feeling of helplessness in the face of the violence of the occupying forces and the daily ease of killing did not allow us to forget that the Janczarskis were also under the power of the state machinery of the German Reich. They had to take into account that at any moment, a criminal commando could turn up to murder those illegally hidden and those illegally giving shelter. The existence of a hiding place offered at least a chance to hide Jews.

It was November 1942, and it was hard to imagine people utterly unprepared for the approaching winter somewhere in the forest. "We realised, however, that

[58] *Ibid*., p. 289.

the Kołatacz family, deprived of a suitable hiding place, was doomed."[59] While the Janczarski family deliberated, "at that time, the Kołatacz family was sitting hidden in a room and waiting for our decision."[60]

In the Janczarskis' memoirs, it is clear that the most critical problem was the threat posed by the occupation orders and not the question of who was who or what his nationality was. Hence, the couple's decision was not an element of the "Polish-Jewish relations" that are sometimes thoughtlessly generalised today but an example of the challenges faced by people subjected to the actions of the German state terror. "We decided to take in the Kołatacz family after a long deliberation, full of dilemmas, with a compressed heart. In fact, we were deciding not only about this family's life but also [about] our own life."[61] The Janczarski family understood that by doing so, they were also posing a direct threat to their three small children: Bogdan, Eugeniusz and Romana. "We did this not without fear because from that moment on also our lives and the lives of our three underage children […] were in constant danger."[62]Years later, Bogdan, the eldest son, also recalled that that moment could not have been easy for his parents. "The parents were put in a tough situation: putting the lives of our entire family at risk."[63]

Throwing them [the Kołataczs] out of our house would be equivalent to passing a death sentence [on them]. About this we had no doubt. The Kołataczs no longer had a way of returning to Skała; they knew no one in the area and were defenceless. So what was to be done? We told the Kołataczs that they were staying with us, at least for a while, [in fact] we knew that it meant until the end of the war.[64]

At the same time, the Janczarskis were well aware that the situation on the fronts did not herald a quick end to the German occupation, quite to the contrary. In the autumn of 1942, the Germans were still at the height of their power, ruling almost

[59] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy.*

[60] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 4 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 285).

[61] *Ibid*.

[62] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy.*

[63] YVA, M. 31/5758, B. Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji o pomocy udzielonej Kołataczom z miasteczka Skała k. Ojcowa.*

[64] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 4 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 286).

the entire continent. The front was far to the east of Poland. The Germans decided the to-be or not-to-be of millions of people in our part of Europe.

The hellish entanglements created by the reality of the German occupation meant that the Janczarskis' positive decision was not easy for the Kołataczs either: "they received our words with undisguised joy, but also with disbelief. They did not know us enough to trust us fully."[65] Nothing looked like the free world here.

By the time they arrived at the Janczarski family, the Kołataczs were already like hounded animals, pursued by all the services of the German state. The Janczarski family – not yet. According to the German segregating orders, the Kołataczs – as Jews – already had no right to stay outside the places designated by the Germans. Living outside the ghetto, they became criminals ruthlessly prosecuted by the German repressive apparatus. As Poles – although treated as subhumans by the Germans – the Reich still did not explicitly deny the Janczarskis the right to live in their own home. It did, however, condition it on their compliance with the German orders. By taking on the role of those who illegally hid people from the authorities, the Janczarski family placed themselves, in the light of the law imposed by the Reich, in the role of criminals subject to prosecution by the state services.

And then there was another problem mentioned earlier. The Janczarski family understood that, from now on, the burden of the additional maintenance of the Kołatacz family of five would also fall on their shoulders.[66] Meanwhile, they were in a difficult material situation. They had lost a large part of their possessions during the hostilities in September 1939. "It took us even longer to wonder whether we would be able to feed such a large number of people from our modest farm. In addition to our family (five people) and the five-member Kołatacz family, we also had to consider two more people who had already found shelter in our house."[67] These guests could be given legal shelter in the house, and they could help them and participate in running the farm. Unfortunately, this was impossible when people hid illegally, and food had to be provided for them anyway.[68]

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[65] *Ibid*.

[66] YVA, M. 31/5758, B. Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[67] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 3 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 285).

[68] They recalled Wojciech Kwiatkowski: "He helped us with the work on the farm; in those difficult and hungry times, everyone had to earn their daily bread". See *ibid*.

"If anyone does not realise what it means to have such a number of people to feed, even modestly, let them look at the painting depicting the Last Supper. We were supposed to feed twelve people every day," concluded Janczarska.[69] And although the Kołataczs assured them that they had the monetary resources to buy food, in practice, they could not cover their living costs.[70] Even a partial contribution to the cost of food did not mean a fee for help. It would be difficult to estimate anyway. "It was a great help to us that the Kołatacz family had some savings and, **until they were exhausted, they contributed certain sums to their food** [emphasis mine – M.K.]."[71] These savings could not last for long. The same applied to the funds obtained from the Kołataczs' items stored with neighbours and acquaintances, which were sold by Masza's guardians (the Grzybowskis) on her instructions and transferred to the Kołatacz family hiding with the Janczarski family.[72] Masza Kołatacz described: "When my parents arrived at Mr and Mrs Janczarski's in November [19]42, they had white linen and some leather. Father also had gold coins, which he gave to Mr and Mrs Janczarski to cover the cost of our food. Unfortunately, **the reserves were quickly exhausted, and despite this, Mr and Mrs Janczarski kept us until the end of the war** [emphasis mine – M.K.]."[73]

Bogdan Janczarski underlined: "for my work for the Kołataczs, none of them offered me the slightest remuneration."[74] "We did it selflessly, from humanitarian motives," Genowefa Janczarska stated years later.[75] Unfortunately, this side of the Janczarski story is not accurately reflected in a recent publication describing these areas of the General Governorate (published in Poland under the title: *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski)*.[76]

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[69] *Ibid*., pp. 3–4.

[70] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[71] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 13 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 294).

[72] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 3.

[73] *Ibid*., The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

[74] *Ibid*., Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[75] *Ibid*., Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[76] In the publication mentioned above, entitled *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, the history of the Janczarski, Grzybowski, and Kołatacz families is mentioned in the section presenting Miechów County. Unfortunately, instead of the enormity of the sacrifice of these two families to save their fellow citizens, which is apparent from the available records, the

No descriptions do justice to the scale of the undertaking of hiding a large family from the Germans for more than two years. Even the first decision to take the Kołatacz family under their roof, to let them into the house before any long-term decisions were made, was fraught with risk. The Janczarski family had to ascertain whether Korzonek managed to bring them in secret, without witnesses. "Above all, we tried to establish whether someone followed the Kołataczs or saw them near our house. Because then the catastrophe for all of us might not have been far away."[77]

The Logistics of a Shelter

Another problem was the necessary work to convert the shelters so that people could hide in them permanently. The shelter eventually had to be adapted to the new needs. After all, it was one thing to have a room built to protect a family from air raids and another to have a hiding place for people living there in a manner invisible to visitors. "The most important thing now was to hide the Jews from unauthorised eyes" – mainly because the Janczarski house was visited by many of the forester's customers.[78]

As mentioned above, the Janczarski family lived on the edge of the village in a hamlet called Bocieniec. "The hiding of the Kołatacz family was possible owing

reader's attention is diverted to other areas, contrary to the realities of the time. In just a few sentences devoted to these events, there is room to emphasise twice the material resources of the Kołatacz family – as if this was crucial to the provision of help. The rescued family is referred to as the "wealthy Kołatacz family," which is ungrounded insofar as they were, in fact, reasonably wealthy before the war. While escaping the German genocide, they saved a small part of this wealth because they left some of their belongings at other people's homes and took some with themselves. Within the framework of a mere catchword description, the author found space to mention that "the Grzybowskis remained in contact with the Janczarski family, took the belongings of the Kołatacz family and sold them, using the obtained funds for hiding." On the other hand, he did not point out that these resources were few and were very quickly exhausted. They only helped in the first period, covering a part of the cost of feeding the Kołatacz family, who were dependent on the Grzybowski and Janczarski families on a daily basis. Such a description leads to belittling the scale of the sacrifice these two families made to save their Jewish neighbours. And yet it is all too clear from the interlocking testimonies of Genowefa Janczarska and Masza Kołatacz, as participants in these events, that after the resources were quickly exhausted, the Kołatacz family continued to be dependent on the people who were hiding them – until the end of the war. See Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 127.

[77] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 3 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 285).

[78] *Ibid*.

to the location of our farm away from other human settlements."[79] They benefitted from this during earthworks and, later, in their daily existence.

> What was our biggest problem before the war: the remoteness from other human settlements, the considerable distance from the church in Wysocice, the school and the shop turned out to be our most tremendous boon during the war. Around our homestead, just outside the windows of the house, grew a dense forest with equally dense undergrowth. Therefore, from whichever side one approached our house, it could be seen only from a distance of a few dozen metres, well-hidden among the pines, oaks, birches and ash trees. The forest hid our wartime secrets well.[80]

Indeed, the proximity of the forest and the hilly terrain were conducive to hiding practices forbidden by the occupying forces.[81] "The first part of our fox shelter was built while the September campaign was still in progress [in 1939]. This is because we thought […] that the long-term persistence of the war front in our area could not be ruled out. And then a solid shelter for the whole family would be handy. It was built under the shed mentioned above because it was the only place where underground work could be done secretly."[82] It was a cellar measuring about 4 × 3.5 metres. Multiple layers of clay covered the ceiling made of thick wooden logs. Its height had to be limited. "Our hiding place was tiny and cramped. We sat huddled together; it was impossible to straighten up," wrote the Kołataczs' daughter.[83] This was their main shelter. Descending into the dark pit, the refugees did not know how long they would have to hide there. "We realised quite quickly that the Kołatacz family's stay with us was not a matter of days or weeks but of many months or a few years perhaps."[84] In the end, they spent more than two years in the shelter.

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[79] *Ibid*.

[80] *Ibid*., p. 6.

[81] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[82] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 8 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 289).

[83] YVA, M. 31/5758, The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

[84] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 8 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 289).

Under the new circumstances, the Janczarski family secretly rebuilt the shelters. Making use of their observations of the foxholes, they decided that for safety reasons, these shelters also needed multiple exits. "Therefore, my husband drew up a plan for underground passages, hiding places and facilities. It was then implemented, with great difficulty, over several weeks in late 1942 and early 1943. Its contractors were exclusively my husband and my eldest son Bogdan, who was strong and clever even though he was [only] 12 years old at the time. Much of the underground work was, of course, done by the Kołataczs."[85] For a young boy like Bogdan Janczarski, this was essentially work and duties transcending his possibilities:

> We began adapting the shelter and, most importantly, camouflaging the surroundings of the entire farm. At the age of only 12, I took part in this work. To protect the shelter from detection by the police dogs, which the Germans often used, I started building simple pens for raising rabbits – first in the room where the entrance to the shelter was and then against the barn wall. We used paraffin to confuse any possible 'sniffing out' of the smells by the dogs, but it was hard to get it (this also applied to carbide). Rabbit droppings, in other words, dung, sufficed to prevent detection [of the entrance – M.K.]. I did this work myself, he recounted years later.[86]

There is no exaggeration in this. Masza Kołatacz also wrote of his involvement: "The son [of the Janczarski family – M.K.] Bogdan […] helped his parents, watched over everything and kept vigil when strangers approached." [87] The rules of conspiracy demanded that earth be disposed of from underground excavations in a way that would not cause curiosity and questions – even those arising from a friendly interest – about the construction in progress. Therefore, during the earthworks, "the biggest problem was the removal and camouflage of earth from the secret diggings. The clay, carried out in baskets, was dumped into the hollows of the ground and masked carefully with leaves and branches. Nature took care

[85] *Ibid*.
[86] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.
[87] *Ibid*., The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

of the rest, covering these with grass and lush weeds."[88] Janczarska described the entire underground infrastructure as follows:

> The basic underground shelter (approx. 12–15 square metres) was built within the courtyard, under a shed, in full conspiracy conditions, during the September 1939 campaign, as a possible shelter in case of prolonged fights at the war front. This shelter was subsequently extended with underground passages and various enhancements. One of these underground passages connected the shelter with the residential building (the hatch to it was placed under a moveable wardrobe in the sleeping room). A second narrow passage connected the shelter to the cowshed and, through it, to the barn above it (due to the hilly terrain). There was a small hiding place in the barn, under a thick layer of sheaves, providing an opportunity for an inflow of fresh air (it was stuffy in the underground shelter). There was also a spare underground shelter under the barn, which was generally unused. A third underground passage led westwards, directly into the forest, and gave some (in fact minimal) chances of escape, at least for some people if the main shelter were exposed. This passage was also a makeshift ventilation duct with an outlet hidden in a large pile of branches "for firewood."[89]

The Janczarskis also created a several-metre-long connection between the shelter and the house. "It was a narrow corridor from which it was possible – through a suitable hatch – to get directly to … the sleeping room, i. e. the safest room because it was the furthest one from the house's front door."[90] The exit in the house was also cleverly concealed. "The entrance was camouflaged with a light moveable wardrobe. Even if an unauthorised person had pushed it open, they would not have noticed anything – the boards of the manhole (i.e. the floor) were cut diagonally so no gap would uncover the cut."[91]

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[88] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 8–9 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 289).

[89] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*, p. 3.

[90] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 9 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 290).

[91] *Ibid*.

Given the approaching winter, the hiding place had to be protected from the cold. The hiding place was designed to be heated without exposing its existence. "This underground corridor passed close to the corner of the room where the tiled stove stood. This made it possible to install a small iron stove below."[92] In another testimony, Janczarska explained: "there was a small stove connected to the chimney shaft in the house. So it was a kind of two-storey stove, but when you burnt wood in the stove in the shelter, you had to burn it also in the stove above to avoid exposing the hiding place."[93]

A separate exit was dug from the shelter into the barn. It was camouflaged with manure (further neutralising the potential use of tracking dogs by intruders). From the cowshed, it was possible to enter the barn above by a ladder through an opening generally used for transferring hay and straw. This helped to avoid opening the exits and going outside. There, i.e. in the barn, "a small shelter was arranged between sheaves of straw, with a properly camouflaged entrance. Only here could the Kołataczs occasionally have access to fresh air, which was in such short supply in the underground shelter. However, this was not always possible. As soon as something suspicious happened around the buildings, the Kołataczs faded into their underground hideout like shadows."[94]

The shelter's ceiling was constructed of thick wooden logs covered with an 80 cm layer of soil.[95] The main entrance to the shelter was located in the shed. It, too, was covered with a layer of soil. A horsecart stood over the entrance permanently. "Through the appropriately camouflaged manhole, a narrow ladder led down to the shelter. Pots of food were served through this route, and waste buckets were taken out."[96] It was used in situations where there was no danger of exposure. On the other hand, when it was impossible to give food to those in hiding by this route due to the threat, food was passed on a string through a specially made vertically fixed concrete pipe with a 20-cm diameter.

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[92] *Ibid*.

[93] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[94] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 9 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 290).

[95] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[96] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 10 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 290).

The installation was constructed mainly by the eldest son, the then twelve-year-old Bogdan Janczarski.

> There were situations when you couldn't open the shelter for several dozen hours. I then came up with a way of serving food. On the other side of the rooms, I drilled a hole about 20 cm in diameter, inserted a piece of concrete drainage, and made camouflage. You could serve milk or some liquid in a bottle or slices of bread cut into appropriate strips on a string through such an opening. [97]

Masza Kołatacz confirms: "Bogdan dug a small hole into our shelter, and some air would come in through this outlet, and sometimes he would drop us a flask of fresh water on a string."[98] Bogdan Janczarski also invented other additional forms of security.[99]

They proved helpful when there were a lot of strangers in the yard. "For it must be remembered that my husband was a forester, and sometimes farmers from neighbouring villages, wanting to buy wood, or [those who were – M.K.] employed in the tree nurseries, waited in our yard from dawn,"[100] Janczarska recounts.

The last passageway – a long, 20-metre-long tunnel leading into the woods – was provided in case the shelter was detected. "This was to allow a possible escape in case the main shelter was threatened. A special emergency earth cover was prepared for this event, supported from the inside by diagonal rods. When jerked hard, these rods were to collapse, exposing the escape route."[101]

The Janczarski family did the job, even though they were not convinced that this escape route would work in a catastrophic situation. The chances of such an escape were minimal, or, in truth, none, because the Germans always surrounded the homesteads being searched very tightly. Anyway, such a possibility probably sustained the psyche of the Kołataczs – their shelter was not a trap with no way

[97] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[98] *Ibid*., The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

[99] *Ibid*., Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[100] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 10 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 291).

[101] *Ibid*., p. 290.

out.[102] However, the solution also had a practical dimension related to air access. The corridor was planned by Janczarski so that it would at least ventilate the shelter somewhat. The outlet of a primitive wooden vent was concealed by a large pile of branches, pretending to be a supply of firewood. This is where the steam escaping from the shelter was deposited in winter. Yet "despite this device, there was a constant lack of air in the shelter. It was difficult to remedy this."[103]

In addition, there was another underground shelter under the barn, built just in case – with no connection to other shelters, but eventually, it was not used.[104]

Janczarska knew that all these endeavours only created a chance for two families to survive the war, while they certainly did not guarantee it. "The truth is […] that if someone counted on the proverbial stroke of luck in this cruel war, he simply did not survive the occupation. We knew this truth, and that is why we survived. And with us, the Kołatacz family."[105]

The farm's location in a secluded spot, close to the forest, was conducive to conspiracy, but what was an advantage could also pose a threat. The proximity of the forest meant that groups of diverse provenance hiding in the woods often visited the farm. This could have further attracted German manhunts. In addition, the farm was also frequented by visitors coming to see Roman Janczarski as a forester.[106] When the manhole was opened, Bogdan Janczarski would secretly watch the area so the Kołataczs could go outside the "bunker." "When the Kołataczs were leaving the shelter to go to the barn, observation of the road access from the direction of the village had to be carried out nonstop, regardless of the weather conditions. The Kołatacz family had to be notified of any approaching strangers so that they could immediately return to the shelter, whereafter a camouflage of the manhole had to be restored."[107]

Genowefa Janczarska made no secret of it: "the living conditions were extremely tough. For both sides, by the way."[108]

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[102] *Ibid*; YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Genowefa Janczarska of 19 March 1993, p. 10.

[103] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 10 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 290).

[104] *Ibid*.

[105] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 10,.

[106] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[107] *Ibid*., Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[108] *Ibid*.

The Principles of Conspiracy

Once the decision had been made to give illegal shelter, the Janczarski family realised that, at least for the duration of the war, the fate of both families had been linked by a "criminal" procedure: "There was no turning back, neither for them nor for us."[109] Years later, Janczarska recalled: "We did not have easy days during the occupation."[110]

The Janczarski family knew the Germans used their own openly operating services and a network of secret collaborators. There was, therefore, a fear whether a secret would be kept: "my husband and I wondered whether there might be a Judas among us who would betray us."[111] The anxiety about whether a secret collaborator of the authorities would surface in the neighbourhood was natural for any conspiracy in a totalitarian state. This was by no means because all villagers posed a potential threat. The principle of any conspiracy is to protect everyone – including friends and relatives – against unauthorised eyes. It was not only the deliberate activities of enemy confidants that posed a mortal danger but also ordinary human stupidity or verbosity. Secrecy could be breached by repeated spreading – even with no malicious intent – of gossip and conjecture, passed from mouth to mouth as trivia. The Janczarskis had to reckon with the fact that all it took was a rumour about granting the illegal shelter to people to reach the wrong ears, and their entire farm could run down in blood.

No one outside the circle of indispensable people was allowed in on the secret for everyone's sake. Security rules called for extreme caution about all those around. Again, it was not about nationality, religion, sympathy, or antipathy in such situations. If one acted in a Polish environment, the conspiracy and security rules required strict secrecy towards the Polish milieu. If someone was active in a Jewish environment (e.g. a resistance movement in the ghettos), the conspiracy and security rules also required strict secrecy about the Jewish environment. In a totalitarian state, illegal activities must be concealed even from theoretically sympathetic people, those close to you, and those harmed by the authorities. It is the

[109] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 6 Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 289.

[110] *Ibid*., p. 15.

[111] *Ibid*., p. 4.

only mechanism that offers a chance of survival. That is why the Janczarski family's hiding of the Kołatacz family was surrounded by strict secrecy – neither acquaintances near and far nor other people the Germans were looking for knew about it.

Still, one more Jew abided in the neighbourhood of the Janczarski farm and visited it, from a particular moment onwards. It was Mosze Kamrat from Cracow, who was also trying to survive in the area. The Janczarski family helped him as much as possible by giving him food, which was also punishable by death. However, they could not reveal the secret of the shelter to him either: "for understandable reasons, we did not disclose to him the fact that we were giving shelter to the Kołatacz family, […] he only found out about it during his last stay with us," that is, when the war had already ended.[112]

Even when they had to contact the underground due to the illness of one of those in hiding, they did not reveal the location of their hiding place. People involved in the underground were all the more likely to be arrested. The Gestapo's investigative methods could also have led to the disclosure of such a secret. The fewer people knew, the better.

It was no coincidence that the conspiracy also applied to their own youngest children. Information about the shelter's existence was concealed from Andrzej and Romana almost until the end of the war.[113] Only the older son Bogdan knew about everything.

In addition, the resettlers living with the Janczarski family, Maria Pytel and Wojciech Kwiatkowski, were also initiated.[114] For them, this knowledge also meant mortal danger. It is difficult to imagine that, in the event of the pacification of the farm, the Germans would have acknowledged that they lived here but knew nothing about the illegal hiding of people.

Despite the far-reaching precautions taken, some people – as it turned out later – knew or guessed that the Janczarski family was helping Jews. On the other hand, the hosts themselves were convinced for a very long time that their conspiracy was airtight. Only towards the end of the German occupation did they discover that complete secrecy had not been kept in the village: "as we found out after the war,

[112] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*, p. 4.
[113] *Ibid.*
[114] *Mapa Pamięci.*

a few people knew about its [the Kołatacz hiding place – M.K.] existence," Janczarska stated. However, this information never reached the Germans – even though the mere knowledge of the shelter's existence was a threat.[115] On the other hand, it turned out that by the end of 1944, a wider circle of villagers already knew about the fact that people were being illegally kept somewhere on the Janczarskis' farm. It is possible that partial exposure of this place was the result of a breach of security rules by one of the people in hiding. Theoretically, "there was no question of Jews in hiding going outside the homestead area, and only very rarely outside the shelter area."[116] The Kołataczs should have strictly observed this. It was, unfortunately, otherwise. "Towards the end of 1944, local people spread the word that Jews were hiding at the Janczarskis' – this came about after the irresponsible behaviour of one of the Kołatacz family, who contacted a Jewish woman hiding in the village of Wysocice with the Kędzierski family. It turned out that Edward Kędzierski was bringing this Jewish woman into our shelter," recounted Bogdan Janczarski.[117] It wasn't easy to justify such behaviour. After all, Kołatacz must have known that he was exposing his family, the Janczarski family, their children, and the tenants to mortal danger.

Another thing is that it did not take the disclosure of a secret for armed Germans to appear in or around a farm. Their forces were roaming the area anyway, tracking down illegal trade and Jews, partisans and people who supported them. During the prolonged war, the Janczarski family had to take additional security measures. "Some changes had to be implemented in how the special security measures functioned. The main entrance was dug from the shed to the pigsty where it was additionally masked over the security decking with a layer of earth – also dung."[118] According to the son of the Janczarski family, "various checks by the police and then searches by German troops intensified – dogs were also used. Still, nothing was detected thanks to the camouflage I described above."[119]According to his mother's testimony, searches took place on the farm twice – once with tracking dogs.[120] Fortunately, the security measures in the form of paraffin and rabbit droppings passed the test.

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[115] *Ibid*.
[116] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*
[117] *Ibid*., Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.
[118] *Ibid*.
[119] *Ibid*.
[120] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*, p. 3.

Food Factory

One of the most important daily challenges for the Janczarski family was to feed such a large number of people. To provide for two multi-child families and the resettlers mentioned above, the Janczarski family had to run a kind of undercover "food factory" for about a dozen people. And all the food supply and production had to be done in a way that did not raise suspicions from the occupation authorities or confidants. The Germans, imposing, among other things, a robbery system of compulsory supplies, developed various procedures for the detailed registration and control of the circulation of food products. "A major problem was supplying food for so many people. It was made easier by our own farm, which supplied us with essential products, i.e. cereals, potatoes and vegetables," described Janczarska.[121] Fortunately, the Janczarski family still had a horse and a cart, and Janczarski himself, as a forester, had many "official" reasons for moving around. This enabled them to purchase goods all over the area without paying attention to the frequency of their journeys or the amount of goods they bought. Janczarski's son recounted: "It was a great effort to get flour, groats and other resources – we had to purchase goods in various localities, in quantities that did not raise any special suspicions." Therefore, it was often he himself, as an inconspicuous twelve-year-old, who harnessed horses and rode a cart around the mills. He would bring home grain products. "I was slim, short, a young boy, I did not evoke any 'who, why' questions."[122]

The purchased grain had to be milled. Also, the Germans tried to exert control over this branch – they imposed strict documentation of all milling orders. An excessive number of orders for the Janczarski family could have caused suspicions. But here, too, fate favoured them. Janczarska's family helped. "We milled our grain in the nearby water mills, most often at my brother's, Bolesław Makowski's, in Imbramowice, bypassing the milling registration procedure introduced by the occupier."[123]

Despite all these successes, providing food for such a large number of people was a constant problem until the end of the German occupation and in 1944, new

[121] *Ibid*.

[122] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[123] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 12 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 293).

challenges arose. Firstly, an additional resident was admitted to the shelter – Masza Kołatacz. Secondly, after the Warsaw Uprising, it was sometimes necessary to take in even more people: refugees from Warsaw. "There were days when I had up to 20 boarders, especially when a handful of Varsovians expelled from Warsaw after the fall of the Uprising arrived in Wysocice. After all, I couldn't say I wouldn't take in a refugee from the capital because … I already had a few Jews at my place. If there was no other solution, I divided the food into smaller portions."[124] Both those giving shelter and those in hiding had the same menu. "We all ate the same thing; there was no better or worse table," wrote Janczarska.[125]

> In this situation, dishes could not be elaborate. The basis was bread. We had flour, mainly rye, made from our grain. Every year, however, we had to buy a few quintals of grain from our neighbours. This was difficult because the Germans oppressed the village with forced deliveries of grain, potatoes and meat. We did not deliver the quota ourselves because we bribed the municipality official. So in this way, we obtained extra rations of food.[126]

After taking in the Kołatacz family to provide for it, Janczarska had to systematically prepare and bake 12 large loaves of bread a week, which meant more than 100 kilogrammes of bread per month. And this means that for 26 months, the housewife produced well over 2,600 kilogrammes of bread. "The bread was baked in two instalments, six loaves each, because that's how much the so-called bread oven could accommodate. The baking process, bread by bread, made better use of the oven's heat, but above all, it perfectly camouflaged the true quantity of the [baked] bread."[127] This, however, did not exhaust the scale of the daily endeavours related to the provision of food. The most important bread topping was home-made plum jam:

> We fried it for two days in a huge cauldron over a field hearth each year. It could be cut with a knife and stored in large pots made of clay. A rarer used bread

[124] *Ibid*.
[125] *Ibid*.
[126] *Ibid*.
[127] *Ibid*.

> topping was [also home-made] cheese and butter, although we constantly kept two or three cows. We also ate very little meat: only as many hens, geese, and rabbits as we could raise, and 2–3 pigs per year.

As the forester's wife, Janczarska also admitted with some embarrassment that she had bought hares caught in snares from poachers on several occasions. "The end, unfortunately, had to justify the means," she added.[128]

Vegetables and fruit also came from Janczarskis' farm, and purchases were made from neighbours. "To ensure that our 'charges' did not contract scurvy, I often served onions, sauerkraut and carrots, which were grown in large quantities."[129] The youngest children were also employed in this natural food factory. Together with Bogdan Janczarski, they would go to the forest to pick berries and mushrooms. "And this also counted in the overall food balance."[130] They bought salt, illegally imported from Wieliczka, from smugglers and pedlars. Janczarska made up for the lack of sugar with her work and enterprise. "That's why I learned to evaporate molasses from sugar beets in autumn and winter in a pot over the hearth. This was our wartime sugar – brown and heavily polluted, but sweet."[131]

Similarly, with her work, Janczarska made up for the shortages of other products. "I also made soap from tallow, lye and rosin, properly mixed. It was grey, semi-hard and pinchy, but it disinfected linen and bedding well."[132]

Serving a multitude of people day in and day out required an enormous amount of work. "I was constantly helped in the kitchen by Marysia Pytel – without her, I don't think I would have ever been able to manage all my duties," confessed Janczarska.[133]

Other routine activities were also challenging. In addition to feeding the Kołatacz family, the Janczarskis had to wash their linen, clothes, bedding, etc.[134] Such ordinary chores are often forgotten, yet washing was done by hand at the

[128] *Ibid*.
[129] *Ibid*., pp. 293–294.
[130] *Ibid*., p. 294.
[131] *Ibid*.
[132] *Ibid*.
[133] *Ibid*.
[134] *Ibid*.

time, so with five and six extra people in hiding, it required a lot of effort. It was also a challenge that lasted for two and a half years.

In addition, such mundane issues as disposing of the waste generated in the hideout had to be resolved. It was mainly Bogdan Janczarski who took care of its disposal. [135] Another problem that is rarely remembered in such a context was illness and infection. A doctor's visit in the hideout was impossible. "Only once did they use medical help; it was given by doctor Jaros – a member of the Home Army, temporarily staying in Imbramowice."[136] Contacts with the underground helped here, of course, but this meant initiating at least one more person. Such a visit involved risking one's life, as the sick person had to be transported to another location to avoid exposing the shelter.

For the Kołatacz family, however, filling the time in the dark shelter also proved to be a problem. It could not be illuminated because Bocieniec was not electrified. They used paraffin lamps and carbide lamps, which were scarce commodities at the time. But this was not the only reason such lighting had to be saved: "the lamps absorbed oxygen, which was in short supply there. So the refugees lived in darkness."[137] Janczarska described with admiration that, despite everything, they did not lose spirit but … learned English – "which was quite exotic for us at the time." This filled the Janczarskis themselves with encouragement – the Kołataczs believed in their survival.[138]

Masza

While the Kołatacz family were still in Skała under the care of Mieczysław Korzonek, their teenage daughter, Masza Kołatacz, after escaping from Skała, found shelter elsewhere, namely in Ojców. This tourist and spa town is located a few kilometres from Skała (and 15 kilometres from Wysocice). The family of Irena and Władysław Grzybowski helped her. Masza was the only daughter of the Kołatacz family, the eldest of their children.[139]

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[135] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*

[136] *Ibid.*

[137] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 15 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 295).

[138] *Ibid.*

[139] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska.

Written down in 2017, her testimony shows how serious inaccuracies can be in this kind of second-hand testimony (this also applies to Holocaust survivors' testimonies). In her words, "the Grzybowskis, in the summer of [19]42, told my parents that they were ready to shelter me because they had news [sic!] that the Jews would be destroyed and burned."[140] Therefore, years later, Masza Kołatacz was convinced that the Grzybowski family had already been friends with her parents before the war.[141] In reality, no such ties connected them. The Jewish Kołatacz family from Skała was known to the Grzybowskis virtually only by sight, and they indeed also remembered Masza. Grzybowska wrote that the Kołatacz family "had a general shop in Skała" and that she often shopped there.[142]

The Grzybowski family knew nothing about the fate of the Kołatacz family between 1939 and 1942. The restrictions of the German occupation had changed their previous customs – including those related to shopping. They were also unaware of the German plans; the authorities of the General Governorate did not warn the inhabitants about their murderous intentions. Masza Kołatacz had a similarly naïve idea of the circumstances of her family's reception by the Janczarski family: "Mr Janczarski […] met my father in the summer of [19]42 and offered to take him in in case of danger."[143] Masza did not witness these situations. She did not ask her parents about it, and many years later, she tried to explain it herself, relying on her imagination rather than facts.

What it was really like was described by Irena Grzybowska. Let us go back to 1942. Grzybowska remembers precisely both the moment when she realised that the Germans carried out mass murders of the Jewish population and the moment when – to their surprise – Masza Kołatacz appeared on the doorstep of their flat. It was not a visit agreed with anyone.

Grzybowska and her husband and son were walking from Ojców to a village next to Skała. They noticed some unusual things being transported from the hill near the Jewish cemetery. "I saw a big pile of something colourful, and carriages were passing from Skała and carrying something colourful towards the [Jewish] cemetery. I asked my husband what they were carrying, whether these were such

[140] *Ibid*., The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.
[141] *Ibid*.
[142] *Ibid*., The testimony of Irena Grzybowska.
[143] *Ibid*., The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

coloured stones. My husband and son went to see what was lying there, and I slowly walked further along the path. In a moment, they came running to me and said that these were the bodies of Jews killed today in Skała."[144] As Grzybowska said – 350 people were murdered that day. "We were terrified and upset."[145]

In the evening, when the Grzybowskis and Irena's mother sat at the dinner table talking about these German crimes, they suddenly heard a knock on the door. Masza Kołatacz stood on the threshold: "she asked if she could stay the night until tomorrow."[146] The Grzybowskis, like the Janczarski family, were aware that even a single night's stay of a Jewish fugitive would expose them to the risk of being killed if discovered by the Germans. This was all the more dangerous because many Germans stayed in Ojców, as "during the occupation, it was a holiday resort for German airmen and for this reason many policemen and gendarmes were constantly hanging around."[147]

When the Grzybowskis invited Masza Kołatacz inside, the latter told the story of her escape from Skała. "After talking to Masza, we decided she would stay with us," she says. Irena Grzybowska says frankly, "we didn't know it would take so long."[148] Would they have accepted anyone? It would not have been so apparent if Masza had been unknown to them. After all, none of the household members could have a guarantee that such an escapee was not, for example, a provocateur sent by the Germans. Grzybowska writes: "I agreed because we had known each other [from shopping in the Kołatacz shop – M.K.] for quite a long time."[149]

These are not theoretical remarks. After all, the Germans, like Communists in a Stalinist state, used various forms of provocation to detect illegal activities. Sometime later, Bogdan Janczarski came into contact with a "partisan" who, soon afterwards, returned to the Janczarski family in a German uniform (this will be discussed). When a stranger came to the house, it was unclear whether he could be

[144] *Ibid*., The testimony of Irena Grzybowska.

[145] *Ibid*., p. 1.

[146] *Ibid*.

[147] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 11 Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 292.

[148] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska.

[149] *Ibid*., p. 1.

trusted or was actually looking for help. The declaration that he was hiding from the Germans because of political activity or his nationality was not necessarily true. Sometimes fear made it necessary to refuse a stranger.

Taking care of the young Jewish girl was also challenging for housing reasons. After all, keeping people illegally required maintaining strict conspiracy, preferably having hidden rooms – such as those at the Janczarski home. Meanwhile, the Grzybowskis were, all four of them, crammed into one room and a kitchen. They had no shelter or even a yard at their disposal. Although the house in Ojców was entirely theirs before the war, even before Masza came to live with them, living conditions had changed significantly. Even at the beginning of the occupation, they still had six summer rooms on the house's first floor, without heating. They sealed and secured two of them to serve as year-round housing. Irena Grzybowska lived there with her husband and underage son. Downstairs was one tenant and Irena Grzybowska's mother, who had a large room with a kitchen at her disposal.[150]

These relatively comfortable conditions did not withstand the clash with the omnipotence of the occupying authorities. It soon became apparent that in Ojców, a blue police officer assigned by the Germans to the local police station – platoon sergeant Kazimierz Guzik – was looking for a flat. He was one of the officers who had volunteered to join the *Polnische Polizei*, a formation the Germans created in 1940. He served at the Ojców post with the later notorious traitor, sergeant Kazimierz Nowak. For a few months in 1943, Guzik worked with him in the pursuit squad (*Jagdkommando*) formed by the Germans, which committed numerous murders against the Jewish, Roma and Polish population. Before the war, Guzik is said to have been a miner. During the war, when he was already serving the Germans as a blue police officer, "he became known as a torturer, abusing people and committing murders without reason. He was particularly fond of executing by a firing squad."[151] In her testimony, Grzybowska noted that later "Mr Guzik took part in the killing of Jews in Skała."[152] So it is hardly surprising that he did not hesitate to take advantage of the privileges of power. "He came to see my mother;

[150] *Ibid*.

[151] A. Hempel, *Pogrobowcy klęski. Rzecz o policji "granatowej" w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1990), p. 187.

[152] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska.

my mother told him we only had unheated summer rooms [free]. […] Mr Guzik went upstairs to me," recounted Irena Grzybowska, "he saw my flat and said to me that I could live with my mother and give him my flat. It was the beginning of the war, and people still had normal reactions; they tried to look after their property: Of course, I didn't want to agree to that, so he went."[153]

It was not long before the women realised that they were dealing with one of those traitors who were prepared to obey even the most criminal German orders and had no qualms about their fellow Polish citizens. "The next day, he brought me a flat confiscation decision with immediate effect." Grzybowska tried to intervene with a local German from Ojców (a civilian known for his decency), but she was quickly informed that new principles reign in the Reich. She was told that if she did not agree to give the rooms to the blue police officer, the Germans would throw her and her family out. Everyone had to comply. Irena Grzybowska and her family moved in with her mother, and later recalled: "Policeman Guzik moved into my flat with his wife and daughter."[154]

Thus, when, in the autumn of 1942, Masza Kołatacz knocked on their door, the Grzybowskis had only a tiny, one-room flat at their disposal and had the Guzik family as their neighbours. Irena Grzybowska's mother (hereinafter referred to by Masza as Grandma) slept in the kitchen. The Grzybowskis divided the room with a screen. "One half was the kitchen, and the other half was Mum's bedroom.[155] The room was at the disposal of all the other household members and all the guests. It could not be isolated. Two beds, a table and a baby cot, stood in it. What was missing was an extra place to sleep. But the biggest challenge was hiding Masza from strangers during the day. They could only move the wardrobe so that a small niche was created behind it in the corner of the room. "Two wardrobes stood in the room's corners; Masza hid behind one sitting on a stool."[156] The makeshift hiding

[153] *Ibid*., p. 1.

[154] *Ibid*., p. 2. Based on the notes published in some studies, one gets a very different impression, far from the truth, that he was someone like an acquaintance who "paid visits to his hosts." Note on Roman, Genowefa and Bogdan Janczarski, and Władysław and Irena Grzybowski, *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, p. 244.

[155] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 3.

[156] *Ibid*. "It was a very makeshift shelter, easy to detect," Genowefa Janczarska later assessed the "hiding place" at the Grzybowskis.' From Masha's testimony, it was probably then that Janczarska learnt the whole story of her earlier hiding at the Grzybowskis.' She remembered very well the story

space was extremely cramped. The wardrobe could not be pushed aside any further, as this would have aroused suspicions of uninvited guests.

At night, when no visits were expected, the Grzybowskis tried to make Masza reasonably comfortable. Grzybowski slept on one bed, and his wife and Masza slept on the other. Irena's mother slept in the kitchen. However, this security was illusory – after all, in the event of a sudden intrusion by the Gestapo or the police, the householders had no chance of hiding an illegal resident. [157] Grzybowskis' house was not equipped with a sewage system. There was a communal toilet situated outside. Policeman Guzik and his family also used it. A stranger could, therefore, quickly draw attention. Masza had to take care of her needs behind the wardrobe. She could not use the vessel intended for taking out the waste. Firstly, it could make too much noise behind the wardrobe, and secondly, it would immediately arouse suspicions. Grzybowskis contrived that Masza would defecate into a rubber boot.[158] She, years later, appreciated the effort: "the flat was not sewered, and my waste had to be disposed of."[159]

Masza Kołatacz spent most of the day behind the wardrobe. Only with the utmost precautions could she be allowed outside the shelter. "Grandmother would close the windows and doors so that she could talk to me and take me out from behind the wardrobe so I could walk around the room for a while."[160] However, there was always a risk of accidental exposure, which would have cost the lives of both Masza and the entire Grzybowski family. "Once, Mrs Guzik came unexpectedly from upstairs. The door to the room was open. Masza was sitting on the bed. I looked at my husband, and he embraced the sudden visitor and said [to Guzik]: 'You look so pretty'." By this time, Masza had managed to hide behind a wardrobe. The Grzybowskis thought that the danger had been averted. They were wrong. A factor difficult to control appeared unexpectedly. Despite numerous instructions, the Grzybowskis' three-year-old son was too young to understand the danger. "My son, seeing such cordiality from my husband towards Mrs Guzik, said

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that "Masza's hiding place was a corner in the room concealed by a wardrobe pushed to the corner." See Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 292.

[157] *Ibid*.

[158] *Ibid*.

[159] YVA, M. 31/5758, The Letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

[160] *Ibid*.

that behind the wardrobe, there was Marysia." It was a moment of horror. "I, at first, was stunned with terror," Grzybowska recounted. Fortunately, she found an explanation in no time:

> Seeing a painting hanging on the wall next to the wardrobe depicting a woman carrying a bundle of brushwood on her back, I smiled and told Mrs Guzikowa that my son called the woman in the painting Marysia, who was similar to an old maid of the same name who lived with us and often carried wood from the forest in a similar manner. Mrs Guzikowa accepted this explanation with a smile and went upstairs.[161]

The fear, however, remained. Only after a long time could they recognise that the danger had been averted.

However, it is essential to note a certain imprudence in the Grzybowskis' behaviour. They were involved in conspiracy work. According to its elementary principles, the two types of illegal activity should not have been combined. According to the rules of the underground structures, all organisation members should observe the rules of security. For example, keeping a Jewish woman in the house increased the danger of arrest and the threat of exposure of the cells with which the Grzybowskis were in contact. Meanwhile, according to Genowefa Janczarska, clandestine meetings of the Home Army were held in the same room where Masza stayed. The girl was, therefore, an unplanned outsider witness to the conspiratorial meetings. When this was discovered, the mood was one of perplexity. After all, this was also how Masza became the depository of the secrets of the underground: "in the event of a setback connected with Masza's exposure, the partisans could face serious consequences. Therefore, another shelter was urgently sought for her."[162]

On 6 July 1943, Irena Grzybowska's mother died. In those days, displaying an open coffin in the flat was a common custom. With candles lit and flowers, collective prayers were held by closer and further relatives and neighbours – coming to say a final farewell to the deceased. For obvious reasons, Masha could not be kept

[161] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 3.

[162] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 11 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 292).

behind a wardrobe for days when the room became public. There was no way out. She had to be secretly transported to another location. In addition, Władysław Grzybowski's mother had to be initiated into the matter, so another person was put in great danger. "We had to move Masza to Genowefa's husband's mother at night. There she had worse conditions. During the day, she was hidden in the kitchen in a potato cellar under the floor. She had to sit there without light. The door was closed and covered with rugs. After a few days, we moved her back to us."[163]

The exact circumstances of how contacts between the Grzybowski and Janczarski families were established are difficult to reconstruct. There must have been some form of communication, if only to help the struggle for survival in material terms, at least in the early days. "Masza knew where her parents had left some of their possessions [to various people in the area] for storage. She would write a note, and my husband [Władysław Grzybowski] would go to collect these things, and then he would sell them. He would give the money from the sale to Mr Janczarski for Masza's parents."[164] These activities also widened the circle of people initiated into the fact that Grzybowski was involved in hiding someone from the Kołatacz family. Fortunately, none of these contacts led to the exposure of the shelter.

In such conditions, Masha stayed with the Grzybowskis for almost two years: from November 1942 to August 1944. "The Grzybowskis cared for me selflessly throughout my stay with them, putting themselves and the whole family at risk," she underlined many years later.[165]

Family Reunification

In August 1944, Masza had to change her hiding place for good. Years later, she explained that this was due to the news of the additional mortal danger she and the Grzybowski family found themselves in. The Red Army stopped the front on the Vistula, giving the Germans time to suppress the Warsaw Uprising, but the Germans were expecting a new blow. "In August [19]44, the Germans [as in the original – M.K.] were about to evacuate all the inhabitants of Ojców; the front was

[163] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 3.
[164] *Ibid*.
[165] *Ibid*., The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

approaching," Masza recalled.[166] Irena Grzybowska explained these circumstances in greater detail.

> In Ojców, the Germans seized two hotels. […] In the village of Jerzmanowice, a few kilometres outside Cracow, in Ojców and the surrounding villages, the Germans took all the men capable of digging trenches. My husband also went digging. In 1944, the Germans started accommodating more troops in Ojców. They said they would occupy all of Ojców and resettle the population elsewhere.[167]

It was feared that in the event of the expulsion of the inhabitants, there would no longer be any chance of hiding Masha effectively, and leaving her behind the wardrobe was not an option. So an idea emerged to take her to the Janczarski place and to reunite her with the rest of the Kołatacz family. "Then my husband and I rode our bicycles 15 kilometres to Mr Janczarski's to ask if it would be possible for Masza to join her parents. Mr Janczarski agreed."[168]

Janczarska reflected years later: "Who came up with the idea of hiding Masha with us, I don't know." She suspected that "it could probably have been Korzonek from Skała because he was the only one who knew about the Kołatacz family's current whereabouts."[169] If the information on the cooperation in collecting and selling the items indicated by the Kołataczs was true, it means that some contact between them had already existed[170]. Now the Janczarski family felt that they could take in one more person. "What was to be done? So we decided to take Masza in – to complete the family set."[171]

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[166] *Ibid.*

[167] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 3. Therefore, Krzysztof Kocjan presented the essence of the problem not very precisely: "Due to the discovery of this fact by Home Army members gathering there (as Janczarska claims) or the cramped nature of the flat (as another source suggests – and to make matters worse, the notorious blue policeman Guzik lived in the same house), the Janczarski family transported her to their home in July 1944." See Kocjan, "Zagłada skalskich Żydów," p. 90.

[168] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 4.

[169] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 11 Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 292.

[170] After almost 50 years, Janczarska may not have remembered it so accurately anymore, especially as the intermediary was her husband, not herself.

[171] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 11(Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 292).

Grzybowska recalls that it was in August 1944 that Janczarski announced that he would be at the Ojców forestry inspectorate during the week. They agreed to prepare a safe transport, which could, of course, be carried out only in secret. [172]

Ojców and Skała are small enough villages for people to know each other, even if from afar – in the same way as the Janczarskis and Grzybowskis knew the Kołataczs. It would have been enough for the wrong person to recognise her even once, and misfortune would have been brought upon everyone.[173] Therefore, "transporting Masza to Bocieniec was one of the more serious challenges, especially as Janczarski had to pass through Skała."[174]

The two families secretly agreed on the method of the secret transport and the meeting place. Władysław Grzybowski's mother "had a large wicker basket (basket-coffer)."[175]Masza fit into it with her legs shrunk. "We covered her with a piece of bed linen and closed the basket with a padlock. […] We took the basket by the ears and walked along a path through the forest to the ruins of the Ojców Castle, right opposite the forestry inspectorate. We carried the basket half a kilometre to Mr Janczarski's cart."[176] They agreed on the ruins of the Ojców castle as the place to meet Grzybowski.

The Janczarskis arrived there as agreed. "We prepared for it very carefully. On the agreed day, my husband and I arrived in a horse-drawn carriage at Ojców. The Grzybowskis' arrived from Wysocice, not disturbed by anyone. We could not use the driveway to the Grzybowskis' house because the road [to them] led through a German resort [in Ojców]; entry was forbidden there."[177] The Grzybowskis waited until Janczarski went out of the forestry office, and the carriage with Masza in the

[172] YVA, M. 31/5758, Relacja Ireny Grzybowskiej, p. 4.

[173] *Ibid*.

[174] Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 292; YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 4.

[175] *Ibid*.

[176] Here there are inconsistencies in the testimonies. Janczarska believed that the Grzybowskis carried the basket in wheelbarrows, while the latter was convinced that a servant was waiting on the Janczarski cart to help place the basket on the cart. Meanwhile, the Janczarski family had no servants. This is also an example of the challenges the researcher deals with when reading testimonies written down years later. See YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 4; YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 292; *ibid*., The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.

[177] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 11. (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 292).

basket rode toward Bocieniec.[178] The Janczarskis rode the 15-kilometre distance from Ojców to Wysocice in an atmosphere of maximum tension. "Masza stayed in the basket all that time, that is, for about two hours, curled up as if she were in her mother's womb."[179]

The routine inspections of the transported goods conducted by the German services posed a deadly danger. "For us, the most difficult section was the passage through Skała. There was a large police station there, and a constant 'hunt' for Jewish survivors and small food or tobacco traders never subsided. Therefore, every vehicle was searched."[180] The shape of the terrain and the road network did not allow us to bypass the police station in Skała.[181] "We were stopped, but we avoided a search because my husband was known here as a forester, often travelling this route. […] So we rode happily through Skała as well. Further on, it was much safer; passing through Minoga and Gołyszyn, we reached a shallow ford on the Dłubnia, and from there, we had only a kilometre to our home."[182] It was an operation full of tension. "I don't have to write how happy we all were about [the successful finale of] this expedition to bring the Jewish girl in a basket," Janczarska concluded.[183]

The following week, her husband met the Grzybowskis on another forestry inspection visit. He informed them that everything had gone according to plan.[184] Thus, after almost two years of hardship and sacrifice, Masza Kołatacz's illegal hiding behind a wardrobe in Mr and Mrs Grzybowski's flat came to an end. "All this help was unplanned and selfless. God probably helped us all survive all this without any major problems," Irena Grzybowska concluded.[185]

In this way, the Kołatacz family reunited, and the number of people hidden in the Janczarski shelter grew to six.

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[178] *Ibid*.

[179] *Ibid*.

[180] *Ibid*.

[181] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarska, *Relacja o pomocy*.

[182] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 11 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 293).

[183] *Ibid*.

[184] YVA, M. 31/5758, The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 4.

[185] *Ibid*.

The previously mentioned Wojciech Kwiatkowski, who lived with the Janczarski family, was arrested together with the teacher Tadeusz Zduniak during one of the German raids. Fortunately, this did not lead to the exposure of the illegally hidden Jews.

Towards the end of 1944, Janczarski's own situation became precarious – the Germans suspected him of having contacts with the underground. After all, various armed groups showed up at the farm. Janczarski was "wanted by the Gestapo for collaboration with the partisans. Fortunately, he was warned in time by the AK counter-intelligence, which had its 'plug' in Miechów's Gestapo. From then on, he had to go into hiding. He hardly ever slept at home." [186] Janczarska's testimony states that this happened in 1943, which is probably a mistake in the annual date. She was most likely referring to the last months of 1944, as in 1943, the partisan groups were not yet as numerous as they were the following year, and Janczarski himself transported Masza Kołatacz in August 1944, regularly visiting the forestry inspectorate and undergoing checks by police officers who knew him. In any case, at that time, he was not in hiding yet. And he certainly could not have been wanted by the Gestapo yet. Bogdan Janczarski's testimony confirms this. "I mention here how hard it was for my family to lose its safe haven – Father was forced during the autumn and winter, 1944/[19]45, to hide in the forest, in the cold, for a year, exposed to the danger of being captured and shot."[187] In his testimony given in the 1980s, Bogdan Janczarski stated: "from 1944 onwards, my father and I were away from home, as I took part in the partisan movement." He also said that "they lived in a forest area."[188] In an earlier letter he wrote: "my father fought in the partisans of the Home Army, while all the care for those in hiding rested on my Mother's shoulders […]."[189]

[186] *Ibid*., pp. 15–16.

[187] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[188] Archiwum Intytutu Pamięci Narodowej (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, hereinafter AIPN), 392/456, File p 481 (hereinafter 392/456), Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bogdan Janczarski of 28 February 1985, p. 45–45a. This document has almost in its entirety been published in *Relacje o pomocy Żydom udzielanej przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Dystrykt Krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, ed. S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020), 488–489.

[189] AIPN, 392/456, The letter from Bogdan Janczarski to the GKBZH [Chief Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes] in Poland, dated 15 May 1984, p. 46.

Meanwhile, his son Bogdan had unwisely become entangled with a man claiming to be a member of the underground – in reality, he turned out to be a German provocateur: "to a certain Silesian pretending to be a partisan (who, in reality, was a collaborator of the German police) Bogdan gave some rifle cartridges he had found and he proposed to use them to shoot … some Germans. We discovered it when this alleged partisan arrived in a police uniform to search our homestead."[190] As a result, they were now taking extra precautions and Janczarski, not only himself but often with his son, had to stay out of the house.[191]

Such situations posed an additional danger of the Germans discovering the shelter. Fortunately, the previously mentioned measures worked, including scattering rabbit droppings, spilling paraffin and other safety measures against tracking dogs. "The Germans came for my husband twice, and he escaped them each time in dramatic circumstances. Even the police dogs involved in the manhunt for my husband did not sense anything suspicious underground. The shelter with the Jews turned out to be undiscoverable."[192]

Nevertheless, nothing was certain until the very end of the German order. At the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945, the tension increased even more.

> When the danger was imminent, the two younger children were also forced to leave the house, usually under the care of the highlander Marysia, under some pretence. For I never told the children about the threat to the house. I was then left alone in the empty house, if not counting the faithful dogs. The Kołataczs in their underground shelter didn't even know about it. It was better that way. On several occasions, I expected the worst, which I preferred even not to think about.[193]

The reality of the occupation revealed not only heroic attitudes but also, often at the least expected moments, extreme selfishness or concentration on oneself and

[190] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 15-16 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," 295).

[191] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[192] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 15 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," 295).

[193] *Ibid*., p. 297.

the loved ones. Such behaviour also had nothing to do with the lines of national divisions and ran across religious divisions. An upsetting experience for the Janczarski family was their inability to give practical help to another Jewish refugee, Mosze (Moses) Kamrat. At this point, the Kołatacz family's history intersects with the fate of the Kamrat family from Cracow. Janczarska recalled: "a Jewish boy from Cracow visited our house in Bocieniec several times. He was only a little older than my son Bogdan so he could have been 15–16 years old at the time. His name was Mosze (Mieczysław) Kamrat." [194] Mosze (Moses) was born on 17 June 1928, so in 1943 he was 15 years old. His parents were Józef (born 1898) and Chawa (born 1902). He had a sister Miriam, born in 1932.[195] Józef Kamrat first found shelter with Jan Biskupski in Laski Dworskie. He stayed with him secretly for some time, together with his wife, son and daughter.[196] Then they moved to Feliksa Biskupska (née Kruczek) in the same village. "They asked me to give them food and take them in for accommodation. I fed them and took them in for a few days," in the long run, they couldn't survive safely at her place. "Our house was next to the highway, and it was not safe for them or for us to continue to keep the Jews there." Later still, at the request of Józef Kamrat, Feliksa Biskupska hid little Miriam in her house for some time.[197] Then Mosze was also hidden in Wysocice, with Feliksa's parents and siblings: Stanisław and Marianna Kruczek, living with their children: Stanisława, Michalina, Edmund and Teofil. The Kamrat family also used a cellar with a wooden vault built in the garden to store vegetables. They sometimes stayed overnight, and food was secretly brought to them.[198] This probably was how they spent the entire winter of 1942 to 1943.[199] The mother, Chawa Kamrat, died in 1943,[200] probably together with her daughter. Janczarska had only unconfirmed information about this:

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[194] *Ibid*., p. 294.

[195] Geni. A MyHeritage Company. Personal data: *Moshe Kamrat*, https://www.geni.com/people/Moshe-Kamrat/6000000033681575712 (accessed 30 July 2019).

[196] AIPN, 392/456, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Biskupski of 24 April 1970, p. 4.

[197] *Ibid*., Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliksa Biskupska of 24 April 1970, p. 7.

[198] *Ibid*., Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Michalina Kruczek of 24 April 1970, p. 17; *ibid*., Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Edmund Kruczek of 24 April 1970, p. 20; *ibid*., Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Kruczek of 24 April 1970, p. 24.

[199] *Ibid*., Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Biskupski of 24 April 1970, p. 4.

[200] Geni. A MyHeritage Company. Personal data: *Chawa Kamrat*, https://www.geni.com/people/Chawa-Kamrat/6000000023097262858 (accessed 30 July 2019).

> At first, he [Mosze Kamrat] came to see us with his father, Józef, whom we knew a little from our pre-war contacts. He had already lost his mother and a little sister after they had escaped from the Cracow ghetto. The village leader – a martinet from the neighbouring G. [Gołyszyn – M.K.] – played an infamous role. But the boy's father was soon murdered and robbed by a farmer who initially gave the Kamrats shelter.[201]

In her testimony, Janczarska paused over the circumstances of this murder. "Was he frightened of the Germans, did a miserable haul tempt him? It is not for me to judge now," she wrote.[202] These are, however, unconfirmed data. Other versions of events contradict them – unfortunately, they also do not come from direct witnesses. Jan Biskupski later received information that Józef Kamrat "was shot by the Germans near the village of Krepa and that Kamrat's wife and his daughter were arrested by the Germans in the village of Gołyszyn in Miechów County and taken to the police station in Skała." [203] Bogdan Janczarski, on the other hand, claimed that Józef Kamrat "was killed by a farmer living in the village of Czaple, who was not convicted for his act, while his son [i.e. the victim's son: Mosze Kamrat] did not want to reveal the name of the killer." [204] All of this still requires a separate search in the available sources.

"From then on, young Kamrat wandered around the neighbourhood alone. He only came to us late in the evening, approaching so secretly that even the dog sometimes did not bark."[205] The Janczarski family felt that this boy should also be helped, even though this would have further increased the farm costs and hardship. "My husband and I felt sorry for this Jewish orphan, so we concluded that there could be enough space for him, as the sixth tenant, in the Kołataczs shelter because Masha was not there yet." [206]

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[201] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 14 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 294).

[202] *Ibid*.

[203] AIPN, 392/456, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Biskupski of 24 April 1970, p. 4.

[204] *Ibid*., Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bogdan Janczarski of 28 February 1985, pp. 45–45a.

[205] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 14 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 294).

[206] *Ibid*.

However, this proved impossible for the least expected reasons. Wartime conditions often taught ruthlessness to people who experienced support from others. The Kołataczs blocked Mosze Kamrat's rescue. Janczarska was helpless: "But they [the Kołataczs], to our surprise, refused, motivating it by the cramped nature of the shelter."[207] The Janczarski family had to understand that, in this truly diabolical entanglement, they were no longer the sole decision-makers on the number of those in hiding. After all, the Janczarskis could not accommodate a new tenant by force. "There was poverty; we could not help young Mosze much. He only received some meagre meal and bread for the road. […] In the cold winter of 1943, I gave him a small quilt so that he could at least protect his back from the cold. He tied it to his back with a string and walked like that."[208] Janczarska recalled the whole affair bitterly, finding it difficult to hide her resentment towards the Kołatacz family: "I don't bring it up, nor do I want to prove that we were good and whoever else was bad. It was the war that made man a wolf toward his fellow man."[209] The argument about a lack of space did not coincide with reality, which is evidenced by the fact that a year later, the Kołataczs found a place in a shelter for their daughter. Mosze Kamrat was a stranger to them. This situation also says a lot about the meanness of the occupation time and the many dimensions of human attitudes revealed in the atmosphere of German terror. Moreover, for security reasons, the Janczarski family could not even explain to Kamrat why they did not take him in.

Fortunately, Mosze Kamrat found help in Wysocice, near the village of Wiktorka, at the home of Stefan and Antonina Szyncel.[210] They took a risk, taking advantage of the fact that their house was on the edge of the village, close to the Czaple forest.[211] At the same time, Kamrat understood the danger his benefactors exposed themselves to. He did not want to put the Szyncel family at even greater risk: "In autumn and winter, young Mosze would hole up for days in the large grain stacks belonging to the Czaple manor. He secretly drilled deep tunnels in

[207] *Ibid*.

[208] *Ibid*.

[209] *Ibid*.

[210] Note on Stefan and Antonina Szyncel in *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, p. 736. See Florek, "Społeczność ziemi miechowskiej," p. 85.

[211] Note on Stefan and Antonina Szyncel in *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, p. 736. See Florek, "Społeczność ziemi miechowskiej," p. 85.

them, and fed on grain from unthreshed wheat, drinking water from a few flasks he had prudently taken with him."[212]

After the war, Mosze Kamrat visited those who had helped him, including Jan and Feliks Biskupski,[213] to thank them. He eventually settled down in Israel. Years later, Janczarska met him in 1992. "He thanked us for our help, even though he was the one we helped the least. Much less than this brave Jewish boy deserved," she said, recalling the wartime events with a hint of bitterness.[214] His and his family's fate is not always factually reflected in literature.[215]

Summary of Facts

Under the laws of the German Reich, how many people committed this crime of illegally helping the Kołatacz family? Let us count the ones we know about. So we have three members of the Janczarski family (not counting the two youngest children), Mieczysław Korzonek from Skała and his teenage son, who secured the bicycle ride (we know nothing about the other members of the family and possibly other people involved, although they cannot be excluded), Edward Kędzierski from Wysocice, Irena, and Władysław Grzybowski, Irena Grzybowska's mother, Władysław Grzybowski's mother, the resettlers accommodated at the Janczarski forester's lodge – Maria Pytel and Wojciech Kwiatkowski – and Doctor Jaros, who

[212] *Ibid*. Janczarska incorrectly uses the surname Szencel.

[213] AIPN, 392/456, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Biskupski of 24 April 1970, p. 4.

[214] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 15 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 295).

[215] A one-sentence recollection of Mosze Kamrat and his family was included in the study *Dalej jest noc...* Dariusz Libionka, the author of the chapter on these areas, wrote: "The Janczarskis and the Szklans [as in the original – M.K.] helped Mosze Kamrat, whose family was killed by the Poles. He survived in hiding places in the fields and the forest." In this way, the author prejudges the circumstances of the death of Mosze Kamrat's mother and sister, which, as stated above, are questionable. Another thing is that in such a portrayal, the Poles, who were positive characters in the story (those who helped Kamrat), were described as individuals without emphasising their Polish nationality. At the same time, the villains were presented as authoritative representatives of the Polish nation. The case of blocking Mosze Kamrat's admission to the shelter at the Janczarskis' by the Kołatacz family was passed over in silence. After all, this caused he continued to "hide in the fields and the forest." See Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," pp. 133–134. In *Księga Sprawiedliwych* the note on the Janczarski family mentions both the Kołataczs and Mosze Kamrat. But here, likewise, the thread of his refusal to take him into the shelter, which, after all, prevented the Janczarskis from giving Kamrat much more effective help, is passed over in silence. Note on Roman, Genowefa and Bogdan Janczarski, and Władysław and Irena Grzybowski in *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, p. 244.

helped the Kołatacz family.[216] So we obtain a figure of at least 13 people. And we know that this is not a complete list.

A separate question: how many people were directly exposed to death at the hands of the Germans for helping six members of just one Kołatacz family? Here, this number of thirteen people should be increased by the two youngest Janczarski children, who did not participate in giving aid, but in the light of German practices, were also exposed to death for the actions rendered by their parents and brother. The same applies to the Grzybowskis' children. We get a figure of at least 16 people, speaking of those we certainly know of, exposed to death at the hands of the Germans. Let us remember, however, that under the Reich regulations, it was also a crime punishable by death not to disclose information about the whereabouts of Jews, even if the person who had this knowledge did not participate in helping them. One may consider that no credit can be taken for passivity, but to the number of people living in danger, one must also add those who kept the secret. Any shadow of suspicion on the part of neighbours that they knew about the illegal hiding of Jews and did not inform the authorities could have resulted in them being murdered too. These were not lip service threats. Such situations did happen. One need not look very far for examples. In the nearby village of Wierbka near Pilica, in January 1943, the Germans added Piotr Podgórski to the Jews, and the Poles caught with them. They shot them all. Podgórski was a member of the village guard organised on the instructions of the Germans and, in their view, must have known that a villager was hiding Jews. So a presumption sufficed.[217]

How many people knew that the Janczarskis or Grzybowskis were hiding people illegally? After so many years, it is impossible to determine the exact number. We can only be tempted to make a conservative estimate. We are sure that at least several of the Janczarskis' neighbours knew. We do not know their number or names – we rely on Janczarska's testimony concerning several people. None of them misused this knowledge, although they may have feared collective responsibility. The group of insiders who kept secret should also be extended to include

[216] *Mapa Pamięci.*

[217] K. Samsonowska, "Dramat we wsi Wierbka i jego dalszy ciąg na zamku w Pilicy," in *"Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje." Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*, ed. A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2009), p. 126.

all those (number unspecified) who kept the Kołatacz family's valuables and later gave them back to the family through Grzybowski – none of them complied with the German order to denounce them under the threat of criminal liability. Every visit to these people required mutual trust. After all, it was equivalent to the exposure of organisers of illegal aid. It also involved widening the circle of people burdened with the dangerous knowledge about the hiding of Jews. This is also an essential part of the story.

"I cannot describe our threat – our awareness of the supreme danger in which the Kołatacz folks and we lived," Bogdan Janczarski summed it up. Years later, he drew attention to a peculiar paradox: in the event of a sudden invasion of the farm by the Germans, it was the Kołataczs who were in hiding, and it was them who still had a chance that the Germans would not find them or they still had some possibility of escaping through one of the emergency exits: "The Kołataczs were protected from the outside world, whereas my family could not have that in the slightest." [218]

Genowefa Janczarska stated briefly: "But fate favoured us. We all survived." [219] Years later, their wartime ordeal was described in various ways, sometimes in a way that was far from presenting the accurate picture of events, with untrue suggestions brought to the fore, regarding the material context of the relations of those in hiding and those giving shelter.[220]

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[218] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[219] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 16 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p, 297).

[220] The entire passage on the history of the Kołatacz family in *Dalej jest noc...* reads as follows: "**A wealthy Kołatacz family** from Skała gained a hiding place fairly quickly – they hid in the hamlet of Bocieniec near Wysocice. Their hosts, the Janczarski family, lived on the outskirts, the buildings of their farm adjoining the forest directly. Roman Janczarski was a forester. The Kołatacz couple and their three adult sons stayed in a specially built shelter, about a dozen square metres big. A stove connected to the chimney draught was installed there. The Janczarski's eldest son delivered the food. In July [should be: in August – M.K.] 1943, they were joined by their daughter Miriam (Masza), who, until then, had been hiding in Ojców in the flat of the Grzybowski family. The Grzybowskis remained in contact with Janczarski, **collected things belonging to the Kołatacz family and sold them, the obtained funds being used for hiding purposes**. Their flat was tiny, and, to make matters worse, a notorious blue policeman named Guzik lived in the same house." [emphasis mine – M.K.]. See Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 127. Barbara Engelking also mentioned the Janczarski family in one of her books: "the forester's wife, Genowefa Janczarska, described the conditions of hiding the Kołatacz family in an extraordinarily interesting testimony." However, the author presented only the "construction" aspect of the creation of the underground shelter, adding only that "the whole [Kołatacz] family

After the end of the German occupation

In January 1945, the German occupation of the described areas ended. The whole of the Lesser Poland region got under the Red Army occupation. "The Kołataczs could finally come out of their hiding place of over two years into the light of day. I experienced great relief. Our hardship was coming to an end," said Genowefa Janczarska.[221] Their daughter, Roma Janczarska, was operated on for appendicitis in a hospital in Miechów in January 1945. When the Soviet front passed, all hospital beds had to be emptied to accommodate wounded soldiers. "So my husband and I went to Miechów to pick up Roma by a horse-drawn carriage as usual. When we returned with our child to Bocieniec, we no longer found the Kołatacz family there. They left first for Skała, then for Cracow. They were enjoying their freedom."[222]

Unlike the countries of Western Europe, Poland was not a free country after 1945. After its occupation by the Red Army, German totalitarianism was replaced by Soviet totalitarianism. In the post-war communist state, the Janczarskis still had problems and found they would continue to bear the costs of the relief activities they conducted during the war.

After the war, the communist authorities, just as the German occupier had done before, oppressed the rural population with the imposed obligation of forced deliveries of agricultural products. The new officials in the municipality, those of the communist hand, discovered that the Janczarski family had, during the occupation, evaded their duty to deliver the imposed quotas to the German authorities thanks to bribes. These officials were not interested in the fact that the bribes also cost money and allowed them to feed two families for over two years of wartime terror. The Communists demanded that the Janczarski family give back to the new authorities all the agricultural supplies formerly owed to the German occupiers. Let us emphasise this: they forced the "giving back" of the current and the "overdue" quotas imposed on them by the Germans. "It probably sounds unbelievable, but

survived the war." See B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień… Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 2011), pp. 87–88.

[221] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 16 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 297).

[222] *Ibid*.

we had to deliver everything, down to the smallest grain, to the new [communist] authorities," Janczarska commented bitterly.[223]

In the following years, in communist Poland, life was not easy for the Janczarskis – like for most of Poland's society. The situation became even worse when Roman Janczarski died in 1949. Genowefa was left alone with three underage children as the only breadwinner.[224] What had happened during the war came back in the form of various burdens and accidents. The very existence of the shelter under the floor proved dangerous in the long run – it brought about a structural collapse. Years later, due to the rotting boards, the room stove and the shelter stove connected to it sunk into the ground. Everything had to be renovated.[225] The stress and experiences of the war recurred in various situations and forms. The daily excrement removal from the shelter left a permanent trace in Bogdan Janczarski's psyche. "I am still traumatised today – I did not have a normal childhood. Maybe I shouldn't mention it, but even an ordinary thing like carrying the waste and excrement in a bucket, which is what I did, has left a reflex to this day – I vomit whenever I enter a dirty toilet," he recounted more than 40 years after the end of the war.[226]

After moving to Cracow in January 1945, the Kołatacz family settled at 5 Syrokomla Street. "Parents without means of subsistence" – was written in the Security Office's (Polish abbreviation: UB) profile of Salomon Kołatacz,[227] which probably accelerated the family's decision to emigrate. Abraham Kołatacz changed his name. As Roman Kowalski, he became a forester and clerk in Rybnik (German: Rychbach). [228] Masza lived with her parents, as did her youngest brother, who was 15 years old in 1945 and continued his education. The parents, as well as Masza and Abraham, were non-partisan; under the communist regime, they did not get involved in political life.[229]

In 1945, the already 19-year-old Samuel Kołatacz followed a different path – at least initially. He settled down in Cracow independently of his family. He changed

[223] *Ibid*., p. 12.
[224] *Ibid*., p. 17.
[225] *Ibid*., p. 9.
[226] YVA, M. 31/5758, Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.
[227] AIPN Kr, 057/1064, Profile, 11 April 1945, p. 10.
[228] *Ibid*., Special questionnaire, Cracow, 16 August 1945, p. 28.
[229] *Ibid*.

his name to Edward Majos. He enrolled in the communist party (Polish Workers' Party, *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR) and found a job in – as he wrote it himself – "the municipal secretariat of the PPR," i.e. the PPR City Committee in Cracow.[230] He decided to get even more involved on the side of the new order. It was known in the PPR that the UB, as a new political police force built from scratch, extensively used people from the lowest social strata, but it also needed workers who could read and write well. So the PPR City Committee issued a suitable recommendation for Kołatacz for a position in the terror organs. It was emphasised that "Citizen Majos Edward is politically reliable and committed to the cause of democratic Poland."[231] He quickly assimilated the propaganda terms and, given that the communists were then referring to themselves as the "democratic camp," he used the relevant terms in soliciting employment by the Voivodeship Office of Public Security (WUBP). In his application for employment with the WUBP of 26 March 1945, he wrote that he was asking for a job "as a censor, declaring that he would try to do his work conscientiously and diligently for the good of democratic Poland." [232] He was given a position in the Voivodeship War Censorship Department of the WUBP and signed the relevant documents and pledges. This is how Samuel Kołatacz became a functionary of the communist repression apparatus. Not for long, however. Still in October 1945, in an employee performance information, the head of the department, Nesanel Kichler (Küchler), described Edward Majos as follows: "He works well, is disciplined, politically aware, is a sincere democrat, a member of the PPR, interested in cultural and educational work, attached to work in the bodies of the Security Office." [233] Despite this, Kołatacz did not see a place for himself in this institution for much longer. After a year, he deserted. At the beginning of April 1946, Kichler informed his superiors that "the censor Majos Edward, employed in Department VIII of the WUBP as an office worker since 22 III [19]46, has not reported for work. According to the information we have

[230] *Ibid*., E. Majos. *Curriculum vitae*, 26 March 1945, p. 33; The letter from the PPR City Committee to the WUBP dated 23 March 1945, p. 33.

[231] *Ibid*., The letter from the Personnel Department of the PPR City Committee to the WUBP with a recommendation for E[dward] Majos for a job in the Security Office (UB) dated 23 March 1945, p. 34.

[232] *Ibid*., Application to the WUBP in Cracow, 26 March 1945, p. 32.

[233] *Ibid*., Employee evaluation of Edward Majos, Cracow, 5 October 1945, p. 7.

gathered, he probably went abroad"[234]. His suspicions were correct. Kołataczc--Majos was – as a deserter – deleted from the records of the WUBP employees.[235]

Genowefa Janczarska recalled a farewell meeting with the elderly Kołataczs: "We said goodbye for good then, when they left Poland, first for Aachen, then for Israel and Canada. I have not seen them since." [236] Icchak and Bajla Kołatacz maintained their correspondence with the Janczarskis for several years after the war. "The old Kołataczs still wrote me letters for some time. I could tell from their letters that it was not easy for them in an alien environment; they had to start everything from scratch."[237] Janczarska emphasises that she never asked them for any help. The correspondence ended in 1963: "Not one letter came from that side. No sign of life – for almost 30 years. It was as if everyone had died. I don't make a tragedy of it, we didn't count on gratitude for what we did for that family. Nor can everyone carry the burden of difficult memories."[238] Bogdan Janczarski had heard of one letter from the old Kołatacz from Canada[239]. He may not have known about any other correspondence. Many years later, he recalled it all perhaps all too bitterly: "after the war, none of them expressed the slightest thanks, sent even a greeting card as others normally receive from all over the world."[240] Years later, in a letter to Yad Vashem, he wrote: "I ask for recognition of the sacrifice [we] made ([expressed] by your Organisation), and I need this not for myself, but for my children and grandchildren, for the simple memory of those years."[241]

Janczarska described that the younger Kołataczs "gave a sign only in 1992, first Sam, then Masza."[242] The latter asked the Yad Vashem Institute to speed up the procedures leading to the Janczarskis being awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal. "I would like to ask you to sort the matter quickly because Mrs Janczarska is 86. I would very much like to bring her to Israel at my expense for

[234] *Ibid*., Letter from Lt. Kichler dated 2 April 1946, p. 5.

[235] *Ibid*., Information on the service record of E[dward] Majos, p. 3.

[236] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 17 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 297).

[237] *Ibid*.

[238] *Ibid*.

[239] AIPN, 392/456, The letter of Bogdan Janczarski to the GKBZH in Poland dated 15 May 1984, p. 46.

[240] YVA, M. 31/5758, B. Janczarski, *Relacja z lat okupacji*.

[241] *Ibid*.

[242] YVA, M. 31/5758, G. Janczarska, The testimony of 19 March 1993, p. 17 (Janczarska, "Lisi schron," p. 297).

the ceremony at Yad Vashem."[243] It is unclear why it happened so late, but it was still possible to fully confirm the Janczarski family's dedication to their fellow human beings in this case.

And what were Masza Kołatacz's relations with the Grzybowski family like? After the Red Army occupied Poland, they still visited Masza in Cracow for some time. "Then Masza got married and lived in Bielsko, and I visited her there. Then she left with her husband for Aechen [Aachen – M.K.] in West Germany."[244] Some time later, during a trip to visit her daughter in the UK, Grzybowska could meet Masza there. In Aachen, "they attached the carriages, and the train stood for more than an hour. I had previously written to Masza to say I would be in Aechen. She and her husband came to see me on the train. Then the journey could be interrupted for 24 hours. They took me to their place and drove me back to the train the next day, and I rode on."[245] After Masza Kołatacz-Wolf left for Israel, Irena Grzybowska was once again her guest. "We have kept in touch by letter and telephone until now," she wrote in April 1993.[246]

Also in 1993, Roman, Genowefa, Bogdan Janczarski, Władysław and Irena Grzybowska were awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal by the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem.

* * *

Many people's fates were intertwined during the German occupation's inhuman period. The story of families threatened with death for giving aid, and those denied the right to live by the German state is closely embedded in the reality of German totalitarian terror and cruelty.

Before 1939, the Janczarskis, Grzybowskis, and Kołataczs lived in their communities in free Poland. They met occasionally during business dealings. They passed each other on the streets and lived their own lives. We can only speculate that this is probably how it would have stayed if the war had not broken out. It is possible that they would all have remained distant acquaintances to each other, residents

[243] YVA, M. 31/5758, The letter from Masza Kołatacz-Wolf.
[244] *Ibid*., The testimony of Irena Grzybowska, p. 4.
[245] *Ibid*.
[246] *Ibid*.

of the same area. Everything changed after the German Reich imposed its new order on the occupied Polish territory. In the German *General-Gouvernement*, the Kołatacz family was threatened with death like the entire Jewish community. The Grzybowskis and Janczarskis could live by obeying German orders. Still, driven by a compassionate impulse and willingness to make sacrifices, they took on the burden of giving illegal help despite the threat of death for acting against the laws of the German Reich.

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SUMMARY

For more than two years, the Janczarski family hid the Kołatacz family, a Jewish family they had previously known only by sight. The Grzybowski family also participated in helping the Kołatacz family. The text attempts to reconstruct the reality of everyday life in a situation of illegally hiding people for such a long time. It presents a description of the circumstances in which the decision to provide help violated the occupation law. It brings closer the methods of securing oneself from the German occupation services and tracking dogs, as well as the principles of conspiracy. The article presents all the logistics involved in hiding people (hiding places, escape routes, food production, ways of getting food, and excrement disposal). Furthermore, it characterises the behaviour of those hiding and those giving shelter. Finally, it shows the situation of those in hiding and those giving shelter after the occupation of Poland by the Red Army and under the communist regime.

KEYWORDS

German occupation • terror • totalitarianism • Holocaust • everyday life under occupation • social attitudes • logistics • illegal hiding of people • illegal food production • Skała and its vicinity • General Governorate